

Are we there yet?

- » 10 years of ILGA-Europe:
we have come a long way, but not there yet!
- » defending European liberalism and secularism
- » handbook and CD-ROM for each reader inside!



Message from Patricia

A very warm welcome to the spring edition of our Newsletter!

This edition of the Newsletter celebrates the 10th anniversary of ILGA-Europe. We began our celebration last year in Sofia during the anniversary annual conference with a cake and speeches. In this edition we are looking into the past and our history. Although we are only 10 years old, a lot of important details are gradually being forgotten and there are many newcomers to ILGA-Europe who do not necessarily know facts and reasons for establishing the European region of ILGA. We believe it is crucial to know our past so we can better understand our today and successfully enter tomorrow. That is why we provide a detailed account on our brief but colourful and exciting history.

At the same time an anniversary is also a good time not only to evaluate and reflect on our achievements but start thinking and planning our future. In this Newsletter we highlight the future challenges and hopes. We also invite the entire membership to take a very active role in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. I hope that this Newsletter will provide a good incentive to all the members to take some time to identify your aspirations and ideas on the future of the organisation and we look forward to hearing your comments, ideas and suggestions on the next Strategic Plan.

A lot of ILGA-Europe's successes and achievements were possible because of the support and partnership established with various institutions and organisations. We are very grateful for their contributions to this Newsletter reflecting their view on our cooperation, joint efforts and friendships to make Europe a better place for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We are also looking at two current and significant European developments: signed a few days ago the Berlin Declaration and related controversy, and the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

I hope you will enjoy this Newsletter!

PATRICIA PRENDIVILLE

ILGA-Europe's Executive Director



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Celebrating achievements, getting ready for new challenges

10 years is an important age for any organisation. It is a great opportunity to evaluate achievements, analyse failures, and sketch future plans and challenges. Undoubtedly this is also time to celebrate, and we think ILGA-Europe has a few reasons for celebrations!

Since its creation, ILGA-Europe made incredible progress and established itself as a serious, recognised and respected voice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Europe. This respect and recognition is gained with both the LGBT communities themselves and with all major European organisations and institutions.

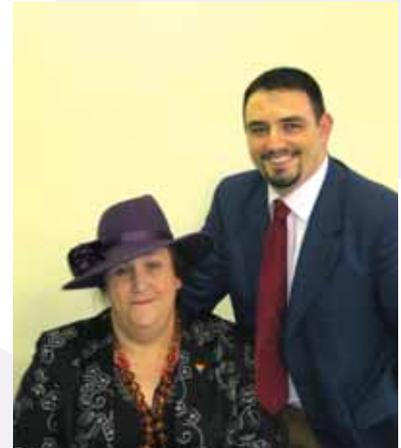
This has been made possible by strengthening of our capacity that grew continuously over the last decade and represents one of our main achievements. ILGA-Europe is proud and thankful to everyone who helped the organisation develop and achieve its goals from the very beginning – all its past and present volunteers, members of the board and staff, individuals and organisational partners, supporters and simply well-wishers. Dedicated work and contributions from the 'ILGA-Europe family' resulted in the organisation receiving core funding from the EU in 2001 which allowed the establishment of the Brussels office and employment of professional staff. Thus we began our journey from an organisation run entirely by volunteers towards an organisation in which a volunteer board and a professional staff, each in its respective role, work together towards the realisation of ILGA-Europe's strategic objectives.

The further increase in our funding marked another increased in ILGA-Europe's capacities. Thanks to the successful applications to the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the Open Society Institute and other donors, our work is less bound to the EU core funding and an EU-driven agenda. We are fruitfully working with and within the Council of Europe and the Organisations for Security and Cooperation in Europe; transgender issues are recognised and organically incorporated; we extended our membership to countries where ILGA was not present before and supported the birth of organisations where no LGBT movement had yet been present. Thus ILGA-Europe has become a real and fully pan-European platform for all of our constituencies.

A very significant development is our new role as funder, which is a sign of trust gained from our own funders and of the organisation's maturity. ILGA-Europe has now created a "small grants" fund for our members for specific projects such as the Human Rights Documentation Fund. Building on the experience we are gaining, we see some potential for the future development of this new function of the organisation which would offer new opportunities to our members.

Another significant change has been the shift from annual working programmes to three-year strategic plans. The entire organisation –

members, board, and staff – are now more comfortable and capable of setting aside short term prioritising to instead look more ahead, to discuss, conceptualise and implement longer term and larger scaled priorities. We are about to start preparing for the second three-years strategic plan for 2008-2011, to look at the future we want to shape, building onto the achievements of the past three years.



Deborah Lambillotte and Riccardo Gottardi, Co-Chairs of ILGA-Europe Executive Board

It must not be underestimated the increase in ILGA-Europe's presence, profile and prestige in the European arena. The organisations successfully established itself as a professional, trustworthy and authoritative player in a team of European fighters for equality and human rights. ILGA-Europe currently works with and is recognised as one of the main voices of LGBT people in Europe by all principal European inter-governmental organisations: the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe. Moreover, ILGA-Europe has also positioned itself as an active player of the wider European social justice movement and was one of the founding members of the European Platform of Social NGOs. We can hardly summarise here the list of our specific achievements, and this is in itself significant and should make us proud. Further contributions on this Newsletter provide a detailed overview of our successes, from article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, to the Buttiglione affair, to the Fundamental Rights Agency.

Finally, just before we turned 10, we received the best birthday present – ILGA-Europe together with two European members of ILGA, LBL and LSVD, were granted consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council. This opens new opportunities to address the issues of sexual orientation and gender identify discrimination in Europe through the UN mechanisms and to support the struggle for equality of the LGBT movement in other parts of the world.

Once again we thank each and every one who helped this organisation to become what it is today and we are looking forward to continue together with all of you this exciting and sometimes challenging journey towards equality and respect for everyone in Europe!

**Deborah Lambillotte and Riccardo Gottardi
Co-Chairs of ILGA-Europe Executive Board**



“We are family!”

Almost 200 delegates from all over Europe came to our annual conference last October.

It was a great pleasure to see familiar faces and to meet new activists, young and old, from various corners of Europe and different parts of the LGBT family. With obvious enthusiasm, the participants exchanged experiences, discussed challenges, networked, established new contacts and brainstormed further strategies and projects.

The conference was ‘inaugurated’ by an interesting and useful session on network facilitation among conference delegates. The main idea was to create a small team of facilitators who would know which delegates had knowledge and expertise in a particular area and would be able to provide other delegates with the quickest and easiest way of finding experts or other like-minded people.

This year’s conference theme was “We are family: our families in Europe and the European family.” By choosing such a theme ILGA-Europe wanted to re-affirm its determination to work towards full legal equality and social acceptance of all forms of families across Europe. Some countries have made significant progress in terms of acknowledging, legally recognising and accepting various family models. But there is still significant work to be done to achieve full equality and recognition. Diversity of families was equally matched by the diversity of the speakers at our panel on Friday 27th October. Family panel speakers provided an overview of a variety of family models and impressed an attentive and engaged audience with their testimonials.

During the conference a draft of ILGA-Europe’s key demands on diversity of families was circulated. It was discussed and amended during various workshops exploring the diversity of families and ways of recognition and acceptance. The final version of ILGA-Europe’s key demands to advance the recognition of diverse families is now available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/issues/marriage_and_partnership.

Another well attended plenary session took place on Thursday 26th October, under the theme of “Human Rights Violations”. Participating experts examined and identified various difficulties LGBT people still face in terms of exercising their basic human rights and identified the lack of anti-discrimination legislation and insufficient application of existing anti-discrimination laws.

During nearly 30 workshops and caucuses the delegates discussed a whole range of issues affecting LGBT people in Europe. This year ILGA-Europe continued to provide in-depth and focused capacity building workshops. In particular we organised three two-part workshop sessions on using video as

Conference participants sing “We are Family” song by “Sister Sledge”

a human rights advocacy tool, understanding and working with the media and making our organisations more diverse and inclusive.

During the conference we hosted two launches. The first was organised by EuroFLAG, the European organisation of parents and friends of LGBT people, which presented their project ‘Family Matters’ funded by the European Commission’s DAPHNE programme and which aims to support families to combat violence against LGBT young people. The second launch was organised by the Swedish project ‘All Clear’, funded by the EU EQUAL programme, which addresses the issues of sexual orientation discrimination in employment. The project launched the English translation of their toolkit (handbook and CD-ROM) which is included in this Newsletter for every reader.

Of course it was also a celebratory conference as ILGA-Europe marked 10 years of its 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 to achieve further and fuller equality and human rights for LGBT people in Europe. The future actions will be outlined in the new Strategic Plan 2008-2011 which will be developed in time for our next conference. ILGA-Europe has just announced the call for consultations on the new Strategic Plan and all members are encouraged to take active part. Please see page 8 for details.

It was also significant and symbolic that the conference took place in Bulgaria which joined the European Union on the 1 January 2007. We hope this was a great opportunity for the Bulgarian LGBT activists and organisations to meet their colleagues from across Europe. There was extensive coverage of the conference in the Bulgarian media and we hope the Bulgarian officials gained a better understanding of LGBT issues. We also hope they learned from other European experiences how to address equality and human rights issues for LGBT people and thus build Bulgaria as an equal and inclusive society for all its citizens.

I would like to thank the all members of ILGA-Europe staff, the Bulgarian co-organisers from the GEMINI organisation, and all the delegates for their professionalism, enthusiasm and energy. Without their contributions and commitment it would be impossible to have such a successful and enjoyable conference.

I was feeling slightly nostalgic leaving this ILGA-Europe family reunion in wonderful Sofia. But it makes me happy and excited to think about our next meeting this October in Vilnius for our next reunion where all of you are invited and welcome.

DEBORAH LAMBILLOTTE
Co-Chair of ILGA-Europe Executive Board

New ILGA-Europe Executive Board

During the Annual Conference in Sofia, which also served as ILGA-Europe's general assembly, a new Executive Board was elected. Here is what they had to say about themselves:

Ruth Baldacchino first got involved with the Malta Gay Rights Movement, an experience which provided her with a deeper insight of her surroundings, and was the step that led Ruth to become a queer activist. Through MGRM she came across IGLYO - an encounter where she met brave and young queer activists from across Europe. In turn, they brought her here to ILGA and provided a diversity of experience, information and backgrounds. Ruth considers it to be a continuous journey which has helped her become a realist and a critic, yet never stopped her from being a dreamer.

Martin K.I. Christensen was a member of the National Board of LBL, the Danish National Association of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals, before becoming member of the Board of LBL International five years ago. He is also co-founder and chair of the LGBT-group in the Danish Social Liberal Party. Martin holds a Master's Degree in History, Middle East Studies and Business Economy from Denmark, Istanbul and the Netherlands, and works as a magazine editor.

Linda Freimane is one of the founding members of Mozaika, the LGBT alliance in Latvia, and organiser of the Friendship Days and Riga Pride 2006 and 2007. Linda was born in Stockholm, Sweden, but moved to Latvia in 1997 and has since then worked as a lawyer and business consultant. She decided to become an LGBT activist because she believes in the necessity to always defend the democratic values our societies are built upon – if we do not act, we have no right to criticise those who do!

Riccardo Gottardi has been involved in LGBT activism since 1997, first in the Pisa branch of Arcigay and then at national level. He has served in the ILGA-Europe Executive Board since 2001, and been co-chair since 2003. He has worked in the past as a trainer (diversity and sexual orientation) for teachers, students, health professionals, etc. and as a coordinator for several projects, including two EU transnational antidiscrimination campaigns. Riccardo's main focus in NGO work is now on issues of organisational management and development. He is now based in Genova and about to finish his PhD in bio-nanotechnology.

Lisette Kampus is one of the leading gay rights activists in Estonia, currently living and working as a European Relations officer in Campaign Against Homophobia, the Polish national LGBT organisation in Warsaw. Lisette is mostly working in the field of European Union matters, and has a strong background of political lobbying and advocacy work in both Estonia and Poland. Amongst various projects and initiatives, Lisette has many LGBT youth capacity building initiatives to her name.

Deborah Lambillotte is an intersexual gender activist. This is her fourth time on the ILGA-Europe Board, and her second mandate as Co-Chair. After years of involvement in the Italian Arcigay, Arcilesbica and ArciTrans, she returned to Ghent (Belgium) in 2002. She is also board member of the Halebifederatie, the Flemish LGB umbrella organisation, where she is responsible for staff and transnational projects. She also co-ordinates the local section of Vieux Rose, a 50+ lesbian group, and lists her hobby as lobbying.



From left to right: standing – Martin K.I. Christensen, Miha Lobnik, Tomasz Szypuła, Christine Le Doaré, Ruth Baldacchino, Lisette Kampus, Pierre Serne; sitting – Linda Freimane, Deborah Lambillotte, Riccardo Gottardi

Christine Le Doaré has been involved in LGBT activism since 1997. A former president of the French national activist, observatory of homophobia and SOS Homophobia help line, she is now the president of Paris LGBT Centre and its regional offices. Christine has just accepted to join the new Council for Equality, launched by the Paris Ile-de-France region political body, because she believes we need to work for diversity. She works as a legal advisor in a bank.

Miha Lobnik comes from Ljubljana and believes in trying to add sense in the world, but admits that doing this can also be exhausting sometimes. Well, if that is the price for freedom, he accepts to pay it. Since 1997 he was active in IGLYO and since 2002 in ILGA. In Slovenia he worked in social and political work for the Gay and Lesbian Community. Miha considers activism to be a great experience and immensely enriching, bringing together great people that share the common goal - to change the oppressing and isolating realities is just one of them!

Pierre Serne is presently working as head of personnel for the deputy mayor of Paris, in charge of integration and non-EU foreigners. In 2000 he was appointed as political adviser of the French Minister for the Environment. For a few years now, he has been chairman of the LGBT national committee in the Green Party. He is also a member of the city council of Vincennes (Paris suburb), and has been elected in charge of European issues in INTER-LGBT, the main French LGBT umbrella association.

Tomasz Szypuła has been involved in gay activism since 2001, initially in the Krakow branch of KPH. In 2004 he founded and coordinated the first Gay Pride Festival ('Culture for Tolerance' days) in Krakow. After graduating from journalism at Jagiellonian University in September 2004, he moved to Warsaw and was elected to be the Secretary General of Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH). Since then he has also been working on international relations and cooperation with foreign LGBT organisations, and in June 2006 he graduated from Human Rights School of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. Tomasz is 26, works as a Public Relations officer and lives in Warsaw with his Spanish partner Jose and two cats.



The long and winding road

ILGA-Europe has just celebrated its 10th birthday, and next year, ILGA will mark its 30th anniversary. It has been a long and winding road to regionalisation within ILGA and the establishment of ILGA-Europe. ILGA “veteran” Kurt Krickler gives a short “historic” overview.

From the very start, ILGA has always been European-dominated. That seems to have been put into its cradle, as ILGA was founded in 1978 by ten European gay organisations at the annual congress of the British organisation “Campaign for Homosexual Equality” (CHE) in Coventry. Since then, world conferences have been held on an annual basis until 1995, and after that in two-year intervals. Fully aware of this European “disparity” or “dominance”, ILGA organised world conferences in Washington in 1982, Toronto in 1985, Acapulco in 1991, New York in 1994, and Rio de Janeiro in 1995, to reach out to other continents. Africa and Asia, however, have only seen one ILGA world conference each (Johannesburg in 1999, and Manila in 2003). 15 out of 23 world conferences took place in Europe, but it must be said that ILGA has always been dependent upon a strong host organisation to arrange a world conference, as ILGA itself did not have the resource or capacity to organise such an event.

Moreover, since 1980 ILGA has held European regional conferences every year, and from 1987 to 1996 organised ten annual sub-regional conferences for Eastern and South Eastern Europe. This data clearly shows Europe’s “pre-dominance” – or advanced degree of organisation – within ILGA. The other regions have had much smaller numbers of regional conferences, if any at all, and it was only in 1985 that one of the ILGA secretariats moved to a host outside Europe, to Montreal for only one year.

However, the attempts to establish stronger ILGA membership outside Europe by holding world conferences on other continents did not produce the desired sustainable results. In the early days, these results were measured mainly in terms of membership in ILGA and participation in the conferences, as ILGA used to be a very loose umbrella and rather a network than a formalised association with a strong headquarter. For example, it was only in 1986 that the positions

of the two general secretaries were created. The work completed on behalf of ILGA between the world conferences was carried out by member organisations volunteering to do that task, and acting as a specific secretariat or committee. The loose structure of the organisation that only allowed decision-making at the world conferences was, indeed, a general flaw of ILGA in the first decade. This was only remedied at the 1990 world conference in Stockholm where a new constitution was adopted creating the so-called “secretariats committee”, made up by ILGA’s four secretariats and their back-ups. This committee, together with the general secretaries, could finally make decisions in matters that did not brook a delay until the next conference.

European working parties

Europe, however, did not only have regular regional conferences from the very start, but soon a much more systematic approach to lobbying the relevant international organisations in Europe, such as the Council of Europe, the Conference (later Organization) for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the European Communities (later Union) was adopted.

In the late 1980s, two working parties dealing with specific European issues started to work within ILGA; one dealing with Council of Europe and CSCE/OSCE matters, and the other with lobbying towards the European Communities. The working parties, made up by a small number of dedicated member organisations, received their respective mandate at both the world and European conferences, starting at the 1990 Stockholm world conference. The most important communication tool of these two working parties was the Euro-Letter¹. Over the years, they carried out many systematic and successful political lobbying activities towards these organisations.

The unequal representation of the various regions within ILGA, however, persisted during the 1980s. As ILGA has always claimed to be a worldwide organisation, other solutions to change this were explored with “regionalisation” being considered a remedy to this unsatisfying situation. The debate on remodelling the association by establishing independent regional organisations started seriously in the beginning of the 1990s. However, this process in the end took much longer than originally envisaged. Decisions were postponed from Barcelona in 1993 to New York in 1994 and again to Rio in 1995. In 1994, however, it was decided to change the intervals between the world conferences from one to two years, and 1996 was declared the year of regionalisation. All regions were supposed to make use of this world-conference-free year to hold regional conferences to get their act together and prepare the founding of regional associations. At the European conference in Helsinki in December 1994, a working group was already formed to draft a constitution for a regional European structure of ILGA.

At the world conference in Rio in 1995, ILGA’s regionalisation was finally implemented and regional secretariats were established, the European secretariat being at COC in the Netherlands. However, it was clear that some regions would still struggle for a few more years before they would establish an independent regional association. Two years later, Europe was the only area that had established its regional organisation. Nevertheless, a new ILGA constitution was adopted by the world conference in Cologne in 1997. One of the main changes in this constitution was the provision to set up an executive board consisting of two representatives elected by each region. Thus, “soft” pressure was exercised on the regions to form their regional structures in order to be able to elect their representatives in this board.

The founding of ILGA-Europe was also delayed, as the working group mandated in Helsinki to draft a constitution had not prepared anything until the next European conference in Riga in December 1995. However, a year later, in Madrid in December 1996, a draft constitution and work programme for ILGA-Europe was ready, and adopted. Thus, ILGA-Europe was born on the last days of 1996.

Perfect timing

Although the 1996 Madrid conference had decided to have one single European ILGA region, the ILGA (world) conference in Cologne in July 1997 created two European regions by its new constitution. The creation of the Western Europe and Eastern Europe regions caused some heated debate in Cologne. After Europe’s post-war political divide had finally been overthrown, a vast majority of ILGA-Europe’s members were keen not to reinforce the still existing emotional divide in people’s minds and hearts, or to overcome these attitudes. Thus this inconsistency, or mistake, made in Cologne was later rectified at the ILGA-Europe conference in London in October 1997 where it was confirmed that Europe would remain one single region within ILGA, and elect only two instead of four representatives to the ILGA executive board.

The founding of ILGA-Europe came at a perfect time as new opportunities opened up at the European level in this period. In June 1997, the Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union concluded its work, and a new Treaty was adopted in Amsterdam. This treaty contained a clause (Article 13) conferring a competence to the EU to combat discrimination, including on the grounds of “sexual orientation”. This clause has formed the basis for the EU to act in this field. In October 1997, the European Parliament also established its first “intergroup” on “Equal Rights for Gays and Lesbians” to address these issues across party lines within the parliament. While most of the lobbying to include “sexual orientation” in Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty was undertaken by ILGA’s EC working party, all the lobbying to make use of this article had already been completed under the auspices of ILGA-Europe.

In November 2000, two major results based upon and deriving from Article 13 were achieved. One was the adoption of the general framework directive “for equal treatment in employment and occupation” which lead to anti-discrimination provisions for the workplace in all the 27 EU member states today. The other was the adoption of the Community action programme to combat discrimination, making it possible for ILGA-Europe to receive core funding from the European Commission. This was again the beginning of a new era for ILGA-Europe, which started to receive core funding in December 2000 (in the first year under a kind of pre-programme implemented by the EU to bridge the time gap until the action programme became operational). ILGA-Europe could finally rent office space in Brussels and hire employees. This was indeed another turning-point in the history of ILGA/ILGA-Europe as this substantial core funding made a complete difference to the way the organisation would work. This funding was essential and crucial for the further development of ILGA-Europe and the success story it has later written – much of which can be read elsewhere in this “jubilee” issue of the Newsletter.

Hopes and Challenges

ILGA-Europe's vision is of a world in which the human rights of all are respected and everyone can live in equality and free from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. In this article, Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, highlights hopes and challenges for the next decade.

ILGA-Europe has been part of the international movement to claim and have respect for the human rights of LGBT people. We are the European Region of ILGA and as such are part of a long history of activists lobbying for changes in laws to bring countries into alignment with their responsibilities under international human rights declarations.

ILGA itself was established in 1978, but prior to that the International Committee for Sexual Equality held five conferences between 1951 and 1959. In Coventry, UK, 30 men from 17 organisations from 14 different countries gathered and made a declaration to maximise the effectiveness of Gay Organisations and to set up an information centre to promote a wider knowledge of gay oppression.

In Barcelona (1980) women delegates held a workshop to discuss a lesbian conference and in Turin 1981 the International Lesbian Information Secretariat was established.

Annual conferences of ILGA-Europe have been held in a broad range of cities from Madrid to Linz, to Pisa, Rotterdam, Lisbon, Budapest, Sofia and this year it will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Much has been achieved and yet much remains on the agenda.

Because of the work undertaken in the past, the achievements gained and the solid force of the work, we recognise the next decade as being crucial in building on the gains, and also pushing for the complete enjoyment of human rights and respect for all regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

We name the following 10 key demands to ensure the vision is realised

1. Freedom of assembly – to enable LGBT organisations demonstrate, gather and express solidarity for equality and diversity.
2. Freedom of association – to enable LGBT activists and human rights defenders form associations, meet, lobby and advocate for equality for all.
3. Equal age of consent for heterosexual and lesbian and gay sexual activities – including the decriminalisation of same-sex consensual sexual activities
4. Equal recognition of same-sex partners in law, social protection and social policy
5. Laws guaranteeing equal rights for all LGBT people in employment, the access to services and goods, without exclusions.
6. No discrimination of LGBT people with regard to access to adoption services, reproductive technologies or in relation to parental rights.
7. Support for and engagement with LGBT NGOs at regional, national and European levels by governments and authorities
8. Compliance with and appropriate implementation of national, European and International laws, conventions, agreements by governments with regard to the human rights of LGBT people
9. Awareness of the need to equality proof all social policies, laws and programmes especially in relation to heteronormativity
10. Rules, regulations and laws making homophobic comment, hate speech and violence illegal

In all we seek that the human rights of LGBT people are respected, that no other right is given greater protections or protections that would reduce or nullify the rights of LGBT people.

In particular, we are working to bring greater representation of the diversity of the LGBT community into active engagement with our work – the issues of age, race, ethnic minorities, disability, gender are all key issues for the LGBT community also. Working with the complexity of humans will be an important feature of the work in the next decade. Not necessarily easy, but essential.

There will be challenges to these demands – people talk about lack of political will, about other, seemingly conflicting rights, about other issues being more important or more urgent – but we will continue our arguments, our lobbying, the advocacy and development of LGBT organisations.

PATRICIA PRENDIVILLE

Executive Director of ILGA-Europe

Developing new Strategic Plan 2008-2011 for ILGA-Europe

Following the promise made at the last ILGA-Europe annual conference in Sofia, all ILGA-Europe members are now invited to take active part in consultation on the organisation's next Strategic Plan 2008-2011.

We have prepared a questionnaire and it is now available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org The Strategic Plan 2008-2011 is to be accepted in Vilnius in October 2007, so now is the time for engaging and discussing!

Please send your replies, reflection, opinions and suggestions as soon as possible, **but before 10th April 2007** at the latest to: patricia@ilga-europe.org

With thanks and appreciation for your time!

Important dates to remember:

We seek review comments and suggestions from Members	March – 10th April 2007
A paper is developed and circulated from members, board and staff	18th June 2007
Open invitation meeting on Strategic Plan	7th July 2007
Comments on first paper invited until end July 2007 Second draft of the plan distributed in the 2nd mailing	August 2007
Open to comments suggestions to the plan	9th September 2007
Third draft circulated prior to the conference	Early October 2007
Presentation and agreement at conference	28th October 2007



Gesa Böckermann, who works for the European Commission's anti-discrimination unit and has for many years been liaising with ILGA-Europe, provides her evaluation of ILGA-Europe's role and contribution to the wider struggle for an equal and just Europe.

Committed partners in joint struggle for equality

European Commission building in Brussels

When Juris asked me whether I would be happy to contribute to this anniversary issue of the ILGA-Europe newsletter, I immediately agreed to do so.

One of the reasons for my immediate reaction is that our team in the European Commission enjoys a very good relationship with all staff in ILGA-Europe's Brussels office. Patricia and her team are very committed people and they have, over the years, managed to position ILGA-Europe as a voice at European level for the rights of those who face discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. If we are to secure the best possible outcome, the ever-growing complexity and diversity of work in the non-discrimination field requires professional, competent and motivated organisations to represent the rights of people exposed to discrimination.

The European Commission is convinced that NGOs have an important contribution to make towards affecting and accompanying change in anti-discrimination legislation and policies at all levels. The core funding ILGA-Europe has received from the European Commission since 2001 plays a key role in enabling ILGA-Europe to make that contribution, and to conduct an extensive work programme in relation to sexual orientation discrimination within the EU member states and the candidate countries.

For NGOs to make a difference however requires a sustained, cohesive network, capable of analysing information, making the information available to key actors and mobilising sources of influence. European-level NGOs can use their network to provide the Commission with practical experiences and facts from the people they represent. ILGA-Europe, with its 200 member organisations in over 40 European countries, is in a good position to make that difference. Over the last few years, ILGA-Europe has put increased emphasis on strengthening the capacity of its members to address discrimination issues and to help victims of discrimination, which is a welcome development.

Another element driving my spontaneous reaction to agree to write this article is the acknowledgement of ILGA-Europe's past achievements. Since its creation, ILGA-Europe's main activities at European-level have included lobbying for the inclusion of sexual orientation discrimination in the anti-discrimination provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam, and working to ensure the effective implementation of the Employment

Directive at national level. Recently, for example, ILGA-Europe has made a contribution to the European Commission's forthcoming report on the implementation of the Employment Directive. ILGA-Europe has also contributed to the development of the LGBT movement in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, and is currently stepping up its lobbying efforts for new anti-discrimination legislation.

The European Commission believes that with the adoption of the two anti-discrimination directives in 2000, European legislation has significantly raised the level of protection against discrimination across the EU. It has acted as a catalyst for the development of a more coherent, rights-based approach to equality and non-discrimination. However, despite the progress achieved in combating discrimination in Europe, we also acknowledge that in 2007, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the situation is still not ideal. All too often, discrimination continues to prevent people from fully achieving their potential. Despite our best efforts, discrimination is still a too familiar aspect for many gay, lesbian, bi- and transsexual people in their everyday lives. Most often it is a case of individuals discriminating against other individuals but, here and there, certain political statements reveal institutionalised discrimination.

Looking into the future, we therefore acknowledge that much work remains to be completed in this area, and that there is room for further progress. Above all, it is necessary to continue to combat stereotypes and prejudices in all possible ways. This is why in 2007, for a whole year, the spotlight will be on equal opportunities and the benefits of a diverse society for Europe.

The year will also provide us with an opportunity to intensify discussions on important topics such as the efficient implementation of the existing anti-discrimination legislation, the need for new legislation, the role that positive action can play, mainstreaming non-discrimination and the challenges posed by multiple discrimination. The European Commission is committed to continue its efforts in the fight against discrimination, and will continue to count on the important contribution NGOs such as ILGA-Europe can make.

And is this not yet another good reason for spontaneously agreeing to contribute to this newsletter?

GESA BÖCKERMANN
European Commission

10 years of ILGA-Europe:

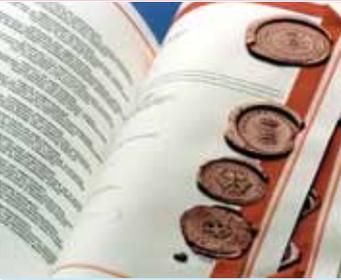
10 years of ILGA-Europe: **timeline**

1996



- ILGA-Europe is founded as ILGA's regional umbrella for Europe during the ILGA's 18th European conference in Madrid in December; constitution is adopted; decided to establish the new organisation under Belgian law with headquarters in Brussels

1997



- Action Plan "24 ideas for European Commission-led initiatives": ILGA-Europe starts presenting itself to the European Commission and mainstreams LGBT issues in EU institutions
- Sexual orientation is included as a non-discrimination category in Article 13 of Amsterdam Treaty – the basis for the EU to combat discrimination in the future
- First EU funding: the European Commission informs ILGA-Europe that its "Equality for Lesbians and Gay Men – A relevant issue in the civil and social dialogue" project will receive EU funding
- ILGA-Europe for the first time attends the meeting of the European Parliament Intergroup "Equal Rights for Gays and Lesbians"
- Annual Conference takes place in London, England

1998



- ILGA-Europe is granted consultative status with the Council of Europe
- ILGA-Europe becomes a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform)
- first EU funded project – "Equality for Lesbians and Gay Men – A relevant issue in the civil and social dialogue" – is carried out
- the European Parliament adopts a resolution "on equal rights for gays and lesbians in the EU" drafted by ILGA-Europe; the EP says it will not support accession into the EU of the countries with discriminatory laws against LGBT people
- ILGA and ILGA-Europe representatives meet with Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Geneva
- ILGA-Europe joins the Pink Triangle Coalition – An International Coalition for Coordinating Affairs Related to the Nazi Persecution of Gay Men and Lesbians, established in Berlin
- Annual Conference takes place in Linz, Austria, with the theme of "Courage of Joy"

1999



- After Amsterdam: another ILGA-Europe project is funded by the European Commission
- ILGA-Europe's begins lobbying for new EU anti-discrimination legislation and an action programme to combat discrimination
- Another lobbying activity starts on the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights
- ILGA-Europe is lobbying for and contributing to two reports at the Council of Europe. Additionally, ILGA-Europe lobbies for inclusion of "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" in the new version of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (by Protocol 12).
- "Sink Schwimmer Campaign": ILGA-Europe and its members campaign to prevent the election of Walter Schwimmer as the new Secretary-General of the Council of Europe. Schwimmer is elected by a narrow margin of two votes and five years later he is not re-elected
- Annual Conference takes place in Pisa, Italy, under the theme of "Building Our European Community"

2000



- "Stepping Stones and Roadblocks": ILGA-Europe joins a project application UNITED for Intercultural Action as the lead partner with other European NGOs, to the European Commission under the proposal "preparatory measures aimed at combating and preventing discrimination in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty".
- The European Council adopts the Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Decision establishing a Community action programme to combat discrimination (2001 to 2006). Lobbying for these two measures has been one of the main priorities for ILGA-Europe in the whole year
- ILGA-Europe for the first time submits applications for and receives a positive response from the European Commission for 1 year core funding
- The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is adopted and contains reference to sexual orientation
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopts two historic documents referring to sexual orientation discrimination; ILGA-Europe lobbied on them since 1999
- Annual Conference takes place in Bucharest, Romania, under the theme of "ACCEPTING diversity"

2001



- ILGA-Europe moves into own office premises in Brussels and employs first members of staff
- First issue of the Newsletter is published
- First meeting of ILGA-Europe's EU National Co-ordination Network
- ILGA-Europe gets its own website www.ilga-europe.org
- ILGA-Europe contributes significantly to the European Parliament hearing "EU Enlargement: A Gay Perspective"
- Annual Conference takes place in Rotterdam, Netherlands - "Creating Partnership"

- Campaign on equality of treatment for LGBT EU citizens and their partners/families in the field of immigration and free movement is launched and amendments to the Commission's draft directives are proposed
- Campaign on the recognition of LGBT refugees in the new EU asylum directives is launched
- Campaign directed at the Convention on the "Future of Europe" is launched
- The Gay and Lesbian Rights Intergroup of the European Parliament is re-launched; ILGA-Europe participates regularly in their meetings
- Annual Conference takes place in Lisbon, Portugal, under the theme of "Recognising Diversity, Promoting Equality". Patron of the conference is Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



2002

- First grant from the Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Trans Working Group is formed
- ILGA-Europe's Constitution and Standing Orders are reviewed
- Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights organises a public hearing on "Sexual Orientation Discrimination" in the European Parliament; ILGA-Europe and its member organisations are prominently represented
- Annual Conference takes place in Glasgow, Scotland, under the theme of "Policy into Practice - Making LGBT Equality Happen"



2003

- Transgender questionnaire is distributed
- ILGA-Europe and COC Nederland co-sponsor the "Preventing and combating discrimination" capacity-building conference in Sofia for Romanian and Bulgarian NGOs
- Celebrating the enlargement of the Brussels office: more space and staff
- Strategic plan and new organisational structure with new mission, vision and value statements are discussed
- OSI funding for the project "Integration of LGBT health issues into state health policy in Central and Eastern Europe" received
- ILGA-Europe supports the 5th regional meeting of the South-East European Queer (SEE Q) Network in Skopje
- First ever side event at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw organised by ILGA-Europe
- ILGA-Europe plays prominent role in 'Buttiglione affair' when the European Parliament disapproves the entire new Commission because of one of the proposed Commissioner's anti-democratic views and the Commission reshuffles its team
- Annual Conference takes place in Budapest, Hungary, under the theme of "Coming out to the EU".



2004

- "Human Rights Monitoring" and a "Fundraising" seminar in Kraków
- Participation in the OSCE conference on anti-Semitism and related intolerance in Córdoba and organising a side event on homophobia
- New "Scholarship Angels" scheme to raise money for annual conference scholarships is launched
- ILGA-Europe updates its visual identity and presentation (new logo) and re-launches its website
- Co-operation with IGLYO on social inclusion of the LGBT youth starts
- Pilot "Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund" projects for 2005-2006, supported by the Sigrid Rausing Trust, are launched
- Annual Conference in Paris, France, under the theme of "United in Diversity"



2005

- ILGA-Europe and COC carry out a joint fact-finding mission to Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan
- Moving into bigger premises in Brussels and sharing offices with ILGA World
- Capacity-building seminar on "International Human Rights Mechanisms and Monitoring"
- Co-operation with IGLYO: research and data on social exclusion of LGBT youth and supporting advocacy and policy work towards the social inclusion of LGBT youth
- Prominent involvement in the preparations and participation of the Pride Against Prejudice conference as part of EuroPride in London
- Participation at the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights, Montreal, Canada
- Workshop "Using Data to Advocate for LGBT Health"
- ILGA-Europe receives the "Zivilcourage" Prize of the Berlin CSD
- Continuation of the "Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund"
- Annual Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria "We are Family - Our Families in Europe and the European Family"
- ILGA-Europe receives significant grant through the Tides Foundation
- ILGA-Europe granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council



2006

The timeline is a summary of a more detailed history of ILGA-Europe which was compiled by Kurt Krickler and Vera Cîmpeanu for the 10th anniversary ILGA-Europe conference last October in Sofia. Full history is available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/about_us/our_history

During its 10 years ILGA-Europe produced a number of publications and they are all also available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications

The fight against prejudice must continue

Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender persons continue to face serious discrimination in the enjoyment of their human rights, as well as persecution and prejudice from private and state actors. Alarmingly, 2006 witnessed grave threats to the rights of LGBT persons.

In Poland, a teaching manual describes homosexuality as a perversion and illness. In Turkey, homosexuals who do not wish to carry out the military service are requested humiliating evidence to prove their homosexuality. Peaceful Gay Pride Marches were banned in Chisinau and Moscow and disrupted in Riga and Tallinn, in breach of freedom of assembly, association and expression, fundamental in any democratic society. Perpetrators of violations of LGBT's human rights are seldom held accountable and the result is impunity.

Stigmatisation based on sexual orientation or identity can no longer be tolerated. International human rights instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights oblige States to secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms therein. States must do their utmost to ensure the respect of their international human rights' obligations, also in regard of LGBT persons: legislation and policies on anti-discrimination must be adopted, practices changed, and the authors of homophobic crimes duly prosecuted and condemned.

Despite the setbacks, the last years have also witnessed major advances capable of defying the difficulties faced by LGBT persons. To start with, the protection and promotion of human rights of LGBT persons have increasingly found a place on the agenda of the Council of Europe. Fundamental guarantees against discrimination on any ground, including sexual orientation, lay in article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and in its Protocol No. 12. This Protocol, in force in 14 countries, prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of any right set forth by law and discrimination by any public authority.

The European Court of Human Rights has taken groundbreaking steps for the LGBT movement by protecting the rights of individuals across Europe. Often, the Court's decisions reflect changes in the national law and practice, making this a slow but steady progress. In



Thomas Hammarberg, the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

the implementation of the Court's decisions, European States are gradually being forced to amend their laws and policies. For example, the Court has ruled on the decriminalisation of consensual sexual relations in private between adults of the same sex; on the elimination of discrimination concerning the age of consent for homosexual acts; and against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation for granting parental responsibility. Other decisions have favoured the admission of homosexuals into the armed forces and the succession of tenancy rights for same sex partners. Regarding transsexuals, the Court has required changes of the legal sex on the birth certificate. Yet, on homosexual adoption the Court finds that the lack of consensus in member States and in the scientific community enables a wider margin of appreciation for the State.

If at the institutional level international organisations and States are giving stronger signs of support to equality, the driving force behind such developments lies in a strong civil movement that has been struggling for LGBT's human rights over the last years. All around the world, brave individuals and non governmental organisations have been actively working to promote the same rights for all. Their courage and determination merits our reflection and applause.

Non-discrimination on all grounds, including gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as the protection and promotion of the human rights of LGBT persons are a priority in the work of the Commissioner for Human Rights. In each of the 46 Council of Europe member States, the Commissioner works, in cooperation with NGOs, toward a constant watch of the human rights situation and, where necessary, urges governments to fully ensure the respect of human rights through law and practice. Partnerships between civil society, international organisations and states can only bring us closer to our aims of dignity and human rights for all. It is high time that the fight against prejudice succeeds.

THOMAS HAMMARBERG

Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

Birthday greeting from the Social Platform

On behalf of the Social Platform I am delighted to be able to congratulate ILGA-Europe on its tenth anniversary. ILGA-Europe has come a long way in the last ten years, but the political situation within the European Union means that ILGA-Europe's work remains more important than ever to promote the rights of LGBT people across Europe.

The Social Platform brings together the major networks of civil society who are fighting for social rights in Europe, and from our perspective the alliance we have with ILGA-Europe - who were one of the founder members of the Social Platform - has been of crucial importance. ILGA-Europe have always considered themselves to be part of a broader battle for social rights, and this has translated into a huge commitment to work with other NGOs, forging alliances, strengthening civil society, and in the process raising the profile of LGBT issues.

In the early days, ILGA-Europe relied upon its volunteers, principally board members such as Kurt Krickler and Jackie Lewis - who were Co-Presidents at the start - in order to advance much of its EU work. Before the ILGA-Europe secretariat was established it was board members like Kurt and Jackie who were responsible not only for building an LGBT network across Europe but also for developing ILGA-Europe campaigns and representing the organisation at many EU events. In spite of this heavy work-load and limited resources, ILGA-Europe dedicated great efforts to supporting the development of the Social platform, and making sure that LGBT voices were also at the heart of this new network of NGOs. This commitment to alliances with other civil society movements inside the Social Platform has continued to this day, and the contribution of ILGA-Europe to the Social Platform's work continues to be greatly appreciated.

The creation of a professional secretariat in Brussels - now under the leadership of Patricia Prendiville - allowed ILGA-Europe to focus more resources upon the task of placing the concerns of LGBT people on the EU agenda. As the EU enlarged, so did the areas of action for social NGOs, and ILGA-Europe has been no exception. ILGA-Europe has played a key role in building a broad alliance of NGOs working together on non-discrimination, recognising early on that progress was only likely to be achieved if groups experiencing discrimination came together to put pressure on the EU to act. But ILGA-Europe increasingly found itself working on issues spread wide across the policy landscape, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, social exclusion, and freedom of movement.

Whilst that campaigning has led to many positive political changes, from my own perspective perhaps the biggest achievement has been

to establish a visible and constant presence for ILGA-Europe as a key stakeholder in the process of building the European Union. ILGA's presence at EU-level has constantly reminded policy-makers of the impact of their decisions upon LGBT people. ILGA-Europe has always campaigned strongly for a real 'civil dialogue' - an open debate and partnership between civil society and politicians - and whilst there is a long way to go before this kind of participatory democracy becomes the norm at EU-level, ILGA-Europe has helped to change the culture of the EU to be more open to discussion and consultation. Part of this change is down to the growing recognition by politicians here in Brussels that they need to be more in touch with the concerns of people across Europe - including LGBT people - but I believe that ILGA-Europe's growing capacity over the last ten years to bring specific expertise to decision-makers has also played a key role. ILGA-Europe has not simply complained to the EU about the treatment of LGBT people: it has made, and continues to make very specific recommendations which bring added-value to the policy-making process.

It is not only politicians who need awareness-raising of course, and I have also seen the positive impact which ILGA-Europe has had upon the other social movements within the Social Platform, by raising awareness and making connections between the struggles faced by different groups. One example would be the way that many NGO movements have gradually adapted their view of 'the family' to be more diverse and all-encompassing. Another would be the growing recognition by civil society of the existence of widespread multiple discrimination, and the need to attack it through broad (although sometimes challenging and difficult) alliances.

It would be nice to be able to end this article by congratulating ILGA-Europe on reaching its goal of achieving human rights and equality for LGBT people at European level. Unfortunately I fear this will take a lot more than another ten years to achieve. But I'm sure that ILGA-Europe's commitment and energy will continue to remind politicians, civil servants - and other NGOs - that we cannot build a European Union which is not based on equality and human rights for all. Happy birthday ILGA-Europe!



Roshan Di Puppo, Director of the Social Platform

10 years of ILGA-Europe:

ROSHAN DI PUPPO

Director of the Social Platform

www.socialplatform.org

Solid and effective alliance

ILGA-Europe formed a close and effective cooperation with the European Parliament's Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights from the very beginning of the Intergroup's establishment. This alliance brings together unique knowledge, expertise and opportunities which are crucial in achieving equality for LGBT people in Europe.



Michael Cashman,
President of the
Intergroup



Raül Romeva i Rueda,
Vice-President of the
Intergroup



Alexander Stubb,
Vice-President of
the Intergroup



Sophie In't Veld,
Vice-President of
the Intergroup

ILGA-Europe's first decade in existence has made a huge difference at the European level. The Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights wishes a very happy birthday to our leading partner in the continuing effort to create equality for LGBT peoples in Europe and beyond. It is with pride that we call ILGA-Europe a reliable partner that has supported our actions in the European Parliament, and helps ensure that the needs of LGBT peoples isn't stricken off the agenda.

ILGA-Europe and its staff work tirelessly to ensure that European institutions are informed of the needs of the LGBT community. In this capacity, the Intergroup and ILGA-Europe regularly and continuously communicate with each other to ensure that the right amendments are strategically placed in the draft laws of the European Union. We communicate in order to ensure that when you inform us of new issues rising from within your borders, we are prepared to bring European pressure to bear.

ILGA-Europe does its job admirably well - despite often having a mammoth task facing it. Whether it be helping the Intergroup to answer questions from our constituents on diverse matters such as civil and partnership law, or whether or not certain countries are safe to go into as an LGBT person, we can always count on ILGA-Europe to help us find the answer. On each of the Intergroup's adopted priorities in the last semester, we coordinate very closely with ILGA-Europe because it is only together that we can move things forward.

ILGA-Europe's staff members have been crucial allies, and crucial keynote speakers in meetings that have been organised in the European Parliament - whether that is in Strasbourg where the Intergroup's meetings are organised, or in Brussels. ILGA-Europe's staff members have been passionate and their devotion to the cause has moved even the most sceptic voices in the House.

The good coordination between the Intergroup and ILGA-Europe has more than once paid dividends. During the Buttiglione Affair, both organisations were crucial in getting the right information about how

terrible Buttiglione was as a choice for Commissioner of Freedom, Justice, and Security. Our coordination has also led to two resolutions being adopted at the European Parliament. We both have many positive landmarks to draw inspiration from.

As the first decade of ILGA-Europe draws to a close, we at the Intergroup are keenly aware of the continuing need to have an ally like ILGA-Europe to support the daunting work that faces Europe in the coming years. We are pleased to have such eloquent partners sitting next to us at the meetings of European Parliament and could not ask for a more devoted and skilled neighbour.

It is our hope that ILGA-Europe continues to succeed. Ten years is a short time, and already ILGA-Europe has made a huge impact. We are certain that this partnership will continue to pay dividends in the future, and already there major challenges facing us: ensuring that the re-launch of the Constitution does not harm LGBT rights in the process; ensuring that the written declaration on combating homophobia which we have tabled together gains the necessary support; and ensuring that the content of the draft shadow directive that ILGA-Europe has presented finds its way in European legislation. These are the major common projects facing us, and we could not hope for a better companion in meeting those challenges.

We hope this first decade is only a taste of what we will be able to accomplish together, and that ILGA-Europe continue to be such excellent representatives of the diversity of the LGBT community.

Our best wishes to ILGA-Europe!

MICHAEL CASHMAN

President of the Intergroup

RAÜL ROMEVA I RUEDA, ALEXANDER STUBB, SOPHIE IN'T VELD

Vice-Presidents of the Intergroup

Two more birthday greetings - from a funder and a partner

SIGRID RAUSING TRUST

Birthday greeting from the Sigrid Rausing Trust:

The Sigrid Rausing Trust has funded ILGA-Europe since 2002, awarding a total of £545,000 (€358,610) to date. Through its staff and partners, ILGA-Europe has done vital work in holding European institutions to account for their commitments to non-discrimination and equality. In the best tradition of membership based-advocacy, ILGA Europe has helped mobilise sexual minorities across Europe to advocate on their own behalf for respect, rights, dignity and voice. With funding from the Trust, ILGA-Europe launched the innovative Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund in 2006. The pilot fund supports partners in

the Balkans, Caucuses and new accession countries to document abuses and build an evidence-base for advocacy in their locales and in European institutions.

Happy 10th birthday ILGA-Europe and best wishes for another decade of successful activism!

JESSICA HORN

Program Officer

Women's Rights and Minority Rights, Sigrid Rausing Trust

... and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

On behalf of the "Tolerance and Non Discrimination Programme" of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) I would like to congratulate ILGA-Europe with its 10 years anniversary!

In fact, ILGA-Europe is considered as one of our 'key NGOs' as ILGA Europe has attended OSCE Human Dimension events over those last 10 years on a very regular basis and has established good relations with several ODIHR staff members over time. I am particularly thankful for the expertise that ILGA-Europe has shared with the ODIHR in the field of monitoring and reporting on hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

As one of our recent publications reported, hate crimes based on sexual orientation are often underreported and undocumented. Therefore ILGA-Europe's efforts to increase the capacity of its

member organisations in the OSCE region to monitor and report on hate-motivated incidents based on sexual orientation and gender identify are fully supported by the ODIHR, for example by providing input during ILGA-Europe's trainings and conferences. In addition to ILGA-Europe's co-ordination with the ODIHR, many of its member organisations are in regular contact with OSCE Field Missions in the Balkans and Caucasus.

I realise that much remains to be done in combating discrimination and intolerance based on sexual orientation in the OSCE area. I therefore wish you all the best and success in the next 10 years.

JO ANNE BISHOP

Head of TND programme



Promote equality:

Buy ILGA-Europe t-shirt and wear it with pride!



More information and payment details on our website:
www.ilga-europe.org/europe/get_involved_support_us

10 years of ILGA-Europe!



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

Rights, Representation, Respect and Recognition

What do the themes of the European Year of Equal Opportunities mean for LGBT people?

Officially launched at the Berlin Equality Summit at the end of January, the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is now underway. The aims of this European Year – i.e. raising awareness about existing rights, moving closer to meaningful and real equality and promoting the advantages of diversity – can appear ambitious and even out of reach. Yet, the Year's four themes can be articulated into more concrete actions and demands for the LGBT community in Europe.

Raising awareness about **rights** and existing protection against discrimination is the first theme of the Year 2007 and certainly an important priority for the LGBT community. Too often still, LGBT people, unaware of their rights, live with harassment and discriminatory practices thinking that it is "normal". On the other hand, very few employers understand what constitutes sexual orientation discrimination in employment, and as result are excluding LGBT people. In addition to awareness-raising, LGBT people also need to have more sources of support to be able to claim their rights, whether it is in cases of discrimination in employment or violations of fundamental rights – such as freedom of assembly or the rights human rights defenders. For instance, individuals who face harassment in the workplace often don't find the support they need from trade unions. Activities during the Year should then also focus on training equality bodies, trade unions, lawyers, NGOs and legal aid services to enable them to support victims of discrimination.

Moreover, as there are no equal opportunities without equal rights, ILGA-Europe believes that the Year should give the political impetus needed to extend legal protection against sexual orientation discrimination to social security, healthcare, social benefits, education, access to goods and services.

The second theme, **representation**, relates to the issue of participation of under-represented groups in society. A first claim to make is to call upon decision-makers to give a voice to LGBT people in policy-making processes at national and European level. But beyond political participation, and keeping in mind that discrimination and exclusion experienced by LGBT people is often linked to their invisibility, the idea of representation should be used to call for greater visibility of LGBT people in society. Many concrete actions can be taken during the

Year to give a visibility to LGBT people in the workplace, in education, in health services, and send positive messages of inclusion to support LGBT people in being open about their sexual orientation and gender identity in different spheres of life. For instance, businesses can build a culture of respect and inclusion by supporting gay events in their community or explicitly inviting same-sex partners to office parties. Schools can be proactive by adopting and publicizing anti-bullying policies and including LGBT issues in their curriculum. Doctors can have LGBT-friendly literature displayed in their office.

This European Year also aims at giving **recognition** to different groups, and celebrating diversity and equality. We can certainly agree that it is crucial to send a strong message that the value of people does not depend on their sexual orientation and gender identity. This can be done by giving a voice to both well-known and "ordinary" LGBT people who would speak about their lives and give a positive portrayal of LGBT people in society. But having a meaningful celebration of diversity and promoting equality presupposes a collective debate on barriers to equality for LGBT people, from stereotypes about homosexuality to definitions of family and existing norms in society. In this context, encouraging a wider recognition of same-sex partnerships and LGBT families by Member States would be a key achievement of the Year.

The final theme of the Year 2007 is **respect**, understood as the importance of eliminating violence and prejudice, and promoting good relations between all communities in society. Given that hate crime and homophobic violence – including homophobic bullying at school – remain main issues of concern for LGBT people in Europe, the adoption of legislation that covers crimes on ground of sexual orientation and anti-bullying policies would be in line with this objective of the 2007 Year. Another action would be to tackle homophobic speech from public figures, including politicians and religious leaders, which contributes to reinforcing prejudices and even incites to violence.

For more information on the Year of Equal Opportunities, please visit our website at www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities

2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

Secularism Under Siege

This article highlights the threats to liberal values and European secularism surrounding the “Berlin Declaration” being planned to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Union.

As was widely expected, German Chancellor Angela Merkel is using the current six-month German presidency of the EU to revive the project for a European constitution – with God included. Chancellor Merkel expressed her support for a “God clause” in the constitution following her visit in August to Pope Benedict XVI. She said,

we need a European identity in the form of a constitutional treaty and I think it should be connected to Christianity and God, as Christianity has forged Europe in a decisive way.

Central to Chancellor Merkel’s project is the “Berlin Declaration”, a statement of principles to be fed into the creation of the new treaty. All EU heads of government have been asked to contribute to the draft, but members of the European Parliament have been warned not to get involved. Germany’s foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told the European Parliament’s constitutional affairs committee on 23 January that MEPs will not have any major role in the EU’s constitution revival project. His remarks however were in sharp contrast to his words of encouragement to Europe’s church leaders. At a meeting with representatives of the European churches in January, he said: “Churches have a specific role in the European integration process”

The dangers here are obvious. Any treaty that confuses the undoubted role of the Churches in European history with its frequently negative role in the creation of modern European civilisation is likely to be hugely divisive. A Constitution that highlights Europe’s supposed Judeo-Christian heritage can only serve to exacerbate cultural differences. Demands among Europe’s minorities already range from codifying cultural differences into family law, to an outright acceptance of Sharia law for Muslims. A recent survey by NOP showed that some 40% of young British Muslims would prefer to live under Sharia Law.

Even before he became pope, in 2004 the then Cardinal Ratzinger launched a fierce attack on supporters of secularism, arguing that they were fostering intolerance in Europe and forcing Christianity underground. He issued a rallying cry to the faithful, saying that the liberal consensus had now evolved into a “worrying and aggressive” ideology. In recent weeks his worries have been echoed by other bishops from across Europe. Neither they nor the pope seem able to distinguish between secularism and hostility to religion. They fail to see that the secular state, the state that is neutral in matters of religion and belief, is the only state that can guarantee freedom of religion or belief to all its citizens.

The Secularists Fight Back

But secularists are fighting back. Spearheading the fight is the **Vision for Europe project** which aims to bring Europe’s secular, liberal values back to centre stage.

The Vision for Europe is the outcome of an unprecedented collaboration between academics, politicians, writers, community leaders and both secular and religious non-governmental organisations. The centrepiece of the Vision for Europe project is the **Brussels Declaration**, a restatement of the shared values that underlie modern European civilisation. These values are not unique to a single culture or tradition but are shared by all. They are the ground rules of European civilisation.

Leading the project are several non-governmental organisations: the International Humanist and Ethical Union, the European Humanist Federation, and Catholics for a Free Choice, with support from the European All-Party Group on Separation of Religion and Politics. Hundreds of distinguished Europeans and non-governmental organisations have now endorsed the Declaration, including government ministers, senior conservative, liberal, social democrat and green-party politicians including over 80 MEPs; leading scientists and philosophers including several Nobel laureates; as well as Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Humanist organisations and leaders.

More information can be found on the Vision for Europe website at: www.avisionforeurope.org including a detailed analysis and discussion of our shared values: A Secular Vision for Europe, and the names of the organisations and distinguished individuals who have already endorsed the Declaration.

The Declaration was launched 27 February at the European Parliament in Brussels. Since the launch and the presentation of the Brussels Declaration to the representative of the German presidency, we have heard reports that Angela Merkel has dropped plans to include any reference to God or Christianity in the Berlin Declaration – much to the anger of the Polish government among others. This victory will only be confirmed however when the people of Europe are finally permitted to see the text – and that only after it has been signed by the 27 heads of government.

We must continue to work for a secular Europe. Whether or not you are in favour of the idea of a European constitution the fact remains that the project is once again under way. We must continue to fight every inch of the way to ensure that Europe remains secular. If you have not done so already, please sign the Brussels Declaration today.

ROY W. BROWN

Coordinator of the Committee for a Vision for Europe

Brussels Declaration:

Another world is possible – for African LGBT people, too



"I have found my Q Spot - at the World Social Forum!" Named Q Spot for "queer" – this space was organised by the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and was one of the most talked-about at the Forum.



The public comes to see gays and lesbians, blacks, Africans, with their own eyes. Around the activists, ten, twenty, maybe thirty people and their questions and comments swarm: "You're gay? Really?"



For marching, we have to paint our banners and select the best slogans.

Stephen Barris was in Nairobi in January to attend the first World Social Forum in Africa, an event that coincided with the coming out of the LGBT community in Kenya.

No tent! The space reserved by the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) is nowhere to be found! Is it intentional? There's no time for controversy today - the first hectic day of the Forum: we'd squat in the first empty tent we could find! The Forum was particularly important for GALCK and its members. After it was formed by eight gay and lesbian associations in Nairobi, it had made a first, timid appearance in a march for World AIDS Day 2006 behind a banner held by five brave activists. The Forum was meant to be the climax of a campaign whose first success was the first legal registration of an LGBT association in the history of Kenya.

Forty young people followed the preparation meetings for the Forum led by Annika, a Norwegian volunteer from Queer Solidarity, and Angus, the head of a MSM project. Are they aware of the impact that they will make? After all, they're about to organise a national coming out for the Kenyan LGBT community. Their tent, the Q Spot, will make history. It will be one of the most visited spaces in the Forum!

The freedom of tone of the activists invited to participate in debates in the tent is extraordinary, and the public – who are intrigued and rarely hostile – are amazed. They come to see with their own eyes those gays and lesbians – black, African, like themselves. The activists improvise and make impromptu circles of chairs. Ten, twenty, sometimes thirty people surround an activist, their questions and comments blurring together: "You're gay? Really?"; "That doesn't exist in Africa," "How did you get like that?"; "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!"; and, always, "How do you do it?""What?""Sex..." The groups laugh with the activists and the young Kenyan activists neatly reverse the questions: "And you, how do you make love?"

It's hard to ask the audience to leave when we have to paint our banners to march around the stadium with the feminists. GALCK activists will march no less than three times this week! The joy is real as in a first Pride but the energy is doubtlessly multiplied by the years of fear and silence.

Another emotion is in store for gays and lesbians of Kenya; on Sunday night, GALCK organises a party. The disco is not big. How many of us are here? Two hundred, maybe three hundred, but my new comrades can't believe their eyes: "We've never seen so many people!" And in the same breath, they add: "We'll have to throw more!"

GALCK is present at the closing ceremony on Thursday afternoon but our

banners are barely visible in the crowd. We decide to ask for a speech to be read but there's no guarantee that it will be read. An hour passes, then two hours, then three. Kasha, a Ugandan activist, and I decide to go backstage to ask what's going on. Our persistence seems to make the presenter panic. He would read it, he says, but he can't find our speech anymore. I look around us and spot the script at our feet, like rubbish on the ground. I pick it up and press him for an answer: when will we go on stage?

Kasha and I stand and wait. An hour and a half passes, and finally comes her moment. With a bit of wit, we have decided to begin the speech with "Universal" protest mottos and Kasha warms up the crowd shouting, "Respect for All! Human Rights for All!" The pitch works perfectly.

Kasha continues, "I speak in the name of the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya, the Coalition of African Lesbians, the Sexual Minorities of Uganda, the International Lesbian and Gay Association..." Surprisingly, the audience that was dancing in front of the stage falls silent. Fists begin to rise, with some crying "No! No!"

Kasha continues, and the hostility in the crowd grows. "People, if you do not understand homosexuality, you have to at least agree with me on one principle: we have to learn to live together. Gays and lesbians also have the right to live in peace in Africa!" Before thousands of people, Kasha drops to her knees and improvises: "I beg you, tolerate us!"

My heart beats quickly, my stomach clenches, and I hardly dare to imagine how Kasha must feel. The atmosphere is electric as she leaves the stage. Two Rastafarians chase her backstage with their raised fists: "Fire! Fire on homosexuals!"

Kasha starts to run; I run after her to stop her. A reflexive instinct tells me not to run into the crowd; hers probably tells her to run as fast as she can. I catch up with her and we rejoin our group. Kasha regains confidence while people, shaken, express their support...

Why didn't the organisers come to her defense? Why did they let this happen, after five days of a World Social Forum and five hours on stage shouting that "another world is possible"?

STEPHEN BARRIS

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VILNIUS CALLING!



The Vilnius conference team lead by Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) is delighted to welcome ILGA-Europe members to the first European Capital of Culture among the new member states - city of multicultural life and vitality. Together we can make Vilnius the city of diversity too.

2007 is an exceptional year for all of us: we are celebrating the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Annual conference in Lithuania would be a great opportunity to join our experience, ambitions and competence for discussing urgent problems and creating a powerful strategy for promoting equality and LGBT rights for 2008-2011. We need your presence, your spirit of freedom and courage in order to combat vastly spreading homophobia in the region.

The conference will be held from **25 – 28 October 2007** in the heart of the Old Town, historical centre of Vilnius, one of the largest in Eastern Europe. Although Vilnius is often called a baroque city, here you will find some buildings of gothic, renaissance and other styles. Because of its uniqueness, the Old Town of Vilnius was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is enchanting with narrow streets, cosy courtyards, lively cafés and inns.

Pagan cult sites, Orthodox churches, Catholic baroque, and traces of the Jewish way of life testify to the wide open history of this Eastern European city. Its present cultural life is lively: the city always ensures that its guests have an abundant supply of diverse interesting events to take part in. Every conference participant will surely find something to suit his or her expectations fully.

The registration form, the conference programme and practical information tips will be available on ILGA-Europe's website www.ilga-europe.org/conference

Vilnius conference team

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