

## Executive Summary

### Background

The overall legal situation in Europe for LGBT communities is improving with a growing number of countries outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation, granting equal rights to same-sex couples and explicitly tackling homophobic violence in hate crime legislation. However, positive legal changes should not be mistaken for real equality; institutional inequality, homophobic speech, denial of equality and recognition of human rights of LGBT people do remain widespread across Europe, and are increasingly fuelled by the current economic context and by some political parties. Prevailing economic and political factors require ongoing monitoring for potential negative impacts, including on availability of funding to support actions to ensure equal rights for LGBT people and on existing political leadership and commitment to adopt necessary legal and policy measures.

Over the past years, ILGA-Europe has demonstrated its capacity to successfully advocate for the equal rights of LGBT people against these prevailing conditions by building and working in strong alliances with human rights organisations, equality bodies, and different actors within the European institutions. Wider alliances have indeed enabled ILGA-Europe and its member organisations to become a stronger, more capacitated European LGBT movement which can instigate important legal and social changes in Europe. In addition, building on the good relationship built with European institutions over the past 14 years, ILGA-Europe is also well positioned to contribute effectively to initiatives within the EU, Council of Europe, OSCE and UN, and to progress the equality agenda through partnerships with the different institutions.

### Who is your work programme targeted at?

ILGA-Europe advocates for the rights of LGBT people in Europe. Our membership consists of some 300 LGBT groups and organisations from across Europe (and not only from the EU). The working model of ILGA-Europe is bi-directional in the sense that it targets the European institutions to obtain policy change, support for respect of equality and human rights for LGBT people in the European countries. But ILGA-Europe also works to enhance the capacity of its members to advocate themselves both at the national and the European levels. In this way the concerns from one country are linked to those of another, tied to the strategic objectives of the whole organisation and linked to the vision and mission of ILGA-Europe. In order to achieve its objectives ILGA-Europe also targets other equality and human rights organisations throughout Europe in order to build alliances and coalitions towards combating all forms of discrimination, fighting for equality and advocating for human rights for all.

### Aims/objectives of your network

ILGA-Europe's vision is of a world freed from any form of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; a world where the human rights of all are respected and everyone can live in equality and freedom. The mission of the organisation is to act as a European voice for the rights of those who face discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; to promote the right to equality and freedom from discrimination by lobbying and advocacy, and by educating and informing the European and International institutions, media and civil

society; to strengthen the capacity of European human rights organisations fighting against sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression discrimination to work for equality through their involvement in advocacy campaign and networking, the exchange of best practice, the dissemination of information and capacity building programmes

As defined in ILGA-Europe's current three-year strategic plan (2008-2011), the strategic objectives are:

1. Working towards full recognition of and respect for fundamental human rights
2. Working towards full equality in employment
3. Working towards full social inclusion
4. Working towards full recognition and equality of the diversity of families and family relationships.
5. Strengthened capacity of member organisations
6. Strengthened capacity of ILGA-Europe to achieve its mission

## Results/key findings

### **I. Improving the networks' organisational capacity and management**

Overall, ILGA-Europe's current Strategic Plan has been so far implemented with a well-working level of flexibility. This has resulted in ILGA Europe being able to be better responsive to relevant developments at all levels, making sure the organisation can meet its objectives more effectively. Improvements to ILGA Europe networks' organisational capacity and management – including strengthening the skills of the management team – have been key to increasing the organisation's responsiveness, impact and effectiveness, and have been priorities for the organisation. A new approach to evaluation and monitoring has been embraced, with the aims of developing concrete objectives and indicators linked to the organisation's strategic objectives, of improving the formulation of priorities in the organisation and strengthening the relations and communication between the staff, board and member organisations. Moreover, steps have been taken to become an organisation reflecting better the diversity of the European LGBT communities. In response to the growth of the organisation in terms of staff, activities and resources, ILGA-Europe is now focusing on consolidating its structures and ensuring their sustainability.

### **II. Voicing the conditions, concerns and expectations of (1) people exposed to social exclusion, discrimination and gender inequality or (2) organisations providing services to people exposed to social exclusion, discrimination and gender inequality**

ILGA-Europe defines its policy priorities in relation to its triennial Strategic Plan (2008-2011) which was developed in conjunction with its member organisations. ILGA-Europe also maintains an open dialogue with members throughout the year so that emerging issues can be identified and brought to the planning process for the current or subsequent years. In this context, ILGA-Europe's advocacy and policy work has in recent years focused on non-discrimination in employment, education, health and goods and services; on increased recognition of LGBT families; on combating homophobic and transphobic violence; and on discrimination based on gender identity.

The outcomes of our work in the field of employment have been very encouraging, with ILGA-Europe's partnership with social partners being at the core of advances made. After the European Trade Union Confederation officially put the issue of LGBT equality its agenda, national members and different sectorial unions started to take steps to promote LGBT equality in their work. The *Trade Union Mapping*

*Study* undertaken by the Working Lives Research Institute during 2009 showed that sexual orientation is now second to racial or ethnic origin as a ground of anti-discrimination in trade union initiatives.

Campaigning for the adoption of the new anti-discriminative directive – which would bring about legal protection against discrimination in all areas of life - has continued to be a key priority for ILGA-Europe at EU level. Together with colleagues from other NGOs, ILGA-Europe has contributed to the successful adoption of the European Parliament report on the directive which proposed improvements to the draft legislation. The last stage in the decision-making process is adoption of the legislation by all 27 EU member states. In this, ILGA-Europe is working closely with the EU Presidency (until December 2009, Sweden, and in 2010, Spain and Belgium), with government officials from different countries, and with our partners and allies from other NGOs. And last but not least, we are working with members without whose active engagement at national level we will not reach the finish line.

A number of new opportunities to raise and mainstream LGBT issues in a broader range of EU policies have emerged in the past year, as new needs are being formulated by our member organisations. A number of issues that are very important for our members are being put on the EU policy agenda – including freedom of movement and mutual recognition of registered same-sex couples, discrimination based on gender identity in relation to the implementation of the gender equality directives and combating homophobia. As ILGA-Europe embarks on its next strategic planning process, it is likely that these issues will gain even greater prominence on its work programme, especially if there are opportunities to advance these issues with European institutions. In addition, ILGA-Europe became increasingly aware of the need to monitor the implementation of EU directives on asylum as the number of claims lodged by LGBT asylum seekers in the EU is rapidly increasing, and evidence of significant gaps in implementation of EU standards are surfacing.

### **III. Reinforcing the skills of the networks and its members' organisations to advance, support and further develop EU objectives and priorities at national level**

ILGA-Europe places significant importance on strengthening the capacity of its member organisations to advocate for recognition of human rights and equality for LGBT people. Not only is the increased organisational capacity of national LGBT organisations essential for progress at national level, it is also a prerequisite to effective advocacy with European institutions. Indeed, the working model of ILGA-Europe is bi-directional – lobbying the European institutions and informing the memberships and gathering information and data from the membership so as to lobby at European level. To this end, ILGA-Europe works to enhance the capacity of its members to lobby themselves both at national level and at European levels. In this way, the concerns from one country are linked to those of another, tied to the strategic objectives of the whole organisation and linked to the vision and mission of ILGA-Europe.

ILGA-Europe's initiatives to respond to skill-building and capacity development needs of its members vary greatly in format, from networking meetings, trainings and study visits, to the production of campaigning web-based materials, policy publications and guidelines. One of our main tools to reinforce the capacity of our member organisations to support and contribute to our advocacy work with EU institutions continues to be our EU Network (made up of one member organisation per member state). ILGA-Europe's annual conference and General Assembly which is organised in partnership with one of our member organisations is another important opportunity to reinforce the skills of our network and our member organisations. Not only is it a unique moment to strengthen the wider ILGA-Europe network, it is also an opportunity for the national host organisation to raise awareness about LGBT issues in their own country, as well as to progress political claims. For example, our presence in Malta for the 2009

conference proved to contribute towards lively debates around LGBT rights in the country. It was the first time that ILGA-Europe's representatives were invited to a meeting with a head of state during the conference. During the week of the conference, a meeting with the representatives of the Maltese national trade unions took place which facilitated developing closer links and a dialogue. These meetings were received with great interest and the trade unions were quick to point out their commitment for equality for all.

Recently, ILGA-Europe has explored new tools to inform and support member organisations, including new media such as Facebook and Twitter pages which provide us with an opportunity to address and access to wider audiences across Europe. Both Facebook and Twitter pages of ILGA-Europe are dynamic and popular with a constantly growing number of followers. Through these media we are able to post our news, disseminate calls for actions and campaigns, and send educational information.

An important lesson is that, while active participation and involvement of our members significantly increases the impact of our work, it is also important that activities and campaigns do not constitute an added burden for member organisations, as overburdened organisations are less likely to engage positively. This is why we regularly assess the needs of members, and review the methods used to ensure that members are adequately equipped to effectively advocate for LGBT equality at both national and European level.

#### **IV. Better integrating cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, poverty and non-discrimination) in day-to-day work**

ILGA-Europe's core values included "respect for diversity and accessibility among LGBT people and within society" and "solidarity with other discriminated groups of people, with mutual support in combating oppression and discrimination and fighting for equality". It follows that ILGA-Europe's approach has been to work in partnership with other anti-discrimination and equality organisations, as well as human rights organisations for many years.

In 2008-2009, ILGA-Europe undertook a diversity review with a view of enhancing diversity within its membership and of ensuring inclusion in policies and practices. This review has been supported by awareness-raising sessions and diversity management training with staff and board. As part of our work on diversity and multiple discrimination, we started developing a model for our work on intersectionality. The foundations of a working model on intersectionality were established as ILGA-Europe identified and undertook concrete actions that can be taken jointly with other anti-discrimination and equality networks. In 2010, ILGA-Europe will further explore joint actions with other European anti-discrimination networks on intersectionality between race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. The organisation will also develop and start implementing its diversity strategy action plan to be implemented starting this year, building on the 2008 diversity audit and the work already carried out on intersectionality and multiple discrimination.

### **Implications for relevant stakeholders**

ILGA-Europe focuses its strategies to lobby for legislative change, social policy change, practices, public attitudinal changes, to ensure countries implement equality according to their international human rights obligations, and to support the development of strong voices to continue to lobby for the human rights and equality of LGBT people. We identify the opportunities at each of these levels and institutions and

lobby for legislative change, human rights recognition, full implementation of laws and raising awareness of the human rights violations and make recommendations for change accordingly.

ILGA-Europe and its member organisations have been putting LGBT issues firmly on the agenda of a growing number of European and national actors. Increased awareness and research about the discrimination, harassment, marginalization and social exclusion experienced by LGBT people across Europe is providing a stronger base of evidence to support the development and formulation of new legislation, policies and other measures to effectively combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and to advance equality for LGBT people. In this context, it is important to refer to the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency Study on "*Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the EU Member States*" which not only provides a comprehensive social analysis of the situation of LGBT people in Europe, but also clearly defines legislative and policy objectives for the European Union institutions and the Member States within their respective spheres of competence to fully respect fundamental rights without discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.