

HOMOPHOBIC SPEECH IN LATVIA: MONITORING THE POLITICIANS

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After parliamentary elections in Autumn 2006, the Latvian Parliament appointed Jānis Šmits – one of the most homophobic members of Parliament during the period covered by this analysis – as Chairman of the Human Rights and Social Affairs Commission of the Latvian Parliament. The appointment of Šmits to this position demonstrates fundamental misconceptions of “human rights” among Latvian politicians and calls into question the sincerity of supportive statements made by members of the ruling coalition (including the Prime Minister) after the anti-gay/lesbian attacks of July 2006.

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HOMOPHOBIC SPEECH IN LATVIA: A SYMPTOM OF WEAK DEMOCRATIC CULTURE?

Among the political statements dealing with the problem of homophobia in the new member states of the EU, the European Parliament resolution of 18 January 2006 gives perhaps the most concise enumeration of the social manifestations of homophobia:

*'Homophobia manifests itself in the private and public spheres in different forms, such as hate speech and incitement to discrimination, ridicule and verbal, psychological and physical violence, persecution and murder, discrimination in violation of the principle of equality and unjustified and unreasonable limitations of rights, which are often hidden behind justifications based on public order, religious freedom and the right to conscientious objection.'*²

This paragraph happens to sum up not only the forms which homophobia takes when it is translated into social and political action, but also its discursive forms and modalities, expressed through language. These include not only hate speech and incitement to violence, but also the wider justification frameworks often used to give context to the former.

The monitoring conducted by the Latvian NGO *Mozaika* provides a survey and classification of the typical discursive forms that verbal abuse directed against LGBT people in Latvia has taken during the months leading up to the Riga Pride marches in 2005 and 2006. The period covered provides a vast amount of material, from the media and from parliamentary debates, allowing to study the forms of homophobic speech in a given country and time, but also providing a valuable insight into homophobic speech as such. Concrete forms and categories of homophobic speech described and exemplified in this study can all be traced to the archetypal 'justifications based on public order, religious freedom and the right to conscientious objection' mentioned in the European Parliament resolution.

Attitude towards homosexuality in a given society is one of the core indicators of the society's attitude towards the so-called 'self-expression values', as defined in the human development theory of Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart. According to them,

² European Parliament resolution on homophobia in Europe, P6_TA (2006) 0018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0018+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, last viewed on 23.03.2007.

developed post-industrial societies where more people adhere to the values of individual choice and self-expression are more democratic, or, to be precise, there is a higher likelihood of an 'effective democracy' in such societies.³ 'Effective democracy' differs from 'formal democracy' by the degree to which citizens are willing and able to use the political rights they enjoy according to the law. In view of some of Latvia's problems connected with corruption and oligarchic influences on politics, it would be logical for democratic political leaders to strive to support the values of individual choice and individual dignity in society, in order to overcome the weakness of democratic political culture. So far, however, very few politicians, even from opposition parties, have had the courage to address the problem of homophobia in Latvian society and to support LGBT activists in their struggle for equality. Future will show whether a new generation of parties, currently appearing on the political stage, will make a better job of this task.

At the same time, it is important to view the material used in the present study in perspective, taking into account the developments that have taken place since 2006.

A brief summary of the recent tendencies in the field of homophobic discourses and other intolerant rhetoric in Latvian society is given at the end of this publication.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the report

The following is an analysis of selected public statements by politicians in Latvia regarding gays and lesbians, made between May 2005 and July 2006. The foundation for the analysis is a database of quotes in Annex 1. The purpose of this analysis is (1) to present an overview of the patterns of homophobic speech by politicians in Latvia over a volatile one-year period and (2) to present a methodology for monitoring and analysing this speech. It is not the purpose of this brief analysis to go into detail on how to curtail homophobia, but it is the hope of the authors that this analysis will initiate discussions about the existing situation, the underlying reasons for it, and what can be done.

In this report, Mozaika offers a categorisation and analysis of the types of statements made by politicians, elaborates the underlying logic and potential consequences of such statements, as well as invites reflection about how homophobic speech could and should be monitored and curtailed in a democratic society. It is beyond the framework of this study to analyze the causes of homophobia in Latvia.

³ R. Inglehart, C. Welzel. *Modernisation, Cultural Change, and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, Chapter 4.

A systematic and innovative review of homophobic speech by politicians in Latvia reveals that the most popular justifications of exclusionary policies and politics towards gays and lesbians are those based on: (1) untested facts and misinformation, (2) a narrow and exclusionary interpretation of family values and morality and (3) an alleged national and international homosexual conspiracy and propaganda.

“Politicians”

For this analysis, “politicians” are defined as persons elected to Parliament or appointed to government office and coming from parties that are represented in the 8th Saeima, or Latvian Parliament. The stance of the President of the Republic of Latvia is also reviewed, and the study also includes some quotes from deputies of the Riga City Council as well as official government spokespersons.

Time period covered

The time period covered is May 2005 to June 2006⁴. The main events during this period were:

- In the Parliament in 2005, various debates relating to:
 - Amendments to legislation, including an amendment to the Latvian constitution prohibiting same-sex marriage (Nov.-Dec. 2005).
 - Removal of immunity of a member of parliament who organised an illegal anti-Pride demonstration.
- In the media in 2005:
 - The first Riga Pride and the discussions surrounding it.
- In the Parliament in 2006, various debates relating to:
 - The second Riga Pride and the discussions surrounding it (May and June 2006).
 - Discussions on amending the Labour Law to include an anti-discrimination clause for “sexual orientation” (May 2006).
- In the media in 2006:
 - The entire period until July 2006.

⁴ The analysis does not cover the discussions held in the Latvian Parliament on September 21, 2006 regarding the Labour Law. Although many particularly intolerant and hateful statements were made then, the patterns of speech are the same as those identified earlier. In addition, the speakers are largely the same, including some particularly hateful speech by Jānis Šmits, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament. These quotes are included in a separate document in Annex 3, in Latvian. It should be noted that these homophobic debates came after the events of July 2006. The sense is that many politicians did not learn any lessons from the hatred expressed in Parliament and on the streets of Riga in July 2006.

Patterns of homophobic speech

During the volatile discussions taking place in all spheres of public discourse (Parliament, churches, the internet, the press, etc.) on homosexuality, it became clear that certain types of arguments were being used over and over again to speak out against lesbians and gays. As these patterns of homophobic speech were emerging, Mozaika decided it would be useful to categorise the public speech of politicians in Latvia. As a result, general thematic categories were identified and political speech was reviewed and divided into those categories⁵.

The thematic categories

The thematic categories of politicians' speech used for analysis are the following, followed by a brief description⁶:

NAME OF TC	DESCRIPTION OF TC
<i>Generally positive</i>	
Human rights / European values	Invoking universal human rights and/or European values to support gay and lesbian rights or to critique statements or actions against gays and lesbians in Latvia.
Unacceptable form	Protest against unacceptable speech (quality of debate, incitement to hatred) without fundamentally challenging the content.
Positive proceduralism	Legal/procedural disagreement regarding a discriminatory bill or decision.
<i>Negative, anti-LGBT bias</i>	
Negative proceduralism	Legal/procedural support for a discriminatory bill or decision.
Nationalism	Arguments that are grounded in an ethnically Latvian understanding of the nation (and the state) and aim to preserve its homogeneity and integrity by exclusion and/or subordination of gays and lesbians. Also includes cases where nationalism or "Latvianness" per se are not emphasised, but rather emphasis is on principles of statehood.
Christianity	Arguments that draw upon religion, specifically Christianity, to argue for exclusion of gays and lesbians from the moral community. This moral community often gets equated with the nation as well, thus rendering the nation not only exclusively Latvian, but also Christian.

⁵ In many cases more than one category applies to a single statement, since they are related and tend to reinforce each other even as they draw upon a slightly different basis.

⁶ During the initial stages of analysis, the findings of preliminary thematic category no. 12 ("homosexualisation of society") were integrated into other, broader thematic categories (in particular TC 10, "Conspiracy theory"), so thematic category no. 12 has been deleted.

NAME OF TC	DESCRIPTION OF TC
<i>Negative, anti-LGBT bias</i>	
Morality	These arguments mostly invoke family values and unspecified morality (as opposed to religious morality, for example) to argue for exclusion and/or subordination of gays and lesbians.
Foreign decadence	These arguments depict Latvia as having retained traditional values that Western countries have lost . From this perspective, liberalism, including advocacy of gay and lesbian rights, is portrayed as Western decadence indicative of moral decay and imposed from the outside, more specifically from Europe.
Illness	These arguments depict gays and lesbians as sick and deviant and appeal to the history of medicalisation of homosexuality (which has long been discredited).
Conspiracy theory	Another popular substantiation of exclusion and subordination of gays and lesbians is that gays and lesbians wage propaganda campaigns with the intent to “homosexualise” society. Homosexuality here is portrayed as an ideology. These arguments misrepresent a struggle for rights as a struggle for power, and foreclose the possibility that different ways of being can coexist in a democratic public space .
Demographic crisis	These statements refer to a demographic crisis in Latvia, to which homosexuality purportedly contributes, and blame homosexuals for the destruction of society and the nation (ethnic group).
Exclusion from the public space	These statements demand exclusion of gays and lesbians from the public space, thereby attempting to render the public space homogenous. The imagined modes of exclusion range from demanding that gays and lesbians keep their way of being to themselves (often misrepresenting homosexuality as pertaining only to sexual activities in the bedroom) to radical calls for banishment to mental wards, the forest, or prison.
Marginal-isation	This is an especially dangerous set of arguments that dehumanise, belittle, marginalise and demonise gays and lesbians, thus creating the conditions for their subsequent mistreatment.
Incitement to violence	These are statements that are either a direct call for violence, or indirectly allow for, or threaten with, the possibility of violence .
Invitation to discriminate	Invitation to discriminate, or acknowledgement of discrimination as an acceptable method.

NAME OF TC	DESCRIPTION OF TC
Negative, anti-LGBT bias	
Misunderstanding or misuse of terms	Misunderstanding or wilful misuse of the generally accepted meaning of a term. This category most often refers to a misunderstanding or alternate application of generally accepted principles, such as “democracy”, “tolerance” or “discrimination”.
Manipulation with untrue, untested, disputable facts, outright lies	This is related to the preceding thematic category, but goes beyond misuse of a term to entire concepts and reliance on discredited or questionable sources.
Denial of discrimination	Denial of the existence of discrimination against gays and lesbians, homophobia, or other negative conduct.

These categories are indicative, and do not cover all the types of LGBT-related speech by politicians identified during this project⁷.

The database

The quotes reviewed in this project have been compiled in a database located in *Annex 1*, which is in Latvian. The database can be sorted to extract statements made by representatives of parties, individual members of parliament, topic discussed. The instructions for reading the database are located at the beginning of *Annex 1* and the methodology used for this study is described in *Annex 2*.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this report:

- JL** - Jaunais laiks (“New Era”), political party
- LGBT** - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered person(s)
- LPP** - Latvijas Pirmā partija (“Latvia’s First Party”)
- MP** - member of Parliament
- SC** - Saskaņas centrs (“Harmony centre”), political party
- TB/LNNK** - Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK (“For the Fatherland and Freedom LNNK”), political party
- TC** - Thematic category
- TP** - Tautas partija (“People’s Party”), political party
- ZZS** - Zaļo un zemnieku savienība (“Union of Greens and Farmers”), political party

⁷ There were also some statements made in 2006 that do not easily fit into a category, for example Ivars Godmanis (LPP/LC), now Minister of the Interior, stated: “We believe that in accordance with the laws, **gays have the right to march**. Only we appeal to their sense of responsibility – what are they causing with such a march.” <“Mēs uzskatām, ka pašiem atbildstoši likumam ir tiesības iet tajos gājienos. Vienīgi mēs apelējam pie viņu pašu atbildības – ko viņi izraisa ar tādu gājieni.”> (Statement made by Ivars Godmanis (LPP/LC) on 03.06.2006 to the newspaper Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze (p. 2).) This is an interesting statement because it basically invites self-censorship on the part of gays and lesbians, to be subjected to majority attitudes.

The Annexes

Annex 1 contains the actual quotes of Latvian **politicians, categorised according to the thematic categories of LGBT-related speech.** It is in Latvian, but the instructions and column headings are also in English.

Annex 2 is a detailed description of the **methodology used.** The methodology may be further developed and serve as guidelines for:

- 1) Follow-up monitoring and **documentation of homophobic speech** directed against the LGBT community in Latvia **by politicians,**
- 2) Documentation of intolerant speech directed against the LGBT community in Latvia by other members of society, such as religious leaders, internet commentators, media **representatives.**
- 3) Documentation of intolerant speech directed against other minorities in Latvia by different representatives of **society (politicians, religious leaders, internet commentators, media representatives)**
- 4) Applying all these categories of analysis in other countries. If the methodologies are **sufficiently similar, this may allow a certain degree of comparability across countries.**

Annex 3 is a compilation of some of the **sources of quotes.**

SOME OVERALL FINDINGS

This analysis identifies patterns **regarding speech against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons.** It is not – nor was it ever designed to be – a comprehensive review of all statements uttered by **politicians during a particular time period.**

The speech of politicians recorded in the time period between May 2005 and June 2006 exhibits **extraordinary crudeness.** The statements recorded include comparison of gays and lesbians (and their struggle for equal rights) with “pigs”, “weeds”, “the devil”, “monkeys”, “the plague”, “a virus” and “lice”. And even if some of the homophobic speech may not qualify formally as “hate speech”, there are profound questions of the appropriateness of such discourse in the public arena.

While the statements of intolerance are nothing short of shocking, it is also disconcerting that there has been **very little public and political reaction to them.**

As one politician has stated:

“In the last 2-3 years this aggression and hatred is being proclaimed not by individual members of society, but by politicians. Political parties are turning to the people with hatred. And where are the people of Latvia now turning?”⁸

⁸ See Ingrida Circene, *Edelweiss seminar, June 2006.*

The main findings regarding homophobic speech by politicians in Latvia are the following:

- 1) The most **popular substantiations of homophobic speech** draw upon: family values and morality; that it is a conspiracy wrought to “homosexualise” society; that it is a purported illness; and that it is against Christian principles. Explicit nationalism is not among the 5 most popular categories, but is often assumed or embedded within them. All of the above are reinforced with misinformation and manipulation of facts.
- 2) Homophobic **politicians define public space** (including the streets as well as the arena of discourse) as homogenous and a property of the “norm”, with **no** room for those that do not fit their version of the norm.
- 3) The role and **meaning of terms** like “democracy” or “free speech” are often misunderstood or **wilfully misused**.
- 4) Some leading **politicians have been silent against homophobic speech** and attacks; they may therefore be complicitous in fostering an intolerant society.
- 5) Not all LGBT-related political speech in Latvia has been negative. There have been a number of politicians that have spoken out against homophobic attitudes and made **positive statements**.
- 6) **The principle source of homophobic speech by politicians is Latvia’s First Party – the LPP**, one of the main initiators of the anti-pride and anti-LGBT activities. LPP members have been joined by some other members of parliament whose speech is **entirely outside acceptable standards of respectful discourse**.

These overall findings are reviewed in **more detail below**.

Most frequent categories of homophobic speech

The most frequent categories of homophobic speech (starting from most frequent) used by **politicians during the period of analysis** are the following:

1. Manipulation with facts, misinformation (TC 18)
2. Morality (TC 7)
3. Conspiracy (TC 10)
4. Illness (TC 9)
5. Christianity (TC 6)

Nationalism comes in at 8th place, **leading to a preliminary conclusion that the most**

prominent (or aggressive) logic of exclusion is grounded in supra- and sub-national frames, such as Christianity and the family. Nevertheless, **nationalism appears to be embedded/assumed** in many of the other arguments. The **relationship of nationalism** with other thematic categories will require further analysis.

Some trends identified

Some other trends have been identified in the review. For example, it is evident that most politicians making anti-gay/lesbian statements have a very **particular understanding of the nature of democracy and public space** in Latvia, namely **that it is the property of the “norm”** (according to their definition), so that minority groups must ask for permission to appear in this public space. In such a view, the public space is not neutral and cannot accommodate diversity; rather, it is to be **restricted to and synonymous with a Latvian, Christian, and heterosexual nation**. As a result, the appearance of lesbians and gays in the public space is interpreted as a direct attack on the “norm” rather than a **rightful presence** in a democratic space.

Such an understanding of the public space is often related to a particular **(mis-) understanding of democracy** as merely the rule by majority, with no need to take into consideration minority rights. Examples of this (wilful) misinterpretation are found throughout the text below.

It is more difficult to identify and quantify **“silence”** than it is to categorise speech. But silence has also played an important role in shaping the discourse regarding homophobic speech in Latvia. Possibly the most disappointing inaction was that of President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga in 2005, who remained silent as the framework of public debate was being set.

Positive statements

Of course, not all speech uttered by politicians about the LGBT community is negative. The annex also contains some positive statements.

Positive statements have been expressed from politicians like: Artis Pabriks, Minister of Foreign Affairs, member of TP; Ingrida Circene, former chair of the Latvian Parliament’s Human Rights Commission, member of JL, now MP; and various representatives of various parties, with the exception of Latvia’s First Party.

One of the strongest and most positive expressions uttered in Parliament was by Ingrida Circene, JL. In parliamentary debates of September 21, 2006 on amendments to the Labour Law, Circene said the following:

“What is happening at the highest instance of state representative power – in the Parliament? Unfortunately, representatives of the highest legislative power are

directly espousing the ideas of the communist regime: anyone who is different must be punished. Anyone. So what will the proposals be? Will we once again set up concentration camps, prepare train wagons for deportation or will we do something else? It is simply pathetic to hide hatred and insincerity under the shield of Christian values. Every inhabitant of Latvia deserves to be protected by the state, in particular those persons representing minority views. The majority has always been able to defend itself.”

During the same parliamentary debates on Sept. 21, 2006 on amendments to the Labour Law, MP Boriss Cilevičs (SC) responded to a statement by Jānis Šmits (weeks before he was elected as **Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament**) invoking the Bible’s Leviticus chapter. Cilevičs said the following:

“It seems to me that our democracy in fact has two main threats: populism and clericalism. And this debate clearly shows that clericalism is becoming increasingly dangerous. Because the speech by Mr. Šmits... I would not want to comment on it, but if a legislator speaks like that here, from the podium of the Parliament, then I have to interpret that as an invitation to institute the death penalty, according to your citation. You are a legislator, and, if it is as you say, then you have to follow up and you should prepare the relevant bill. But if that is merely blah-blah-blah, then, forgive me, but you should not be confusing the podium in Parliament with the pulpit in church.”

The summary calculation in the database indicates that there has been an increase in the number of positive statements by politicians in 2006, but not within parliamentary debate. **Positive statements in Parliament remained very few even in 2006.**

	TC 1	TC 2	TC 3
2005 Saeima	1		
2005 Media	4	3	8
2006 Saeima	3	6	3
2006 Media	27	17	17
TOTAL	35	26	28

This contrasts with the intolerant categories, which do not demonstrate a positive or negative trend – the patterns of intolerant speech by politicians remained the same in 2005 and 2006.

The LPP (Latvia’s First Party)

One of the principle sources of homophobic statements by politicians is Latvia’s First Party (LPP). And one of the main anti-gay/lesbian activists is LPP member Jānis Šmits, the current **chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament.**

Andrejs Naglis and Dainis Turlais of the LPP also provided numerous homophobic statements.

It is not the aim of this analysis to cover the relationship between homophobic speech by members of the LPP and members of various Christian denominations and sects, but the link must be more than coincidence⁹.

According to a review of the database, LPP representatives are responsible for the majority of homophobic speech by politicians in Latvia relating to the following categories:

- Proceduralism in support for a discriminatory bill or decision (TC 4)
- Nationalism (TC 5)
- Christianity (TC 6)
- Morality (TC 7)
- Foreign decadence (TC 8)
- Conspiracy (TC 10)
- Demographic crisis (TC 11)
- Misunderstanding or wilful misuse of the true meaning of a term (TC 17)
- Denial of discrimination (TC 19)

And the most frequent categories of homophobic speech by LPP members were: Christianity, Morality, and Demographic crisis.

The homophobic statements of Jānis Šmits have been so frequent and have touched on so many different thematic categories, that it is difficult, and possibly futile, to make a detailed analysis of his statements. Examples of Šmits' statements are reflected throughout this study.

According to the database of quotes collected, even within the ranks of his own LPP party, Šmits is responsible for almost half or even more of the statements on the following¹⁰:

	OF THE TOTAL STATEMENTS BY LPP, % OF STATEMENTS BY ŠMITS
Illness (TC 9)	46%
Conspiracy (TC 10)	51%
Invitation to discriminate (TC 16)	50%
Manipulation with facts, lies (TC 18)	43%
Denial of discrimination (TC 19)	71%

It is interesting to note that during the period of analysis, Šmits has largely managed to avoid making outrageous statements regarding incitement to violence (15) or invitation to discriminate (16) – unless one counts his quotations from the Bible advocating the death penalty for homosexuals.

⁹ The methodology used in this analysis could also be applied to statements by religious leaders in Latvia.

¹⁰ It is possible to generate similar tables for other parties and politicians using the database in Annex 1. However, because it is impossible to record all speech, these conclusions are merely indicative and of interest for discussion.

Other political figures

Some of the leading political figures that played a disappointing role in 2005 nevertheless demonstrated a better understanding of the fragility of the situation in 2006 and began to question the homophobic state of affairs in Latvia. These include the President, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, and the Prime Minister, Aigars Kalvītis.

At the same time, **Parliament and society have been subjected to homophobic rantings** by a number of members of Parliament, as **described below**.

President of the Republic of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga

The record of the President of the Republic of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga (formerly a Professor of Psychology at the University of Montreal, Canada) in 2005 was **disappointing** in terms of very little public and explicit championing of the rights and dignity of LGBT persons in Latvia. This was the period in which the framework of public discourse was being set in Latvia, and her putative moral authority played little or no role in helping to set those parameters. She ended her silence over the issue of intolerant speech and LGBT rights, and **finally spoke up, in some cases strongly, in 2006**. Even so, in 2006, public statements from Vīķe-Freiberga regarding LGBT persons have tended to come only in reaction to events that have already taken place, tend to be phrased in vague and general language, and **very rarely explicitly use the terms “gay”, “lesbian” or “homosexual”**. Nevertheless, her expressions of support for LGBT dignity and rights and her questioning of the low level of public discourse in Latvia have become more frequent in 2006, as demonstrated in the database in Annex 1 and in the examples in this study.

Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis

During the time period covered by this review¹¹, the record of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia Aigars Kalvītis has **occasionally surprised with his lack of** understanding of certain fundamental principles. Some quotes call into question his understanding of the principles of a **democratic society based on the rule of law and the** role of the individual within that society, in particular protection of minorities and the separation of church and state. This is based on Kalvītis statements like “Latvia is a state based on Christian values” and “We cannot advertise things that are not acceptable to a majority of society” (“Mēs nevaram reklamēt lielākai sabiedrības daļai nepieņemamas lietas”¹². Kalvītis’ utterances before the first Pride in 2005 were also instrumental in scaring the Executive Director of Riga City Council Ēriks Škapars (JL) from issuing the initial “permission” for the Pride to take place.

Over time his stance seems to have become more tolerant of differing viewpoints, as reflected in the examples below and in *Annex 1*.

¹¹ Kalvītis has been prime minister throughout the period of review, and was again appointed Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections and setting up of a new government in Autumn 2006.

¹² As quoted by the newspaper *Latvijas Avīze*, 21.07.05, p. 7. See the quote in the examples below and in the database in Annex 1.

Other politicians

The speech of some individual members of parliament was entirely outside acceptable standards of respectful discourse. These include Ināra Ostrovska, Aleksandrs Kiršteins, Pēteris Tabūns (TB/LNNK), and Leopolds Ozoliņš (ZZS). The first two were no longer members of any parties in Parliament, although Ostrovska was elected on a JL mandate, and Kiršteins was elected on a TP mandate, and he also served as **Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission** of the Latvian Parliament. Ozoliņš remains a member of ZZS and is in the new Parliament, and Tabūns was a member of TB/LNNK. Even if these people represent extreme views, it is **important to take into account to what extent** they help shape the parameters of public discourse in Latvia. Their statements are found in the examples below and in *Annex 1*.

THE THEMATIC CATEGORIES

The thematic categories were identified after a preliminary analysis and categorisation of a sample of the politicians' speech. In the context of Latvia, these have proven to be a useful tool since they accurately reflect the vast majority of anti-LGBT political speech¹³. A certain degree of subjective assessment was necessary for classification, but the patterns and tendencies are clear. The main point is that the speech of politicians falls into identifiable categories, it can be monitored, and political figures must be held responsible for their words inciting intolerance, hatred and even violence.

This section presents the thematic categories of homophobic speech by politicians in Latvia, and each category covers the following:

- Brief description of the thematic category
- Its frequency of use by politicians
- Examples (in table format, with information about the speaker and source and references to other thematic categories, where applicable)

This report ends with a section on “Issues for consideration” which draws out some important questions regarding the findings of the thematic categories.

The thematic categories begin with three relatively positive or supportive ones, followed by the more numerous negative categories.

1. HUMAN RIGHTS, EUROPEAN VALUES

Some Latvian politicians, in defending the rights of LGBT persons, have invoked universal human rights and/or European values to critique the treatment of gays and lesbians in Latvia. Since the concept of “human rights” seems to carry different meanings in Latvia, it is interesting to consider the examples here of positive references to European values in relation to statements that posit Europe as the source of luxury-induced foreign decadence (see thematic category 8).

Frequency

Of the positive thematic categories, this one is the most frequently referred to by supportive politicians. And like the other two positive categories, it has been used much more frequently by politicians in the press and media and in public meetings in 2006; but mention of “human rights” or “European values” in reference to LGBT persons was rarely heard in Parliament.

¹³ During the detailed analysis, some quotations were not easy to categorize according to the selected thematic categories. These were, for the most part, positive statements or statements of concern about developments in Latvia.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Ingrīda Circene (JL)	<i>"Human rights are not to be linked with discrimination, intolerance, evil and hatred."</i>	Plenary session of the Parliament re amendments to the Labour Law. <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Aigars Kalvītis, Prime Minister (TP)	<i>"It is clear to every politician that human rights must be observed and people should not be divided according to some kind of characteristics."</i>	Interview on Latvian Radio, 12.06.06. <i>"Diena", 20.06.2006, p. 1</i>
Artis Pabriks, Minister of Foreign Affairs (TP)	<i>"Safeguarding the rights of minorities is one of the fundamental principles of a democratic state, and it is in our interests not to allow a repeat of a similar situation in the future."</i>	Quote in newspaper article, 31.06.06. <i>"Час"</i>
Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia	<i>"Homosexuality [sic] is not a crime, people have the right to openly express their views. But the state has an obligation to protect its citizens from aggression. After joining the European Union, Latvia also accepted European values. These include tolerance of sexual minorities."</i>	Quote from interview in Austrian newspaper "Die Presse". <i>"Час", 28.07.06; "Вестни Сегодня", 28.07.06</i>
Dagnija Staķe, Minister of Welfare (ZZS)	<i>"In our society we have not spoken enough about the problem [sic] of homosexuality, we haven't explained it sufficiently. We are trying to suffocate freedom of speech with repressive methods, and this is an extreme step."</i>	Discussion organised by politika.lv "The rights of sexual minorities in Latvia: dream or reality?"; 20.07.06. <i>Record from discussions</i>

2. UNACCEPTABLE FORM

This positive thematic category indicates a politician's protest against another politician's unacceptable speech (such as low quality of debate or incitement to hatred) without fundamentally challenging the content. It is thus not always a positive assessment or statement of support for gays/lesbians.

Frequency

Like the other two positive thematic categories, this has been used much more frequently by politicians in the press and media and in public meetings in 2006. It is rarely used in Parliament.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia	<i>"Every person expressing a public statement must be responsible for it."</i>	Press conference at airport, 25.06.06 <i>"Телеграф", 22.06.2006</i>
Ainars Latkovskis, Minister of Integration (JL)	<i>"If there are incidents, the LPP will be responsible for them, since they fomented a campaign for their political purposes. No one is being asked to support gays and lesbians, but there must be a neutral approach."</i>	Quote in newspaper, 22.07.05, p. 3 <i>"Diena"</i>
Ingrīda Circene, Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (JL)	<i>"...it is sad to listen to Christians expressing blatant hatred, aggression and intolerance against their fellow human beings, when the real message should be exactly the opposite – love thy neighbour."</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.5.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Aigars Kalvītis, Prime Minister (TP)	<i>"Such intolerance like the kind demonstrated on Thursday in Parliament has never been seen in Latvia,"</i> noted the Prime Minister. He would prefer that deputies solved issues that are within their direct mandate, rather than "making use of inappropriate expressions and name-calling in Parliament, fostering intolerance in society."	Latvijas Radio, 12.06.06 <i>"Час", 20.06.2006</i>
Artis Pabriks, Minister of Foreign Affairs (TP)	<i>"Freedom of expression does not mean prohibiting others from their freedom of expression,"</i> said Pabriks. He is <i>"hurt and ashamed about what is happening in Riga."</i> In the Latvian capital, <i>"the situation today, in the 21st century, is the same as in Western Europe in the 17th century. And this does not do honor to any of us."</i>	Quote in newspaper, 28.07.06 <i>"Час"</i>

3. PROCEDURALISM - POSITIVE

This thematic category denotes speech wherein a politician uses legal or procedural arguments to, in effect, support gay or lesbian rights regarding a discriminatory bill or decision. In some cases the emotional angle is notably absent, and instead the politician expresses a statement of support in a legalistic manner. However, in still other cases the "procedural" argument is intertwined with an emotional argument, as in some of the examples below.

Frequency

Like the other two positive thematic categories, this has been used much more frequently by politicians in the press and media and in public meetings in 2006. However, it is rarely heard in Parliament.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Ingrīda Circene (JL)	<p><i>“The ruling coalition’s hysterical homophobia and insincerity in interpreting human rights and Christian values has led us to a situation where millions of tax-payer lats will not be used for pensions, child support or solving other social problems, but instead, in the interests of the ambitions of these politicians, will be diverted to paying for penalties after losing international court cases,”</i> believes the Chair of Human Rights and Social Affairs Commission Ingrīda Circene.</p>	<p>Webpage, 06.07.2006 <i>JL web page</i></p>
Ilze Viņķele, delegated party representative (TB/LNNK)	<p><i>“The reasons for prohibiting the Pride march are unacceptable to me. This is not the first time that the Riga City Council, claiming inability to ensure order and providing no further explanations, has limited the rights of people to assemble. I believe it is a very dangerous tendency for the police to become involved in politics. The Law on Police says that the police defend persons regardless of their citizenship, social or financial status, abilities and national affiliation, gender, age, education and language, opinions or beliefs.”</i></p>	<p>Discussion organised by politika.lv “The rights of sexual minorities in Latvia: dream or reality?”, 20.07.06 <i>www.politika.lv, Discussions transcript</i></p>

4. PROCEDURALISM - NEGATIVE

This negative thematic category is similar to the preceding thematic category (which is positive), but it refers to statements by politicians that present a legalistic argument against protecting gay and lesbian rights, expressing support for a discriminatory bill or decision. There is also an interesting case in the database where the current Minister of Social Integration, Oskars Kastēns (LPP), used a legalistic argument to support his party’s anti-gay/lesbian stance.

Frequency

Of the negative thematic categories, this category is relatively rarely used. There seems to be a small decline in its use in 2006.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Andrejs Naglis, MP (LPP)	<i>“Our Latvian people have a good proverb that says one drop of tar will ruin an entire honey pot. This expression can also be applied to the Civil Law and the Labour Law. Sections 7.2 and 29.9 of the Labour Law are to be supplemented – it could even be said that it is in a cynical, shameless and provocative manner that we are being forced to include a norm such as “sexual orientation.”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 Official record of Parliament
Arvīds Ulme (ZZS)	<i>“If we now have such commotion about this matter, maybe the existing situation, when this provision was not in force, has not caused any problems – neither for human rights, nor for religious organisations, if... It was acceptable... acceptable legislation about labour, where it was clearly stated that there would be a prohibition of direct or indirect discrimination. Therefore it has all been said.”</i>	Comment to newspaper03.08.06 “Latvijas Avīze”
Jānis Šmits (LPP)	In response to the question about why he wants to delete sexual orientation from the list, Šmits said that any kind of discrimination is prohibited according to Article 7 of the Labour Law, as well as Article 91 of the Constitution, and for this reason it is not necessary to emphasise this (4). In addition, according to the deputy, by using the term “sexual orientation”, there could be problems with its definition. <i>“Because sexual orientation – these are not just heterosexuals and homosexuals [sic]. Those include all kinds of sexual pathologies (9; 17; 18),”</i> explained Šmits.	Quote in newspaper, 21.06.06 “Телеграф”

5. NATIONALISM

One of the negative thematic categories used against LGBT persons are phrases that invoke nationalism, statehood or “Latvianness”. For some nationalists, arguments are grounded in an ethnically Latvian understanding of the nation (and the state) and aim to preserve its homogeneity and integrity by exclusion and/or subordination of gays and lesbians.

But there are also cases where “Latvianness” per se is not emphasised, but rather the emphasis is on principles of statehood. This may be an effort to address ethnic minorities in order to coalesce them against another minority – lesbians and gays. In such cases, the speakers are looking elsewhere for arguments and thus they invoke supra- and sub-national identifications, such as Christianity and “the family”.

The underlying perception is that homosexuality and homosexual persons are a direct threat to the existence of the nation (people) and the state. As such, for some politicians this thematic category is closely tied to TC 6 (Christianity), TC 7 (Morality),

TC 8 (Foreign decadence) and TC 11 (Demographic crisis)¹⁴.

Sometimes in the context of homophobic speech, nationalism gets refracted through Christianity, i.e. “*we are a state based on Christian values*” (Prime Minister Kalvītis). On these occasions, the nation gets defined through Christianity rather than ethnicity.

Frequency

In terms of frequency, the invocation of nationalism/statehood falls somewhere in the middle compared with other negative thematic categories. The fact that it is not one of the most popular thematic categories may come as something of a surprise, however, given the above considerations, it may appear in a somewhat concealed form through other categories.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Inese Šlesere, MP (LPP)	<i>“Defenders of same-sex marriage are trying to put in the centre of attention the issue of equal rights for adults, neglecting children’s rights and, as a consequence, the interests of the state (5; 7). A strong, traditional family is the greatest value for the country (5; 7). And only by strengthening and defending it, we can overcome the demographic crisis and avoid a looming demographic catastrophe for Latvia.”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Pēteris Tabūns, MP (TB/LNNK)	<i>“We Latvians are used to living in accordance with our normal principles of morality and this pathology should not be written into law (5; 7; 9). We have already gone too far in letting this, if we can call it that, louse into our coat.”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.5.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Ināra Ostrovska, MP (Not a member of a party, elected into Parliament as a member of JL)	<i>“Anyone can go along with the socialists, communists, Brussels, the Kremlin, the UN, homosexuals [sic], Soros, foreigners and support their values. I choose Latvia, Latgale [eastern region], the Christian faith, our traditions and morality. (5; 6; 7).”</i>	Opinion, 20.07.06 (p. 2) <i>“Neatkarīgā Rita Avīze”</i>

¹⁴ See, for example, the comment from MP Inese Šlesere (LPP) in the examples below. There are also interesting videos available on [youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) where Jānis Šmits, the current chairman of the Human Rights Commission in the Latvian Parliament, leads the assembled “No Pride” demonstrators in singing the Latvian national anthem “Dievs, svētī Latviju” (God bless Latvia), manipulating with religion and nationalism/statehood simultaneously, while the entire event takes place in the Russian language: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJJ_pTMp-QQ

6. CHRISTIANITY

These arguments draw on religion, specifically Christianity, to argue for the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the moral community. This moral community often gets equated with the nation as well, thus rendering the nation not only Latvian, but also Christian.

According to the Latvian constitution, the church is formally separated from the state. However, in the last several years, with the rise of anti-gay/lesbian evangelical fundamentalism and the active support of the “traditional” denominations like the Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church, these lines have blurred. The strategy of political parties like the LPP is also linked with these tendencies.

And it is not only particular parties or Christian groups that rely on their interpretation of Christianity to influence political discourse in Latvia. The Prime Minister has referred to a “state based on Christian values”¹⁵.

Frequency

Reference to Christianity or Christian values is one of the most popular thematic categories used by politicians harbouring negative opinions. It is not surprising that of all anti-gay/lesbian political speech using the “Christian” thematic category, the most avid users are members of the LPP.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Aigars Kalvītis, Prime Minister (TP)	<i>“We are a state based on Christian values and we cannot advertise, let’s say, things that are unacceptable to a large part of society.” (6; 7; 10; 17)</i>	Quote in newspaper, 21.07.05, p. 7 <i>“Latvijas Avīze”</i>
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“Lord, protect Latvia from the sins of sodomy and unholiness!”</i>	Parliament plenary session, 31.5.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

¹⁵ See the example in the table. A similar statement was also included in Kalvītis’ letter to Human Rights Watch (August 7, 2006).

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Naglis Andrejs, MP (LPP)	<p><i>“This can only be achieved if all churches in Latvia unite. We must acknowledge that there are people in the government who are not against the organising of Riga Pride 2006. They simply want to move this march to a different place, further away from the centre of Riga. But our LPP faction [in Parliament] and I myself as a Catholic say a categorical no to any such activities. We cannot allow any kind of activities by homosexuals [sic] in Latvia (13). Last year they requested a permit to organise Pride, but now they are demanding it and are insistent. A big thank you to the church “New Generation” for being the first that spoke out against this problem and are actively fighting against this virus (9; 14). But the most important thing is that all Christian denominations in our country are against it. God is with us, and we shall win (6)!”</i></p>	<p>At the New Generation conference</p> <p>www.baznica.info, 16.07.06</p>
Dainis Turlais, MP, later member of the Latvian delegation to the Organisation for Security and Conference in Europe (LPP)	<p><i>“I can say that, as a politician and a believer, I am convinced that people on earth must live in accordance with the laws of God. Homosexuality is in violation of the laws of God (6). And it is the responsibility of every Christian to fight against it, defending his principles. The biggest problem is awakening the spirit of Christianity in people to the same extent as when we awoke from Communism. I am convinced that by overcoming the spiritual stagnation in this society, we will be able to overcome everything that is against the rules of God. This includes homosexuality. The church “New Generation” must not stop, they need to fight more actively against homosexuality (15; 16). And then we will truly win!”</i></p>	<p>At the New Generation conference</p> <p>www.baznica.info 16.07.2006</p>
Jānis Smits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<p><i>“We are Christians, and for us homosexuality is unacceptable.”(6)</i></p>	<p>Quote in newspaper, 19.07.06</p> <p>“<i>Ψac</i>”</p>

7. MORALITY

These arguments mostly invoke family values and an often unspecified morality (as opposed to religious morality, for example) to argue for exclusion and/or subordination of gays and lesbians. Reference is occasionally made to a “national morality”, which ties these arguments with other thematic categories of homophobic speech.

Frequency

This is the second most frequent category of speech used against LGBT persons. It is also very popular with members of the LPP.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"If there are no families, there will be no descendants, there will be nothing (7; 11). There exist various interpretations about marriage in the world – in some countries they understand marriage to be living together. And what is living together – a common refrigerator, bed? In other places marriage is understood as living together because of love – that is also something general. But in our understanding, which is based on Christian values, marriage is created as a union of man and woman followed by creation of children (6; 7). God, when he created people, also said be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," Šmits said to Neatkarīgā.</i>	Quote in newspaper, 21.12.05, p.1 "Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze"
Ainārs Baštīks, former and current Minister for Children's and Family Affairs (LPP)	In his opinion, <i>"permitting such a march would, first of all, threaten children's rights, since their perception and values system is only developing (7; 17). Second, family rights are threatened – only within marriage between a man and a woman can children be created. Latvia, which is dying out and where it would be necessary to stress family values (7; 11) is thus put to shame."</i> And third, a public gay and lesbian parade offends Christians – <i>"because an abnormality is being touted as a normal occurrence (6; 9)."</i>	Quote in newspaper 20.07.05 "Rīgas Balss"

8. FOREIGN DECADENCE

In these arguments, the speaker depicts Latvia as having retained traditional values that the Western countries have lost. From this perspective, liberalism, including advocacy of gay and lesbian rights, is portrayed as Western decadence indicative of moral decay and materialism and is imposed from the outside, more specifically from Europe.

Frequency

In terms of popularity of use as a thematic category, "Western decadence" falls in the middle as a type of anti-gay/lesbian speech.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Inta Feldmane, MP (LPP)	<i>“The European Union is a secular creation, which has separated itself from Christian values and the church, which is the protector, guardian and carrier of spiritual values to the nation (6; 8; 18). And thus such absurd criteria are created, which have no spiritual authority in the nation, because, in its genetic memory (18), for centuries it has preserved and carried forward the words that the Creator said to the people: “Be fruitful and multiply!”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 Official record of Parliament
Mareks Segliņš, MP, Chairman of the Legal Commission of the Latvian Parliament TP	<i>“At this time, thank God, marriage between a man and a woman still exists in Latvia as an obvious accepted concept (7). But in one part of Europe where, in my opinion, due to an overly rich and saturated life, this concept is understood differently and seems to be the norm (8).”</i>	TV news programme, 12.10.05 LNT Ziņas

9. ILLNESS

These arguments depict gays and lesbians as sick and deviant, also subject to, or forerunners of, various “paraphilias” like paedophilia, zoophilia and necrophilia. For purposes of categorisation and analysis, references to “zoophilia”, “necrophilia” and “paedophilia” are also included in the analysis, since the speakers are wilfully mixing them up. The speakers also sometimes appeal to the history of medicalisation of homosexuality, a concept that has long been discredited.

Frequency

This is one of the more popular thematic categories used by anti-gay/lesbian politicians in Latvia. Interestingly, for the LPP this is not one of the main categories of their anti-gay/lesbian speech.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Ainars Šlesers, de facto leader of party (LPP)	The Executive Director of Riga City Ēriks Škapars (“JL”) should take responsibility for permitting the “ <i>parade of perversion</i> (9)”, Latvia’s First Party (LPP) already on Monday will take a decision about expressing a no-confidence motion regarding the Executive Director, said the chairman of the board of LPP, Ainārs Šlesers.	Quote in newspaper, 23.07.05, p. 4 “ <i>Latvijas Avīze</i> ”

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Juris Lujāns, prominent member of LPP (LPP)	He walked up to the podium and, citing the Bible, presented a very emotional message. In essence it was as follows: the opposition is simply using its opportunities to try to create a rift in the coalition; the LPP strongly condemns the march by the sexual minorities, but it is not possible to undo it now; and if E. Škapars will be removed from office, the situation will not change radically and “ <i>the homosexuals [sic] will continue to do useless, perverse and stupid things</i> (7; 9).”	21.07.05, p. 2 “ <i>Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze</i> ”
Žuravļovs Sergejs, Rīgas domes Deputāts (“Dzimtene”/TSP)	For his part, Sergejs Žuravļovs (Dzimtene/LSP) was concerned that now “ <i>satanists, cannibals, necrophiles and zoophiles</i> (9)” will even request permission to march past the Monument to Freedom. (5)	21.07.05, p. 2 “ <i>Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze</i> ”
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (PP)	“ <i>Today’s vote is a very important and historic one, which can open the floodgates for legalising pederasty, lesbianism, pedophilia, zoophilia, necrophilia and other pathologies at the legislative level</i> (9; 14).”	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Pēteris Tabūns (B/LNNK)	“ <i>The protection of children, which was already discussed here, from this abnormality. And these are not simply people who think differently – they are different because they are abnormally oriented</i> (9). <i>And you see, seriously psychologically ill people get taken to Aptiekas street. And it is a pity that some kind of clinic has not been invented, where these people could also be medically treated a little bit, then there would be significantly fewer of them</i> (9; 13; 15). <i>But we haven’t come that far yet, but maybe in the future we will.</i> ”	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.5.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

10. CONSPIRACY THEORY

Another popular substantiation of exclusion and subordination of gays and lesbians is that gays and lesbians are waging propaganda campaigns with the intent to “homosexualise” society. Under that viewpoint, homosexuality is portrayed as an ideology. These arguments misrepresent a struggle for rights as a struggle for power, and foreclose the possibility that different ways of being can coexist in a democratic public space. Occasionally this thematic category is closely linked with thematic category number 8 (“Western decadence, lack of morality, imposed by Europe”).

Frequency

The idea of a conspiracy spread by propaganda in order to establish the homosexualisation of society is the third most common form of anti-gay/lesbian speech. Jānis Šmits, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament, is a particularly avid user of this category, accounting for more than half of the public statements by his party, the LPP.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

One of the most disturbing examples is the widespread reliance among politicians and religious leaders on “The Gay Manifesto”, written as a satire in the United States. The Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament Jānis Šmits read it in full when he was still a MP, in plenary session of the Latvian parliament on May 31, 2006. One Latvian politician even mistakenly stated that the manifesto was read by gays before the United States Congress as a threat¹⁶.

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Leopolds Ozoliņš, Member of Latvian Parliament (ZZS)	<i>“Society’s fears and a lack of desire in actively defending a normal lifestyle because that is not, you see, modern, has encouraged the faggots not only to drill each other up the ass in their bedrooms, but also to shamelessly and openly assail us with propaganda of their perverse lifestyle.”</i>	18.07.05 <i>MP’s press release</i>
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“For this reason I would recommend that every deputy who votes in favour of the legalisation of homosexuality should no longer go and place flowers by the Monument to Freedom, because with his vote he will be the same as those people who once tried to annihilate our people (5; 11).”</i>	Parliament plenary session, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Dzintars Rasnačs, MP (TB/LNNK)	<i>“...I am inviting you to avert the heterophobic pedocracy (18) that is now entering Latvia (5).”</i>	Parliament plenary session, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Ainars Šlesers, MP, de facto party leader (LPP)	<i>“Today, taking into account the heightened activities of sexual minorities, I would say that the situation is dangerous (10). They are trying to convince all of society that sexual relationships between members of the same sex are a totally normal occurrence (10)! The next logical step from the sexual minorities – to achieve recognition of same-sex marriages (10)! You must understand that we don’t want to repress anyone. But we also cannot silently watch what is happening today. We already have a demographic crisis (11), but now we also have homosexual propaganda (10)! What is going to happen tomorrow? Zoophiles will show up and start to claim that a marriage between a person and a dog nowadays is completely acceptable (9). If the zoophile does not object, and the animal has not submitted a written complaint, then for the sake of “tolerance” those kinds of sexual relationships can also be legalised, by law (17; 18)!”</i>	17.09.05 <i>“Вестни Сегодня”, also LPP home page</i>

¹⁶ A discussion of the way the radical right in the United States has manipulated this satire can be found at <http://rainbowallianceopenfaith.homestead.com/GayAgendaSwiftText.html>

11. DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

These statements refer to a demographic crisis in Latvia, to which homosexuality purportedly contributes, and blames gays and lesbians for the destruction of society and the nation (ethnic group).

Falling populations and birth rates are an acute problem in much of Europe. In Latvia, some politicians want to turn the LGBT community into scapegoats – as contributing to the demographic crisis specifically, and more generally to the overall destruction of society.

Frequency

Although this is not one of the most popular negative thematic categories used by Latvian politicians, it is a particular favourite of the LPP, who account for the vast majority of these statements.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"We must say a clear "no" to all those wise men from the West, who want to suggest that our people undertake voluntary suicide because, as you know, children do not come from homosexuals [sic] (5; 7; 8; 11; 18)."</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Almers Ludvigs, Riga City Council deputy, Baptist minister (LPP)	<i>"I believe that the provisions of law allow the local government to take a justified decision to prohibit the organising of such a march, because the popularisation of homosexual relations and the demands to accept it as a norm will lead us to the degradation of our basic values – an understanding of the role of the family, of natural marriage and of a natural family (7; 11)."</i>	Quote in newspaper, 09.07.2006 "Чак"
Kokins Juris, LPP biroja vadītājs, akciju sabiedrības "Latvijas Pasts" padomes loceklis, Rīgas pilsētas vēlēšanu komisijas priekšsēdētājs (LPP)	The head of the LPP office J. Kokins elaborated this thought more broadly: <i>"Not following the order ordained by God will lead humankind to destruction, because children are not born in same-sex marriages (6; 7; 11; 18)."</i>	Quote in newspaper, 15.12.05, p. 2 "Diena"
Ainars Šlesers, MP, now Minister of Transport (LPP)	<i>"We already have such a demographic crisis, but now we are subjected to homosexual propaganda (10; 11)!"</i>	25.11.05, p. 3 "Diena"

13. EXCLUSION FROM THE PUBLIC SPACE

These statements demand exclusion of gays and lesbians from the public space, thereby attempting to render the public space homogenous. The imagined modes of exclusion range from demanding that gays and lesbians keep their way of being to themselves (often misrepresenting homosexuality as pertaining only to sexual activities) to radical calls for banishment to mental wards, the forests, or prison.

Frequency

This is one of the less frequent categories of intolerant speech, but it arises during discussions about pride marches.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Kalvītis Aigars, Prime Minister (TP)	Officials of the Riga City Council have made a badly considered and mistaken decision to allow the parade of sexual minorities, Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis stated on the Latvian national television channel LNT during the programme “900 seconds”. <i>“For me, as the head of government, it is unacceptable that in our capital city, in the very heart of Riga, next to the Dome Cathedral, there is a parade of sexual minorities (13). This is unacceptable. We are a state based on Christian values (6). We cannot advertise things that are not acceptable to the majority of society (7),”</i> said Kalvītis. <i>“It will be necessary to have two police for every participant to ensure order. These are, first and foremost, expenditures and I do not see the point of this,”</i> said Kalvītis.	20.07.05, 11:01:00 <i>LETA</i>
Ainārs Baštiks, Minister for Children’s and Family Affairs (LPP)	A. Baštiks does not understand the desire of sexual minorities to express their views exactly in the centre of Riga: <i>“Let them go to the Salaspils memorial and gather there (13).”</i>	Quote in newspaper, 20.07.05 <i>“Rīgas Balss”</i>
Dergunovs Viktors, Rīgas domes deputāts (PCTVL)	<i>“Let them demonstrate their sexual proclivities in some other place, why not at Lake Ķīšezers, but not in our Old Riga (13),”</i> said Viktors Dergunovs, member of the Riga City Council, expressing his opinion.	Quote in newspaper, 25.07.05, p. 8 <i>“Latvijas avīze”</i>

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Juris Lujāns, party chairman (LPP)	“Granting a permit can be an elastic concept. I would rather go to court than to grant this kind of permit. Where was it planned? In the heart of Riga! On a holiday, when it is full of our people, also foreign tourists, who would conclude that this is not only a capital of prostitution, but also a centre of homosexuality (10; 13).”	21.07.05, p.2 “Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze”
Grinblats Māris, MP (TB/LNNK)	“TB/LNNK as a conservative political force believes that Riga City Council made a mistake, first allowing the march of sexual minorities in the city centre (4), because this can be seen as a certain popularisation of this lifestyle (10). This could be allowed in the outskirts of Riga (13).”	22.07.05, p. 4 “Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze”

14. MARGINALISATION

This is an especially dangerous set of arguments that dehumanise, belittle, marginalise and demonise gays and lesbians, thus creating the conditions for their subsequent mistreatment.

The act of dehumanising, belittling, marginalising or demonising one’s opponent means that you are taking away his or her legitimacy to participate in society on the same level as you. In the speech used by some politicians in public discourse in Latvia, this ranges from words that dehumanise (“pig”, “monkey”) to words of disrespect for the minority, such as “faggot” (in Latvian, “pederasts”, “pediņš” or “pidars”).

Frequency

Although this is not a very frequent negative thematic category, the terms used range from bad manners to simply shocking. In some cases, politicians use terms that should no longer be accepted in public discourse, such as pederast, faggot (“pidars”), homosexualist (“homoseksuālists”). It should be noted that not in all cases are politicians referring to LGBT persons as a “devil”, or a “monkey” or a “plague” but they are drawing parallels that lead listeners **to make those associations themselves**. In some cases, nevertheless, the dehumanising references are very direct.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

Gays and lesbians (and their struggles for equal rights) have been compared by some Latvian politicians with: “pigs”, “weeds”, “the devil”, “monkeys”, “the plague”, “a virus” and “lice”. And this is just in publicly accessible information.

ANIMAL OR THING GAYS AND LESBIANS ARE COMPARED WITH	SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
PIG	Dainis Turlais, MP, member of the Latvian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (LPP)	It is possible that I really did show, as it now is accepted to say, intolerance in my statements. But I had never intended to wage a “crusade” against sexual minorities; I generally don’t meddle in other people’s private, especially intimate, lives. Let gays love each other. That does not apply to me; we live in a democratic society. Something else bothers me. Why is it that in a democratic society for the sake of one group of people, the rights of another group can be trampled on (17)? Imagine the following scenario: in a bus going from the countryside to Riga, a farmer gets on with his pig, which he wants to sell at market in the capital. The pig is squealing, there is an unbearable stench (14). Instead of asking the man to get off the bus with his pig (he is the only one in the bus with a pig), the other passengers, to demonstrate their respect for the minority representative, get off the bus and continue on foot. Tell me, could this happen in real life? I doubt it. But as regards sexual minorities, we are being asked to act in accordance with this absurd scheme. Gays and lesbians demand that they are permitted to present their personal lives for everyone to see (18).”	Quote in newspaper, 07.06.06 “Вести сегодня”
WEED	Andrejs Naglis, MP (LPP)	“I would like to draw your attention to the provisions in the laws. Perhaps it would be useful to think about the impact of each legal provision several years into the future. As an example I could mention the weed “latvānis” – a Soviet-era legacy for the Latvian countryside. Today we are beginning to understand and recognise that this weed is dangerous, but we do not know how to get rid of it – how many resources, work and time that will require.”	15.09.05 in plenary session of Parliament <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

ANIMAL OR THING GAYS AND LESBIANS ARE COMPARED WITH	SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
DEVIL	Feldmane Inta, MP (LPP)	What in fact does this amendment entail? It is only the first step in enforcing gay and lesbian interests at the legislative level (10). Because the experience of the world demonstrates that this will be followed by demands to legalise same-sex marriage and demands to allow adoption of children. As the proverb says, give the devil your finger, he will take the whole hand (14).”	Parliament plenary session, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
MONKEY	Pauls Kļaviņš, MP, member of Judicial Commission of Parliament (JL)	In response to the question „Therefore same-sex marriages are completely unacceptable?” Pauls Kļaviņš [JL] responded: „That is approximately the same thing as if in time someone would come forward with a proposal that everyone who walks on two legs – humanlike monkeys, that they should be granted human rights – something like that.”	12.10.05, 20:30 <i>LNT TV news programme</i>
PLAGUE	Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament LPP	“I invite all Christians who are here, in the hall of Parliament, to understand their responsibility. If you vote for the legalisation of homosexuality, then, please, go to church and openly repent for what you have done, because it will no longer be possible to halt this plague that you have let loose in our society”	Plenary session of Parliament, Sept. 21, 2006 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
LICE	Pēteris Tabūns, MP TB/LNNK	“We Latvians have learned to live in accordance with our normally accepted principles of morality and we cannot write such a pathology into our law (5). We have let this louse into our coat too far, if it can be described in such a way.”	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

ANIMAL OR THING GAYS AND LESBIANS ARE COMPARED WITH	SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
VIRUS	Andrejs Naglis, MP (LPP)	“We must acknowledge that there are people in the government who are not against the organising of Riga Pride 2006. They simply want to move this march to a different place, further away from the centre of Riga. But our LPP faction [in Parliament] and I myself as a Catholic say a categorical no to any such activities. We cannot allow any kind of activities by homosexualists [sic] in Latvia (13). Last year they requested a permit to organise Pride, but now they are demanding it and are insistent. A big thank you to the church “New Generation” for being the first that spoke out against this problem and are actively fighting against this virus (9; 14).”	New Generation Conference <i>www.baznica.info, 16.07.2006</i>

The following table provides examples of other types of marginalisation and belittlement used by some politicians in Latvia against LGBT persons:

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Inese Šlesere, MP (LPP)	<i>“This is why I hope that Latvia will not, in the near future, join those nations where this parody of a family is possible – same-sex marriage.”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Pēteris Tabūns, MP (TB/LNNK)	<i>“I have fought against these abnormalities (9; 14) for a long time especially during the 7th session of Parliament, and, when I was invited on television – to a discussion with one of these abnormalities (9; 14) (I cannot call them anything else) then I did not sit next to him, this type of person.”</i>	Parliament plenary session, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Juris Dobelis (TB/LNNK)	<i>“Damn faggots!”</i> [Juris Dobelis of TB/LNNK screaming out after the vote on amendments to the Labour Law on September 21, 2006.]	Parliament plenary session, 21.09.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Dainis Turlais LPP	<i>“Then what do we have to do? Come up with compromises? So that all kinds scum, drug addicts, rabble, faggots (9; 14) walk the streets, and we hide in the bushes? Just the opposite, we will go out into the streets, because we are right (13)”</i> said D. Turlais.	Quoted in numerous newspaper articles “Diena”, 30.05.06, p.3; “Diena”, 31.05.06, p. 2; “Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze”, 29.05.2006, p. 1; “Baltic Times”, 08.06.2006

15. INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE

These are statements that are either a direct call for violence, or indirectly allow for, or threaten with, the possibility of violence.

Although not commonly used by Latvian politicians, incitement to violence is sometimes uttered through the prism of Biblical quotes.

Frequency

Fortunately, this is a relatively rare form of hate speech in Latvia.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Pēteris Tabūns, MP (TB/LNNK)	<i>“... we must use every means possible to make the strongest counterstroke against these abnormal people and what happened in Old Riga this summer! Every means possible!”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“We must remember the lessons of history: the Latvian is very patient – like a spring on a clock, which you wind and wind, but at one moment, when the pendulum gets moving, you can no longer hold it back.”</i>	Quote in newspaper, 21.07.06, p. 5 “Latvijas Avīze”

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"I think every one of you deputies has received these kinds of pamphlets, on the last page you have had the opportunity to familiarise yourselves with what the Bible says about homosexuality. I will read it to those of you who don't know how to read. Apparently it is necessary to remind you. Leviticus chapter 20 says: 'If a man sleeps with a man as with a woman, they have both committed an abomination. They must be put to death; their blood is on their own hands.' (Leviticus)"¹⁷</i>	Plenary session of parliament, 21.09.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

16. INVITATION TO DISCRIMINATE

This thematic category covers overt invitations to discriminate, or acknowledgement of discrimination as an acceptable method. In these cases often the speaker advocates discrimination but the underlying reasons are based on other thematic categories, such as "Christianity", "Nationalism" or "Illness".

This category should also be considered in the context of thematic category 19 - "Denial of the existence of discrimination, homophobia, or other negative conduct".

Frequency

This is one of the least frequent forms of hate speech in Latvia. The LPP does not appear to be a big proponent of this thematic category. This thematic category has found a new "champion" in Dzintars Rasnačs, TB/LNNK.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Dzintars Rasnačs (TN/LNNK)	<i>"And the chairwoman of the Human Rights and Public Affairs Commission [Ingrīda Circene] here read us a manifesto about the impermissibility of discrimination. Let me remind you that just any restriction does not constitute discrimination. Discrimination is an unjustified and unfair restriction. We support a justified and fair restriction. And in this regard it is not discrimination (16; 17; 19)... I believe that for labour rights, positive restrictions are possible. This does not prohibit the person from selecting a profession where he would not harm the interests of society."</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>

¹⁷ Later in the plenary session Šmits denied that this was an incitement to violence. He said: „I have not incited any kind of aggressive action, I have only reminded what is written also in your people's [addressing a Jewish member of Parliament] holy texts."

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Dzintars Rasnačš (TN/LNNK)	<i>"Many deputies have probably earlier been drafted into military service. I am talking about the representatives of the male gender. And remember, you were examined in the so-called obezyannik or in that examination point by a doctor... (Laughs) Now can someone with a non-traditional orientation work in such a place (16; 17; 18)?"</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 Official record of Parliament

17. MISUNDERSTANDING OR MISUSE OF TERMS

This category covers the misunderstanding or wilful misuse of the generally accepted meaning of a specific term and most often refers to terms such as “democracy”, “minority”, “free speech”, “tolerance”, or “discrimination”. Some politicians in Latvia appear have a completely different understanding of these terms than what is acknowledged in the West and in Latvia’s international commitments. It is possible that this misunderstanding arises from being overshadowed by their other convictions, such as religious or nationalist beliefs.

Frequency

In terms of frequency, this falls in the middle range of anti-LGBT speech. It is frequently used by LPP politicians.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Inta Feldmane, MP (LPP)	<i>"Democracy does not mean imposing the crippled values system of a minority on to the majority (17), and human rights are not above the laws of God (17), in accordance with which humans must live (6)."</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 15.09.05 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Mareks Segliņš, MP, Chairman of the Legal Commission of the Latvian Parliament (TP)	He believes that in Latvia all minorities are protected, only no one protects the “normal” ones.	Quote in newspaper, 14.10.05, p. 5 <i>"Latvijas avīze"</i>
Juris Lujāns, Party chairman (LPP)	<i>"A public demonstration of sexuality is not an expression of free speech."</i>	29.07.05, p. 4 <i>"Latvijas avīze"</i>

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"It is unacceptable even to call faggots and lesbians a minority."</i>	22.07.05, p.4 <i>"Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze"</i>

18. MANIPULATION WITH UNTRUE, UNTESTED, DISPUTABLE FACTS, OUTRIGHT LIES

This category represents sheer inaccuracy of assertions or, in a word, lies. These also include various pseudo-political or pseudo-scientific theories, as well as denial of certain facts or the "unmasking" of the truth (which homosexuals are allegedly hiding).

This is related to the preceding thematic category, but goes beyond misuse of a term to entire concepts, such as relying on definitions of homosexuality from a dictionary published in the 1920s/30s¹⁸ as authoritative fact. This also can be seen as a supporting category for other thematic categories.

Frequency

This category of "Manipulation with untrue, untested, disputable facts, outright lies" is by far the most popular among politicians, and seems to have been constant throughout the period of analysis. Jānis Šmits, current Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament, uses this method frequently.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"This amendment to the constitution protects us from the possibility that various EU directives could be imposed on us that would be contrary to the interests of the nation, for example, the legalisation of paedophilia (8; 9; 18) ... The amendment will also prohibit open propagandising of homosexuality by stating that it is of greater value than the family (7; 10; 17; 18)."</i>	Quote in newspaper, 17.12.05, p. 7 <i>"Latvijas Avīze"</i>
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>"... if the anti-discrimination law is adopted, any inhabitant of Latvia who says that homosexuality is a sin, is violating the law and is criminally liable."</i>	21.07.2010, p. 5 <i>"Latvijas Avīze"</i>

Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“And for the purpose of finding some kind of explanation for this thing, I have tried to turn to... I think this is our most authoritative source, and that is the “Conversational Dictionary” [an encyclopedia written in the 1920s/30s in Latvia] in order to determine once and for all what does pederasty mean (17; 18). Excuse me! I will now quote from this book’s text, what is this thing and who does it. Therefore: Pederasty is the satisfaction of sexual urges by placing the penis into another man’s anus. Therefore, a wholly condemnable act (14). Second, “pederasty is done by alcoholics and moral degenerates (9).” This is what our (5) Conversational Dictionary says. Therefore, even our Conversational Dictionary is against this.”</i>	Parliament plenary session, 31.05.06 “Official record of Parliament”
Turlais Dainis (LPP)	<i>“Today the European Union by tolerance and respect for minorities understands only sexual minorities (17; 18)!”</i>	Quote in newspaper, 07.06.06 “Вести сегодня”
Feldmane Inta, MP (LPP)	<i>“Through the holy books we see that homosexuality is a sin that destroys the foundations of society, the nation, the family (6). It is an open war against the family (7; 18). ”</i>	Public statement at City Hall Square, 19.07.06 http://newgeneration.lv/rus/novosti/?doc=1334 , 19.07.2006

19. DENIAL OF DISCRIMINATION

This negative thematic category is the denial of the existence of: discrimination against gays and lesbians, homophobia, or other negative conduct.

In the examples below, the statement by Ainārs Baštiks (LPP), former and current Minister for Children’s and Family Affairs is remarkably noteworthy for its disingenuousness.

Frequency

Although this is not one of the most popular categories of intolerant speech, it is a great favourite of Jānis Šmits, the current Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament.

Some examples (more examples in Annex 1)

SPEAKER AND POLITICAL TITLE, POLITICAL PARTY	QUOTE (WITH REFERENCES TO OTHER THEMATIC CATEGORIES, WHERE APPLICABLE)	DATE, EVENT, SOURCE
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now also Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“But I would like to emphasise, that in Latvia there never has been, nor, I think, will there be, persecution of those who think otherwise or of sexual minorities (19). As long as these minorities do not artificially create a situation where they are imposing on the majority of society their amoral things which contradict universally accepted norms and fundamental Christian principles.”</i>	Quote in newspaper interview 21.07.2006, p. 5 <i>“Latvijas avīze”</i>
Arvids Ulme (ZZS - Latvia's Green Party)	<i>“This entire situation regarding homosexuality or homophobia as it is now called... in Latvia, as you all know very well, in fact for these problems as such some kind of exacerbation did not even exist. No discrimination, no violence or anything. Everything started, this whole thing, only thanks to that pride march, which exacerbated this certain balance.”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.06 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Jānis Šmits, then MP, now Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvian Parliament (LPP)	<i>“Show me, please, just one homosexualist [sic] in Latvia whose rights have been violated or limited!”</i>	Plenary session of Parliament, 31.05.07 <i>Official record of Parliament</i>
Ainārs Baštiks, former and current Minister for Children's and Family Affairs (LPP)	<i>“These marches should not be allowed, because there is no discrimination of gay rights – no one is prohibiting them from doing what they want. But why do they want to popularise this and impose it on society (10)? Such marches have nothing to do with democracy and freedom (17).”</i>	20.07.05, p. 2 <i>“Rīgas Balsis”</i>

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The purpose of this report has been to monitor homophobic speech of politicians in Latvia and to develop a potentially reproducible methodology for continuing and expanding such monitoring. The study has generated a wealth of data about politicians' discourse with regard to gays and lesbians, as well as raised a number of issues for further consideration.

Hate speech – definition and mechanisms of accountability

First and foremost, the report monitored homophobic speech in Latvia, which is defined herein as a broader category than hate speech. While “hate speech” may be subject to legal consequences, “homophobic speech” includes speech that may not be illegal, yet that could and often does lead to social and political consequences. As Tariq Modood argues, “the ideal of civilized discourse has built-in restraints, and in the extreme case liberals may have to use law (where nothing else will do) to prevent the kind of abuse and provocation that would lead to a [social] breakdown”¹⁹.

The Latvian political and policy community should consider the following issues:

- How is “hate speech” understood in Latvia?
- What are the limits of acceptable political discourse? What are the limits of acceptable social discourse? How are such limits determined?
- Can a link be identified between homophobic speech expressed by politicians and actions undertaken by extremists?
- How and by whom are politicians to be held accountable for their speech? More specifically, what are the mechanisms in Latvia for holding politicians accountable for their words? What are the mechanisms in Europe?

The last set of issues is especially important, since the **cultural and historical context** within which hate speech occurs may render some mechanisms of accountability ineffective, even counterproductive. It is important to understand that hateful speech is not usually an isolated event, but rather a component of a particular way of conduct or worldview; therefore changing such practices is a lengthy and difficult process. As Tariq Modood notes, “In most cases, the **necessary inhibitions will be acquired through habit, principle, sympathy, and public censure**, but where they are lacking and civility is threatened, the law may be the only recourse available.”²⁰

Analysis of politicians' discourse in Latvia shows that homophobic speech is deeply linked with identity. Thus, for example, the **appearance of gays and lesbians in the public space** is understood by some politicians as a direct threat to their identity. In

¹⁹ *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*, by Tariq Modood, University of Minnesota Press, p. 125 and 126.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

such cases, the politicians are not able to disentangle their sense of self – as Latvian, Christian, heterosexual – from the public space, which in democratic societies should be able to accommodate diversity. Articulation of identity and homophobic speech presents challenges for finding the right mechanism for cultivating non-homophobic practices and discourses.

Here follow some particular issues for **consideration relating to some of the thematic categories** described above.

Nationalism (TC 5)

- What are the methods for cultivating a **national identity without exclusionary nationalism**?
- Is the **understanding and use of the term “nationalism” that we have seen in this study** a marginal political phenomenon or a broader social phenomenon?
- To what extent are nationalist arguments against gays and lesbians related to similar arguments against other minorities, ethnic, racial or religious? Consequently, is this an issue that is of concern to a broader alliance of minority groups?

Christianity (TC 6)

- What is the capacity of Christianity to accommodate diversity, namely can one be both a gay or a lesbian and a believer?
- How can a liberal-democratic state reconcile its allegedly Christian roots with its commitment to democracy and human rights?

Morality (TC 7)

- What are the concrete implications of advocating definitions of family that do not correspond to the social and historical reality? Given that family values do not exist above and beyond individuals that inhabit them, definitions of family that do not correspond to social reality do harm, for they inform legislative acts that do not facilitate but rather hinder the wellbeing of their subjects.

Foreign decadence (TC 8)

- Arguments positing homosexuality as a product of Western decadence bear a striking similarity to arguments used by the Soviet Union in its propaganda war against the West. It seems that some Latvian politicians are still tapping into this mindset.
- The politicians using arguments that depict homosexuality as a Western product imagine a Latvian history without homosexuals. However, the fact that gays and lesbians were not previously visible in Latvia's public space is

rather a function of the prevailing homophobic practices and attitudes than proof that gays and lesbians are new to Latvia.

Illness (TC 9)

- Assertions of homosexuality as illness should be easy to disprove, yet they remain widespread in the politicians' discourse. This is due to the availability of allegedly scientific arguments of questionable credibility. Undoubtedly, throughout history, science has been put to various questionable purposes, and continues to be closely linked with politics, yet some scientific sources are more credible than others, such as the World Health Organization and the American Psychological Association. The challenge remains for some politicians and other members of society (like religious representatives and internet bloggers) to be able to distinguish between the views of serious professional organisations and those of less credible and more biased organisations.

Conspiracy theory (TC 10)

- In the context of Latvian history, it should be noted that conspiracy theories were very common during the Soviet era and earlier. These were based on a lack of information that was interconnected with a dissatisfaction regarding the current state of affairs, plus, at times, the need to identify a scapegoat. A detailed analysis of the patterns of homosexual conspiracy theories may reveal striking similarities with alleged conspiracies attributed to other minorities in Europe, such as the Jews. For example, it is disturbing that quoting of the satire "The Gay Manifesto" still has so much credence in Latvia, particularly since direct parallels can be drawn between this satire and the fabricated "Protocols of the Elders of Zion". A belief in the accuracy of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" led to pogroms and worse against the Jews of Europe.
- More generally, why do conspiracy theories still generate so much credence in Latvia? What are the underlying socio-political and socioeconomic reasons?

Demographic crisis (TC 11)

- One of the ironies of the "demographic crisis" argument is that it assumes that the presence of gays and lesbians in society is a zero-sum game. According to the argument, if gays and lesbians are not excluded from participation in the public space of society, then society will undergo a profound crisis. The argument ignores the fact that homosexuals – and their struggle for equal rights – are not the cause of a demographic crisis.

- By scapegoating gays and lesbians, the greater risk is that politicians are driving talented people away from Latvia, in effect encouraging a “brain drain”. Contrary to some politicians’ insistence on the marginality of gays and lesbians, gays and lesbians are present in all social, ethnic, and economic groups of society – as prominent, educated, productive, and creative members. Departure of these individuals would be a loss to the economic and social well being of society²¹.

Exclusion from the public space (TC 13)

- What is the nature and role of public space in Latvia? It is evident that public space is not only functional, but also highly symbolic for both the anti-gay/lesbian platform and the gay and lesbian movement. Exclusion can happen both materially and symbolically, yet both have real effects for gays and lesbians. Consequently, relegation of gays and lesbians to the margins of the capital means relegation of gays and lesbians to the margins of society and the nation. This invites consideration about who claims ownership of the public space and who gets excluded in the process, and what material effects such seemingly symbolic exclusion has.

Marginalisation (TC 14)

- Europe and humankind generally have a tragic history of dehumanisation used as a tool preceding discrimination and, in some cases, annihilation. Some well-known examples include the rhetoric used against Jews in Nazi Germany as well as the justifications used to justify slavery in the United States.
- What are the effects of such marginalisation and dehumanisation of gays and lesbians in Latvia? How are such discourses even possible?

Incitement to violence (TC 15)

- To what extent can the speaker be held responsible for uttering statements that can be interpreted as incitement to violence – by both followers as well neutral observers?
- Throughout the world, some religious fundamentalists – Christians, Muslims and others – use their holy text to justify violence against others. Is incitement to violence under cover of the Bible an acceptable form of public discourse in a liberal democracy? What are the boundaries?

Misunderstanding or misuse of terms (TC 17)

²¹ In fact, some countries and cities around the world are competing to attract what has been called the “creative classes”. See the seminal article and book *The Rise of the Creative Class: Why cities without gays and rock bands are losing the economic development race* by Richard Florida. See also www.creativeclass.org.

- A necessary and immediate task could be the preparation of a small glossary defining terms like “democracy”, “minority”, “tolerance”, “discrimination” and “sexual orientation” and circulating this to politicians and others, perhaps with a healthy dose of humour and irony. Nonetheless, the statements by some politicians reflect a deep-seated conceptual misrecognition, rather than merely a terminological one. How to fundamentally change this understanding remains an open question.

Manipulation with untested facts, misinformation (TC 18)

- An important consideration, which is beyond the scope of this study, is what was the true knowledge or motivation of the politician when he or she spoke? Was the statement based on ignorance, misinformation, or was it a conscious lie? At the same time, Mozaika recognizes that proving someone’s intention is a nearly impossible task, yet, as public speakers, politicians have to be held accountable not only for the intention behind their speech, but also for its effects. This is a crucial issue for Latvia, for, to date, intention is much more valued than effects, thus privileging the voice of the speaker over that of the target of their speech. In other words, minority claims that a particular statement was injurious gets overridden by the claim that it was not intended as such.

Denial of discrimination (TC 19)

- An interesting and curious aspect of this thematic category is that the more the politician denies the existence of discrimination, the more they discredit their own argument. At the same time, these statements effectively demonstrate the deep gap of understanding with regard to the nature of **discrimination and its** manifestations between the principles enshrined in the Latvian legislative body and the practices of some of Latvia’s politicians.

Finally, as noted at the beginning of this analysis, the appointment of Jānis Šmits as Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Latvia Parliament calls into question the sincerity of any positive statements made by members of the ruling coalition (including the Prime Minister) after the anti-LGBT attacks of June 2006. The appointment of Šmits underlines a radically different understanding about human rights and associated understandings of the circumstances in which the human rights of some groups can be limited in order to purportedly uphold the rights of others.

As long as universal and European concepts of “human rights” – and indeed, “humans” – are called into question in Latvia at all levels of society – from politicians to thugs – the future of a stable democratic society is at risk.

HOMOPHOBIC SPEECH IN LATVIA: THE LANDSCAPE AFTER 2006

After the violent protests against the Riga Pride in July 2006, when a number of incidents drew international attention to homophobia in Latvia, the landscape of homophobic speech in the Latvian media and politics has changed. New channels of homophobic rhetoric were developed and some of the old ones have disappeared. Among the former, one could count the use of parliamentary debates for promoting homophobic rhetoric. As more recent monitoring of parliamentary debates has shown, virtually no examples of openly homophobic rhetoric can be found in the records of the plenary sessions of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) in 2007. Compared to the 56 cases when intolerant rhetoric was used by MPs against ethnic non-Latvians (Russian-speakers) and even to the 8 cases when the MPs ostracized or rhetorically excluded civil society and NGOs, only one example of speech directed against LGBT people has been recorded between 1 March and 31 December 2007 (see figure 1).²²

The groups targeted by delegitimising discourses in open debates in the Latvian parliament in 2007:

WITCH GROUPS ARE THE MAIN TARGETS OF DEL-EGITIMIZING STRATEGIES?	
Other&political activists	3
NGO's	8
Non-Latvians	56
Roma	1
New citizens	4
Refugees	0
Sexual minorities	1
Non-citizens	32
New immigrants	32

It is tempting to ascribe this change in parliamentary rhetoric to a shift in values or the development of democratic political culture, however, this thesis is at least partially disproved by the fact that some MPs have continued to reproduce homophobic rhetoric in the media. On the other hand, 2007 saw no legislative initiatives touching upon the rights of LGBT persons as a group, in contrast to 2005 and 2006, when amendments to

²² M. Golubeva, A. Rozukalne, I. Kazoka. *Izaicinājums pilsoniskajai līdzdalībai. Analītiskais ziņojums par Saeimas un mediju monitoringu*, p. 48 (Figure 51). <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=15022> (in Latvian). Last visited on 23.03.2008.

the Constitution (Satversme) and to the Labour Law, the former prohibiting marriage between people of the same sex, the latter adopting EU anti-discrimination norms on the basis of sexual orientation, were adopted. The lack of legislative agenda dealing with LGBT issues could at least partly explain the absence of homophobic rhetoric in the Latvian Parliament during the recent year. However, the same monitoring has also revealed a general tendency towards the reduction of stigmatising rhetoric in the Saeima in 2007. In the second half of 2007, the use of exclusionary rhetoric to undermine the legitimacy of minority groups has fallen considerably compared to the first half of 2007. Some MPs have used rhetoric which was not characteristic of earlier parliamentary debates, e.g. condemning the intolerant statements of their own party representatives. On the other hand, the total number of cases when MPs made statements recognising any minority group's contribution to society, showing that the group is entitled to participation, or questioning the 'us' versus 'them' rhetoric used by other MPs remained relatively low. The development of more inclusive and tolerant attitudes towards human diversity in the Latvian political discourse is taking time to develop, and the development path is remarkably thorny, as the virtual lack of affirmative rhetoric supporting the rights of LGBT people in the Parliament demonstrates.

Another part of the landscape – the media – has changed little since 2006 in its relation to LGBT issues. A cursory glance at the relative number of cases when intolerant rhetoric delegitimising various minority groups was used in the printed media reveals that homophobia is the leading motive of intolerant speech reproduced in the media. The highest number of cases of delegitimising speech in the Latvian printed media in 2007 was directed against LGBT people (117 cases)²³. Two newspapers, *NRA* and *Rītdiena*, were particularly consistent in promoting homophobic discourses. Statements concerning the 'fundamental' differences between a gay person and what the journalist termed a 'healthy person' were repeatedly published in *Rītdiena*. Both in *NRA* and *Rītdiena*, the activities of LGBT groups were portrayed as part of a foreign-sponsored campaign with the aim to discredit Latvia. Among the Russian-language media published in Latvia (and read by a substantial portion of the population), homophobic articles were particularly frequent in the newspapers *Час* and *Вести Сегодня*. The publications pointed out the 'infectious' nature of homosexuality and declared that it may pose 'threats' to society.

As can be seen from Figure 2 (below), the incidence of delegitimising rhetoric used against LGBT people in newspapers published in Latvia in 2007 was much higher than

23 M. Golubeva, A. Rozukalne, I. Kazoka. *Izaicinājums pilsoniskajai līdzdalībai*, p.

the incidence of similar articles targeting other minorities or NGOs.

Groups targeted by articles using delegitimising rhetoric. Printed media (national level newspapers) published in Latvia in 2007:

THE GROUPS MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLES	
New immigrants	7
Non - citizens	41
Roma	9
Sexual minorities	117
Refugees	0
New citizens	1
Non - latvians/Russians	77
Other specific ethnic groups	8
NGO	69
Other groups	26

Moreover, the most prominent source of homophobic rhetoric are the journalists and editors themselves. This does not allow for a very optimistic forecast concerning the time it might take for the media to abandon homophobic discourses.

A recent study of social and political discourses points out that:

‘Tolerance of others and of their opinions is perhaps the most basic general attitude underpinning democratic practice. Toleration is rarely absolute and can be difficult to achieve, but is of huge importance. However, the ability to tolerate not just the political views of others but also their right to express those opinions publicly is at the root of a democracy. In addition, tolerance demands making allowances not only for the political opinions of others but also for other aspects of their lifestyles, especially where these lifestyles differ from one’s own.’²⁴

The demonisation of adversaries, turning them into enemies with whom no civilised debate is possible, could not happen with the notion of pluralist society permanently present in parliamentary and media discourse. With the notion of pluralism absent or delegitimised, the demonisation of adversaries becomes possible and desirable.

One of the preconditions for the use of delegitimising strategies in order to discredit and

²⁴ C. J. Pattie and R.J. Johnston. *It’s good to talk: Talk, disagreement and tolerance*. <http://www.ggy.bris.ac.uk/personal/Ron.Johnston/CurrentPapers/Electoral/electoral21.pdf>.

marginalize social groups is the discourse of threat. Homophobic speech monitoring and later studies²⁵ show that LGBT people as a group are frequently cast in the role of dangerous outsiders with access to unlimited resources of foreign sponsors, potentially hostile to the nation's interests (which are never defined precisely). However, LGBT people are not alone in this situation. While rhetorical attacks against them are, in many cases, more vehement and more often inciting to human rights violations, references to vaguely identified threats to the country and 'the people' are also used to discredit active civil society groups and advocacy NGOs. In such cases, speakers justify the exclusion or unequal treatment of social groups, opposing their involvement in public policy. Civil society activist's desire to have a say in the running of society is seen as encroaching on the rights of professional politicians, the goals of activism are cast in doubt and the sources of support for them are portrayed as suspect:

'We cannot avoid seeing that some interest groups receive from their donors funding that is unlimited by Latvia's scale. This money allows exerting influence, recruiting the media and opinion leaders... This is an unconcealed wish to subject the representatives elected by the people to the unclear goals of a little group of self-satisfied manipulators. We should not forget that in a democratic state, nothing can substitute the legislative power of the Parliament...' (Indulis Emsis, former Speaker of the Saeima)

In such circumstances, it is no wonder that LGBT rights activism, as one of the most 'risky' forms of civil society activism, is viewed with suspicion both by opinion leaders and by society at large. It is important, however, to view the current and future fate on LGBT rights activism in the country, because it may serve as a valuable indicator of the development or stagnation of democratic political culture. Global studies show that there is a direct correlation between the extent to which a society believes in individual choice and its commitment to democracy.²⁶ While the path to a more tolerant and inclusive society in Latvia is hardly strewn with roses, it is important that LGBT rights activists continue their work, also because the issue they promote has direct bearing on the growth of democratic culture.

²⁵ See above M. Golubeva, A. Rozukalne, I. Kazoka. *Izaicinājums pilsoniskajai līdzdalībai*.

²⁶ See above, Footnote 2.