



Report from the Executive Board

From Dublin to Zagreb – a snapshot of ILGA-Europe's work over the past year

October 2012 – October 2013

In many ways, this year epitomised the crossroads at which the European LGBTI movement is finding itself. On one hand, more countries are adopting marriage equality laws and more countries are publicly acknowledging existing gaps in protection of trans rights. On the other hand, political backlash is more violent and harsher than ever in several other countries, with Russia leading this trend. ILGA-Europe operates in this environment which is increasingly multi-layered and complex, an environment which requires greater flexibility and the capacity to adapt strategies and messages to very diverse situations. It is also an environment in which there are a growing number of actors and stakeholders, and therefore increasing expectations put on an organisation like ILGA-Europe. This is bringing ILGA-Europe itself to a crossroads, a point where the organisation needs to invest in building its capacity “to respond effectively to the current needs and priorities of the LGBTI movement, and to seize opportunities and overcome challenges by adapting its strategies” as clearly stated in the proposed Strategic Plan 2014-2018.

This report is not meant to be an exhaustive account of all activities carried out by the organisation in the past year but rather a snapshot of the most significant developments, opportunities and challenges faced by ILGA-Europe since the Dublin conference.

Advocating for change from a European level perspective

A clear goal for ILGA-Europe at the European Union level has been to get stronger political commitment on LGBTI rights in the form of a specific EU strategy or Roadmap on LGBTI rights. A large effort went into building ground for such a Roadmap to be adopted by the European Commission, including by working directly with national governments to gain their support for EU action. ILGA-Europe's call for a LGBTI Roadmap – similar to strategies that exist on gender equality, for equality for persons with disabilities and Roma – is seen as a priority at a time when progress on anti-discrimination legislation continues to be stalled and the EU Commission's commitment to responding to the specific needs of LGBTI people wavering. This is why ILGA-Europe worked closely with the LGBT Intergroup of the European Parliament and several Member States towards rallying our voices to explicitly ask the EU Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Viviane Reding, to adopt an EU LGBT Roadmap during the first IDAHO Conference, hosted by the Dutch government in The Hague.

Despite a call signed by 12 governments at the IDAHO event, and the compelling data on experiences of discrimination in the EU revealed by the Fundamental Rights Agency on 17 May, the Commissioner dismissed the idea of a Commission strategy on LGBT issues. While her reaction is hugely disappointing, the campaign on the Roadmap has created an important momentum among EU member states towards stronger EU action on LGBTI issues, generating mobilization which can help achieve progress in several policy areas as well as in the development of national action plans in many EU countries. Moreover, it enabled ILGA-Europe to engage with national governments in a very productive manner, hence demonstrating the growing importance of working directly with national policy-makers – in close cooperation with member organisations – in order to instigate change at European level.

At the time when the Commission was refusing to adopt an internal strategy on LGBTI rights, the European Council adopted far-reaching EU Foreign Policy Guidelines on LGBTI human rights. Building on the work done with the EU's External Action Service over the past few years, ILGA-Europe actively contributed to the elaboration of the Guidelines, a comprehensive legally binding document which will give clear instructions to EU institutions and Member States on how to support the human rights of LGBTI people in dealing with third countries and at international fora. The Guidelines are the first ever EU policy document explicitly referring to intersex people.

Meanwhile, institutionalisation of LGBT rights in the Council of Europe's work continues to move forward. To support the process of creating monitoring mechanisms and the mainstreaming of LGBTI issues, ILGA-Europe has been providing information to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance to support inclusion of LGBT issues in the Commission's country monitoring, and has actively engaged with (among others) the staff of the LGBT unit, members of the Parliamentary Assembly ("PACE") Committee on equality and non-discrimination, and the PACE Rapporteur on LGBT rights. Whilst the Council of Europe continues to be a strong political ally that actively plays its role in cases of human rights violations in Europe, the blocking behaviour of certain states is an ongoing challenge to this work aimed at strengthening the institution's role and capacity to effectively monitor LGBTI rights and to provide much-needed technical support to Member States. This was illustrated over the past year with the Council's process for reviewing implementation of the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. ILGA-Europe provided extensive documentation collected by member organisations (including through dialogue with state officials) on the state of implementation in 16 countries. This clearly demonstrated the need for further action by the Council on the basis of the Recommendation. Yet, the opposition from vocal member states is stalling the review process and signaling that none of the positive developments of the past years can and should be taken for granted.

This past year, ILGA-Europe also actively contributed to the European conference hosted by the French government as the regional event feeding into the global dialogue on advancing the human rights of LGBTI people at the UN. Not only did this conference give an opportunity to build a constructive relationship with the French government, it also offered a space for ILGA-

Europe and its members to connect with and support the LGBTI agenda at international level.

Beyond ILGA-Europe's work on overarching European standards and commitments, lots of progress took place on specific issues. ILGA-Europe's work on asylum issues is a success story. The revision of EU's laws and regulations on asylum came to an end with the adoption of the last two revised EU asylum directives (one dealing with procedures in place to treat asylum claims and one on reception conditions for asylum-seekers) in June. Three years ago in its strategic plan, ILGA-Europe set as an objective to "achieve concrete proposals on improving European standards" and we did that and more. All three EU directives on asylum are now inclusive of both sexual orientation and gender identity; in fact, the Qualification Directive is the first ever EU directive to mention gender identity explicitly. There is of course work to do to ensure that these pieces of legislations translate into effective protection for LGBTI asylum-seekers. But ILGA-Europe succeeded in ensuring that there is a strong legal framework across the EU to work towards meaningful changes in practice.

In late 2012, ILGA-Europe took a leading role in a coalition campaign challenging the nomination of Tonio Borg as EU Commissioner for Health based on his track record on LGBTI rights and sexual and reproductive rights. While the European Parliament approved his nomination, several political parties made their support conditional upon specific commitments on women's rights and LGBTI rights as result of the campaign by the wide coalition of social NGOs that ILGA-Europe was part of. This campaign opened up doors for ILGA-Europe which had been closed until now. Since Mr. Borg took office, ILGA-Europe has been able to engage successfully with the Commission on several health-related issues, from programmes to tackle health inequalities to EU policies on HIV/Aids prevention to depathologisation of

trans identities. This will clearly be one of the most active policy areas for ILGA-Europe in the coming year.

Education is the other issue which is coming to the forefront of ILGA-Europe's policy work. ILGA-Europe gained the support of the Irish Presidency of the EU to host an official presidency conference addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools, the first ever EU level event on bullying. Organised in close cooperation with GLEN and BeLonG To, this conference enabled ILGA-Europe to open a dialogue with the EU commission on inclusion of LGBTI issues in EU policies and programmes. One outcome is that ILGA-Europe is invited to take part as a keynote speaker to a high level event on the future of EU policies on education in October 2013. This said, while continuing with its advocacy and coalition building at the European level, much of ILGA-Europe's attention in the field of education is focused on the national level, not only because education remains a competence of national governments, but also because so much of the expertise lies with national and local LGBTI organisations. To this end, the consultation conducted with members late 2012-early 2013 provides the basis for future targeted activities on exchanging good practices and mutual

learning on how to promote inclusive and safe schools across Europe.

Top on ILGA-Europe's agenda this year were of course the grave developments in Russia, in particular since the adoption of the federal law banning "propaganda" of homosexuality and with the threat of more LGBT-phobic laws being adopted. ILGA-Europe worked closely with the Russian LGBT Network and other Russian groups earlier in the year to oppose the law, and following its adoption, to provide technical and political support especially in addressing the sharp increase in societal violence targeting the LGBTI community. ILGA-Europe is also working with Russian activists towards developing new strategies adapted to this new political and legal reality, and to respond to the law's impact on the ability of the Russian LGBTI movement to organise and to continue to take public action. ILGA-Europe supported efforts to build global coalitions to respond to the negative developments in Russia and played an advisory role with many international actors in this context. Beyond the Russia borders, ILGA-Europe is also closely monitoring the spill-over effect on neighboring countries, in particular Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia.

Following a successful 2nd Intersex Forum in Stockholm, ILGA-Europe worked together with

OII Europe and other intersex organisations to move forward on making progress on some policy issues identified by the Forum participants. OII Europe with ILGA-Europe provided input to a report and resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on "Children's right to physical integrity" which resulted in achieving a call to governments to ensure that no one is subjected to unnecessary medical or surgical treatment that is cosmetic during infancy or childhood. It is the first resolution of its kind by any European institution and signals a shift from the current medical domain to a human rights approach. ILGA and ILGA-Europe are joining forces again this year to co-organise and facilitate the 3rd Intersex Forum, which will be held at the end of 2013.

ILGA-Europe's Annual Review & Rainbow Map is rapidly becoming an important benchmarking tool and information source for activists and policy-makers alike. The Rainbow Package is not only ILGA-Europe's best tool to gain visibility in the media for its work and for LGBTI issues in Europe, it is also one of the best tools to grab the attention of national decision-makers, as more of them ask us "what do we need to do by next year to be at the top of your ranking?". This year, ILGA-Europe successfully joined forces with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency to synchronize the launch of its Rainbow Package with the launch of the FRA LGBT Survey results. This led to wide media coverage of our work, including features on BBC, various international and national mainstream media and plenty of local and LGBTI media. In addition to the Rainbow Package, efforts to reach out to the media are paying off as ILGA-Europe is invited to comment on legal, political and social developments in Europe by a growing number of media outlets, including leading ones such as EuroNews, France 24, The Independent (UK), Der Spiegel (Germany), The Voice of Russia, La Repubblica (Italy), to name a few.

Strengthening the European movement

The work in ILGA-Europe's second major pillar, capacity-building, continued to expand and to effectively contribute to the development of strong, skilled and sustainable LGBTI groups in Europe. Over the past year, ILGA-Europe has focused on developing new areas of skills-building such as strategic communication and security training, while continuing to offer trainings on strategic advocacy and organisational development and to organise study visits with the European Union and the Council of Europe. The organisation also organized regional events addressing the negative regional trend on introducing laws banning so-called homosexual propaganda.

Re-granting is increasingly embedded as a core tool of ILGA-Europe's capacity-building programme (28 grants have been awarded since November 2012). ILGA-Europe awarded grants to support litigation projects, emergency grants to support security needs through the Dignity for All Consortium which ILGA-Europe joined last year, as well as grants for advocacy and documentation. One of the largest re-granting activities was a call for projects to document hate crimes using a common

methodology developed by ILGA-Europe. This project, funded by the Dutch government, is aimed at gathering comparable data from over a dozen European countries with a view to using it to advocate for stronger European laws and policies against LGBTI-phobic violence. The other large project is the “Advancing responses to discrimination, hate-crimes and other human rights violations in the European Region”, funded by US State Department. Within this re-granting programme, small scale grants to support capacity building of LGBTI organisations and advocacy related activities are offered to organisations in the pre-selected program countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. Re-granting work is increasingly linked with the training and policy priorities of ILGA-Europe.

With the increased influence of national governments on European developments, it is getting increasingly important for ILGA-Europe to strengthen the capacity of LGBTI organisations to engage nationally on key European level policy developments and implementation. This is why the board and staff

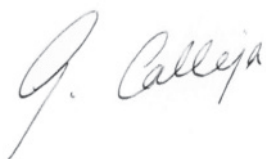
members revisited some of the organisation’s existing networks over the past year, assessing their relevance, format and make-up, and functions. In particular, the board decided that an Advocacy Network would replace the former EU and EU accession networks, taking into consideration the two EU enlargement processes, the sophistication of ILGA-Europe’s advocacy strategies and tools and the increased diversity of the EU Network. The new Advocacy Network will largely be organised around activists that are involved all year round as national advocacy focal points for ILGA-Europe, and show continuity in their involvement. In addition, ILGA-Europe will move towards holding more “thematic advocacy meetings” on targeted European policy issues, allowing a different group of members and activists who have more specialised interest or knowledge to participate. It is also envisaged to step up skills-building training on EU institutions and policies to be offered to a broader range of members (as opposed to limiting it to EU network members). In this context, ILGA-Europe has also stepped up its own engagement in external networks, such as the Brussels-based Human Rights and Democracy Network and the Amsterdam Network.

In the context of ever-growing needs for capacity-building, ILGA-Europe also started to invest time in setting up mechanisms to facilitate and increase peer learning amongst LGBTI organisations in the region and to use existing expertise within ILGA-Europe’s membership to support movement building initiatives in the region. A concrete outcome of this work is greater space provided at the annual conference this year for peer learning and exchange of experience among members. But this is just a start as the staff will look at further integrating peer learning into the development of training sessions, mentoring work and in-country programmes over the next year.

Inside the organisation

It is amidst a rapidly-changing environment that the strategic planning process took place this year. This process – which will hopefully result in the adoption of ILGA-Europe’s new five-year strategic plan at the Zagreb conference – rested on extensive contributions from the board, staff and members over an eight-month period. The board and staff allocated time and space to meeting with external allies and experts, to analyzing progress made on the current plan and to giving input towards an initial draft. A highlight of the process was the consultation meeting that brought together members, board and staff in Athens in early June. This resulted in a new draft that was sent to the whole membership for further consultation over the summer, and the final draft for approval by the membership in Zagreb.

Another important organisational process this year again was the work to secure future funding to meet the growing needs of the organisation. This has entailed not only exploring possible new sources of funding but also securing current ones, including by advocating, together with other European equality NGOs, for a strong EU financial programme on fundamental rights and equality for the next 7-year financial period. In relation to the staff team, ILGA-Europe recruited two new Programmes Officers (Boris Balanețkii-Schlütter and Valeria Santostefano, after the departure of Faika el-Nagashi) over the past year, and hired a new Finance Manager (Tom Donley) following the departure of the previous Finance Manager (Olimpia Ciripoiu-Vonica). While ILGA-Europe can rely on strong internal resources at the moment, the organisation has started to look for further ways to ensure that it continues to have the capacity to meet the increasing administrative and financial requirements linked to managing a professional organisation like ILGA-Europe.



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