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**European LGBT Policy Makers together in The Hague:
*Violence against lesbian women, gay men, bisexual and transgender persons¹ must be tackled!***

Homophobic violence and threats against LGBT's are considered, by governmental experts on sexual orientation policies in Europe, to be among the most serious problems in the area of LGBT policy in Europe. This is one of the results of the two day pre-conference "Mainstreaming Policies on Sexual Orientation in Europe", held on November 19 and 20, 2004 in The Hague.

Government officials to meet at follow up meeting in Europe

By invitation of the Coordinating Member of the Netherlands' Government for LGBT-issues, the State Secretary Mrs. Clémence Ross-van Dorp (VWS), a total of one hundred LGBT Government



Officials, pressure group members, volunteer organisations, researchers and representatives of social partners assembled. (in the picture above: participants at the conference)

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Mr. Roel Bekker, announced the start of a European network of LGBT Government Officials. He underlined the Netherlands' pioneering role in Europe in this area by granting a financial contribution to boost further cooperation between Government Officials from the EU Member States in 2005.

The audience, originating from 28 European countries from Finland to Cyprus, welcomed the Netherlands' initiative to boost further cooperation in this area. Already at the start of the Conference, it became clear that this initiative was likely to be continued during the EU Presidency of the United Kingdom (2nd half of 2005).

Dialogue between lgbt's and ethnic and orthodox religious communities

The Netherlands' *De Dialoog* (The Dialogue) project was presented at the conference as an example of a project currently active in the Netherlands, which bridges differences and tensions between LGBT's and religious groups like orthodox Muslims, -Jews and -Christians.

¹ = LGBT



(in the picture above: Omar Nahas of the *Dialogue* project in the lobby of the conference with the representative of the Netherlands' Ministry of Defence).

Differences between EU-member countries and the Lisbon agreement

People shared concerns about the future and did not hesitate to criticise. First of all, new EU Member States called attention to the fact that they are coming 'from afar' and have a long way to go in the area of LGBT emancipation, compared to most of the 'older' Member States.

Also more emphasis is needed at European level on the social dimension of the Lisbon agreements, especially where exclusion of LGBT's (both inside and outside the labour market) is concerned. Furthermore, the fear exists that in the dominant market approach emphasising commercial interests, social positions and equal treatment of LGBT's will receive less and less attention.



Displaying in-depth expertise, decisive action and humour, Joke Swiebel, former Euro Parliament Member and Chair of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Inter-Group of the European Parliament, guided the guests through the Conference. (see photo above)

Current different levels of protection in Europe

Also being advocated was a cohesive lgbt-emancipation policy at both National and European level, whereby the differences in protection afforded under the law to minority groups must be aligned and included in all policy fields.

A network was started of national government officials on the area of lgbt policies. The Netherlands EU Presidency and the United Kingdom EU Presidency will meet to discuss a follow-up conference in (end of) 2005.

ILGA-Europe and GO's strengthen their networks

To support cooperation among officials, researchers, volunteer organisations and other homo policy experts, COC-Netherlands and International Lesbian & Gay Association (ILGA) Europe will present a proposal to create virtual - Europe-wide - platforms.



This two day conference was realized in cooperation with COC-Netherlands.
(on photo: COC-Netherlands Chair, Wybren Bakker (left) talking with Chair of the National Government' Steering Committee on LGB matters in The Netherlands, Joop Verboom (right)).

The full report of the two day European Conference is expected by April 2005.
Anticipating the full report, which will be distributed to all invitees of the conference and contacts in Europe, a synopsis of the National Government Officials network meeting is included in this Summary Report.

Summary Report of the Government Officials meeting ***Government Officials network in the field of sexual orientation policies***

Seventeen Government Officials and other guests took part in this invitational workshop for Government Officials on 19 November 2004 in The Hague (hereafter: GO's). They agreed on the aims and the future agenda of this horizontal network.

- Belgium: Federal Government's Centre for Equal Opportunities
- Belgium/Flanders: Flemish Ministry for Equal Opportunities
- Czech Republic:
- France: Ministry of Justice
- Germany: Ministry of Health, Women and Family affairs (NRW)
- Ireland: Department of Justice
- Slovenia: Government's Office for Equal Opportunities
- Spain: Spanish Government official, Spanish Socialist Party
- Sweden: Government's ESF, EQUAL managing authority
- Turkey: Ministry of Labour and social security
- United Kingdom: Women & Equality Unit of the Department for Trade & Industry
- United Kingdom/Scotland: Scottish Executive
- The Netherlands: (5#) The Ministry for coordinating lgbt policies (VWS) and the Ministries of Home and Constitutional Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs and Labour and the Defence Ministry.
- The Luxemburg- and Austrian GO's have apologized for not being able to attend this meeting.
- Also the European Commission was not able to attend the meeting.

Moderator of this meeting is Ailsa Spindler, Equality Network, Scotland (UK) and the Rapporteur is: Bernard Baks, General-Secretary of the National Government' Steering Committee on LGBT matters in The Netherlands.

Closer horizontal cooperation between member states needed

The Moderator pointed out that this meeting follows the Netherlands survey 'Searching with a spotlight' amongst LGBT- GO's or -governmental experts in Europe. It has been issued by august 2003. It is also the first European meeting ever for GO's on the area of combating discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation. It was not easy to find colleagues on lgbt issues in the EU member states and Bulgaria, Croatia, Rumania and Turkey. It seems that only thirteen European countries have GO's that can be linked to the LGBT policy dossier.

Representing the Netherlands EU Presidency, Bernard Baks pointed out that, as it has been said earlier at the conference' opening, The Netherlands' Government would like to facilitate the *horizontal* and closer *cooperation between countries on LGBT-specific matters*. He also pointed out that it is important that this informal GO's meeting will be followed up next year by another host, another country in Europe.

Because of this commitment, The Netherlands' government is willing to grant an amount of €15,000 to the conference host organisation in 2005.

Given that the United Kingdom will hold the EU Presidency in the 2nd half of 2005, the Netherlands Government, the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish Executive are discussing the details of a follow-up conference next year.

Community's Action Program to facilitate cooperation amongst GO's?

As a preliminary remark the representative of the Czech Republic welcomes if the European Community's Action Program would facilitate this kind of network meeting amongst government officials.

Former assistant to MEP and member of the LGBT Intergroup MEP, Hein Verkerk, refers to the so called 'comitology process', which means that the member states GO's representation in Brussels may vary per country (be it an expert or a scientist or a GO).

GO's network has two aims

The aim of this GO's meeting is twofold: (a) prevent re-inventing of the wheel by exchanging good practices and (b) exchange and - where possible - co operate on lgbt policy matters.

The network group elaborated on two basic questions:

- *How can we make this network group interesting for ourselves and to our colleagues?*
- *What should be the agenda of our next year network meeting?*

On the first question: the GO's agreed that in the future the Presidency should press countries to attend this conference. Ministries can be pretty hierarchal bodies. It therefore can take a long way for the invitation to 'boil down' to the proper GO.

The participants agreed on the urgent need for GO's to meet on the issue of coordinating and mainstreaming LGBT specific policies. Especially when many ministers are in charge, a collective commitment and process coordination is essential.

The more precise topics for debate can be formulated, the more GO's might be attracted or willing to join the GO's network. However the specificities of sexual orientation policy could make government's decide to send another expert to meetings like this. This might differ from country by country.

What's next year's agenda?

On the question 'what should be the agenda of our next year network meeting?', most delegates came up with: *the violence and hate crime towards lgbt's in Europe*. But also other topics have been brought forward (at random):

- The recognition of same sex partnerships
- This network should clearly focus on *national* level (LGBT) policy making
- Contributions should focus on what is been done, practical
- Horizontal approach
- Learn from others' experiences especially on coordinating matters.
- How to deal with discrimination on the workplace?
- Exchange case-law between countries
- Homophobic violence and hate crime
- Employment & court cases & give good examples to companies
- Implementing 'same sex marriages'
- Create a national specific lgbt equality opportunities
- Evaluate the national specialised bodies
- How to tackle homophobia (and Islamophobia)?
- Trying to be more inclusive in our approach
- Help implementing the EU framework on other levels.

Conclusion of the GO's network meeting

The GO's network agreed on the following:

To establish a sustainable effective GO's network requires several stages and we are at the moment at stage one.

- Consider to make it a more formal invitation/more pressure by the EU presidency / focus on senior officials (preferably policy coordinators).
- Continue to look for GO's responsible for coordinating lgbt policies / create a critical mass.

Although we move to stage 2 and beyond fairly quickly with what we have at the moment, the danger is that we continue to leave behind, the GO's that are not here now.

- Mandate (by council) and facilitate a network of executive GO's in Europe on lgbt matters on the national level, exchange between countries for exchanging purposes (*horizontal cooperation*).
- Take the issue of homophobic violence and hate crime towards lgbt's on the agenda, agenda setting, therefore make it compelling and relevant for GO's to attend the meeting.

Communicate very clear the agenda whether it is broad or specific so that the appropriate GO's attend the right meeting.

Contact details of Government Officials on sexual orientation policies within the European Union & Turkey.

This list of contact persons is meant to be a dynamic report, however the details are quite static and might change in time. The validity of the information in this list, therefore, needs to be checked and updated regularly. Updates of information are welcome and can be sent to: bd.baks@minvws.nl which is the contact person for the Netherlands Government department for the coordination of policies on sexual orientation (at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport in the Netherlands).

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Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Industry:

Implementation of the Directives based on article 13. A new parliamentary Committee with numerous tasks in the field of discrimination (Cohesive Discrimination Legislation, Dir 2002:11) has been appointed.

Ministry of Justice:

Legislation on Incitement to Hatred now includes the ground sexual orientation.

Instrument of Government (forms part of the Swedish Constitution) have been amended (Chapter 1, article 2) with an obligation for authorities in the public sector to counteract discrimination on the ground of (among others) sexual orientation.

Ministry of Justice:

Instruction to authorities in the legal sector (the Police, the National Courts Administration, The Crime Victim Compensation and and Support Agency, the National Prison and Probation Authority, National Council for Crime Prevention) to fight homophobic crimes

Ministry of Justice:

New Mutual Cohabitees (Joint Homes) Act, Adoption, Custody, Artificial Insemination

Ministry of Social Affairs:

Health issues for lesbians and gay men. Instruction to National Institute of Health to investigate the health situation especially for young gay men and lesbians.

Ministry of Social Affairs:

Ban on Sauna Clubs. (Indirect discrimination due to Sexual Orientation)

Ministry of Culture/Ministry of Justice:

The Living History Project (New National Authority) .

Ministry of Justice:

Local Anti-Discrimination Offices run by NGO:s

Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Swedens role in promoting the right to equal treatment regardless of sexual orientation internationally, the need for protection based on persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation

Ministry of Justice:

The right to free movement for EU Citizens and their family members (cohabitants of the same sex/registered partners)

Ministry of Education:

Homophobia in schools, anti-mobbing work, equal treatment of students at universities

Ministry of Defence:/Ministry of Justice:

Equal Project Normgiving Diversity

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