

# ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015



\* National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgender (LGBT\*) Rights Association

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*The opinions expressed in this publication do not  
necessarily reflect the official positions of the funders.*



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# LGL IN BRIEF

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National lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT\*) rights association LGL is the only non-governmental organization in Lithuania, exclusively representing the interests of the local LGBT\* community. Association LGL is one of the most stable and mature organizations within the civic sector in the country, as it was founded on 3 December 1993<sup>1</sup>. The main principle, characterizing the activities of the association, is the principle of independence from any political or financial interests with the view of attaining effective social inclusion and integration of the local LGBT\* community in Lithuania. Based on its expertise in the fields of advocacy, awareness raising and community building, accumulated during twenty years of organizational existence, LGL strives for the consistent progress in the field of human rights for LGBT\* people.

At the moment, the LGL's team constitutes of 5 Board members, 7 staff members, 2 inter-

national volunteers (participating in the activities of the organization within the framework of the European Voluntary Service) and more than 20 local and international volunteers. Our team is vibrant, dynamic, energetic and always open for new members, ideas and projects. It has to be emphasized that not only homosexual individuals participate within activities of the organization. Together with the members of the local LGBT\* community we are proud of our friends and supporters, who first and foremost associate LGBT\* rights with the issues of democratic governance and effective human rights protection for all the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania without any exceptions.

The office of the association LGL is located in Vilnius, Pylimo str. 21. This is the space where the LGL's team is implementing various projects, organizing meetings and constantly inviting the members of the local LGBT\* community and their supporters to attend various events. The LGL's office is also home for the sole LGBT\* Center in the country. The LGBT\* Center hosts a library in relation to the organization's activities, the free internet access is provided and people are always welcome to come by for a cup of coffee or tea. The LGBT\*

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<sup>1</sup> Officially the association LGL was registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania on 4 May 1995.

Center is open for all well-meaning visitors, who are willing to know more about the organization's activities and about the situation of the LGBT\* human rights in Lithuania.

The association LGL is a member organization of the National Equality and Diversity Forum (NEDF, [www.nlif.lt](http://www.nlif.lt)) and the Human Rights Coalition (HRC). LGL also takes part in international cooperation within the framework of international umbrella organizations, such as ILGA (the International Lesbian and Gay Association), IGLYO (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organization), EPOA (the European Pride Organizers Association) and TGEU (the European Transgender Network). We believe that our strategic objectives can be achieved only through positioning the LGBT\* rights issue within the broader discourse of human rights, therefore we actively support various initiatives both on national and international levels.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LGL Board members and employees assume a significant workload on both a professional and volunteer basis. Without their passion, commitment and determination, LGL would not be what it is today – vigorous, dynamic, learning from its mistakes and bravely moving forward. A special impetus for our work also comes from our volunteers, friends and supporters – ardent human rights supporters in Lithuania grow in number every year.

*We thank everyone who contributed in any capacity to our organization's activities in 2015. We would like to specially thank:*

- LGL volunteers who contributed to the 2015 Rainbow Days and the organization of other community events;
- National and international experts and consultants who contributed to various reports, publications, events and seminars;
- The National Equality and Diversity Forum (NEDF) and the Coalition of Human Rights Organization's member organizations, for their constructive collaboration and solidarity in the field of human rights protection;
- Amnesty International's Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and German branches, and central office in London, for moral, ideological and expert assistance in promoting LGBT\* human rights in Lithuania;
- European Parliament members Ulrike Lunacek and Sophie in 't Veld, and the LGBT\* human rights group operating in the European Parliament, for drawing attention to LGBT\* human rights issues in EU institutions;
- Lithuanian Parliament members Dalia Kuodytė and Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė, for ide-

ological support of the LGBT\* movement in Lithuania;

- Tolerant Youth Association, House of Diversity and Education, and In Corpore, for active contributions towards promoting discourse on development of LGBT\* human rights.

***Our work would not be possible without contributions from our financial sponsors<sup>2</sup>. We would like to specially thank:***

- ILGA-Europe – International Lesbian and Gay Association’s European branch – for financing projects tailored to the local LGBT\* community’s needs, and for their full support in promoting LGBT\* human rights in Lithuania;
- Open Society Foundations, for providing institutional support to our organization;
- The European Commission, for providing financial support for the National Equality and Diversity Forum’s activities within the framework of the PROGRESS program;
- NGO Programme Lithuania funded by EEA Grants, for their financial support for the project „Towards the practical implementation of LGBT\* rights in Lithuania“ and for the project dedicated to strengthening sustainable development of the National Equality and Diversity Forum (NEDF).
- The European Commission program Erasmus+, for their support for the project „Strengthening Human Rights Activism in Lithuania“ and the Lifelong Learning partnership program-provided opportunity to participate in the project „QuPiD: Queer Paths into Diversity“;
- The US Embassy in Vilnius, for their support of activities providing opportunities for law enforcement officials to increase competence around hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity through research;
- Representatives of LGBT\*-friendly diplomatic representations residing in Lithuania for their support to LGBT\* human rights;
- Individual sponsors and donors for their faith in LGL’s expertise and competence.

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<sup>2</sup>A full list of financial supporters can be found under „Financial report“.



# 2015: TOP 10 MOST MEMORABLE EVENTS

## 1. LGL SOCIAL VIDEO CLIP AIRS ON LITHUANIAN TELEVISION



A video clip created over half a year earlier by national LGBT\* rights organization LGL finally reached television audiences and was aired without restrictions. As of February 13th, 2015, the network “Info TV” began showing it from 6pm onwards, during the most-watched timeslot. The video clip was a part of the social campaign “Change it,” and urged viewers to recognize the diversity of society, acknowledge LGBT\* people, and support the implementation of LGBT\* rights in Lithuania by signing a special petition.

## 2. LGL REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH MALTESE PRESIDENT



On February 25th – March 1st, 2015, four representatives of the national LGBT\* rights association LGL participated in the fifth partners’ meeting in the course of Grundtvig Learning Partnership “Queer Pathways into Diversity: ‘Being Different’ as a Key Factor in LGBT\*Q European Adult Education (QuPiD)” in the Republic of Malta. During their visit, LGL’s delegation participated in a gender diversi-

ty-themed seminar, discussed the methods of adult education for non LGBT\*s and were cordially invited to a reception by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society. In the course of the reception the representatives of LGL had the chance to present the President of the Republic of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, with an LGBT\*-themed souvenir from Lithuania.

### 3. LGL TRAVELS TO ICELAND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TRANS\* INCLUSION



On March 19th-22nd, 2015 two representatives of the national LGBT\* rights organization LGL visited the partner organization Q – Queer Student Association in Reykjavik, Iceland. The main purpose of this 4-day visit was

to acquire additional skills and competences in advocating for human rights of transgender individuals and to draw upon the best Icelandic practices in the fields of equality and non-discrimination.

### 4. RAINBOW DAYS 2015



On Thursday the 14th of May, the colorful and exquisitely fashionable event Cheer Queer organized by the National LGBT\* Rights Organization LGL took place at One-Two Bar, in Vilnius. The event successfully marked the beginning of the Rainbow Days 2015 festivities, a week-long series of events to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), occurring world-wide on the 17th of May.

From 10 to 10:30am on the 15th of May, 2015, a press conference for Rainbow Days 2015, which was organized by the national

LGBT\* rights organization LGL, was held at the conference hall of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. The same day, LGL's Board Chair Elena Dapkūnaitė and Executive Director Vladimir Simonko presented President Dalia Grybauskaitė with the "Change It!" petition signatures. That evening, the official reception for Rainbow Days 2015 took place at the Finnish Embassy. Numerous human rights activists, ambassadors, and figures from the world of culture and entertainment showed their support by attending the event.

At noon on the 16th of May, 2015 LGL's rainbow bus rolled down the streets of Vilnius's city centre. That day, the longest rainbow flag in the country was unfurled in an unexpected location in Vilnius – Cathedral Square.

On the 17th of May, 2015 LGBT\*-friendly foreign embassies in Vilnius raised the rainbow flag to honour the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDA-HOT) and to show their support for the LGBT\* community. The rainbow flag decorated the embassies of Italy, Finland, Norway, Austria, Germany, Denmark and Holland.

At 4pm the same day, LGL invited the public to a screening of the Italian film „Loose Can-

nons“, which took place in the theatre „Pasaka“. On the 19th of May, Rainbow Days 2015 travelled to Kaunas, and on the 20th, to Klaipėda.

## **5. U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBT PERSONS VISITS LGL'S LGBT\* CENTRE**



On the 18th of June, 2015 in cooperation with the US Embassy in Vilnius, the LGBT\* Centre of the national LGBT\* organization LGL was visited by Randy Berry, the U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons. The newly appointed Special Envoy was informed about the situation in Lithuania for LGBT\* people and on the activities carried out by LGL, and expressed his support for the LGBT\* community of the country.

## 6. JOURNEY TO „EUROPRIDE 2015“ MARCH IN RIGA



On Saturday the 21st of June, 2015, the national LGBT\* organization LGL marched in Riga at EuroPride 2015. The event will be remembered as historical for two main reasons: first of all, Latvia has become the first post-Soviet country to host the festivity of EuroPride. Secondly, attendance to the event reached an impressive number of 5,000 people!

For the occasion of EuroPride, LGL organized a bus from Vilnius to Riga, giving a unique opportunity to more than fifty people from the LGBT\* community of Vilnius and nearby towns to participate to EuroPride 2015. During the bus ride, feminist activist Margarita Jankauskaitė entertained participants with the passionate and enthusiastic lecture “EuroPride 2015: the importance of openness to myself and others”. LGL’s group stood out from

the parade for the bright colors of the posters, t-shirts, flags of its demonstrators, thus capturing and catalyzing the full attention of media and photographers.

## 7. LGL APPEALS BEFORE STRASBOURG HUMAN RIGHTS COURT



On August 13th, 2015 the National LGBT\* Rights Organization LGL applied before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) under violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) regarding limitations of access to available effective remedies against homophobic hate speech in Lithuania. An official complaint states that Lithuanian authorities have violated the Convention while disproportionately limiting the Applicants’ access to available effective remedies regarding hateful online comments posted under a same-sex kiss picture by two students, who are members of the local LGBT\* community.



## 8. LGL'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ELECTED TO ILGA-EUROPE'S EXECUTIVE BOARD



On the 31st October, 2015 Vladimir Simonko, co-founder and Executive Director of the Lithuanian National LGBT\* rights organization LGL, was elected to the ILGA-Europe Executive Board for the period of 2016-2017 during the elections by the Annual Conference, held on October 28th – 31st, 2015 in Athens (Greece). “I am sure that active participation in the ILGA-Europe Executive Board will enable me and my organization, which has been a member of ILGA since 1994, to contribute more directly towards the current needs of the movement. I believe that together we can make the change, which benefits not only the privileged ones, but also all our brothers and sisters in the diverse and unique European LGBTIQ community,” stressed Vladimir Simonko.

## 9. LGL'S SOCIAL VIDEOS FEATURE EXPERIENCES OF LITHUANIAN TRANSGENDER PERSONS



In November 2015 the national LGBT\* rights organization LGL filmed 2 social videos for its social campaign „#TRANS\_LT“, aiming to increase visibility of transgender persons in Lithuania. The social videos, filmed by a creative team from LGL and local movie director Romas Zabarauskas, feature members of the local trans\* community sharing the challenges they face due to the non-existing procedure of legal gender recognition in Lithuania and inviting viewers to sign a special online petition.

## 10. LGL APPEALS TO PARLIAMENT ON TRANSGENDER PEOPLE'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN LITHUANIA

centre for representatives of LGL and other interested civic sector organizations about effective methods of advocacy to secure rapid, transparent and accessible health care services for transgender persons.



On December 10th, 2015, LGL appealed via an open letter to Lithuanian Parliament for effective implementation of transgender human rights in Lithuania. In this letter, published on International Human Rights Day, LGL sought to draw lawmakers' attention to one of the greatest human rights disgraces in Lithuania – the lack of opportunity possibility for transgender persons to exercise the right to have their gender identity recognized. On the same day, experts from international organization „Transgender Europe“ held a workshop in the LGBT\*

# STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## COMMUNICATION

To provide objective and impartial information to the members of the local community, to the international partners, to the representatives of the mass media and to the general public, to the decision and policy makers (both on national and international levels) is one of the most effective strategies and priorities by the association LGL. We disseminate information regarding the LGBT\* human rights through the organization's web-sites ([www.lgl.lt](http://www.lgl.lt) and [www.atviri.lt](http://www.atviri.lt)), through social media ([www.facebook.com/lgl.lt](https://www.facebook.com/lgl.lt) and [www.facebook.com/BalticPride](https://www.facebook.com/BalticPride)), through the organization's newsletter, through public statements in television and radio, printed press and Internet media and through directly communicating with the members of the local LGBT\* community.

## ADVOCACY

The effective implementation of the international human rights standards, established by the treaties of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations, on the national level is a voluntarily undertaken commitment by the Republic of Lithuania to its LGBT\* citizens. We constantly remind to the representatives of the public authorities, which "homework" still has to be accomplished. There can be no second-class citizens in Lithuania!

## STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Identification of the potential legal situations, which have the potential of expanding on the standards of legal protection for LGBT\* human rights on the national level, and resolution of these legal situation through the judicial means is one of the priorities within the organization's activities. Strategic litigation is highly effective, but quite demanding strategy for promoting human rights. The participation in this process requires substantial financial, organizational and human resources.

## AWARENESS RAISING

One of the most effective strategies in promoting the social inclusion of the local LGBT\* community into the Lithuanian society is the increased social awareness about the challenges, faced by the local LGBT\* community on a daily basis, through "providing human face to the human rights problem". With regards to this purpose we organize the Baltic Pride March for Equality, Rainbow Days, various social events, trainings to the general public and

we ensure representation of the LGBT\* human rights issues in the public discourse. We do not seek to "demonstrate" anything, but we want to live openly both to ourselves and to the others.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

The members of the LGBT\* community in Lithuania increasingly become aware of the fact that human rights is not a given constant – there is the need to fight for equal opportunities and this struggle is taking place on a daily basis. With regards to this purpose we seek to equip our community members with the necessary skills and knowledge in this struggle for ours and yours equality. We organize various seminars, trainings, we provide individual consultations and we seek to increase legal awareness by our community members in the field of human right. In addition to this, we seek to build up a motivated team of volunteers, who have all the necessary skills and knowledge. We strive that our volunteers are using LGL as a platform for the implementation of their own ideas and projects.



## CAPACITY BUILDING

With the view of effectively implementing our strategic objectives in promoting LGBT\* human rights, we seek to acquire additional skills and competences in the fields of advocacy, awareness raising and community building. We want to function better and more efficiently. Regarding this purpose we participate in various trainings, seminars and discussions, we are actively seeking for additional fundraising opportunities and we want our volunteers to benefit even greater from their time with LGL. We are constantly strengthening the material basis of our LGBT\* center, which is accessible to all the members of the local LGBT\* community.

# LGL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015

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**Within the framework of the LGL's activities, the key strategic objectives are as follow:**

- (a) promotion of human rights and equal opportunities;*
- (b) promotion of equal treatment in the fields of employment and occupation;*
- (c) promotion of social inclusion and integration;*
- (d) promotion of the right to family life and recognition and equality for diverse familial constellations;*
- (e) education of the members' skills and promotion of participation of the represented social groups within the organization's activities;*
- (f) development of the organization's skills and competences.*

With the view of implementing its Strategic Plan and achieving the above mentioned strategic objectives, the association LGL accomplished various activities in the period of 2015. The summary of these activities is outlined below.

## EVENTS

### AWARENESS-RAISING

#### Rainbow Days 2015

From May 14-20th, LGL put on a series of „Rainbow Days“ events to mark the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia („IDAHOT“). The opening event of Rainbow Days 2015 took place on the evening of the 14th at One Two Bar in Vilnius. The event started with a lively and sparkling debate about LGBT\* Allyship, involving comedian Oleg Šurajev, politician Aušrinė Armonaitė, comedian Paulius Ambrazevičius and photographer Neringa Rekašiūtė. The event was followed by the special singing performance of drag artist Alen Chicco, that really captured the attention of the audience. The first Rainbow Days 2015 event also hosted Cheer Queer, which also hosted a significant cultural and artistic event: the fascinating LGBT-themed exhibition Rainbow Arts, collecting the artworks of local LGBT\* and LGBT\*-allies artists. The exhibited works dealt with the sexuality and experiences of the LGBT\* youth

– this year’s global theme for IDAHO. Since this was also a fundraising event, visitors had the opportunity to buy the artworks and to contribute in this way to devolve parts of the profits in charity to the realization of Baltic Pride 2016, a very special event in the agenda of the LGBT community of Lithuania for 2016.

From 10 to 10:30am on the 15th of May, 2015, a press conference for Rainbow Days 2015, organized by LGL, was held at the conference hall of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. Vice-Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania Algirdas Šešelgis, Senior Legal Counsel of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania Laima Vengalė-Dits, and Executive Director of LGL Vladimir Simonko participated in the press conference. Member of Parliament Dalia Kuodytė moderated the event. Participants discussed the challenges, problems, positive developments and initiatives related to improving the protection of LGBT\* rights. Participants discussed the challenges, problems, positive developments and initiatives related to improving the protection of LGBT\* rights. The same day, LGL’s Board Chair, Elena Dapkūnaitė, and Executive Director, Vladimir Simonko, presented

the President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė with the “Change It!” petition signatures. That evening, the official reception for Rainbow Days 2015, which was organized by the national LGBT\* rights organization LGL, took place at the Finnish Embassy. Numerous human rights activists, ambassadors, and figures from the world of culture and entertainment showed their support by attending the event. Over one hundred guests celebrated with Finnish Ambassador Harri Mäki-Reinikka, LGL Board Chair Elena Dapkūnaitė and Executive Director of LGL Vladimir Simonko. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Rainbow Award to defenders of LGBT\* human rights. This year, LGL Board Chair Elena Dapkūnaitė honored the Facebook kissing sensations Pijus Beizaras and Mangirdas Levickas with the award in recognition of their courage to use the freedom of expression.

At noon on the 16th of May, 2015 LGL’s rainbow bus rolled down the streets of Vilnius’s city centre. This year, the national LGBT\* rights organisation LGL, author of the censored book “Amber Heart” Neringa Dangvydė, Pijus Beizaras and Mangirdas Levickas, and other human rights activists invited residents and

visitors of Vilnius to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) for the fourth time in Lithuania. On Saturday, the longest rainbow flag in the country was unfurled in an unexpected location in Vilnius – the Cathedral Square. The rainbow bus began its journey at the LGBT\* centre in Vilnius and made stops at two strategically important locations – the Cathedral Square and the Vilnius City Chamber of Marriage. At each of these stops, fifteen passengers left the bus to hold the 30 metre rainbow flag, calling the attention of those passing by, journalists, and government officials to the critical need to protect LGBT\* rights.

At 4 pm on May 17th, 2015, LGL invited the public to a screening of the Italian film “Loose Cannons,” which was held at the “Pasaka” movie theatre in Vilnius. On May 19th, LGL brought the events of Rainbow Days 2015 to Kaunas. LGL invited the public to the LGBT\* Myth Busters Workshop and a Rainbow Days film screening. On the 20th, the same events also took place in Klaipėda.

## **LGL social video clip airs on Lithuanian television**

In February 2015, a video clip created over half a year earlier by LGL was finally allowed to reach television audiences and be aired without restrictions – the network „Info TV“ began showing it from 6pm onwards, during the most-watched timeslot. On September 15th, 2014, experts from the Lithuanian Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics concluded that the video could have a negative impact on minors. Based on this decision, Lithuanian TV channels decided that the PSA could be broadcast only after 11pm, with an A rating („adults only“.) The video clip was a part of the social campaign “Change it,” and urged viewers to recognize the diversity of society, acknowledge LGBT\* people, and support the implementation of LGBT\* rights in Lithuania by signing a special petition.

## **U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons visits LGL**

On the 18th of June, 2015 in cooperation with the US Embassy in Vilnius, the LGBT\*

Centre of the national LGBT\* organization LGL was visited by Randy Berry, the U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons. The newly appointed Special Envoy got informed about the situation in Lithuania for LGBT\* people, on the activities carried out by LGL and expressed his support for the LGBT\* community of the country.

During the meeting, board member of the national LGBT\* rights organization LGL Aliona Polujanova made a presentation about the situation of LGBT\* people in our country and presented the main initiatives of the organization in the framework of the European Union. The U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons have expressed concern over the Lithuanian lawmakers’ legislative initiatives, which are often intended at limiting the rights of the LGBT\* people, in particular the right of freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly and expression.

The U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons reported his wish to contribute to support LGBT\* rights organizations also inside the international business sector, particularly by promoting and supporting their community events. In turn, representatives of

LGL pointed out that in 2013, during the “Baltic Pride” festival, international companies operating in Lithuania did not in any way support the LGBT\* community of the country.

### **LGL representatives participate in 19th annual ILGA-Europe conference**

In October 2015, LGL representatives took part in the 19th annual ILGA-Europe conference „Many voices, One movement – Together, mobilised for a just society“ in the Greek capital Athens. The conference was unique in that for the first time, 450 human rights activists and decision makers from 53 countries took part in the most important LGBTI political event in Europe.

During the ILGA-Europe conference, LGL representatives participated in the event „Shrinking operating space for LGBTI rights organizations“, in which the phenomenon of „shrinking civil society operating spaces“ affecting LGBTI rights organizations was discussed, as well as ways to confront restriction of civil society organizations’ activities.

LGL’s team was also invited to attend international LGBTI rights organization Council for Global Equality’s private dinner with the USA’s specially appointed envoy for LGBT\* rights, Randy Berry. During the meeting, LGBTI rights

activists from fifteen European countries had the unique opportunity to present to the US special envoy the situation of LGBTI people in their countries, and make concrete proposals for pursuing LGBTI equality.

### **LGL Executive Director Elected to ILGA-Europes Executive Board**

On the 31st October, 2015 Vladimir Simonko, co-founder and Executive Director of the Lithuanian National LGBT\* rights organization LGL, was elected to the ILGA-Europe’s Executive Board for the period of 2016-2017 during the elections by the Annual Conference, held on October 28th – 31st, 2015 in Athens (Greece). In addition to supporting the ILGA-Europe’s leadership and its continuous work in assisting member organizations all across Europe, Vladimir Simonko introduced three thematic topics as a platform for his membership in the ILGA-Europe Executive Board, namely: overturning and preventing from being adopted any version of “anti-homosexual propaganda” laws or administrative regulations; promoting pan-European legal recognition of same-sex relationships; and supporting human rights defenders, including trans activists, who experience direct threats and insecurities in the course of their daily engagements. Furthermore, Vladimir Simonko will also seek to en-

sure proper emphasis on the region of Central and Eastern Europe with the view of comprehensively responding to the pressing human rights challenges in these jurisdictions. Even though LGL strives for the consistent progress in the field of human rights for LGBT\* people in Lithuania, the changes in new EU member states are taking much more time than originally expected.

## **Preparation for „Baltic Pride“ 2016**

In October 2015, LGL made an announcement about Vilnius City Municipality's October 21st decision to plan a time and place for the Baltic Pride 2016 March for Equality.

### **ADVOCACY**

## **Advocacy and hate crimes**

At the beginning of 2015, along with partners from Poland, Croatia, Latvia and Hungary, LGL launched the European Commission-funded project „Accommodating the needs of the victims of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes – raising competency in law-enforcement institutions“. A considerable amount of

work went into the project in its first year, with the goal of assisting LGBT\* people victimised by homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, and improving the legal situation.

September 18th marked the launch of a survey on hate crimes, which sought to collect as many experiences as possible from LGBT\* people who had experienced hate crimes, in order to help investigators understand the real situation: what kind of attacks LGBT\* people most often endure, whether they notify the police and others about their grievances, whether they are satisfied with legal assistance received, and so on. More than 150 people in Lithuania completed the questionnaire – the data collected will be summarized in a report scheduled for 2016, which will help LGL raise awareness of law enforcement personnel's treatment of hate crimes in further advocacy projects.

On November 7th, LGL representatives participated in a meeting with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and individuals who have suffered hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation. This event allowed OSCE representatives to get to know the reality of LGBT\* people in Lithuania, which will allow the organization to prepare trainings for police officers to more effectively investigate hate crimes.



## Advocacy in Lithuania

Although LGL is the only organization in Lithuania exclusively dedicated to representing LGBT\* people's interests and human rights, sometimes even its advocacy activities carried out at the national level go unnoticed. We believe that identifying primary advocacy activities in this report will help to objectively evaluate the work LGL has done.



On Monday the 20th of April, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania hosted the Human Rights Conference Equality Policies in Europe and in Lithuania: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives. The event was organized by the National Equality and Diversity

forum (NEDF) in cooperation with the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman of the Republic of Lithuania, the Committee on Human Rights of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the European Information Office of the Seimas. The representatives of National and European Institutions, ambassadors, researchers, NGOs representatives working at national and international level had the unique opportunity to have a look at the progress of equality and diversity mainstreaming across the European Union, assess the work that is still to be done to ensure that the rights of EU citizens are followed and engage in fruitful discussion and question times with the audience attending the conference.

In May, LGL debuted an inter-institutional action plan to promote non-discrimination against LGBT\* people, in which the government was urged to take measures to guarantee the human rights of LGBT\* people, such as changing partnership and legal gender recognition laws, repealing the homophobic Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information law, refraining from further homophobic and transphobic legislative amendments, education and so on. This plan was sent



to all government members and presented at the „Rainbow Days 2015“ press conference in Lithuanian Parliament. The last event was held on May 15th, under the endorsement of Parliament member Dalia Kuodytė.

In April 2015, LGL added activities related to the application of the Law on Equal Opportunity in Lithuania to their list of advocacy work. Upon attempting to rent a specially designated bus from UAB „Julturas“ for the journey to Baltic Pride 2015 in Riga, LGL representatives' request was denied by the company. Shortly afterward, the same company agreed to lease the bus on the same terms to a person unaffiliated with LGL. LGL proceeded to appeal to the the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Lithuania concerning possible discrimination. On May 16th, it was stated that UAB „Julturas“, in refusing to lease a bus to LGL for their journey to the march, violated the Republic of Lithuania Law on Equal Opportunities section 8 article 1, and the director of the company received a warning for the equal opportunities violation. News portals also wrote about the decision on the discrimination that LGL suffered in the field of services based on sexual orientation. LGL expects that this news

has inspired and encouraged more LGBT\* people to complain about service providers' discriminatory actions.

In 2015, LGL carried out monitoring of legislative activities. It was observed that on September 17th, as many as 7 homophobic and transphobic bills were identified in the working program for Parliament's autumn session. LGL has ensured that both Lithuanian residents and foreigners are informed about the content and dangers of these projects.

On August 18th, in solidarity with the Ukrainian LGBT\* community, LGL addressed an official letter to the government of Lithuania expressing deep concern about the events of August 12-15th in Odessa in which LGBT\* activists' march, planned for August 15th, was cancelled after being prohibited by a local court on August 12th. LGL's appeal urged government representatives to immediately declare an official position on these events.

## **Strategic litigation**

2015 saw the continuation of a legal case that began in December, 2014. On December 8th, 2014, a photo of two young men kissing

was published on Facebook, drawing significant public attention – some commentators applauded the couple for their courage, while others took the opportunity to openly incite hatred and retribution. LGL soon submitted a report to the Lithuanian General Prosecutor's office on these hate comments. LGL asked the General Prosecutor's office to launch an investigation under Criminal Code article 170 section 2. And 3., but the Klaipėda district prosecutor's office refused to initiate an investigation, dismissing the two men's photo as „eccentric behavior.“ In January 2015, Klaipėda's regional court upheld the city district court ruling, in which the district prosecutor's decision was recognized as legitimate. Klaipėda's district court ruling is not subject to appeal. According to the court, as the photo of the two men kissing was made public, „this action can be seen as an attempt to deliberately annoy or shock people with different beliefs, or encourage negative comments.“

On August 13th, 2015, LGL appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Lithuania's responsibility to ensure access to effective legal recourse under the European Convention on Human Rights default. LGL's of-

ficial complaint emphasized that effective legal recourse was disproportionately limited for the students who received hate comments after posting the kissing photo on Facebook, that Lithuania was violating the European Convention on Human Rights, and more specifically, that the applicants' right to respect for private life was covered by ECHR article 8, as well as the non-discrimination principle enshrined in article 14. LGL also noted in the complaint that Lithuanian law enforcement authorities' refusal to initiate an investigation infringes on the applicant's right to effective legal recourse.

### **Shadow report**

*Joint submission to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers in the case L. v. Lithuania, September 10th, 2015*

The association LGL in cooperation with the Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HMRI) appealed for the third time to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers regarding the Lithuanian Government's inaction regarding the implementation of the L. v. Lithuania (2007) case. The appeal focuses on the work-

ing group established within the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, which seeks ensure the regulation of the „suitable treatment of transgender persons“ and the smooth implementation of the Strasbourg court’s judgement. In particular, attention is drawn to the proposed amendments to the Civil Code designed to eliminate the obligation for legislator to regulate with a separate law conditions and procedures for gender reassignment, disregarding international transgender human rights standards, and providing no opportunity to change personal identification documents without the mandatory requirement for gender reassignment surgery. Secondly, attention is drawn to the working group’s Description of Requirements for Personal Health Care Services for Persons with Gender Identity Disorders, containing regulations not in compliance with the international medical community’s standards for health care services for transgender persons. It is stated that the assembled description of requirements cannot be considered as a suitable regulatory document for medical gender reassignment procedure. For this reason, it is recommended to modify the document in consultation with not only repre-

sentatives of the local transgender community, but also with international experts in the field.

Available online:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016804b0b10>

## TRANS\* advocacy

**„I can't go to the selected restrooms, I can't go to the selected changing room, I can't even show somebody my ID in a shop without facing an uncomfortable situation. This is very difficult, and I don't think this is how it should be“, – Oskaras, 18-year-old transgender man.**

**According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), as many as 60 % of transgender persons in Lithuania have experienced physical or sexual violence, or threats of violence, in the last five years.**



Today Lithuanian legislation provides no possibility for transgender persons to change their identity documents without the mandatory requirement of surgery. It means that if a person wants to change their identity documents, they must first undergo surgical gender reassignment surgery. However, not all transgender persons are able or willing to surgically change their sex (or desire for other methods of validating their gender identity, such as hormone replacement therapy.) The situation is further complicated by the fact that gender reassignment-related medical procedures are not currently available in Lithuania. Although the Lithuanian Government was obliged by the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case *L. v. Lithuania* (2007) to adopt laws on gender reassignment or to compensate the applicant for pecuniary damages associated with medical expenses for gender reassignment procedures abroad, Lithuania chose the latter option, and gender reassignment legislation is yet to be adopted.

**Lithuania is currently the only European Union Member State in which there is no opportunity not only to receive medical gender reassignment treatment, but there is no de jure or de facto procedure allowing transgender individuals to realize their right to legal gender recognition (i.e. the opportunity to change their identity documents.)**



It is not possible for transgender people to change their identity documents in Lithuania, except if they have undergone a surgical procedure abroad. However, this option is limited

due to the high financial costs.

**Key achievements in advocacy on transgender human rights:**

- *unfavourable legislative amendments prevented from being adopted;*
- *the Committee of Ministers supervises implementation of the L. v. Lithuania judgement*
- *Lithuania was placed under enhanced supervision procedure*
- *an interministerial working group has been created to address issues related to regulation of gender reassignment*

This is an obvious violation of transgender people's human rights, in which transgender people are forced to live with documents that do not comply with their true gender identity and physical appearance. This causes serious problems in everyday life, whether travelling, finding a job, or corresponding with public institutions. Transgender people are forced to disclose their gender identity every time they present their identity documents. In this way, they are constantly confronted with increased discrimination, harassment, and even threats of physical violence. They face questioning

about the authenticity of their identity and accusations of foreign identity appropriation and falsification of documents. Transgender people are forced to respond to various questions and give details about their appearance and legal status. The lack of opportunity for transgender persons to change their identity documents precludes the possibility for their integration into the country's economic and social life.

In March 2013, following a presentation, Lithuanian Parliament approved the Ministry of Justice's amendments to the Civil Code and the Civil Documents Registration Act, which, according to the Ministry, would implement the ECtHR's judgement in *L. v. Lithuania* (2007). Upon deeper examination of the proposed legislative initiatives, the association LGL concluded that the adoption of these amendments would not resolve the issue of transgender persons' right to have their gender identity recognized. Although it is theoretically possible to undergo medical gender reassignment procedures, making the issue an integral part of legally non-binding medical procedures and norms, and maintaining the broad discretion of healthcare professionals, given the transphobic climate in Lithuanian

society, it is unlikely in practice that this option would be implemented. In addition, in the context of the proposed regulations, complete medical gender reassignment continues to be seen as a necessary condition for obtaining legal gender recognition.



In response to the prevailing legal and political circumstances, in December 2013, the association LGL submitted their findings to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – the institution authorized to enforce ECHR judgements – on the decision to implement ineffective measures that do not comply with the international human rights standards.

In July 2014, the Lithuanian Parliament rejected the legislative initiatives proposed by the Ministry of Justice for implementing the EC-



ECtHR's judgement. During the plenary session, some MPs publicly stated that "these measures seek to fund sex change operations with tax payers' money", and called the concept of gender reassignment itself „nonsense“. On account of these negative processes at the national level, the Committee of Ministers, supervising the implementation of the judgement in the *L. v. Lithuania* case, applied the enhanced supervision procedure. This prompted the Lithuanian Government to announce a „reset“ policy and to look for the alternative public policy measures with the view of implementing the judgement in the *L. v. Lithuania* (2007) case. In January 2015 the Government's representative to the ECtHR informed the Committee of Ministers that it was decided to establish a working group within the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice on issues related to gender reassignment.

Although the enhanced supervision procedure put in place on the Council of Europe level and the „reset“ policy announced by the Lithuanian Government are considered to be the greatest achievements in the advocacy process, these episodes mark the inception of an exciting process that aims to ensure the long-

term implementation of transgender human rights in Lithuania.

*„The implementation of advocacy measures related to the rights of vulnerable, marginalized populations is necessary to ensure that these groups are represented in advocacy strategy planning, implementation and evaluation. Only in this way will it become possible to take into account the real needs of these individuals and to generate the most effective proposals for legislators and public policy makers“,*

**- Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius, LGL's Policy Coordinator (Human Rights)**

In February and April 2015, LGL representatives attended meetings in Strasbourg (France) with diplomatic representatives to the Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly delegates, and representatives of the De-



partment of Implementation of Judgements. In May 2015, LGL representatives were invited to a meeting of the working group within the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, at which they presented the highest standard for the protection of transgender people's human rights. Also, in light of these significant developments, appropriate actions have been taken by mobilizing local transgender community members and encouraging them to get involved in advocacy measures. Various community events such as film screenings and meetings with international experts also took place. The community's efforts toward mobilizing didn't take long to yield results – in December, 2015 LGL presented its first video campaign to increase trans\* visibility, in which real Lithuanian trans\* people shared their personal experiences pertaining to the difficulties of obtaining legal gender recognition. This interesting and dynamic process is analyzed in detail in LGL's first publications concerned explicitly with transgender human rights, i.e. „Standards for Transgender Persons' Human Rights: Gender Reassignment and Legal Recognition“ and „Protection from Discrimination on the Grounds of Gender Identity and

Expression in the Lithuanian Legal System: a Feasibility Study“. In December 2015 a campaign was launched on the portal manoteises.lt to collect signatures for an electronic petition #TRANS\_LT. The petition sought to urge the country's legislators, policymakers and decision makers to comply with international standards for transgender human rights and to establish consistency within national legal regulation, allowing transgender people to change identity documents without medical gender reassignment surgery. In order to emphasize the need for legal recognition of gender reassignment in Lithuania, the signatures collected for the #TRANS\_LT electronic petition are scheduled for delivery to Parliament and other responsible institutions. Although this advocacy process is still ongoing, it can be concluded that LGL has strengthened its position as a non-governmental organization representing the interests of transgender persons both at the national and international levels, thus making it possible to achieve effective progress in transgender individuals' human rights in the future.



## COMMUNITY BUILDING

### **Membership and Board**

On March 11th, 2015, during a general meeting, LGL members approved a new statute defining membership in LGL as well as members' rights and duties. By becoming a member of LGL, an individual becomes entitled to the right to attend and vote at LGL general meetings, to be elected and to elect members to LGL posts, to participate in the operation of LGL, to use services supplied by the organization, and to submit proposals on the running of LGL and contribute to real change in Lithuania.

During the LGL general meeting, Elena Dapkūnaitė was elected as new Board Chair, and new Board members Eduardas Platovas, Aliona Polujanova, Tomas Reves and Irena Vanglikaitė were elected. LGL Board members gather monthly to a Board meeting, at which important organizational issues are discussed.

### **Volunteer recruitment**

LGL's LGBT\* center has been in operation

since 2004. This center functions as a gathering place for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, as well as a library of literature related to the organization's activities, where one can make use of a free internet connection and stop by for a cup of coffee or tea. The LGBT\* center is open to all well-wishing visitors who want to learn more about the organization's activities and the LGBT\* human rights situation in Lithuania. At the center, volunteers organize film screenings, discussions, art workshops and many other events and activities. In 2015, the center hosted more than 20 events for both the LGBT\* community and the general public.

This year, LGL began to open its doors to anyone interested in the organization's activities with an open house day. Visitors had the opportunity to stop by the LGL office, meet the staff, get answers to their questions, and find out about volunteer opportunities.

Local LGL volunteers and EVS volunteers called people together to celebrate important dates: workshops were organized for World AIDS Day, Coming Out Day, and Bisexual Visibility Day, as well as Valentine's Day and Christmas parties.

On March 14th, 2015, the LGBT center hosted the open workshop „Guerilla communication“, during which participants had the opportunity to get acquainted with the theory of guerilla communication, as well as methods and real-life, practical examples of interventional acts. The workshop was led by (counter)cultural activist Willi Hejda.

On May 17th, 2015, the event „TRANS\* Pizza“ was held in order to discuss the trans\* community's expectations and needs in a political and legal context.

LGL's EVS volunteers also organized a clothing-sharing workshop, in which anyone wishing to participate could make t-shirts and exchange unwanted clothing still in good quality. The center also hosted LGBT-themed film screenings and discussions, and when the weather improved, everyone went outside for a queer picnic and a LGBT\* scavenger hunt incorporating important locations in Vilnius. And long autumn evenings were spent gathering for board game parties and making zines.

## Public Relations

Some of LGL's work is out in the open, re-

ceiving much media attention, while other equally important work goes on only behind the scenes. The latter includes meetings with politicians, writing complaints to the prosecutor's office, and providing emotional, social, and legal support to LGBT\* people in need. In addition to being a strong human rights advocacy organization, LGL has become an LGBT\* community centre. It is of great importance to LGL to reach all people of different sexual orientations and sexual identities, from all regions of Lithuania, and all socio-economic groups. Likewise, it is imperative that LGL communicate with foreign organizations, institutions, politicians, etc. to attract their attention to Lithuanian problems. In September, 2014 LGL initiated a **fundraising campaign** to encourage public contributions.

# PROJECTS

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## C.O.D.E.: COMING OUT FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

- *Time frame: May 2014 – March 2015*
- *Financial supporter: European Commission's general employment and social solidarity program PROGRESS (2007-2013)*
- *Implemented by: Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, project partners: Lithuanian Disability Forum, LGL; implemented in cooperation with the National Equality and Diversity Forum*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7513](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7513)*

The project is implemented by the partnership of the Lithuanian Equality Body – the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (OEEO) – and two non-governmental organisations the association “Lithuanian National Forum of the Disabled” (LNF) and the Association LGL. The project is developed in accordance with the priorities of the call and with the national strategic document for 2013-2014. To strengthen and disseminate good practice results of the PROGRESS programme implementation in Lithuania, project partners will implement the project in cooperation with the National Equality and Diversity Forum (NEDF), members of which are non-governmental organisations representing vulnerable groups of residents that experience discrimination. The main objectives of the project are:

- *to strengthen the NEDF through ensuring its sustainable development and to utilize the strengthened capacities of the Forum in the field of non-discrimination mainstreaming through practical integration of equality issues in national policies;*
- *to document and to monitor the instances of discrimination and stigmatization in various settings with the view of developing evidence-based advocacy strategies;*
- *to implement targeted interventions with the view of empowering and building acceptance of the most socially vulnerable and stigmatized groups within the Lithuanian society (e.g. the disabled, Roma people and LGBT\* community);*

- *to raise awareness around equal opportunities in general and about specific challenges, faced by various minority groups, through the application of innovative and interactive strategies and methods.*

## **TOWARDS PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF LGBT\* RIGHTS IN LITHUANIA**

- *Time frame: January 2014 – July 2015*
- *Financial supporter: NGO Programme Lithuania funded by EEA Grants*
- *Implemented by: LGL*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=4667](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=4667)*

The main purpose of the proposed project is to mainstream the LGBT\* equality into the Lithuanian politics through addressing the practical challenges, faced by the local LGBT\* community on a daily basis.

The objective of the proposed project is to achieve more comprehensive social integration of the local LGBT\* community by taking into account its specific needs.

The goals of the proposed project are as follows: (a) to identify and raise awareness

among the general public, legislators, policy makers and the LGBT\* community itself about the practical problems, which are faced by the local LGBT\* community on a daily basis; (b) to develop and to propose specific measures, strategies and methodologies, which would aim at mainstreaming the LGBT\* equality in the decision making process in Lithuania; (c) to apply specific measures, which would cause the actual change in the LGBT\* lives in accordance to their specific needs.

## QUPID: QUEER PATHWAYS INTO DIVERSITY

- *Time frame: September 2013 – July 2015*
- *Financial supporter: Grundtvig program for lifelong learning*
- *Implemented by: Kampania przeciw homofobii, KPH (Poland), LGL (Lithuania), Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen, VNB e.V. (Germany), Stiftung Akademie Waldschlösschen, AW (Germany) Gay Older Brothers and Sisters, GOBS (United Kingdom) ir the Malta Gay Rights Movement, MGRM (Malta)*
  - *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=6387](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=6387)*

„QuPiD. Queer Pathways into Diversity. Being different as a key factor in LGBT\*IQ European Adult Education“ – is a project of the Grundtvig lifelong learning partnership program. Six organizations from five countries (Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Malta and UK) are participating in this project. Projektas QuPiD focuses specifically on political education, which critically deals with heteronormativity and the issues surrounding it. The project partners consider LGBT\*IQ adult education as a key element in combating how non-heteronormative ways of living have been marginalised and stereotyped, and we seek to sensitise

and inform the heterosexual majority of society on these issues. The six project partners aim to discuss the needs, resources, topics, target groups, approaches and objectives in LGBT\*IQ adult education through an exchange of experiences and best practices.

## ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF LGL AS A NATIONAL LGBT\* ORGANIZATION

- *Time frame: December 2014 – November 2016*
- *Financial supporter: Open Society Foundations*
- *Implemented by: LGL*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7530](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7530)*

The main goal of the proposed project is to ensure the sustainability of the LGL as a national LGBT\* organization and its on-going awareness raising, advocacy, strategic litigation and community building efforts in tackling discrimination and social exclusion of the local LGBT\* community in Lithuania.

The main objectives of the project are identified within the framework of the four proposed pillars of the activities of the project, namely awareness raising, advocacy, strategic litigation and community building:

- *To increase public visibility of the local LGBT\* community in general and the specific challenges with regards to homophobia and transphobia in the Lithuanian society in particular through organizing large-scale awareness raising campaigns.*
- *To apply both reactive and proactive advocacy strategies with the view of ensuring effective protection and implementation of the human rights of the LGBT\* individuals on the national level within the particular spheres of combating homophobic and transphobic legislative initiatives,*

*developing national policies on social inclusion of LGBT\* groups and addressing the issues of transgender rights and homophobic and transphobic bullying.*

- *To challenge the discriminatory application of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information with regards to the LGBT-related public information before the national courts with the view of amending or abolishing the Law in a long-term.*

- *To contribute to the strengthening of the LGL within the local LGBT\* community as an open, inclusive and responsive to the community's needs organization through the development of the volunteering sector and engagement with the community work.*



## CONSOLIDATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM

- *Time frame: October 2014 – November 2015*
- *Financial supporter: NGO Programme Lithuania funded by EEA Grants*
- *Implemented by: LGL and NEDF partners*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7474](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7474)*

This project is intended to strengthen NEDF through ensuring its sustainable development by increasing the capacities of the participating organizations and building upon the cooperation potential; to increase the effectiveness, skills and public visibility of the NEDF through the application of internal measures; and to improve the skills of the participating organizations with the view of taking part in the policy-making and decision-making processes in order to represent the general priorities of NEDF efficiently.

During the project, workshops have been organized to exchange experiences on issues of religion, senior care, gender and sexuality, as well as trainings in the fields of advocacy and

communication. NEDF also organized the conference „Equal opportunity policies in Europe and Lithuania: Current challenges and future prospects“.

## ACCOMODATING THE NEEDS OF THE VICTIMS OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC HATE CRIMES – RAISING COMPETENCY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONS

- *Time frame: January 2015 – January 2017*
- *Financial supporter: Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission*
- *Implemented by: Kampania przeciw homofobii, KPH (Poland), LGL (Lithuania), lesbian organization Kontra (Croatia), Háttér Társaság (Hungary), MOZAĪKA (Latvia).*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7534](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7534)*

The project was aimed at diagnosing specific needs of the victims of hate crime in the light of the Victims Rights Directive and ensuring their proper and respectful treatment by law-enforcement officials. This is taking place through detailed research of existing legal framework, policies and the experiences and needs that victims have while in contact with police officers, prosecutors, judges, legal practitioners and victim support centers.

One of the features contributing to the originality and significance of the project is that the outputs are being developed in close coopera-

tion between the experts, theorists and practitioners, NGOs, academics and institutional, governmental partners to ensure their utility. In this framework, two researches were conducted in order to study hate crime victims' needs, challenges and problems – quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative research invited LGBT\* crime victims from partner countries to fill in a questionnaire about their experience of hate crime and its reporting to the police or other stakeholders. The qualitative research, consisting of multiple interviews with different target groups, was performed in

each partner country as well. Both studies will be combined to provide a report with valuable data about the victims' needs, experiences, helpful tips, tools and help to develop further project activities and outputs.

Questionnaires were translated into the project countries' languages and advertised through LGBT\* audience targeted media channels, to increase the participation a prize lottery was organized, a leaflet was developed to provide information on what hate crime is, what the Lithuanian national law says about it and what to do if one experiences a hate crime

or witnesses it. The leaflet is available in Lithuanian, Russian and English in paper and in electronic formats. In addition, a Benchmark report was produced in each project country, with the goal of evaluating whether the national legal systems guarantee the rights of all victims of crimes that are established in the Victims' Rights Directive. Therefore the Lithuanian report researches what measures country policy makers have taken to implement the Directive, and identify the issues of transferring it into national law.

## **BLEEDING LOVE: RAISING AWARENESS ON DOMESTIC AND DATING VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIANS AND TRANSWOMEN IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

- *Time frame: February 2015 – February 2016*
- *Financial supporter: European Commission Daphne Programme*
- *Implemented by: LGL with partners from Italy, United Kingdom, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Belgium, and Portugal*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7521](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7521)*

The project aims at contributing to the prevention of domestic and dating violence against lesbians, bisexual women and transwomen in selected countries in the EU. It investigates causes of domestic and dating violence; characteristics of abusers and modality of violence. In more detail it is the first attempt to gather data on domestic and dating violence against lesbians, bisexual women, and trans women by collecting both legal texts and regulations, as well as national legislation, and good practices to prevent or resolve the occurrence of intimate violence.

The project achieved the following goals: a) one comparative research analyzing causes of violence and good practices adopted to prevent or to sustain lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims of domestic and dating violence and related issues; b) one innovative awareness campaign targeted at the women themselves and at the general public on this kind of violence; c) one two-day international final conference.

In the course of the project's implementation, two social videos aiming at raising awareness about domestic and dating violence against LBT\* women were also developed.

## **„FORGING FORWARD TOWARD RECOGNITION: DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCES OF TRANS\* INDIVIDUALS IN THE SPHERE OF EMPLOYMENT“**

- *Time frame: April 2015 – August 2016*
- *Financial supporter: ILGA-Europe Advocacy and Documentation Fund*
- *Implemented by: LGL*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=11908](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=11908)*

The project „Seeking Recognition: A study on trans\* individuals' experiences in the work force“ is intended to methodically collect information about trans\* people's experiences in working society. It is the first study of its kind in Lithuania. The information collected will be used to develop evidence-based advocacy tools to draw policy makers' attention to the need to include discrimination on the grounds of sexual identity in the Labour Code. The data will also be used to inform employers in both the private and public sectors on the challenges faced by members of the trans\* community both when seeking employment, and maintaining it.

Having developed an evidence-based advocacy strategy, LGL will be able to efficiently summarize the difficulties faced by transgender people in the labour relations field to various audiences – namely, law and policy makers, employers, and wider society. This information will help explain why the existing social and legal situation is unsatisfactory, and why Lithuania is behind European standards of legal protection. This, in turn, will encourage public policy makers and national authorities to take decisive steps in changing the current situation and challenging discrimination against transgender individuals.

## **NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM (NEDF) COOPERATION PROJECT OF EFFECTIVENESS DEVELOPMENT**

- *Time frame: July 2014 – January 2015*
- *Financial supporter: Ministry of Social Security and Labour*
- *Implemented by: LGL with NEDF partners*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=7594](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=7594)*

This project aims to reduce discrimination on the grounds stated in the Lithuanian Equal Opportunity Law, raise public awareness and foster respect for humanity. In order to raise awareness of equal opportunity issues and promote non-discrimination, the project promotes non-discrimination measures through mass-media in order to better understand various forms of discrimination and their negative effects.

The project succeeded in organizing a national conference, during which participants shared their best strategies for cooperating with state institutions, discussing national non-discrimination policy, their achievements, and the challenges ahead. A series of radio shows were organized to encourage equal opportunity and non-discrimination, and analyses of multiple types of discrimination were published.

## **DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO LGBT\* HATE CRIMES**

- *Time frame: July 2015 – December 2016*
- *Financial supporter: European Commission Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme*
- *Implemented by: LGL*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=10804](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=10804)*

The project is aimed at generating increased accessibility of knowledge for the national authorities on addressing hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI). Fear of being mistreated or discriminated by law enforcement officials or victim support providers is one of the main reasons for huge rate of unreported cases of SOGI motivated hate crimes. This will be addressed by implementing the following measures: a) Integrating the anonymous online reporting form into the website providing for the capacity to collect records of SOGI motivated hate crimes; b) Developing of toolkit for law enforcement officials and victim support providers; c) Conducting trainings for legal practitioners as well as representatives of victim support services;

d) Analyzing data collected in the course of the project and assessing the needs regarding the establishment of LGBT\* shelter with the view of providing specifically tailored victim support services.

Thanks to this project, the direct beneficiaries – law-enforcement officials and victim support services – will receive tools and competences applicable in their everyday work and necessary to accommodate the needs and The project will hopefully also ensure the protection of rights of the ultimate beneficiaries – victims of hate crimes – thus making them more likely to report crimes without fear of disrespect or victimization, which will positively affect law enforcement and improve safety and living conditions of EU citizens.

## **UNIFORM: BRINGING TOGETHER NGOS AND SECURITY FORCES TO TACKLE HATE CRIMES AND ONLINE HATE SPEECH AGAINST LGBT PERSONS**

- • *Time frame: November 2015 – November 2017*
- *Financial supporter: European Commission*
- *Implemented by: LGL (Lithuania), Cavarria (Belgium), Estonian Human Rights Center, Háttér (Hungary), GLEN (Ireland), MGRM (Malta), ILGA Portugal, Federation of Spanish LGBT Organizations, GALOP project (United Kingdom)*

- *Internet page:* [http://www.lgl.it/en/?page\\_id=11904](http://www.lgl.it/en/?page_id=11904)

UNI-FORM is a European project, financed by the European Commission, and being implemented until November 2017 in ten (10) European Union countries. After collecting relevant information from interviews with key stakeholders (security forces, justice professionals, victim support services and victims), this project will develop an online reporting form and a mobile app. Both the website and app will be directly linked to the national LGBT partner organisations and may or may not also be linked to the relevant national security force.

Objectives of the project: a) Combat discrimination and violence against LGBT persons and underreporting figures, and increase knowledge on homophobic and transphobic hate crime; b) Implement applicable EU legislation, c) Create a uniform reporting mechanism; d) Promote networking among all involved actors, in particular security forces and LGBT NGOs; e) Raise awareness of LGBT victims of hate crime and encourage trust building relationships among relevant stakeholders.

## **EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE (EVS) PROJECTS EMPOWERING YOUTH TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE EUROPE**

- *Time frame:* April 2014 – January 2015
- *Financial supporter:* European Voluntary Service under the program „Youth in Action“
- *Implemented by:* LGL
- *Internet page:* [http://www.lgl.it/en/?page\\_id=7502](http://www.lgl.it/en/?page_id=7502)



The overall objective of this project is to combine our knowledge and experience with our volunteers' fresh ideas and creativity in order to develop new initiatives against homophobia and social marginalization in Lithuania and Europe as a whole. The project aims to encourage young LGBT\* people to participate in European Parliament elections and to develop critical thinking as citizens.

The project took place in LGL's office in Vilnius, the only LGBT\* center in Lithuania. For 10 months, EVS volunteers from the Czech Repub-

lic and Italy participated.

One of the volunteers was responsible for supporting the implementation of LGL's international projects, engaged in ongoing project management, and assisted LGL's youth group coordinator. Another volunteer carried out communications, disseminating information on Facebook, blogs, Youtube, LGL's website, newsletters, etc. while strengthening international collaboration. They also contributed to preparations for Baltic Pride 2014 in Tallinn.

## **VOLUNTEERING FOR VISIBILITY AND INCLUSION**

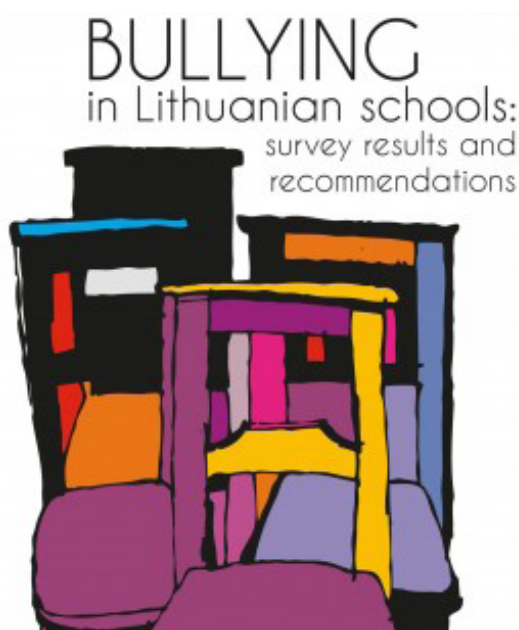
- *Time frame: August 2015 – October 2016*
- *Financial supporter: European Commission, Erasmus+ program*
- *Implemented by: LGL*
- *Internet page: [http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page\\_id=12610](http://www.lgl.lt/en/?page_id=12610)*

The main goal of this European Voluntary Service (EVS) project is to join the long-standing experience of LGL with the ideas of the volunteers in working towards developing the ways and means for increasing the active participation of the LGBT community.

EVS volunteers' experience volunteering at LGL shows that voluntary service in the human rights movement in Lithuania not only contributes to a freer, more open local LGBT community, especially for youth, but also encourages volunteers to more actively fight for their own and others' rights. At LGL, EVS volunteers – working with experienced participants in the movement, local volunteers and staff – share their knowledge and perspective, learn together, further develop their competencies and learn new ones that will be useful whichever direction they choose in their native country or the broader European Union labour market. During the project, LGL accepted two volunteers, Annemarie from Germany and Yuri from Italy.

# PUBLICATIONS

## *HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING IN LITHUANIAN SCHOOLS: SURVEY RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*



In March 2015, LGL presented the publication “Homophobic Bullying in Lithuanian Schools: Survey Results and Recommendations”, introducing one of the most pressing, yet unrecognized issues in Lithuanian schools. This publication is the first step towards tackling the problem of homophobic and biphobic

bic bullying in Lithuanian schools and aims to provide teachers and other professionals working with young people the knowledge to help the fight against violence in the learning environment. In April 2015, volunteers sent the release to the country’s educational and research institutions. Soon, copies of the study on homophobic and biphobic bullying in Lithuanian schools had reached 250 of the country’s general education schools, every educational psychological service operating in Lithuania, educators and social workers in higher education, the Ministry of Education and Science, Parliament’s Education, Science and Culture Committee, the Lithuanian Students’ Union and Lithuanian Student Parliament.

## ***ACTION PLAN ON NON-DISCRIMINATION OF LGBT\* PEOPLE 2015-2020, 2015***



ensure that acceptance for LGBT\* people improves. The plan includes recommendations for measures in areas such as human rights, social acceptance, education, protection from violence, health, employment, sports, tourism and more. On LGL's website, the brochure can be viewed **in full**, presenting non-discrimination policy at both the EU and Lithuanian levels, good practices from abroad, and other relevant information. The publication is expected to draw policy makers' attention to problems faces by LGBT\* people, and to encourage the formulation and implementation of a coherent anti-discrimination strategy at the state level.

In April 2015, an LGL initiative published the Action Plan on Non-Discrimination of LGBT\* People (2015 – 2020 m.), which, taking into consideration the current situation for LGBT\* people in Lithuania, gives guidance on non-discrimination principles and seeks to

# STAFF

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*Volunteer Coordinator*

*(until February 2016)*

**Marius Goročovskis**

*Communications Coordinator*

*(until April 2015)*

# VOLUNTEERS

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The team of volunteers is one of the key pillars within the framework of the organization's activities. Our volunteers come both from Lithuania and from abroad, i.e. Italy, Finland,

Germany, the Netherlands, etc. All of them contribute their time, ideas, skills and experiences with the view of implementing LGL's objectives and enriching the association's activities.

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## *It is cool to volunteer at LGL, because you can:*

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- *join your activist forces in the field of LGBT\* human rights, thus becoming part of human rights history in Lithuania;*
- *participate in various conferences, workshops, trainings both nationally and internationally;*
- *get to learn how LGL functions, i.e. what methods it uses in promoting human right and what kind of projects it implements;*
- *gain valuable professional experience, skills and feedback;*
- *improve your English language skills;*
- *meet tons of inspiring and interesting people and broaden your social network.*

The spectrum of activities for LGL's volunteers is very broad. It consists of activities such as writing articles, performing daily administrative tasks in the office and engaging with the local LGBT\* community (organizing various workshops, lectures, meetings, movie screenings, etc.).

LGL is very proud of its volunteers. It is amazing how their individuality, ideas and commitment magnificently contribute to the success of the organization's activities. Our volunteers support each other. In addition to that our Volunteer Coordinator is always ready to help our volunteers in overcoming arising challenges, acknowledging the plethora of organization's project activities and keeping up with their motivation to volunteer.

With the view of providing comprehensive information on volunteering at LGL, we have developed the list of frequently asked questions (FAQ), which can be assessed online at:

<http://www.lgl.it/prisijunk/savanoryste/duk/>

In case you cannot find an answer to your question, you want to make a remark, a comment, or a suggestion or you want to join our team right away, contact the LGL's Volunteer Coordinator directly:

**email: [volunteers@gay.it](mailto:volunteers@gay.it)**

# FINANCIAL REPORT


## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2015

Unused project funds (2014-12-31)	104.548 €	
INCOME		
	€	%
Amnesty International	4,013 €	2
EEA Grants and Norway Grants	38,126 €	15
European Commission	9,596 €	4
European Commission programme „Youth in Action”	69,990 €	27
Nordic Council of Ministers	6,800 €	3
Lithuanian Social Security and Labour Ministry	5,059 €	2
USA State Department	17,265 €	7
European Social Fund in Lithuania	2,989 €	1
ILGA Europe	18,549 €	7
Embassy of Israel in Lithuania	4,000 €	2
Open Society Foundations	80,358 €	31
Other supporters	5,723 €	2
All funds received	262,468 €	100
<b>Total:</b>	<b>367,016 €</b>	
EXPENDITURES		
	€	%
Wages (gross)	91,721 €	38
LGBT center expenses	33,126 €	14
Projects	113,396 €	48
All expenditures	238,243 €	100
<b>Unused project funds (2015-12-31)</b>	104,548 €	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>371,111 €</b>	



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