

'IT DOESN'T HURT TO HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF FUN'

Results of a
benchmarking
study performed by
RFSL (Sweden) and
LGL (Lithuania)
2009–2010



Sub-project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms and co-funded by Lithuania

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INTRODUCTION

This benchmarking study is a result of cooperation between the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, RFSL and the Lithuanian Gay League, LGL (Lietuvos Gėjų Lyga). It is based on twenty interviews, ten from Sweden and ten from Lithuania. The interviewees are all, in some way, involved in promoting human rights. Some of them work in our respective organisations, or other LGBT organisations or LGBT projects, with LGBT issues. Others work in other organisations or as civil servants inside the framework of promoting human rights and/or helping individuals. The interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2009 and the winter of 2009–2010. In Lithuania they were conducted by seven activists in LGL. In Sweden they were all conducted by Lars Jonsson, Policy and Advocacy Officer of RFSL and coordinator of this benchmarking study. The study is part of a project between LGL and RFSL called Partnership for Equal Rights and financed by EEA Grants and Norway Grants. The study has been compiled by Lars Jonsson at RFSL.

The approach chosen for the benchmarking research is called appreciative inquiry. This approach is based on the simple idea that organisations move in the direction of what they ask questions about. Appreciative inquiry is distinguished from other change methodologies by deliberately asking positive questions to initiate

constructive dialogue and inspired action within organisations. We have therefore asked the interviewees about their best achievements and peak experiences in order to draw conclusions about best practices in six different fields:

- Motivation of human resources
- Leadership
- Sharing knowledge
- Promotion of minority culture
- Educating norm-setters
- Advocacy and lobbying

Every interviewee answered the same questions about two or three of these fields. To make this benchmarking study as lively as possible we decided to include a summary of each of the interviews. This is also because we know that knowledge and new ideas often derive from individual good examples. For that reason, the interviews are presented as they are, separate from the overall analysis and conclusions.

It is the knowledge that arises through experience and through sharing and discussing issues that we've tried to capture in this study. This kind of knowledge however loses much of its rich detail, its inspiring potential and applicability as soon as it's written down on paper. Nonetheless it is this kind of knowledge that forms the backbone of our organisations and that inspires and enables members and volunteers to learn and find innovative methods of working together.

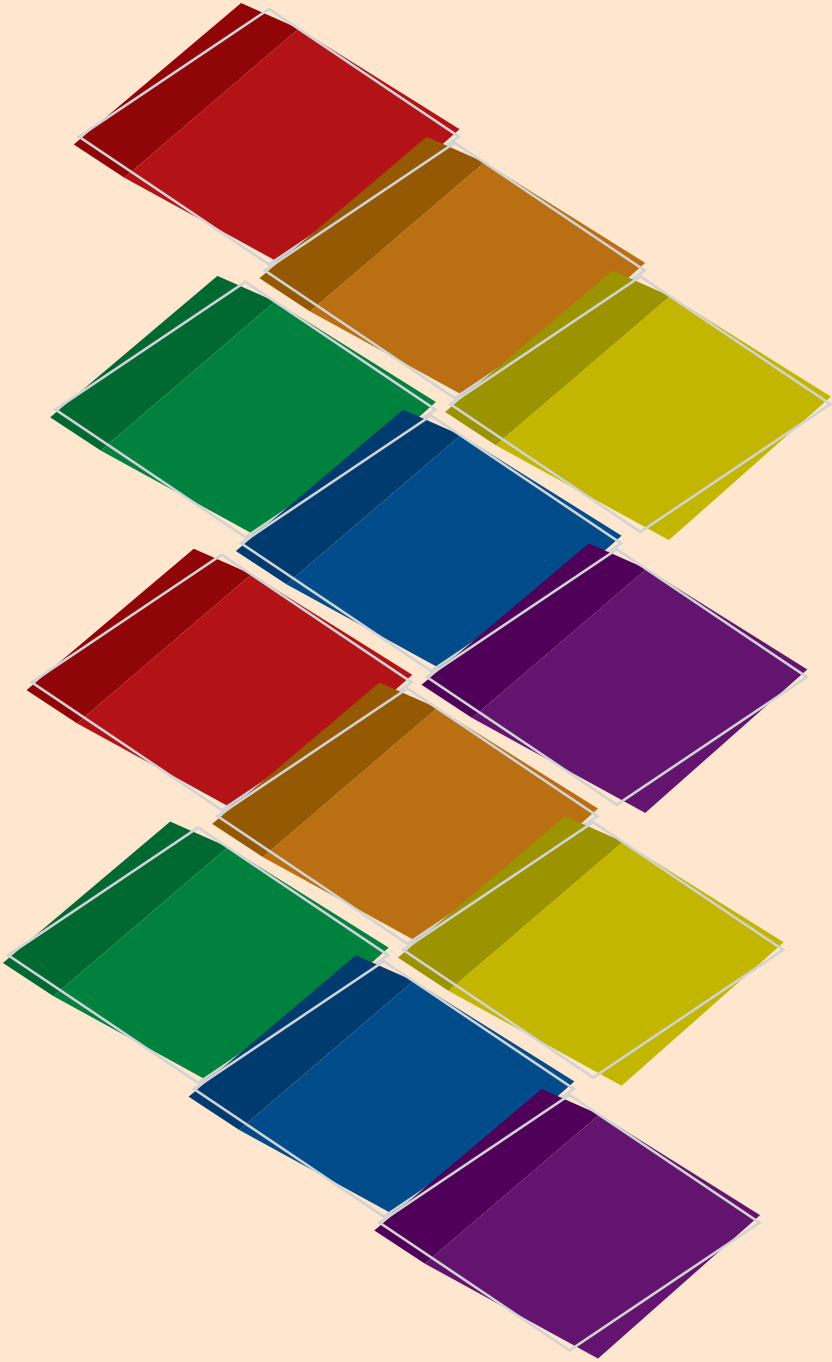
The collection of stories – best practices – is an attempt to capture this tacit and more implicit knowledge. This benchmarking study would like to share these stories with you about best practices.

RFSL and LGL would like to thank the leadership and organisational development consultants at In Dialogue (www.in-dialogue.org) for originally providing us with the tool, the appreciative inquiry method, used. It is only thanks to the experience of a previous benchmarking project, which both RFSL and LGL were a part of and which was facilitated by In Dialogue, that we were able to conduct this study on our own.

USIONS

CONCLUSIONS

USIONS



MOTIVATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

'If you want to keep enthusiastic people in your organisation, you have to communicate with them as much as possible. It's fairly difficult for a young organisation to satisfy all these priorities, but you should strive to achieve them. I believe that it's not a problem when you are weak in certain aspects, because it's impossible to achieve great results within a short time. If your organisation has a strategic plan and works on it consistently, great results will follow at the right time.'

VLADIMIRAS SIMONKO, LGL

'We – everyone in charge of Egalia – have been very involved, sometimes on the brink of being too involved, and I as the project leader have been obliged to remind everyone about the limitations and the direction. My role as a leader was to keep the flame alive and to get everyone to find their place. It was a very transparent leadership where you don't keep any secrets. Everyone had access to all the documents: the project description, the budget, and so on.'

MARIE CARLSSON, RFSL Stockholm

One of the major challenges of running a volunteer-based organisation is to attract, maintain and develop volunteers and

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

activists. There is often a strong wish for more volunteers, since they contribute ideas, enthusiasm and a couple of extra hands. The core of our LGBT organisations is the volunteers, who, without any compensation besides the gratification of achieving progress, work endless hours for free. At the same time, we are also becoming professionalised. So far, more so in Sweden than in Lithuania. RFSL has at its head office, thanks mainly to government funding, a work force of around 20 paid employees who are experts in their field of work. Ideally, the professionals interact with the volunteers in a constructive and motivating way and the volunteers contribute with new thinking. But what happens if the volunteer base is actually not much needed anymore to carry out work? When an organisation gets professionalised, and when the funding is guaranteed for a professional project, sometimes the volunteers get cut out. This is sometimes inevitable, but as an organisation you have to remember that the creation of creative spaces for new activists is the only insurance you have that your organisation will live on.

Human resources constitute the credibility of the organisation. They, the members, the activists, are the ones you represent. The purpose of the activities of LGBT organisations is often to create safe environments for the community, where people are encouraged to be themselves, to come out and get support in your identity.

Key factors in motivating human resources have been found to be:

- Transparency and a clear structure
- Setting up well-defined goals to work with
- Giving activists a reasonable work-load
- Having working means of communicating with your human resources

- Creating an atmosphere of appreciation
- Giving the activists a lot of feedback and letting them take part in decision making

Stockholm Pride, the association that organises Pride week every year in Stockholm, is based on several hundred volunteers. Many of them work all year round, not only before, during and after pride week. Jointly they have a huge workload to deal with and a considerable amount of responsibility. The chairman of the organisation over the past year, Claes Nyberg, defines the amount of time volunteers are willing to set aside working for Stockholm Pride as the organisation's strongest asset:

'We have a very strong work ethic and a sense of responsibility inside the organisation.'

What makes all these hundreds of volunteers show up every year to work, without compensation, for Stockholm Pride? Maybe the greatest motivation is a feeling of belonging and a feeling that what you are doing is meaningful. The space created is somewhere you can meet new friends, sometimes even a partner, and feel you are part of events that are having an impact on the whole of society.



LEADERSHIP

'It's important to be clear and straightforward and to be able to set limits. You have to encourage the people you work with and make them feel that they are important inside the organisation in order to achieve results. It's vital to listen and be compassionate, but also to be willing to fight when necessary.'

JON VOSS, managing director,
QX Förlag AB

'The leaders of such (LGBT) organisations must assume a considerable load and possess a strong spirit. I would like to wish everyone who wants to be a leader in this field the same things: decisiveness, strength, and the ability to understand people's expectations.'

VYTAUTAS VALENTINAVIČIUS, chairman,
Tolerant Youth Association

What kind of leadership is required in order to be successful as an organisation? Most of the interviewees have roughly the same idea about what should be characterized as successful leadership. It is, among other things, a lot about being able to motivate colleagues and being able to take action in a decisive way. During the interview with the former project coordinator at RFSL Stockholm, Marie

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Carlsson, she spoke a lot about her own leadership role in the project she was in charge of – about managing to point out the direction to her co-workers and making them work in a dedicated fashion towards a common goal. She characterises her leadership as transparent, meaning that she never kept any secrets. In the interview she talks about leadership:

'It takes self-confidence to be a good leader. You have to be self-confident about what you are doing and you have to be able to work inside certain frames so that you don't feel the need to use the classical ruling techniques, which is the case for insecure leaders. That is to withhold information, to make decisions in small groups without transparency, and to use mystifying concepts. You have to be honest and straightforward. Many leaders feel that they have to deliver the whole package instead of letting their co-workers be a part of the process. But you have to remind yourself that it's not me and them but that we are all doing this together. What separates me from them is that I have the authority to take certain decisions, but we're all in the same boat rowing towards the same destination. Your co-workers are not the brakes but the engines and without them you can't navigate this ship.'

As a leader it's important to realise that you are more dependent on the group you are leading, in terms of earning confidence for example, than they are dependent on you. They often, if you are an elected leader, can decide at the next annual meeting to replace you if you haven't been as efficient, sensitive or decisive as was expected of you. It's also important to realise that it's not your role to always deliver everything. You have to involve your colleagues or co-workers in the preparations and thinking process that leads up to delivering. If you do that, you have also made them feel partly

responsible for the actions that you as a leader have the ultimate responsibility for.

A skill that wasn't mentioned very much in the interviews, perhaps because the questions were directed towards the internal life of the organisations, was the leader's ability to establish and maintain good relations with the external world. Being a likeable person and being able to perform well when it comes to mass communication such as holding speeches and participating in the media are important skills in this area.

Key factors of successful leadership have been found to be:

- Motivation and communication skills
- Decisiveness when needed
- Transparent decision-making process
- Democratic approach
- Being a bearer of visions
- Ability to implement decisions by delegating and maintaining an efficient structure

You may say that if you're going to be regarded as a successful leader the decision making process is almost of greater importance than what the decision itself turns out to be. Asking all others involved for their opinions, listening to them attentively, and noticing the potential in ideas other than your own are vital ingredients in this process of reaching a decision:

'A leader is like a vessel that contains the overall context, processes it, and then approves the final option.'

**JULIANA LOZOVSKA, project coordinator,
Ladyfest Vilnius**



SHARING KNOWLEDGE

'Everyone gains his or her own experiences from the people they have met, the things they have read and the co-workers with whom they have been lecturing. We speak about methods and substance. These meetings are on quite a concrete level. This is something you need to set aside time for. When you have these meetings regularly you learn to reflect all the time about what you want to share with the others on the team.'

ANETTE SJÖDIN, in charge of education and
international programs at RFSL

'During the creative workshops, participants are part of the creative process and share their experience. It is also a tool for the empowerment of women and a way to communicate, to know oneself, and to discover one's abilities and creative powers.'

JULIANA LOZOVSKA, project coordinator,
Ladyfest Vilnius

For collaborating activists or co-workers to work together successfully, they need to share knowledge with each other. In these high-tech days we are living in, this is to a large extent made

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easier by various Internet solutions. We use our mailing lists and our web pages as means of keeping each other informed. But some knowledge escapes being shared by these explicit means of communication. There is also more implicit knowledge that often needs another kind of forum to be shared with others. You may learn these more implicit things by simply listening to a colleague when he or she is telling a story about an experience encountered in the line of work.

When you are working as a team, but not all the time together at the same place at the same time, it is important to regularly have meetings in which you can discuss the issues and practical things you have been working with. This may seem obvious, but sometimes tasks have to be achieved in a limited period of time and the result is that there little time left for reflection and sharing of knowledge. Time, that is, lack of time, is often the enemy that prevents us from communicating vital things to each other. When performing work inside an organisation, working with different projects, a certain time is often set aside for reflection and sharing of knowledge.

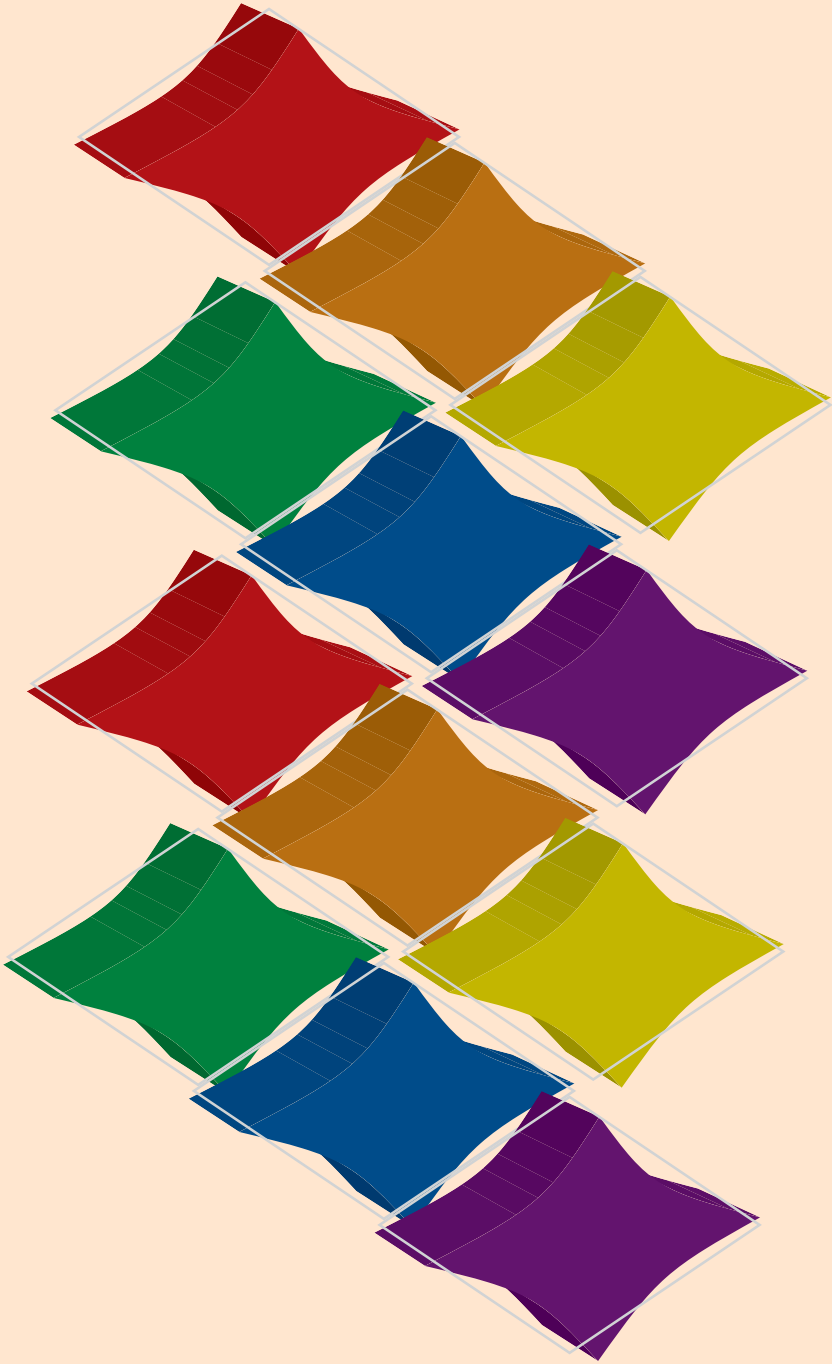
Mikael Ekman, who is a police officer in charge of the hate crimes unit in Stockholm, explains how his team has found a successful way of enhancing efficiency and team spirit inside the unit. The group gathers regularly to receive professional guidance from a trained psychologist:

'We opened up a conversation about how we react in different situations and about the leadership. I explained that I felt I'd been overreacting sometimes and that I felt the pressure of always having to be the one coming up with ideas. It was a relief to hear that others had been carrying around the same thoughts and feelings without us having shared it with each other before.'

By sharing their often tough experiences, and also the feelings attached to them, during the field work, the group of policemen and policewomen are able to relieve themselves of pressure and also communicate different strengths and weaknesses in their organisation. This is a very professional way of sharing the more implicit knowledge inside an organisation. Not every group can or should hire psychologists, but the general idea of finding time and space to meet and discuss in a more informal way is the same regardless of how you are able to arrange it.

Key factors in sharing knowledge have been found to be:

- Distributing the same amount of information to everyone
- Creating accessible channels for spreading information to each other and making sure that everyone involved is using these channels
- Creating space for informal sharing of knowledge
- Properly processing the knowledge concerning an issue, with discussions and time for reflection, before starting to work with the issue
- Documenting what you have been doing and how you have been achieving it in order to share it in the future



PROMOTION OF MINORITY CULTURE

'The director of a movie came to Vilnius and met the audience. It was a nice encounter, and for many people it was the first time they'd met a homosexual person. People had a chance to communicate, ask questions, and see what it's like in reality, because Lithuania is a country where homosexuality is a taboo subject and seeing a homosexual person for some seems almost incredible.'

GEDIMINAS ANDRIUKAITIS, project coordinator at
Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights

'The show challenges the audience in itself toying with stereotypical images of gender and sexuality. It consists of also a section when the actors tell racist and homophobic jokes and when they alter between very masculine and very feminine gestures.'

FRIDA DARJ, project coordinator at
RFSL Ungdom – the youth federation of RFSL

Culture and art are a way of addressing social and political issues. Through a book, a movie, or a play, you are able to reach a lot more people than as a single activist. The message in a piece of art can

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also be a lot more complex than it has the ability to be when you as a LGBT-activist are trying to get a message across. People tend to be open about letting themselves be influenced through art when they have reached the decision to devote time for a book or a movie. This openness and readiness to be influenced by art is something you sometimes get the opportunity to work alongside inside an LGBT organisation by promoting pieces of art that have the ability to influence. A common way for the LGBT community has been to stage LGBT film festivals or other cultural events with not only the LGBT community as the target group. To celebrate Pride, as the LGBT community do in more or less every major city across Europe and North and South America and in several places in Asia as well, is by far the most widespread way of promoting the political agenda with culture. Pride is both an internal and external event, where LGBT people can meet, in a festive way, without having to deal for once with the heterosexual norm, as the minority in society at a Pride event constitutes the majority. The external influence is of course the visibility you create when marching in a Pride parade or gaining attention in other ways.

Some of the interviewees had experience in working with culture as a means of promoting change in society. They were working with or had been working with projects in which culture formed the basis of the project and were very conscious about what kind of change they aimed to create by using culture.

Jon Voss, the managing director of QX Förlag AB in Sweden, which publishes a monthly magazine and operates a community website, says:

'The idea is to spread a positive and identity-strengthening message to a broad group of people.'

As a magazine and as a company, QX takes a very active part in the LGBT community in Sweden, working a lot with the culture they themselves contribute to creating by publishing and being a part of cultural activities like Pride in Stockholm and in other towns in Sweden. With a magazine and with a website you create a voice for the community your mission is to reflect. This is also the case with all other forms of cultural expressions with LGBT content: they work as a voice of expression. But the interpretation is in the eyes of the beholder.

Key factors in the promotion of minority culture have been found to be:

- Being the provider of culture means you should, to a large extent, let the art speak for itself
- Being aware that minority culture is a vital part of the majority culture and not a separated space
- Interacting with the audience can be very successful when facilitated in a conscious and structured way
- Cooperating with artists can be a very rewarding way of putting your message across



EDUCATING NORM-SETTERS

'We wanted to write something that could have lasting importance, a conclusive report that actually would come into use. I developed the idea to produce a report called "100 steps towards a more open workplace".'

GUNNAR SVENSSON, consultant expert on
project evaluation

'Practice shows that laws can be passed quickly, while people's ability to implement those laws lag behind, and at this point in time there is a huge gap between the legal foundation and our international obligations and the readiness to implement those obligations. To close this gap we need to gain experience and learn from other European countries and also to understand what the reasons are for this, i.e. what causes intolerance and discrimination of certain groups of people.'

JOLANTA SAMUOLYTÉ, research director at
Human Rights Monitoring Institute

The norm-setters in society can be people in professions like teachers, journalists and policemen. They are also the politicians and the civil servants. People who in their line of work tend to

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

reflect and pass on the norms and values of the society. Of our two cooperating organisations in this project, RFSL has the most experience in educating these norm-setters. RFSL has a team of employed educators who offer education to different kind of groups. For decades RFSL has also been offering information on the local level about LGBT persons (sexual orientation and gender identity) to school pupils in the regions where local branches are working. A professional team of educators has been built inside RFSL, and about 10 years ago the organisation began working as a stakeholder in various EU-funded Equal projects to counter discrimination in the workplace. LGL has also been a stakeholder in one Equal project. Vladimiras Simonko tells about this project in the interview conducted with him:

‘The uniqueness of these partnerships is that all of us are different, and none of the partners had specifically worked on this issue before. It was a challenge for each of the organisations. This project provided some hope that the topic of sexual orientation could become a unifying topic. The entire project was under great pressure from society, which became some sort of test for the strength of our partnership in our seeking to overcome homophobia. I still believe that cooperation in this field is possible. The project enabled the development of good project practice that can be an example for others.’

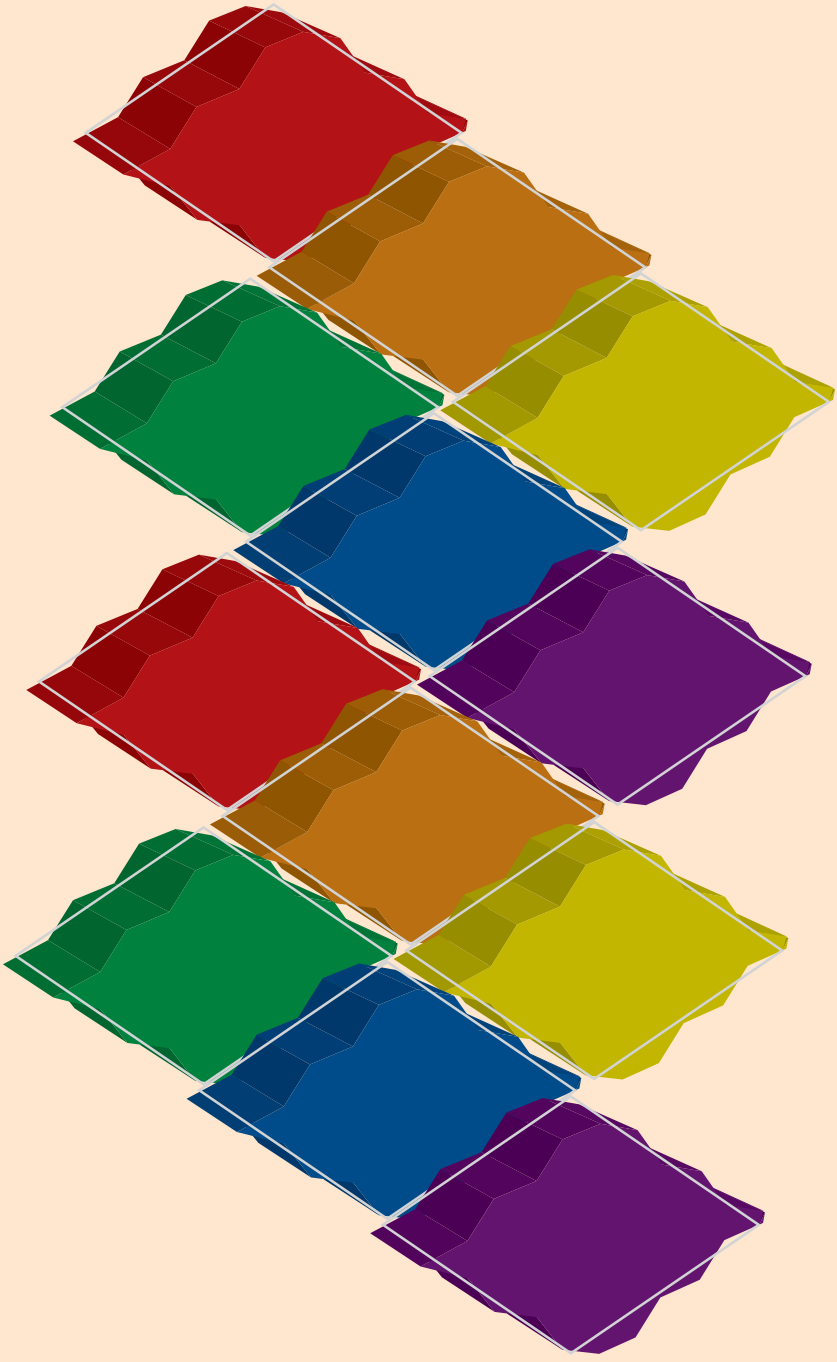
About the Equal projects conducted with RFSL as one of the stakeholders, Gunnar Svensson, a consultant involved in several of them, says:

‘What we’ve done has actually been the foundation for many political initiatives locally about the school system gaining more competence with LGBT issues.’

This describes the essence about why we are educating norm-setters. We want them to process the input that we have given them in their own organisation in order for that organisation to become less rigid and more open in terms of acknowledging different sexual orientations and gender identities. The education of norm-setters is an important way of filling the gap between legislation which prohibits for example discrimination in the workplace and the reality in which the legislation is often ignored and not implemented in the way it should be. A change in values in a society takes time, but by constantly pushing the authorities in the direction of recognising the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities present in society and that people of different sexual orientations and gender identities must be considered equal, NGOs can make this process easier.

Key factors in educating norm-setters have been found to be:

- Making sure the educators are professional and have received proper training in order to carry out the education
- Having a good teamwork of educators in order to come up with new educational ideas
- Having educational tools that work when educating a certain group in order to get the message through
- Cooperating with other organisations, such as unions and other NGOs, and with local and central authorities and experts in the field in different educational projects
- Cooperating internationally in order to gain experience from how norm-setters have been provided with education in other countries



ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

'Every social group considers its own problems the most important ones. Yet it seems that the best results are achieved when one does not overestimate one's problems and does not assume the role of a victim but rather looks for common elements together with other groups. It is when socially vulnerable groups unite and find some common points and ways to solve problems that optimum results can be achieved. ... It is extremely difficult to solve problems when you are alone and when society is hostile. Therefore, I encourage coming together and organising activities aimed at solving the problems of various social groups.'

NERINGA JURČIUKONYTĖ, director of the project Employment of
People with Mental Disabilities

'I believe in the idea of seeing more possibilities than obstacles, but it can be hard in practise. If you belong to a marginalised group, such as women or homosexuals, it is easy to find examples of misery. But it works better to see it from the angle of possibilities. Knowledge is of course important but not always enough.'

CARIN HOLMBERG, crime victim
coordinator at RFSL

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

Advocacy and lobbying are some of the core missions of an LGBT organisation. On behalf of the members, we strive to improve the everyday situation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The situation differs a lot between our countries, Sweden and Lithuania, but there are also obvious similarities. LGBT persons are victims of prejudices and discrimination, sometimes even of violent crimes, and suffer from not being seen and recognised in both countries. The difference is that consciousness about this is more widespread in the society in Sweden and the means to counteract this are in place more often in the workplace, at schools and so on. Lithuania struggles with low visibility of LGBT persons and low acceptance of the fact that LGBT rights are human rights. This is a big challenge when it comes to advocacy and lobbying for the LGBT movement in Lithuania, a challenge for which foreign support is needed to be able to face in the most productive way.

When lobbying, you are trying your best to reach out and reach through with a message. To reach through, this message has to be designed in a convincing way, and you have to be able to provide good arguments. What you need is to have a straightforward message, as simple as possible, based on clear facts without exaggerations and contradictions. Even when you think you have all this it can be the case that you will not be listened to and will be unable to bridge the gap between preconceived ideas and the logic in the message you are bringing across. It is important to be self-confident as an organisation and realise that your message will overcome prejudices in the end, even if that is not the case today. Tomorrow will always be the day when you reach a bit further in the process of achieving your goal.

In spite of lack of resources, LGL in Lithuania has come a long way in its 16 years of existence, much as a result of successful advocacy and

lobbying work which has taken the opportunities given of reaching out with a message to society. The chairman of LGL, Vladimiras Simonko, tells, in the interview with him, about when LGL got the opportunity to work inside an EU-funded Equal project together with other stakeholders:

‘The challenges faced in Lithuanian society led to the desire to take part. The strong social resistance provokes a certain reaction, which later motivates you to realise your potential in the process of overcoming homophobia.’

If you play the strings available in the right fashion and have a long-term strategy you stick to consistently, the potential for a quite small group of obtaining change is enormous.

Key factors of advocacy and lobbying have been found to be:

- Working with your own credibility by sticking to facts and being well prepared
- Being self-confident in bringing the message across and assuming the audience want to be influenced
- Being patient and persistent in trying to keep an issue on the public agenda
- Cooperating with other organisations with similar objectives, as well as with different policy makers and experts
- Basing your message on the confidence you earn from your members and on your organisations work with the target group
- Being open and accessible to the media and working in a strategic way with the media

INTERV

INTERV

VIEWS

INTERVIEWS

VIEWS



I SEE BOTH THE NEED AND THE SOLUTION PRACTICALLY AT THE SAME TIME AND IT'S EASY FOR ME TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM WHAT I SEE AROUND ME.

MARIE CARLSSON

Profession: former project coordinator in charge of a youth project called Egalia at the Stockholm branch of RFSL, now a student

www.rfsl.se/stockholm/egalia

Marie has developed a pilot project in Stockholm reaching out to young people who are LGBT. The idea, named Egalia, she and others realised is quite simple: on a regular basis you open a youth centre for LGBT youth, where kids from 13-20 can hang around. You also fill the centre with activities and build a welcoming and respectful atmosphere around the place. Egalia was a success from the very beginning and over the 3 years it has existed it has attracted over 2,000 young LGBT persons to visit.

– We – everyone in charge of Egalia – have been very involved, sometimes on the brink of being too involved, and I as the project leader have been obliged to remind everyone about the limitations and the direction. My role as a leader was to keep the flame alive and to get everyone to find their place. It was a very transparent leadership where you don't keep any secrets. Everyone had access to all the documents: the project description, the budget, and so on.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

MARIE
CARLSSON

She feels that her leadership in Egalia was successful. She pointed out the direction for her co-workers and made them work in a dedicated fashion towards a common goal. The goal in this case was to build up a surviving structure so that the youth centre would survive the pilot phase. Not without financial problems, Egalia has managed to survive after the funding (from the fund Allmänna Arvsfonden) for the pilot phase ceased. The dedication from a wide range of people to not let the project end has been impressive. Thanks to private donations, Egalia managed to survive during some crucial months in late 2009 and early 2010 and since then the City of Stockholm has stepped in and provided funding.

Marie says that the best feedback has been when visitors have told the youth leaders that the concept actually worked in the way it was meant to work.

– These are the moments when a person who has been visiting us tells us what Egalia has meant for them – that before visiting us they felt lonely and uneasy with themselves and that now everything has improved in their lives thanks to the affirmation they have received through us.

During the years with Egalia, Marie and her colleagues also went on study trips to learn more about similar projects abroad. Both times they went to the USA. The first one trip took them to New York and the second one to San Francisco, where they met with organisations working in the same way with LGBT youth.

– This sharing of knowledge between us was a very good way for us to confirm what we actually were doing. They had evaluated and evidence-based their methods so we got proof that our method,

similar to the one they had been working with for 10 years, was a successful one in the long run.

Marie feels that her biggest advantage that she has the ability to see the whole picture and to develop a consequence analysis.

– I see both the need and the solution practically at the same time and it’s easy for me to draw conclusions from what I see around me.

Now she has turned over the Egalia project to others and wants to develop her life in other directions. What she says she will miss is the freedom to develop something from scratch, from the idea until the actual activity. In the future, she is open to taking up a leadership role again.

– It takes self-confidence to be a good leader. You have to be self-confident about what you are doing and you have to be able to work inside certain frames so that you don’t feel the need to use the classical ruling techniques, which is the case for insecure leaders. That is to withhold information, to make decisions in small groups without transparency and to use mystifying concepts. You have to be honest and straightforward. Many leaders feel that they have to deliver the whole package instead of letting their co-workers be a part of the process. But you have to remind yourself that it’s not me and them but that we are all doing this together. What separates me from them is that I have the authority to take certain decisions, but we’re all in the same boat rowing towards the same destination. Your co-workers are not the brakes but the engines and without them you can’t navigate this ship.



IT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK, 'IN YOUR OPINION, HOW COULD WE DO THIS?' THEN PEOPLE FEEL THAT THEY ARE CREATING AND DOING SOMETHING. COMMUNICATION IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

GEDIMINAS ANDRIUKAITIS

Profession: lawyer, project coordinator at Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights

www.nepatoguskinas.lt/2009

The Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights has been operating for 15 years. It is an organisation founded on the initiative of experts and politicians. The organisation deals with the promotion of Human Rights and mostly with educational projects.

– It was my personal interest in the issues that attracted me. Four or five years ago I didn't even know about the existence of this organisation. I started to look on the internet for information about the possibilities of getting involved in human rights issues and I found this organisation. When I contacted them, the organisation was already "dying", as was the case with many other organisations in Lithuania. Actually the situation is still the same today.

The Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights is facing great difficulties, as are most non-governmental organisations in Lithuania. One

ANDRIUKAITIS

GEDIMINAS

problem is the lack of people who want to do something. Another problem is financial obstacles.

– In order to attract professionals who would like to work at the organisation, we need to ensure stability. I don't see a brighter future; our future prospects do exist but it's hard to tell what the future will be like.

Gediminas values that he has plenty of freedom to take and implement decisions and to organise his own work.

– When you have some work to do, you do it, and when you don't have any work to do, you do not do it. You are not forced to stay in the office and pretend that you are working. There is freedom to act and freedom of creativity during the implementation of projects and ideas. When working at a non-governmental organisation, you acquire considerable experience in different areas, which you would not get in any other organisation. You learn about fund raising and you develop your public relations, organisational, accounting, IT and management skills. When working at a non-governmental organisation, you can acquire various skills because here you have to assume responsibility for a number of areas.

During his time at Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights he has created a project called Ad Hoc: Inconvenient Films.

– I came across this project by chance on the internet. I found information about a human rights cinema festival in Poland. A travelling festival programme was held 4 or 5 years ago. They organised movie screenings in Suwalki, a town not far from the Lithuanian border. The travelling cinema festival has been held in Poland for 9 years already. We also travel in Lithuania and show

documentaries free of charge. I formed a group of friends; we got into a car and went to Suwalki. I was able to get to know more about the organisation, its people, and the festival. I liked this kind of activity a lot and decided that I wanted something similar to be held in Lithuania. So it took me a year and a half to raise some funds and start implementing a human rights film festival, which has continued for 3 years now. This project was the result of my personal initiative.

Gediminas says that it is important that people feel responsible for the activity they are engaged in.

– Our volunteers working in the framework of the Ad Hoc: Inconvenient Films project assumed responsibility for various activities such as checking tickets and disseminating information. We have to ensure that they feel that the event is their event as well. I believe that this is what motivates people the most. We sometimes also provide incentives or small gifts. Our volunteers receive tickets free of charge. The most important thing is that they feel like part of the team and that this project is theirs as well.

He also feels that it is important to involve volunteers in the decision-taking process, consult them when needed, and receive some contribution from them rather than just say 'do this and that'.

– It's important to ask, 'In your opinion, how could we do this?' It's then that people feel that they are creating and doing something. Communication is of utmost importance.

Last year the film festival opened by showing a LGBT film. This year a film about a gay couple, *Suddenly, Last Winter*, was shown.

– It's an autobiographical movie. The director of the movie came to Vilnius and met the audience. It was a nice encounter, and for many

people it was the first time they'd met a homosexual person. People had a chance to communicate, ask questions, and see what it's like in reality, because Lithuania is a country where homosexuality is a taboo subject and seeing a homosexual person for some seems almost incredible.

Gediminas explains that Lithuanian media portray homosexual persons in a very stereotyped way and suggest that they are awful people and very different.

– But here we had a well-educated, intelligent, normal man in front of us and all we could say was 'Well, yes, he is gay, so what?' I believe that this breaks down the stereotypes created by the media, which are rather ignorant about homosexuals. I also believe that an opportunity to have personal communication, meet, and have a conversation is always a positive thing and can bring about considerable change.

The film festival project has received partial financing from the European Commission's Progress programme. Last year the project also received partial financing from the Lithuanian Fund for Culture Support.

– But the beginning and the start of the film festival happened thanks to the European Commission's support. It is virtually impossible to raise national funds for a project of this scale, especially nowadays.

– Our event stands out from other cultural events because it has a clear social message stating that it's not just a festival of documentaries and not just movie screenings but that we are seeking to achieve something more. For us, the artistic aspect of the movies shown is a secondary aspect. The main emphasis is

placed on our desire for social change. Rather than just showing movies, we want society to change and we want people to wake up. I believe that our project was successful. It is not a new thing in other countries, but in Lithuania it still remains a novelty.

Interviewer: LEVA TUREVIČIŪTĖ



**LETTING THE POLITICAL
ISSUE INSTEAD OF A SINGLE
ORGANISATION BE THE FOCUS IS
SOMETHING YOU CAN LEARN FROM.**

FRIDA DARJ

Profession: project coordinator at RFSL Ungdom – the youth federation of RFSL

www.rfslungdom.se

Frida has during her 3 years as an employee of RFSL Ungdom contributed significantly in developing the way the organisation works with projects. One of her accomplishments is the interview study 'Är du kille eller tjej?' ('Are you a boy or a girl?') about the situation for young trans people.

– I have the ability to combine a solid theoretical knowledge with practical work in education and when writing reports. What we've published has gained wide recognition among both researchers and authorities and is often referred to.

She could herself be referred to as a key person when it comes to increasing the credibility of RFSL Ungdom, making the organisation more professional, with a vibrant base of young

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volunteers. When she began her work as an employee, she felt the culture was a bit too nice and polished instead of a more angry approach of demanding things and being norm critical. This has now changed, she feels.

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Right now Frida manages the project called Cry No More, which is a cultural project involving theatre as means of communicating the message. The project is a cooperative effort between RFSL Ungdom; Riksteatern, the biggest theatre company in Sweden; and Region Teater Väst. The play *No Tears for Queers* is performed, which is a drama based on a documentary book by Johan Hilton about well known hate crimes against gays. Frida provides the ensemble with education before the staging of the play and together with others she has developed the pedagogical tools used with students after the performances.

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– The show challenges the audience in itself toying with stereotypical images of gender and sexuality. It consists of also a section in which the actors tell racist and homophobic jokes and alter between very masculine and very feminine gestures.

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The project is an example of how culture can be used as a tool creating awareness and discussion in larger groups of, in this case, students about the conditions of young LGBT persons. So far the project has reached out to 30 different places in Sweden where more than 70 educational sessions have been held. To be able to accomplish such a project in a successful way, Frida stresses that it is important that everyone involved is very aware of what is expected of them and what the common goal is. This is something the group has defined together when preparing themselves by holding workshops. It is also of importance that the roles that everyone has get well defined in order to succeed.

To cooperate with other organisations and groups has often turned out very well for RFSL Ungdom, says Frida. The cooperation should, in that case, circle around a particular event or a project where everyone pitches in with what they are best at. An event she particularly remembers took place in 2008 when Transgender Day of Remembrance was held in Stockholm as a joint project between four organisations organising transgender people, with RFSL Ungdom as one of them. A manifestation was organised which drew a fair amount of people, the highest police chief in Stockholm participated and gave a speech, and a campaign was launched advocating simplification when transgender persons want to change their names to ones in line with their gender identity.

– The combination of high and low made this successful. People from all different levels inside the organisation participated and regardless of competence everyone could contribute. A positive atmosphere was created. It was also a good thing that we did something very concrete with a name change campaign that people could join by applying for a new name.

The lasting result of this cooperation in 2008 is that a Transgender Day of Remembrance now is held every year in late November in Stockholm as a cooperative effort of several organisations.

– Letting the political issue instead of a single organisation be the focus is something you can learn from this.



SUCCESS OF OUR TEAM CONSISTS OF EVERYBODY TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER/HIS OWN FIELD, WHICH THEN DOESN'T COLLIDE WITH OTHERS' FIELDS. THIS STRUCTURE OF SHARING WORK BRINGS GOOD RESULTS.

NADYA GUSAKOVSKAYA

*Profession: project manager for LitPro, European Humanities
University*

www.litpro.lt

Nadya has been working at the European Humanities University since 2007. When a project about promoting Lithuanian language and culture came into the agenda of the EHU, she was a coordinator of student programs.

– This is how I was invited to become the project manager: I was close to students and was the one who brought it up and promoted it to Belarusian students. It wasn't an easy task in the beginning to take such a responsibility – to manage a project with a huge budget and a team.

She says she has appreciated very much the dialogue between the EHU and the financial sponsor (the project was funded by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

NADYA
GUSAKOVSKAYA

– We had a possibility to offer ourselves the best methods of implementation and find the appropriate solution to increase the quality of projects. Though the project itself was quite structured, the communication from both sides brought freedom and flexibility.

– I would say that the success of our team consists of everybody taking responsibility for her/his own field, which then doesn't collide with others' fields. This structure of sharing work so that functions don't collide and that everybody is treated equal despite her/his status, brings good results and avoids conflicts.

The project has had the biggest success in attracting volunteers during the art festivals it has organised. The volunteers are mostly students interested in art and culture.

– The key to motivating human resources is finding a format corresponding to a person's professional identity. As a project manager, I felt how important it was to also be a participant in some events. To participate as a manager in the whole event was a huge motivational impulse. I had an opportunity to get feedback straight from participants.

A part of LitPro is art and film festivals, aiming to get to know the culture of a foreign country in different forms. The impact of culture and art projects can be measured by how the project is represented by the media.

– If nobody knows about the project, you can't call it successful. It's important to promote a project in all possible ways: social networks, mailing lists, etc.

LitPro has been well organised because of the consistent work of the team, Nadya explains, and also because the team managed to make

it outside the frames of the university, choosing different spaces and environments and also using interdisciplinary experiences.

– It's always important to remember why we are doing such a project, because if we want to reach society through culture and art, we must work on being able to reach the specific target group.

Interviewer: VILMA GABRIELIŪTĖ



SOMETIMES AS A LEADER IT CAN BE A GOOD THING TO JUST STEP ASIDE FOR A WHILE IF YOU ARE NOT COMPLETELY PRESENT AND ABLE TO CONVEY A CLEAR VISION. CLARITY IS IMPORTANT FOR CO-WORKERS IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM DIRECTION.

MIKAEL EKMAN

Profession: police officer in charge of the hate crimes unit in Stockholm

www.polisen.se/sv/Om-polisen/lan/St/op/Polisen-i-Stockholms-lan/Verksamheten/Brottsutredning/Test-Polisarbeta-med-HBT-och-hatbrott/Hatbrottsjouren-i-Stockholm-City/

All crimes committed on the grounds of the victim's ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation inside the Stockholm police district are taken care of by the hate crimes unit. They work on two levels: they investigate when a hate crime has been committed and they work in a preventive way by being present in environments where victims of hate crimes typically gather. Examples of such places where the unit are frequently present are at gay clubs and at youth gatherings in Moslem mosques.

Mikael is the police officer in charge of the hate crimes unit, which was created in Stockholm in 2007.

– I have a burning interest in these issues about human rights and in what makes a person commit this type of crime.

He considers himself to be much more of a developer as opposed to an administrator and likes the challenge of building up a new structure. He believes it has been a great advantage for the investigation of hate crimes in Stockholm that a special unit is now in charge of handling these crimes.

– Before it was a bit of a mess with investigations handled by different people all the time. The challenge in particular has been to tackle the disbelief towards our kind of work with prejudices such as ‘why should gays and foreigners have their own speedy line inside the law system?’

He feels that this opposition towards the working method has now weakened inside the police force in Stockholm since the unit has proved that it is achieving very competent work.

A method of enhancing the efficiency and team spirit inside the unit is to gather the group regularly receiving professional guidance by a trained psychologist. Mikael says he first felt hesitation towards this method, but was surprised in a positive way when he found it was working brilliantly. Practically it works like this that everyone gets the opportunity to, in front of their colleagues, speak about their feelings towards the work they have been doing recently.

– We opened up a conversation about how we react in different situations and about the leadership. I explained that I felt I’d been overreacting sometimes and that I felt the pressure of always having to be the one coming up with ideas. It was a relief to hear that others had been carrying around the same thoughts and feelings without us having shared it with each other before.

Mikael recommends this kind of debriefing in a group, especially if you are working with tough issues concerning people who have been victims of crimes and are often in dire need of help and support.

He earlier worked as a section leader at the border police at Arlanda Airport outside Stockholm. There he had the self-image of being present as a leader and in control of what everyone was doing. Now that he is a leader of a unit one level lower, he often feels frustration concerning where his superiors are and that they are not all the time fully aware of his and his team's work.

– Sometimes as a leader it can be a good thing to just step aside for a while if you are not completely present and able to convey a clear vision. Clarity is important for co-workers in order to give them direction.



EVERY SOCIAL GROUP CONSIDERS ITS OWN PROBLEMS THE MOST IMPORTANT ONES. YET IT SEEMS THAT THE BEST RESULTS ARE ACHIEVED WHEN ONE LOOKS FOR COMMON ELEMENTS TOGETHER WITH OTHER GROUPS.

NERINGA JURČIUKONYTĖ

Profession: director of the project called Employment of People with Mental Disabilities

www.zmogui.lt

Neringa says that the project she is in charge of is characterised by its innovative orientation towards both the objective and the context. One of the main activities of the project “Employment of People with Mental Disabilities” is the creation of safe workplaces. She also provides recommendations to authorities, analyses legislation, and proposes amendments to legislation.

Some Lithuanian celebrities such as Dainius Pūras have taken part in the activities of the project.

– After a press conference, Mr Pūras said that I’d done an excellent job of organising the conference and that the journalists were well prepared for it. None of my colleagues had received praise from him, so this appreciation impressed me a lot.

She explains that the experience acquired inside the project kept growing ‘like a snowball’ and led to new results, i.e. new ideas and

‘It doesn’t hurt to have a great deal of fun’

forms of expression. New people and expanded horizons helped to improve these ideas.

– My understanding of the meaning came when I saw concrete results and change. Certainly, I always believed that the meaning existed, but I also kept wondering whether it would be successful. I certainly didn't have long periods of time to think and had to act fairly quickly. Yet the results obtained made me think that if I acted, the result would follow no matter what.

She believes that all organisations should value enthusiastic people and that actions speak louder than words. Organisations must not only provide proper working conditions but also remember that the staff are also people who have a private life and that they need support in times of personal difficulty and appreciation for their work.

One message in the project has been that it is economically efficient to employ people with mental problems and that the position of work assistant is a useful one. The project conducted economic research and later initiated the distribution of the research. They held a press conference and a press release published after a training session for journalists attracted the media (the title of the press release was 'How many millions does our country lose because it does not employ people with mental health problems?'). Journalists were also well prepared after the training session. Proper broadcasting of this news attracted television channels, and the public discussions resulted in the involvement of the authorities. She is proud to say that after the implementation of the project the public attitude towards the employment of people with mental health problems improved considerably in Lithuania. Public opinion surveys were conducted

during the project. The surveys showed that after each public activity public opinion became 10 per cent more positive.

– Every social group considers its own problems the most important ones. Yet it seems that the best results are achieved when one does not overestimate one's problems and does not assume the role of a victim but rather looks for common elements together with other groups. It is when socially vulnerable groups unite and find some common points and ways to solve problems that optimum results can be achieved. ... It is extremely difficult to solve problems when you are alone and when society is hostile. Therefore, I encourage coming together and organising activities aimed at solving the problems of various social groups.

Interviewer: KLAIDAS GRAŽEVIČIUS



I RANK RFSU HIGHLY AS AN IDEOLOGICAL FORCE WITH A COMMON GOAL TOWARDS A SOCIETY IN WHICH PEOPLE CAN DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES ABOUT THEIR SEXUALITY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.

MARIA HELLVIG

Profession: international programme manager at RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education)

www.rfsu.se

Maria has worked for over 20 years with HIV-prevention and sexuality education, earlier as a civil servant at the regional HIV-prevention authority in Stockholm, LAFA (*Landstinget förebygger aids*) and since the year 2000 at RFSU with international projects.

– I rank RFSU highly as an ideological force with a common goal towards a society in which people can decide for themselves about their sexuality and their relationships.

Her current work has taken her many times to India and Russia and also several times to African nations. She is often impressed by the people she is cooperating with in their way of eagerly wanting to implement new teaching methods.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

– I especially remember a project in India where we educated trainers and first had to get them to open up and speak about sexuality, as this is not common in Indian society. I conducted the final workshop with this team of trainers together with an expert on value exercises and forum play, and we were both impressed by how much they had incorporated of these methods during the project. The participants could skip all the basic steps in the process and jump over to facilitate the game. They were all able to dramatise scenes about sex and also homosexuality and sexual violence.

She says that what is demanded of a good educator is that she or he only lead the process and create dialogue. It is not the case that you are supposed to come and deliver the truth. It is a lot about interaction, which can be tricky sometimes in countries like India, where many people, especially if they come from lower casts and are lower down in the hierarchy, normally not are encouraged to think and speak for themselves but rather to obey people 'superior' to themselves.

Recently she has been in Botswana in southern Africa, a nation hard hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. She was invited to meet representatives from the civil society to speak about male involvement and sexuality education. They wanted to work more with getting men involved in sexuality education and HIV prevention. The visit and the workshop ended in a very positive way with interested organisations and a meeting with women from BOWFA, a sister organisation of RFSU, who showed a great deal of enthusiasm and with whom she felt she shared common values. She says it is important to meet these key players in organisations in different countries who are able to conduct a lot of work and spread enthusiasm.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

What she values the most about her own work is that when working inside a volunteer organisation you often have fewer steps between an idea and the implementation of it and that you are freer to develop your own ideas.

– I was very pleased when I started here to get the opportunity to work internationally. At the beginning, there was a bit of trial and error, but I've learned to be a competent administrator of projects having a clear structure and clear and achievable goals that can be validated.



I HAVE LEARNED THAT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO DEDICATE SOME TIME TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE TEAM'S FEEDBACK IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE AS WELL.

JULIANA LOZOVSKA

Project coordinator for Ladyfest Vilnius within New Generation of Women's Initiatives (NKMI)

www.ladyfest.lt

Juliana got involved in the feminist movement when she was finishing her bachelor's studies at university.

– I had to undertake some scientific research and meet feminists. International Women's Day (8 March) was also approaching, so in 2005, together with some enthusiastic women, I took part in the organisation of an event called The Courage to Speak, the Passion to Live. This was how a group of energetic women became involved. Also, I had a chance to participate in the Ladyfest event in Poland organised by informal groups of women who encouraged our attempts and creative ideas to hold a similar event in Lithuania. The NKMI (The New Generation of Women's Initiatives) was established in 2006, and the first Ladyfest event in Lithuania was held in May of the same year.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

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She says that the most important thing for her in this project is the possibility for self-expression and the possibility for everyone to find one's place in different contexts. The feeling of belonging, she says, is mostly encouraged by interpersonal relationships.

– They are extremely important, just as the absence of any clear hierarchy is. In our organisation, we are the main incorporators and all of us have equal rights. Common topics or hobbies which unite people are also of utmost importance.

She believes that the creative process must be encouraged rather than buried under criticism.

– This way, ideas are developed and the natural process of creation is encouraged. When we talk about motivation, it's the idea that attracts people. When an idea is strong, it attracts people, even those who do not have many financial resources. It's possible to form a team even if there is a lack of financial resources because people will work voluntarily. The team should have its own spirit. This way, regular meetings will take place. It's important to keep the idea alive and to create certain habits, thus encouraging creativity and ensuring that our activity is not just a one-time creative 'explosion' but rather acquires a certain form allowing it to continue as a creative workshop. The very form of the project must be a source of motivation.

The greatest challenge for a leader, she believes, is the development of the ability to assume responsibility in critical situations. She also stresses that the manner of decision making is an important aspect of successful leadership.

– I believe that our work must be based on the principles of democracy to the greatest possible extent. It's important to

encourage the organisation's leaders to talk so that everyone has a chance to express their opinion and so that everyone is satisfied with the decisions being taken to the greatest possible extent. If we want people to get involved in a project, we must accept these people together with their personal opinions. A leader is like a vessel which contains the overall context, processes it, and then approves the final option.

She emphasises the importance of interpersonal communication skills such as active listening skills, respect for individuals' personal opinions, control of emotions, and a pleasant personality as being important skills for being able to find the right way to deal with individuals. Other important skills include planning, organisational, and coordination skills.

– A leader is the person who hold the steering wheel and who knows and sees what is going on.

The alternative women's festival Ladyfest Vilnius encourages the equal opportunities movement, the empowerment of girls and women, and the promotion of tolerance. The objective of Ladyfest Vilnius is a critical consideration of the dominating system of relations between the sexes and the promotion of the idea of empowerment of the groups being discriminated against on the basis of sex. The festival creates a safe environment in which participants and audiences can not only communicate and share their views on topics such as sexism, equal rights, overcoming homophobia, the influence of the media, and the role of art, but also take specific steps or look for ways to deal with the relevant issues. The main parts of the project include a conference, creative workshops, orientation games, a drag queen workshop, and a concert.

– During the creative workshops, participants attend the creative process and share their experiences. It is also a tool for the empowerment of women, a way to communicate and to know oneself and to discover one's abilities and creative powers. The objective of the orientation games is to analyse some well-known events and places in Vilnius from the point of view of equal rights and women's rights, to identify the impact of a patriarchal culture on the city environment, and to emphasise the role of a woman as a personality rather than as a man's 'decoration'.

The concert aims to break the stereotype that rock is only men's business, and the drag queen show also serves to break down stereotypes.

Ladyfest has encouraged other events such as the Pro-Choice Reproductive Rights campaign and the idea of starting a project on the theme of the integration of women in the labour market.

She defines the factors of success to be planning in advance, definition of the vision of how everything will take place, coordination and review of the project, and clear distribution of tasks.

– I have learned that it's very important to dedicate some time to the assessment of the project and that the team's feedback is of utmost importance as well. Based on the feedback acquired, reminders for future work can be prepared. From a small project, we grew to become a project of the City of Culture at the time when Vilnius was the European Capital of Culture 2009. From this we learned that the external communication of the organisation is very important.

Interviewer: VILMA GABRIELIŪTĒ



**I BELIEVE IN THE IDEA OF SEEING MORE
POSSIBILITIES THAN OBSTACLES, BUT IT CAN
BE HARD IN PRACTICE.**

CARIN HOLMBERG

Profession: crime victim coordinator at RFSL, background as a researcher, doctoral degree in sociology

www.rfsl.se/boj

Carin has experienced RFSL over the years from mainly two different viewpoints. In the 1980s, she was active on the local level at the RFSL branch in Gothenburg. She then worked as a volunteer with social activities such as pub nights.

– This was the only place for lesbians to meet then in Gothenburg. It was of great importance to me that I was working inside a gay and lesbian organisation and an important statement for me to be involved in that movement.

The experience then was that RFSL was to a great extent an organisation run by men. This is something she found had changed when she returned to RFSL as an employee in 2007. The influence of women in the organisation increased a great deal in the 15 years she had not seen RFSL from the inside. As a feminist, Carin says she and other feminists tried and sometimes succeeded in shifting the agenda even back in the 1980s. She particularly remembers an annual meeting at the the RFSL branch in Gothenburg. At the meeting, Carin and another woman from the branch proposed

that the age of consent be specified within the RFSL Program of Principles to 15 years (which corresponded to legislation in Sweden at that time). Carin felt strongly that it was of great importance for RFSL to be clear in this matter, but not everyone in the annual meeting agreed. Carin explains that she and the other woman, were very motivated and argued passionately in favour of a fixed aged of consent to be stated in RFSL's Program of Principles. The meeting ended with the Gothenburg branch approving their proposal.

– The discussion behind this was whether it should be called a sexual misdemeanour to have sex with a minor below 15 years of age. From my experience as a researcher I could argue successfully that it was important to have a clear age of consent. The arguments of those who were against the motion fell because of their own preposterousness.

This was the best experience for Carin during her early years as a volunteer in RFSL. Her present work at RFSL focuses a lot on trying to reach vulnerable people. She is working with counselling victims of domestic violence inside the LGBT community, and she also lectures about men who beat men and women who beat women in relationships. What she values the most about her work is that she has the capacity to give vulnerable people a voice in society with decision makers who are not always so sensitive. She feels she has the ability to get a message across and make people learn something. This ability has been of vital importance when RFSL has tried to influence the feminist movement working with victims of domestic violence and to work with women who have suffered domestic abuse from other women.

– Basically they want to help other people. I can give them methods to incorporate these kinds of violence in their work. I have learned

what it is that makes them feel resistance towards dealing with this, and I have the keys to give them to unlock this resistance. An easy way for them to signal that they are LGBT friendly is to have a rainbow flag somewhere in sight where they meet clients. LGBT persons take a rainbow flag as sign that there is competence within this place to deal with them.

Carin has built bridges between RFSL and women's organisations providing counselling aid to female victims of domestic violence. She is considered someone with competence and therefore treated with respect and gets listened to by these women's organisations.

– I believe in the idea of seeing more possibilities than obstacles, but it can be hard in practice. If you belong to a marginalised group, such as women or homosexuals, it is easy to find examples of misery. But it works better to see it from the angle of possibilities. Knowledge is of course important but not always enough.

Carin is also involved in the advocacy and lobbying work that RFSL does when it comes to her own field of helping LGBT crime victims. She says it takes stubbornness and being headstrong to be able to get your message across. She stresses the importance of formulating your message in an appealing way that is simple and contains examples from real life. She feels that the voice of RFSL that she is a part of is often raised in a clear fashion. To address LGBT issues as an obvious question of human rights is the approach that she recommends.



I OFTEN SAY THAT IF I GO ON STAGE AND TELL A STORY, NOBODY WILL LISTEN, BUT IF I ASK SOMEBODY FAMOUS TO DO THE SAME, THE IMPACT WILL BE ENORMOUS.

KĘSTUTIS RUDAITIS

Profession: public health specialist at Education and Communication Division of the Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS

www.ulac.lt

Kęstutis has been working at the centre since February 2009 but became interested in these issues when he saw an announcement of the then AIDS Centre on the internet a couple of years ago.

– I visited the centre, talked to the staff and at that time the centre offered a wide range of free tests for those belonging to risk groups. Some of these tests cost as much as LTL 200, so this was one of the incentives for me to become a volunteer. Then the guy who worked at the centre left and offered me his job.

He says he values his ability to handle matters with tact and also with empathy and casualness. Concerning leadership he tells

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

about a wonderful person in a leading position at the former AIDS Centre.

– Her name was Loreta and she worked at the education department. She prepared methodology for lecturers. It was very important because she showed us how to teach children and teenagers about these issues using games and other techniques. She has been a powerful role model for me. Now I want to learn the same methods and use them whenever I can. Another important thing that I learned from her was her ability to find funding. It is still a mystery to me how she found the energy and courage to approach all those potential sponsors.

He describes that in the beginning, when he started visiting schools in other cities, he used to invite one HIV-positive person to come along.

– Real stories are in fact very important. Books on this subject become so much more appealing if they are based on real people and on real events. For example, if you want to talk about drugs, the best way to do this is to invite a former drug addict. Another effective method is to find a person who is well known, a celebrity.

Each year the centre chooses a 'face' for its campaign against AIDS. Jurgis Didžiulis has now been chosen for the second year in a row. He has an uncle infected with HIV and therefore this topic means a lot to him personally.

– I often say that if I go on stage and tell a story, nobody will listen, but if I ask somebody famous to do the same, the impact will be enormous.

The centre has been distributing free condoms to risk groups as this is believed to be an effective means of fighting the spread of HIV.

– Unfortunately, it is very difficult to determine what percentage of those who receive free condoms actually use them. But on the other hand, the results of similar campaigns directed at intravenous drug addicts show that distributing free syringes is very effective and that it helps reduce the number of new cases.

Interviewer: ARVYDAS VOGULIS



**YOU ALSO HAVE TO BE ABLE TO
LAUGH ABOUT VERY TOUGH THINGS.**

LOTTA MOLANDER SHANTI

Profession: supervisor of the children's unit at Alla Kvinnors Hus, a women's refuge in Stockholm

www.allakvinnorshus.se

Lotta works with abused children who before meeting her often have not been listened to, seen, or believed. A lot is about gaining trust, she says, and being creative to be able to start a dialogue with the child in question.

– It's important to state the truth to give children an arena and to teach them that what's happened isn't their fault. This is the start of giving them lives as grownups. I was myself abused as a child and that gives me a base to work from with these children.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

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LOTTA

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When she was first employed at Alla Kvinnors Hus, the organisation did not have a children's unit. Lotta's task was to create one. It was a tempting challenge for her to accept and fits with her creative skills. She says one of her foremost abilities is that she is not afraid to accept challenges and that she does not take either herself or her work too seriously. This is a big advantage, she feels, when coping with the pressure of her responsibility. Another of her advantages is that she is a good lecturer who is able to speak about tough subjects such as child abuse in a way that is not too gloomy but in a sense uplifting.

– You also have to be able to laugh about very tough things.

A method Lotta extols as helping her and her colleagues a lot is the reflection sessions they regularly get from trained psychologists. They have these reflection sessions once every week as a way of lifting things they have experienced with clients from their shoulders and also sharing their different experiences.

– The reflection sessions work to make room for reflection. Everyone participating has an open mind and an allowing attitude. You talk about things that have been bothering you, and as you do that you can get rid of those things and make room for new stuff. It creates better focus and concentration for daily work. I can also get new tools and inspiration from my colleagues ahead of meetings I'm going to have.

Lotta reflects that times have been changing since she began working with the issue of molested women and child abuse. Nowadays it is an issue that can be exposed publicly without creating controversy. About a year ago, Alla Kvinnors Hus cooperated with a nearby gallery in Stockholm where they held an

event attracting several sponsors and making celebrities agree to become ambassadors for the cause. This lighter way of addressing the issue of men's violence against women would maybe not have been possible to bring off only 10 years ago.

– The time is such today that we are able to present the issue publicly in this way without people saying that this is all a lie or not wanting to participate.



A STRONG LEADER WHO IS ABLE TO MOTIVATE NEW MEMBERS TO PERFORM VARIOUS ACTIVITIES EXPANDS THE ORGANISATION'S ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTS EVEN MORE NEW MEMBERS.

AUSMA SAKALAUSKAITĖ

*Position in the organisation: volunteer consultant/supervisor for
Vilnius Youth Line, which is coordinated by the Youth Psychological
Aid Centre*

www.jppc.lt

Ausma emphasises that motivating existing members is very important to ensure their positive contribution and loyalty to the organisation. She also believes that an organisation needs a strong leader. By taking the proper steps, the leader or several leaders will strengthen the organisation and motivate the existing members and those willing to join the organisation.

At the Youth Psychological Aid Centre, long-time volunteers of the organisation share their knowledge with new members, train new members and prepare them for work.

– Motivated citizens come to perform volunteer work at the organisation, and motivated members of the organisation

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

SAKALAUSKAITĖ

AUSMA

strengthen the organisation itself and improve its image in society.

Ausma feels that the stronger an organisation's leader is, the stronger the organisation is viewed in society, which in turn improves the motivation of the members of the organisation. The more activities the organisation is engaged in, the greater the number of those who want to join the organisation is.

– Furthermore, a strong leader who is able to motivate new members to perform various activities expands the organisation's activities and attracts even more new members.

Ausma started to work with the Vilnius Youth Line when she was looking for information about the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme on the internet.

– My search engine found some information about psychological help and support. I visited the Youth Line website and saw that they were recruiting at that time. I registered, went there, liked it, and thus stayed with them. The day on which I visited and learnt about the structure of the centre, the activities of Youth Line, and the general information about the centre made a great impression on me. I saw that it had a responsible attitude towards new members and volunteers.

As a group in charge of the help line, they generate new ideas together and are in charge of ensuring that someone is answering the help line around the clock.

– I believe that people are inherently good and that if the proper conditions are created they are eager to do something good.

Volunteers are invited to the organisation during various presentations held at universities. Most people come to the

organisation thanks to such presentations because volunteers share information about their work, about why they do it, and about why they want to continue doing it. This personal sharing of experiences is what motivates others the most.

– Personal contacts are of key importance in the process of attracting new members to the organisation. I believe that in order for the organisation to have more members, the activities of the Youth Line should be presented more frequently at universities.

Ausma emphasises that it is important for all members of the team to understand what is going on and for no unresolved issues to remain, because these lead to all kinds of interpretations. Interpretations can be very personal and in some cases harmful for teamwork.

– The key aspect is that when you share your knowledge with others and when you tell them something, the audience really listens to you and understands what you are trying to say.

Interviewer: TOMAS JAKAITIS



**WE HAVE A VERY STRONG WORKING MORAL
AND A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY INSIDE
THE ORGANISATION.**

CLAES NYBERG

Position: chairperson, Stockholm Pride, 2009–2010

www.stockholmpride.org

Claes was active in the LGBT movement in Sweden for several years before, in 2008, becoming head of the organisation arranging Pride every year in Stockholm.

– I was curious about how you could get so much output of an entirely volunteer-based organisation. Pride is a carrier of images for the LGBT movement. That is one reason I believe Stockholm Pride is an important organisation. We create a meeting point and we become the window where images are created of what the LGBT movement is all about.

He says that it is only when he came inside the organisation that he realised that the structure is a somewhat floating one and not the organisation's strongest asset. This is, on the other hand, the amount of time volunteers are willing to set aside working for Stockholm Pride.

– We have a very strong working moral and a sense of responsibility inside the organisation.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

He believes one reason for the high level of commitment can be explained with an obtainable goal. The goal is to succeed in arranging a Pride festival, and everyone has their own tasks to focus on. In an organisation with only volunteers, it is very important that everyone receives a task that is clear, and it is easy to measure whether you have succeeded.

Stockholm Pride is a festival with a great deal of different kinds of cultural events. In short, you can describe it as a festival celebrating LGBT culture. Claes explains that the focus on different cultural events and maintaining a high standard for those events is very important in order to get a good response from visitors. One advantage with Stockholm Pride as an event (it is the biggest festival arranged every year in Stockholm) is that you are able to reach out to a broader audience as well. One good example of this he recalls is the exhibition 'In Hate We Trust' by the renowned photographer Elisabeth Ohlson Wallin, which was exhibited at the Kulturhuset in the middle of Stockholm last year. (The Kulturhuset was the venue for seminars and debates during the festival.) In this way, the photos reached out to many ordinary visitors of the Kulturhuset as well as festival participants.

The high point during Stockholm Pride for many of the participants is the parade on Saturday during the Pride week. Arranging a parade of this size is a huge logistical challenge. Claes explains that after several years with the same group in charge of the parade the previous parade group was last year replaced with a new group. He believes this was a successful renewal for the whole organisation. The newly recruited person with responsibility for leading the parade also took a wide responsibility for maintaining a good relationship with participating organisations and authorities. He also had the

ability to recruit suitable co-workers and create a group with a good culture of cooperation. He had the ability to act as a good role model and set up limited and achievable goals for his co-workers. This is a group of less than ten persons in charge of the logistics, information, and relations with the police and others concerning the Pride parade.

– To set clear goals and to check whether you have achieved the goals is vital to succeed. You also have to check with your co-workers that what you are demanding is reasonable and achievable. In that way, you lay the table to make your project successful.



I WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THIS EDUCATIONAL WORK MORE ACTIONS THAT ARE MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO REAL LIFE, SPECIFIC PEOPLE, AND VULNERABLE GROUPS.

JOLANTA SAMUOLYTĖ

Profession: research director at Human Rights Monitoring Institute

www.hrmi.lt

Before joining the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Jolanta worked at InterAIDS in London. Her first step when she started her job at the institute in 2007 was to get to know other organisations.

– At any rate, relations between organisations are based on the personal relations between their members. Personal contacts grow into professional contacts.

As a lawyer, she says she likes research work when you can concentrate closely on one particular project.

– This requires total concentration and I like when I can spend a lot of time working on one particular project, whereas working in

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

JOLANTA SAMUOLYTĖ

the nongovernmental sector you have to do many things at the same time.

Jolanta has mostly studied abroad and her knowledge in the sphere of international and human rights law was gained not in Lithuania but abroad, at Concordia International University in Estonia (bachelor's degree) and elsewhere.

– Early on I realized that I was interested in human rights issues and was lucky to be selected for the Justice Initiative Fellowship Programme under which I was able to study at Central European University in Budapest for my master's degree.

Just after Jolanta joined the institute, they managed to prepare a strategic case related to the discrimination of the Roma people in access to employment.

– We went with a Roma woman to cafés, restaurants, and other places where she wanted to work in accordance with the recommendations issued by the employment office, and in one of them she was refused the job even though before that the employer had assured her by telephone that they indeed needed a worker. But when they saw her and realised that she lived in a Roma encampment they changed their story. After that on the same day, we went there with a Lithuanian woman, and she was shown around and informed that she could start working on the following day. Therefore, the case was easy to prove in court. We won this case in district court and also won in the court of appeals.

She says that the greatest satisfaction is seeing people who are deprived of their rights realise that their rights can be defended.

Lithuania lacks qualified lawyers that NGOs can use. Seminars or training sessions involving lawyers from other countries who

are conducting anti-discrimination cases could therefore be held. Sharing experiences both within the country and between different countries could be very useful.

– Also, besides judicial practice, it is very important to educate society; the most ideal situation is when all these activities take place simultaneously, i.e. educational activities and campaigns are combined with the development of judicial practice.

She feels that Lithuanian society is still very ignorant and various stereotypes are very strong. The same phrases are repeated over and over again, but they are not based on real life or concrete experience.

– This is why I would like to see in this educational work more actions that are more closely related to real life, specific people, and vulnerable groups. Not long ago, we participated in the production of a documentary about the Roma people. Until quite recently, many people did not know how the Roma people live in the Roma encampment, what the Roma people think, or how they look. Their encampment was like an isolated separate country and people from there did not mingle with the rest of society. But when people got to know their way of life, their attitudes changed. Responses to this documentary were very positive, and we received thanks from many people both inside and outside of the encampment.

When there was a discussion last year about presenting amendments to the Law on the Protection of Minors to the Presidential Office, Jolanta received the first draft of the appeal to the President.

– I made quite a few corrections and amendments, and in the end we were able to attract a large number of NGOs; I think there

were thirty-three that signed this appeal to the President. It is now difficult to say whether that was the decisive factor, but the law was vetoed by the President.

One of the institute's success stories is the strategic case L. vs. Lithuania. As a result of this, the Seimas was obligated to adopt a law on gender reassignment but has not yet done it.

– Practice shows that laws can be passed quickly, while people's ability to implement those laws lags behind. At this point in time, there is a huge gap between the legal foundation and our international obligations and readiness to implement those obligations. To close this gap we need to gain experience and learn from other European countries and also to understand what the reasons are for this, i.e. what causes intolerance and discrimination of certain groups of people. Once we know the reasons for intolerance or discrimination, we then will be able to develop a strategy for gradually overcoming these problems. A qualitative representative survey would be useful for finding out the reasons behind intolerance not only on just one basis; all grounds could be included.

Interviewer: ARVYDAS VOGULIS



**WHAT ATTRACTED ME WAS THAT
I EXPERIENCED THE STRUGGLE
TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL AND
THAT I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE
A PART AND HAVE INFLUENCE.**

ANETTE SJÖDIN

Profession: in charge of education and international programs at RFSL

www.rfsl.se

Anette first got involved in RFSL around 1998, when the fierce debate around the photo exhibition 'Ecce Homo' by Elisabeth Ohlson Wallin, portraying themes from the Bible in an LGBT context, was going on in Sweden.

– It became obvious for me that a lot of people had negative views about LGBT issues. Then I got involved in the local branch of RFSL in Örebro, where I lived.

Soon her involvement in the organisation grew and 2001 she was elected vice president of RFSL on the national level. In 2002 she got her first job at RFSL in an EU-funded project concerning discrimination in the workplace that was called *Homo- och bisexuella i omsorgen (Homo and Bisexuals in the Care System)*.

- What attracted me was that I experienced the struggle towards a common goal and that I had the opportunity to be a part and have influence.

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ANETTE SJÖDIN

ANETTE

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As an educator she is now, after having started as the only employee with education as the main focus, part of a team of several educators at RFSL. She stresses the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge together in the group. Two times every year, the educators of RFSL on the national level come together for an entire day with the purpose of sharing experiences.

– Everyone has their own experiences of whom they have met, what they have read, and the people they have been lecturing with. We speak about methods and substance. These meetings are on quite a concrete level. This is something you need to set aside time for. When you have these meetings regularly, you learn to reflect all the time about what you want to share with the others on the team.

As the team leader for the educators employed by RFSL on the national level, Anette needs to be well informed about the different projects her colleagues are working with and have the ability to step in if she is needed for consultations. She prefers a leadership in which the leader gives the group a lot of free space and responsibility to develop things on their own.

– Good delegation is about being able to hand out the responsibilities on a structural level and to be engaged in pointing out the direction, but to then let go and not demand to be more updated than the co-workers feel necessary – as opposed to a leader who needs to be in control of everything all the time.

At the moment Anette and her co-workers are about to start a new educational project focusing on children in rainbow families. The target group is pre-school staff. One of the elements in the project, which is funded by a Swedish public fund called Arvsfonden, is to produce a film, which is supposed to work in an interactive way when

watching it, about meetings between pre-schools and children in rainbow families.

– The reason for this is that small children don't have any prejudices, but they are given them by their teachers and their environment. If we can educate the teachers to challenge prejudices, much is won. It is also about children in rainbow families having the right to be affirmed just as other children. There's a lack of awareness about the need of affirming these children and their parents, but also a fear of pointing them out.

In this project, RFSL is working with a reference group consisting of the teachers union (Lärarförbundet), the union Kommunal, the organisation for the rights of children in Sweden (Bris), the municipality of Nacka in Stockholm, and the national school authority (Skolverket). The theatre group Vardagens dramatik, which is engaged in the making of the film, is also a part of the reference group.

– The reference group is supposed to contribute with knowledge from their own viewpoints and spread information about the project through their own channels.

Anette says that having pre-school staff participating early on in this project is of vital importance in order to make it successful. The broad involvement of people from different fields is also of great importance in order to achieve good results.

– Besides all this, it is exciting to be involved in the making of a film. It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun on the way either.



THE PROJECT PROVIDED SOME HOPE THAT THE TOPIC OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION COULD BECOME A UNIFYING TOPIC.

VLADIMIRAS SIMONKO

Position in the organisation: chairman of Lithuanian Gay League (LGL)

www.atviri.lt, www.lgl.lt

The idea of founding an LGBT organisation was suggested in 1993. At that time, there was no group in Lithuania which united LGBT people. The first event was held 3 December 1993 in Vilnius. The meeting was successful and it was therefore decided to continue holding such meetings.

– We organised culture nights every month, and as we became more popular we decided that the cultural domain was too narrow. So we decided to formalise the group and defend the rights of homosexuals in a more decisive manner. Having found many like-minded people, we formed a formal organisation. The process was fairly long. Therefore, we only received a certification of registration for the organisation in May 1995.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

VLADIMIRAS SIMONKO

In those days discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was not forbidden. The legal framework did not contain any reference to sexual orientation.

– In the beginning, we encountered a number of difficulties. When we were trying to formalise the activity of the organisation, the authorities did not want to register us just because the organisation's name contained the word *gay*, which in the opinion of linguists is not Lithuanian. They tried to persuade us to reject this word and to substitute it with the word *homosexual*. After registering the organisation, we understood that we became a lawful part of society. Since we now have an organisation, it's a tool which we can use to defend the interests of our community.

Vladimiras says that what he values the most about himself is his consistency.

– I've learned to set strategic goals and adhere to them. When everything complies with my own vision and strategy and those of my organisation, then I focus on setting priorities, which helps me avoid inefficient use of resources on rotten projects and steer the organisation in the right direction. The fact that we still exist today, 16 years later, surrounded by a fairly hostile environment, is the greatest achievement for me and the greatest praise of my work. I believe that the duration of the organisation is the most solid proof of its stability and reliability.

The greatest boost in motivation for Vladimiras came when he and LGL were involved in an Equal project with other partners.

– The uniqueness of these partnerships is that all of us are different, and none of the partners had specifically worked on this issue

before. It was a challenge for each of the organisations. This project provided some hope that the topic of sexual orientation could become a unifying topic. The entire project was under great pressure from society, which became some sort of test for the strength of our partnership in our seeking to overcome homophobia. I still believe that cooperation in this field is possible. The project enabled the development of good project practice, which can be an example for others.

Vladimiras says that his motivation was strengthened even further by international cooperation in the project. They worked together with strong and motivated organisations such as RFSL and RFSL Ungdom, the Swedish Youth Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, SKUC-LL (Slovenia) and others.

– Since the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman is an important institution, its participation in the project was a clear sign of trust in our organisation. The greatest incentive for me was the opportunity to be an equal partner with the Office. This proved that we acquired a certain social status not only at the NGO level, but also at the level of state entities, which provided us with an opportunity to influence political decisions.

He says there were several important factors for success in the Equal project. One was the financial factor – that the project had proper funding. He believes, however, that the members of LGL were mostly motivated by the idea itself.

– The challenges faced in Lithuanian society lead to the desire to take part. The strong social resistance provokes a certain reaction, which later motivates you to realise your potential in the process of overcoming homophobia.

If you want to attract new members to your organisation, it is important to ensure its stability, he believes. Other key factors are public awareness about the organisation and the ability to avoid scandals. Also, the loyalty of volunteers is ensured by financial transparency.

– If you want to keep enthusiastic people in your organisation, you have to communicate with them as much as possible. It's fairly difficult for a young organisation to satisfy all these priorities, yet you should strive to achieve them. I believe that it is not a problem when you are weak in certain aspects, because it's impossible to achieve great results within a short time. If your organisation has a strategic plan and works on it consistently, great results will follow at the right time.

He feels that the perfect balance between setting a direction and listening to the initiatives of members was achieved during the preparation of the eleventh ILGA-Europe annual conference in Vilnius.

– The greatest revelation for me was that we, for the first time in the history of our organisation, managed to form a strong team of volunteers who worked with clock-like precision and were very professional. It is then that I, as a leader, felt strongly motivated and believed in my own efforts. I understood that an idea can unite people of different characters, ages, and sexes. It was inspiring practice that I would like to use again in other projects.

He believes that an organisation's success depends on the leader to a great extent but that every leader must understand at a certain time that it is time to look for a suitable replacement, even if the decision to look for new leaders is not an easy step.

Concerning lobbying, Vladimiras strongest memory is how LGL by means of letters, correspondence and communication persuaded the Seimas (parliament) of Lithuania to include in the Criminal Code and Labour Code the prohibition to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in 1997.

– It was an important achievement in our fight against homophobia. We were striving to achieve our goals in a targeted manner and we were successful. Communicating with representatives of foreign organisations, I understood that at that time the key legislation of only a few countries contained references to sexual orientation. Therefore, we valued our own work so much, and our small, inexperienced organisation working under pressure managed to influence political decisions.

Interviewer: ANDRIUS DUDAVIČIUS



WHAT WE'VE DONE HAS ACTUALLY BEEN THE FOUNDATION FOR MANY POLITICAL INITIATIVES LOCALLY ABOUT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM GAINING MORE COMPETENCE IN LGBT ISSUES.

GUNNAR SVENSSON

Profession: expert consultant on project evaluation, previously a teacher

www.integratia.se

About 10 years ago, Gunnar decided to open his own business offering services to different organisations and projects. His speciality is organisational development. As such he has worked as project coordinator on different EU-funded Equal projects that RFSL has been a part of about discrimination in the workplace.

– It's the possibility to make change that drives me. I strive to see possibilities instead of obstacles and I like challenges.

Normgivande Mångfald (Normgiving Diversity) was a workplace project in which big employers like the Swedish Lutheran Church and the Swedish Police took part. Gunnar says that it was not until afterwards that he understood what an enormous challenge this project was. As a factor of success, he mentions the importance of finding 'door openers'.

– To identify them is about informal contacts and sensitivity. It doesn't have to be the person who occupies the most formal position of power, but someone who genuinely understands the issue and has the keys to power.

He says he has a genuine ability to make structure and organise, which is very important when developing a big project. You also have to be able to listen to each other, he explains. Another important factor when succeeding is being able to have fun together and to stimulate each other.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

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– We had a strong sense of togetherness within Normgivande Mångfald among six or seven individuals in the core of the project and we became more than just colleagues.

One of the most successful project processes he has led, he says, is the finishing product in another Equal project called Fritt Fram. The project included the requirement to write a conclusive report.

– We wanted to write something that could have lasting importance, a conclusive report that actually would come into use. I developed the idea to produce a report called ‘100 steps towards a more open workplace’.

The idea was to collect the best experiences that the persons involved in the project had. The goal of the product was to describe how the stakeholders had worked so far against discrimination and also what they planned to do in the next couple of years in the area. All together thirty-eight different organisations and companies explained what they intended to do in the next couple of years.

– It felt like a worthy product to present and to leave to others.

The report took several months to produce, with Gunnar as the main writer.

– It’s important to have vision and be able to think outside the box. If you don’t have vision, you don’t push the work forward. When you’re a coordinator, which I was, it’s about pulling the train forward – searching for the right path and then telling the others about it.

Gunnar has also been involved in the transnational Equal project called UnderYtan (Beneath the Surface), which also involved organisations from France, Slovakia, and Lithuania (the Lithuanian Gay League). In Sweden the project was mainly about educating a

large amount of school employees: teachers, principals, and so on. Three different materials about LGBT issues addressed to school employees were also produced. Two minor transnational publications were produced, one in cooperation between researchers from Sweden and Lithuania about how heteronormativity is reproduced in the school environment. The other one was about experiences from three countries about working with issues concerning sexual orientation. This project, Under Ytan, was chosen as one of the most successful Equal projects in the EU, and Gunnar was invited to a big fair in Lisbon to present the project. He says it overall was very well received inside the field of education and got wide media coverage.

– We had a conscious media strategy where we packaged different messages, either in a broad fashion or more narrow to a certain type of media.

The project employed a communicator of its own and one year produced, for example, a survey during Pride week in Stockholm; members of the teachers' union answered questions concerning sexual orientation and discrimination.

– What we've done has actually been the foundation for many political initiatives locally about the school system gaining more competence in LGBT issues.

He describes successful cooperation between different stakeholders in a project as a give-and-take situation.

– Each organisation has to be able to answer two things: what is our contribution to this project, and what will we be able to get back? You give something and you take something when you participate in a cooperative project.



AN INTOLERANT SOCIETY HAS A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF SOCIALLY VULNERABLE GROUPS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY...

ARŪNAS SURVILA

Profession: project manager of All Different – All Equal at National Social Integration Institute

www.zmogui.lt

The Living Library came to Lithuania 4 years ago as part of the Council of Europe's youth campaign called All Different – All Equal. It was implemented for the first time in the Seimas (parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania. On completion of the campaign, its methods, activities, and values have been continued by the National Institute for Social Integration, which aims to ensure the development of Living Libraries. Just as in a regular library, a visitor comes and borrows a book for a certain period of time. After reading the book, the visitor returns it to the library and takes another book if he or she wants to. There is one difference between a regular library and the living library: in the living library, books mean people and reading means conversation.

– The Living Library's use for organisers is to allow them to understand each other better, and to identify personal and team-

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

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related values. The organisational process of the Living Library is very complex and requires a certain responsibility. We have to assume responsibility firstly because we have to remember that in this case books are people.

– In present-day society, we often encounter various myths based on ignorance. It is like the 'staircase syndrome', not knowing our neighbours who live in the same building. We don't know their histories or values and so we might have a strange attitude, for example, towards a neighbour we invite to our home who does not eat roast meat not because he is a vegetarian but simply because he does not eat pork. Perhaps another neighbour celebrates Easter 1 week later and still another neighbour does not celebrate Easter at all. In society, such people are defined as being *different*. More often than not, lack of desire to look more closely leads to the creation of all sorts of stereotypes. The Living Library encourages the breaking down of stereotypes; it encourages us to learn about our neighbours; and it provides proof that not all Turks are terrorists, not all Roma are thieves, not all Jews love money, and not all gay persons are fashion designers.

In the Living Library, one can talk to national or sexual minorities, politicians, vegetarians, celebrities, war veterans, artists, people with disabilities, etc. Each of them provokes certain associations and many people have prejudices about them. 'Reading' becomes a conversation between an interested reader and the book – a live person. The purpose is to get rid of myths, stereotypes, and unsubstantiated opinions. The readers have a chance to spend some time on the other side of the 'front' and to understand and clarify things for themselves, to get rid of unnecessary biased opinions, and to learn.

The roots of the Living Library are young yet firm. This method is included in the Human Rights Education Programme for youth by the Council of Europe. The programme has been taking place in Europe for several years now, and has reached Lithuania as part of the European youth programme All Different – All Equal.

– An intolerant society has a negative impact on the quality of life of socially vulnerable groups, social justice, and equal opportunity, leads to discrimination and unemployment, and promotes a culture of intolerance, which influences not only society’s mental health but also discourages civil expression and democracy.

Interviewer: KLIDAS GRAŽEVIČIUS



IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE CLEAR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD AND TO BE ABLE TO SET LIMITS. YOU HAVE TO ENCOURAGE THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH AND MAKE THEM FEEL THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT INSIDE THE ORGANISATION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE RESULTS.

JON VOSS

*Profession: managing director of the publishing company QX
Förlag AB*

www.qx.se

Since the early 1980s, Jon has been one of the most influential figures within the Swedish LGBT movement. His focus has been working as a publisher of different LGBT magazines. He describes himself as stubborn and as a working ant. As a leader, he lets people around him be independent and gives them the responsibility to, inside a certain frame he has given them, develop their own ideas.

In the late 1970s, he started working as a volunteer for Stockholm Gay Radio, a local radio station run by volunteers from the local branch of RFSL in Stockholm.

– I listened to gay radio and thought it was crap, so I wrote them a letter with my viewpoints and then got contacted by them. It was my way of, at 19 years of age, coming in contact with the gay community.

Other projects Jon was engaged in early on were starting the bookstore Rosa Rummet (The Pink Room) with RFSL in Stockholm and starting a gay men's song and theatre group called Gayklavarna,

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which was lead by the musician Jan Hammarlund. However, it is as a publisher of LGBT magazines that he is known inside and outside the LGBT community in Sweden, . The first project he was involved with as an editor was called *Magasin Gay*, which lasted for less than a year in the early 1980s. The second project, the magazine *Reporter*, turned out to be more successful and was published from 1986 to 1995.

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– During those times, with the hiv/aids epidemic, it became important to have independent media covering sexual politics and the hiv/aids context. The idea was to create openness and to contribute to the building of an infrastructure inside the community, both as a business venture and as a political force. We thought RFSL had too much of a monopoly on the narrative of the gay community. We wanted to create a platform where others could get their voices heard. This was also the beginning of an era of openly gay and lesbian celebrities inside the area of culture in Sweden.

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Jon is referring to today well known and established figures in Swedish cultural life such as the writer Jonas Gardell, the actor and artist Rikard Wolff, and the singer/songwriter Eva Dahlgren. They all begun their careers in the mid 1980s and to a certain extent benefited in the early years by the existence of a magazine committed to covering culture of special interest to gays and lesbians.

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Reporter went bankrupt in 1995 but was soon followed by a more successful and economically viable concept: the magazine *QX*, which is more focused on entertainment, distributed free of charge, and financed by advertisements. At the beginning a sidekick to the magazine but nowadays a leading part of the company *QX* is the webpage www.qx.se, with the LGBT web community *Qruiser*.

J

– When *Reporter* went bankrupt in the summer of 1995, I began to create contacts with people who could contribute to something new. I gathered a group of investors so that a viable economic base could be built up. I brought an idea to people and got them to want to work in order to realise it. It's about giving people a direction and getting them to realise that their own commitment can influence the entire project. I identified people and gave them a place to take initiative and pursue things by themselves inside quite a broad frame.

This ability to inspire people to work for him and fulfil an idea together with him makes Jon a leading entrepreneur in Sweden inside the LGBT community. As an entrepreneur, he is driven by a clear vision of what he wants to achieve and a belief in the importance of strengthening the ability of each and every one to contribute.

– It's important to be clear and straightforward and to be able to set limits. You have to encourage the people you work with and make them feel that they are important inside the organisation in order to achieve results – to be listening and compassionate but also to be willing to engage in a fight when necessary.

Jon says the big advantage with *QX* as a product is that it is broad and reaches the broad mass of the Swedish LGBT community.

– The idea is to spread a positive and identity-strengthening message to a broad group of people.



I BELIEVE THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT HELPS CREATE FEELINGS OF BELONGING AND PURPOSE IS THE PROVISION OF SPACE FOR ACTIVITIES, ATTENTIVENESS TO EACH MEMBER AND HIS OR HER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS...

VYTAUTAS VALENTINAVIČIUS

Position in the organisation: chairman of Tolerant Youth Association

www.tja.lt

Vytautas says he was attracted to the organisation by a desire to work with an NGO and to defend the rights of LGBT persons rather than by a specific organisation.

– I have a non-traditional sexual orientation myself, and I always wanted to realise myself in this area, to be open, and help other people with non-traditional sexual orientations. Circumstances resulted in my involvement with the Tolerant Youth Association.

He says he is decisive and has the ability to meet challenges and manage critical situations.

'It doesn't hurt to have a great deal of fun'

VYTAUTAS VALENTINAVIČIUS

– I believe that these skills are illustrated by the fact that after I joined my organisation, I was elected its chairman just half a year later.

One of his first actions inside the Tolerant Youth Association was to prepare a project independently, present it, and implement it.

– I was pleasantly surprised at the trust placed in me, which encouraged my further work and my involvement with the organisation. Although I did the greatest part of the work myself in preparing the application for the first project, I also received support from other members of the organisation. I believe that this situation was important and energising because it provided both opportunities and motivation.

The project application he prepared was granted funding.

– I believe that the most important factor that helps create feelings of belonging and purpose is the provision of space for activities, attentiveness to each member and his or her needs and expectations, regular contacts, talking to people, and timely responses to the moods of each member of the community. In the case of my organisation, and taking into account the fact that it is a youth organisation, I think it is especially important for people to be provided with the opportunity to spend time together with their colleagues, friends, and like-minded persons, i.e. to be provided with an environment in which they feel safe and relaxed.

Vytautas believes that in order for a person to become a good leader in an NGO, he or she must have the following traits:

- The desire to do this type of work, the desire to undertake social and community work, and the decisiveness to perform this hard work.

- The ability to propose initiatives and to involve others.

- Time to dedicate to public activity.

He says that one of the main problems for organisations working in the field of LGBT is a lack of leadership.

– I don't see strong leaders either in my own or other organisations. This is no doubt due to the peculiarities of the organisations and due to society's attitude towards homosexual people. The leaders of such organisations must assume a considerable load and possess a strong spirit. I'd like to wish everyone who wants to be a leader in this field the same things: decisiveness, strength, and the ability to understand people's expectations.

He explains that the project called A Friend among Strangers was an interesting and innovative experience for his organisation. Until then, the organisation's projects had been mostly targeted at homosexual people, but this last project was aimed at showing how similar and relevant the problems of other minority groups can be.

– The main target group of this social project was asylum seekers. The key objective of the project was the promotion of the integration of the people who receive asylum in Lithuanian society by strengthening mutual awareness and providing the foreigners with the conditions to preserve and develop their social and cultural identity.

The objectives of the project included the collection of information about the social and cultural identity of refugees in Lithuania, about their rights to preserve their identity, and the opportunities for its development; the establishment of ways in which society, experts, and employers can familiarise themselves with the identity

of refugees, opportunities for the preservation and development of their identity in the new country, and the encouragement of dialogue between them aimed at the improvement of integration; and the preparation of proposals for the improvement of the legal framework and the defence of the rights of refugees with a view to ensuring their better integration and preservation of and respect for their cultural identity. The project was aimed at strengthening mutual recognition based on the experience and recommendations of the Tolerant Youth Association; such recognition involved society, the refugees themselves, and their social integration with the support of relevant institutions and organisations.

– The raising of awareness about refugees in the framework of this project was carried out by revealing the original identity of refugees.

He explains that his organisation had a chance to express itself in a new field.

– Another new thing for our organisation was the cooperation with bodies/organisations financed by the national budget: one project partner was the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman. We also cooperated with the Refugees' Centre and the Skalvija movie theatre. I think that the greatest impact of the project was the raising of awareness about a certain social group, in this case refugees. I believe that the success of the project is proved by the fact that our organisation did not have to put any special effort into advertising the project; it was the media who became interested in it because the topic of the project was a new one for our society.

He says that it is important to keep in mind that an example of an individual minority group can be applied to other minority groups that are discriminated against.

– Major attention in such projects should be paid not only to the target group itself, but also to the education of society via specific examples. I believe that the formula of a successful project is socially active individuals who know what they want.

Interviewer: LINAS JUOZULYNAS

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'IT DOESN'T HURT TO HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF FUN' – BENCHMARKING REPORT

Results of benchmarking study performed by
RFSL (Sweden) and LGL (Lithuania) 2009–2010

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