

Conference Building Bridges, 6th of March 2009 in The Hague, Netherlands
Plenary morning sessions

The European level

Ms Kathelijne Buitenweg, Member of the European Parliament and Chair, Netherlands

This conference is in fact not about sport, but about equality, about law making. Laws are important, but they don't create reality. Since 2000 all forms of discrimination are forbidden in the labour market and in the workplace. Also discrimination on the basis of race is forbidden in and beyond the labour market. However, sexual orientation is excluded from this article. Beyond the labour market there is no declaration against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The EP thought this unfair and wanted to correct this. It has been a long fight in the EP to correct this omission and it is still unclear whether the battle will be won when the European Parliament votes on this article. I hope we get 60% of the EP on board, but not everyone is in favour of the protection of rights on the basis of sexual orientation.

Homophobia still is a problem. But this problem is hard to prove because most people remain silent about their sexual orientation and about the discrimination they experience as a result. Therefore most sport clubs conclude that the problem doesn't exist. But gay athletes know different. A whole range of problems occur and in fact, all are about trust. In order to play you have to trust your team. And the thing is: as a gay or lesbian you can't. Regarding discrimination against gays and lesbians, the nationally renowned Dutch football coach Louis van Gaal recently told gays and lesbians to 'just bear with it.' I find that shocking. If instead we were to talk about anti-Semitism, would he come to the same conclusion, that Jews should 'just bear with it'? Furthermore, it is important we deal with homophobia in sports not just on a national level, but on the European level as well.

International justice

Mr Bert van Alphen, Alderman for Public Health Welfare and Equal Opportunities of The Hague, Netherlands

Gays and lesbians are not always accepted in sports, they are frequently not taken seriously and in the worst case scenario they are victims of discrimination. We fight every day for the acceptance of gays and lesbians in sport throughout Europe. I consider it as an honour to be hosting this conference in The Hague. Many governmental and non-governmental organisations are located in The Hague. The International Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907 in this city laid the basis for international law as we know it today. At the core of these conferences the permanent Court of Arbitration was founded, which is still housed in the Peace Palace today, as are many international organisations in the field of peace and justice.

The Hague is not only a place of international peace and justice, but also a place of multiculturalism and a place for support of gay emancipation. The EGLSF was founded twenty years ago right here in this city. I am proud that this year The Hague will also be hosting Roze Zaterdag (Pink Saturday) on the 20th of June. We will also award The Hague Gay Emancipation Prize for the first time this year, named after the late John Blankenstein, one of the very few openly gay referees and a spokesman for gay emancipation in football.

The basis for peace is mutual respect and the preservation of human rights. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and to be who he or she wishes to be. Every gay or straight person deserves a place in the community including within the world of sport.

The 20th anniversary of the EGLSF Ms Anne Jensen, Co-Chair of EGLSF

The EGLSF was founded in The Hague in 1989 by some of the first European LGBT sport clubs. Homophobia existed then, and it still exists. Now EGLSF has more than one hundred member clubs and represents more than 16.000 athletes in Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe.

What did we achieve over these twenty years? We organized the first EuroGames in The Hague in 1992. Member clubs have organized twelve EuroGames until now. We co-operated with mainstream sport clubs and associations and had support from European city councils. There also have been a large number of successful LGBT tournaments.

Very important is the advocacy work against discrimination. EGLSF has added a large scale Sport for All event to the annual European Sport Calendar. We combine sport and human rights in the Building Bridges conferences and contributed to the Council of Europe's Fair Play Conference on sport (Amsterdam 1998). In 2000 the Council of Europe officially recognized us as a sport federation. EGLSF successfully lobbied within the Council of Europe for the rights of LGBT in sport, and successfully included the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the Council of Europe's Declaration on Fair Play in Cyprus in 2008. We joined Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) as core partner in 2002. We participated in the UEFA conference for football associations in London in 2003 and had a workshop at the UEFA conference in Barcelona in 2006. UEFA agreed on our seven-point charter against homophobia under the slogan 'Show football the pink card' demanding action against homophobia in football. The Belgian and Flemish football associations signed the charter against homophobia in sport in 2007.

Within EGLSF we achieved funding in 2006 for including non-members to discuss what the needs of Eastern European LGBT clubs are. We moved the discussion of gender parity at all levels forward. And we validated knowledge about LGBT in sport and LGBT rights and spread expertise on this subject. We achieved all this by cooperation with LGBT mainstream organisations and our partnership with ILGA-Europe and FARE, cooperation with local and national sports associations and the steady and hard work carried out by a high number of LGBT athletes all over Europe.

What bridges should be built or strengthened to support LGBT sport and LGBT athletes and to fight homophobia? On the local level we should strengthen the cooperation between LGBT clubs and mainstream clubs, for example with respect to access to sport facilities, gender parity and engaging more women in sport. On the national level sport associations should sign the charter against homophobia in sport, using their influence on the politics of sport and on LGBT awareness. On the European level European sport associations should support amateur/LGBT sport in Eastern European countries, following UEFA's example, EU's legislation of sport and putting the fight against homophobia on the agenda.

Is there a case for LGBT rights in sport?

Mr Ben Baks, Liaison Officer for the EGLSF towards the Council of Europe and Vice President of the Nederlandse Culturele Sportbond (Dutch Cultural Sport Association)

A large number of countries violate the rights of LGBT. Homosexuality is still forbidden and punishable in many countries. Last December, a declaration for the abolition of the punishment of homosexuality has been presented and got the support of 66 members of the United Nations in its General Assembly in New York. France and The Netherlands took the initiative for this declaration on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although the UN declaration did not get a majority vote for approval at the General Assembly, the support for this initiative has never been so substantial. Sport is a fundamental social right. Fundamental and social human rights are part of our common values, also in sport.

The European Council has agreed on the EU Treaty of Lisbon. in which Europe sets the ambition of developing the European dimension in sport. According to the EuroBarometer 2003 81% of Europeans think that sport encourages the dialogue between cultures, 59% thinks sport counters all forms of discrimination and 68% thinks the European Union should be more active in promoting education through sport.

Today we focus on human rights and sports. Sport connects insiders, but sport should also connect and reach out to outsiders. Critics say that there is no case for LGBT rights in sport and some critics see them as outsiders. Only few mainstream sport organizations take this case seriously and they can feel uneasy when this issue is brought up.

EGLSF and NCS believe that sport has a good case for LGBT rights in mainstream sport. We need a common language and shared principles: sport for all, good governance and gender equality. The UN, the Council of Europe, the EU and UEFA have set some interesting regulations, declarations, charters and standards on the fundamental human rights and social rights in sport. The United Nations have approved a Sport for All resolution (nr. 60/1). UN members clearly stated that Sport for All is better recognized as a national priority. Sport could foster development and contribute to an atmosphere of better understanding.

The Council of Europe Sports Charter clearly states that European governments shall enable every individual to participate in sport and to ensure that everyone should have the opportunity to take part in sport in a safe environment. Article 4 prohibits discrimination in access to sports. In its reply to the Report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the position of gays and lesbians in sport (EGLSF had lobbied for it) the Council of Ministers clearly indicates that homophobia in sport should be combated in the same way as racism and other forms of discrimination. Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights clearly sets the principle of non-discrimination. And according to article 11 everyone has the freedom of association and assembly, also in sport. It is good to know that more than a hundred LGBT sport groups in Europe made use of that fundamental right. EGLSF has been officially recognized by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers since January 2002.

Within the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) a group of member states work together in the Council of Europe. UEFA and EGLSF have attended the first consultative meeting of the EPAS. EGLSF will be glad to continue its relationship with EPAS and others in the Council of Europe. UEFA's action plan against discrimination is a very good example of taking responsibility and taking care of common values and good governance.

Gender equality is covered by the UN declaration of the rights of women. The declaration clearly states the right of women to enjoy sport or engage in sport in article 13. Lesbian women can benefit from this clearly stated right. The special conference of the UN on women and sport resulted in the Kumamoto Commitment to Collaboration about gender equality in and through sport. UN members and other stakeholders are invited to develop inclusive sport policies.

Mr Havard B. Ovregard, Project Manager 'With Sports Against Homophobia', Norway

The aim of the project is to experience sport as an open and secure arena where LGBT feel at home as athletes, coaches, referees and fans; to prevent and fight discrimination based on sexual orientation at all levels in society; through work within organized sports and to improve living conditions and quality of life for LGBT in Norway. Project partners are the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), the Norwegian LGBT Association LLH and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). The project is partly funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality and by NIF.

The strategic aims of the project are: 1) to increase awareness about discrimination based on sexual orientation; 2) to promote sport politics against discrimination based on sexual orientation; 3) to develop and promote measures hindering homophobia, including awareness-raising and attitude-challenging methodology; 4) through sports promote good role-models and healthy attitudes towards different sexual orientation; and 5) stimulate a situation in which action against discrimination based on sexual orientation is part of the daily work of sport organisations.

In the Sport Policy Document 2007-2011 of the NIF article 1.6 is about tolerance and equality. It says the aim is to foster tolerance, understanding and recognition for equality in order to avoid discrimination and harassment. There shall be zero-tolerance for discrimination and harassment regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation and disability. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals are – differing from many other minorities – an invisible group. It is therefore an extra challenge to contribute to dissemination of knowledge and information in order for this group to be fully accepted within sports. All organisational entities are responsible for this.

So far only little research has been done on this subject in Norway. An exception is the doctoral thesis 'Sporting Sexuality' by Heidi Eng (2003). Eng interviewed Norwegian gay and lesbian top athletes within thirteen sports. Her main conclusions: they are not open about their sexual orientation in sports contexts; they feel that a career in sports cannot be combined with living as gay/lesbian; they underachieve as a competing athlete due to conditions related to their sexual orientation; they are attracted to more gay/lesbian-friendly social arenas; and they often quit sports. There are no open gay male (top) athletes according to Eng, and as a

result of that top sports lose many talents among gay men, due to the costs of being open within sports. Explanatory factors for this according to Eng are strict views on masculinity and femininity and the 'locker-room culture'.

In football the myth of women football as a 'lesbian sport' is still alive, according to Eng, despite of the fact that by far most women football players are openly heterosexual. This leads to increasing homophobia and fear of having too many lesbians in the team. Coaches and athletes can be afraid that this will harm recruitment, because parents will be sceptic towards sending kids to football training. One of the informers chose to sacrifice herself and remained hidden because there were so many open lesbians in the team already. White paper nr. 25 (2000-2001) of the Norwegian Government about 'Living condition and life-quality for gays and lesbians in Norway' concludes that separate gay and lesbian sport clubs are an expression for gays and lesbians lacking comfort because of the heteronormativity in sport environments.

Challenges are to focus away from the gay and the lesbian, because pressure to be open causes less openness and coming out. The challenge is to get more straight people on the field, because everyone can be a victim of homophobia, regardless of their sexual preference. Education is very important and should be very concrete and detailed. Use concrete sentences like: 'reflect about this and that, talk about this and that,' and give examples as well. Make them pronounce the word 'homo' without blushing. When someone makes a homophobic remark, never accuse them, but instead ask them: 'what did you mean by saying this?' Fear is an important factor causing prejudice against gays lesbians. People are afraid of being labelled as gay or lesbian themselves, emphasize their own heterosexuality and avoid meetings with gays and lesbians.

Mr Pedro Velázquez, Deputy Head of the Sport Unit, Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission

The European Council recognizes the importance of the values attached to sport, which are essential to European society. It stresses the need to take account of the specific characteristics of sport, over and above its economic dimension. It welcomes the establishment of a constructive dialogue at the first European Sport Forum organized by the European Commission. It calls for the strengthening of that dialogue with the International Olympic Committee and representatives of the world of sport, in particular on the question of combined sports training and education for young people.

Art. 165 of the Lisbon Treaty will hopefully be ratified in 2009. It will give a new Council framework for political cooperation in sport and for mainstreaming of sport in other programmes and actions. And it will possibly lead to EU incentive measures.

In 2009 the EU will prepare future actions in the field of sport in view of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty after ratification and on the basis of priorities set in the White Paper on Sport. We will provide support for the identification of future policy actions in the area of sport. Policy support will take the form of studies, conferences and seminars to consult stakeholders and develop better knowledge of the field of sport. We will test the establishment and the functioning of suitable networks and good practices which can serve as a basis for future actions in the area of sport. As a first step, networks and good practices will be

supported in the fields of physical activity, sports training, disability sport and gender equality in sport.

The latest developments are: 1) to implement the White Paper on Sport and the Action Plan Pierre de Coubertin with 53 actions, and 2) the European Council Declaration on sport. The message of the White Paper on Sport is to use the potential of sport for social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities. Sport is a tool of social cohesion, the fight against exclusion, empowering individuals and combating all forms of discrimination including homophobia. Different sport-related projects will be supported under various EU funding programmes, like PROGRESS and ESF.

Other instruments at EU level are the report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on 'Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation in the EU member states' (Legal and Social analysis), the existing directive on non-discrimination in employment and occupation (2000/78/EC) based on Article 13 TEC, and the commission proposal for a horizontal Equal Treatment Directive (July 2008). The action of the EU is based on the values of freedom, tolerance, equality, solidarity and diversity. Sport must also be based in the values of fair play, respect, human dignity, peace and balance. The Commission will use its moral and political authority to safeguard those common values.

The EGLSF is an important voice for sport, for example by organising the 2009 EuroGames in Barcelona with a parallel International Conference on Human Rights and Homophobia, by the EU Sport Forum in Biarritz and by the UEFA-FARE conference on racism and discrimination in sport which took place on 3-4 March 2009.

Mr Patrick Gasser, Head of the Football and Social Responsibility Unit (FSR) of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)

UEFA wants to fight discrimination wherever necessary. Discrimination on the basis of skin colour, sex, political colour and sexual preference is unacceptable. Racism and all forms of discrimination should be a thing of the past. It is our duty to contribute to these issues. There is some progress with respect to the position of gays and lesbians in sport. We have managed to build a solid bridge over the last twenty years. The bridge is not a golden gate yet, but we continue to work on it, because the fight against homophobia is still difficult.

Football is a powerful breeding ground for integration, tolerance, respect and diversity if used right. UEFA has started to get some recognition for its activities in this field. In 2008 we organized a big tournament on the notion of respect, for example with regard to rules, referees, opponents, doping, diversity, and also self-respect. Last January we won the World Fair Play Trophy for our Fair Play campaign, in particular for the promotion of respect and fair play at last summer's UEFA EURO 2008 finals tournament in Austria and Switzerland.



Ms Judith Schuyf, Chair of Homosport Nederland

Gives a summary of the workshops and makes a number of concluding remarks about the conference.

Mr Bert van Alphen, Alderman for Public Health Welfare and Equal Opportunities of The Hague, Netherlands

Opens the reception with buffet supper in the Town Hall of The Hague.

Workshop 1

Diversity in Football. Strategies against Homophobia in Football (Germany and United Kingdom)

Discrimination against LGBT people is far-reaching. Homophobia in the sports world can be considered as merely 'part of the game', take football as an example. Without the help and support of the 'straight world' it would be impossible to change the attitudes and intolerance of players, coaches and officials in order to secure the inclusion of all people alike. This workshop gave an overview of the anti-discrimination work in England and Germany.

Mr Christian Dekker, Spokesperson, Queer Football Fan clubs (QFF), the network of gay and lesbian football fan clubs (football fan clubs(Germany and Switzerland)

The QFF fights against all forms of discrimination in football, especially homophobia – in the stadium, on the pitch and in the changing room. It also lobbies for tolerance, acceptance and understanding by officials, like the DFB (German Football Association) and officials of football clubs. We appear openly as gays and lesbians in the stadium – but we do it in a subtle, not provocative way, as we wish to emphasize that we are just like any other fan. One of our slogans is: 'Football is everything – also gay.' QFF-fans mix with other fans, who don't immediately notice that they are talking to a gay fan. In case of homophobic chants we approach people and ask them to stop. If they ask why, then we just answer: 'Because I am gay'. Surprisingly, people accept this and stop chanting. This strategy is very successful and results in more tolerance and less homophobic remarks in the stadium.

In 2001, the first gay and lesbian fan club was founded in Berlin. At the moment twelve fan clubs in Germany and two in Switzerland are officially accredited by their league clubs. In 2006 Tanja Walther-Ahrens (EGLSF, FARE), who we are closely working with, gave a workshop on homophobia at the UEFA conference 'Unite against Racism' in Barcelona. The major outcome was that the UEFA acknowledged the existence of homophobia in football. At the DFB Fan Convention in Leipzig in June 2007, DFB-president Theo Zwanziger commented on the existence of homophobia in football for the first time.

The goal of the event series 'Football is everything' (implemented by Tanja Walther-Ahrens) is to sensitize officials and media to homophobic topics in football. Two events have been held (in Berlin 2007 and Cologne 2008), with Theo Zwanziger as guest in Cologne. The third event will be held in Stuttgart in June 2009. The declaration 'Fighting Discrimination in Football' has been signed by 33 pro-clubs and state FA's and 37 other organisations (as of April 2009).

Ms Lucy Faulkner, Equality Manager, The English Football Association

Research shows that in England in 2007 11% of referees, 10% of club and league officials, 10% of coaches and 14% of players have experienced homophobic abuse. The Football Association has many activities to fight homophobia and it has a partnership with the Gay Football Supporters Network providing volunteer liaison officers to every professional club. There is a section on tackling homophobia on the website www.theFA.com and the FA Respect programme has a code of conduct which mentions homophobia.

Often people in football deny that there is any problem with homophobia because there are no openly gay football players. The reality is that there may be gay players but they choose not to come out, which means the problem is even bigger. Harsh measures remain necessary against fans and football players who behave in a homophobic way. Educational programmes for coaches, referees and members of sport clubs are important in order to normalize the subject of tackling homophobia and of sexual orientation, which hopefully makes it easier for gay people in football to come out in the future.

Workshop 2 Strategy in the Netherlands

The Dutch Olympic Committee and National Sport Federation NOC*NSF is part of an alliance to improve social acceptance of homosexuals in sport. The alliance was presented and discussed in this workshop. The role of organized sport in this alliance received special attention.

Ms Mavis Carrilho, board member NOC*NSF

The goal of NOC*NSF is to increase social acceptance of homosexuals in sport. We want to find out why certain sports are less popular among gays and why they are less likely to reveal their (gay) identity. We want to open the issue up for discussion, increase visibility of gay athletes and take action against unacceptable behaviour. NOC*NSF has a number of activities and projects, e.g. setting up a network for gay athletes, sport management courses within federations, and to increase expertise and alertness of counsellors/advisors towards bullying and intimidation. Another activity is developing a master plan for referees/umpires, call in their help to combat undesirable behaviour and offer them support in dealing with (their own) homosexuality. NOC*NSF will also try to put the issue of homophobia on the agenda of international sports organisations like the European Non Governmental Sport Organisation (ENGSO).

The challenge is a change in culture, which is difficult to make tangible at the club level. How can you create a club that is really inclusive? Collaboration between the world of sport and the outside world is necessary for that. We need pressure from the outside to change sport from the inside. The Netherlands and Norway are in the position to take the lead in agenda setting. The Norwegian presentation we heard today can stimulate The Netherlands to be even more ambitious than we already are. NOC*NSF should collect and show good practices in The Netherlands, e.g. the Nederlandse Culturele Sportbond (NCS, Dutch Cultural Sport Association) and the KNVB (Dutch Swimming Association). Gay swimming clubs participate in regular competitions without any problems. Another good example is the Amsterdam Lowlanders Rugby Club, who is associated with the regular rugby club. The two collaborate well.

Mr Bas Koppers, director of stichting Homosport Nederland

Stichting Homosport Nederland executes the Dutch government policy. Measures proposed by the Dutch government are for example: the Gay and Straight Alliance, a code of conduct,

meetings to exchange best practices, and the inclusion of the topic of sexual diversity in sports education. Special attention will be given to the inclusion of youth from ethnic minorities through sport. Ambassadors will be employed to promote fair play and respect. Projects aimed at creating tolerant sporting environments for LGBT will receive support.

Dutch research shows that, compared to other social environments, sport has the highest percentage of LGBT that hide their sexuality. Few public hostilities occur, but sexual preference is considered as a source of discomfort, insecurity and shame. Homosexuality hinders full social acceptance. Additional research will be done in 2009, assigned by stichting Homosport Nederland. Participating organisations in the Gay and Straight Alliance are: NOC*NSF, Nederlandse Sport Alliantie (Dutch Sport Alliance), John Blankenstein Foundation, COC-Nederland (Dutch Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgenders), MOVISIE (The Netherlands Centre for Social Development) and stichting Homosport Nederland. Aim of the Alliance is to coordinate, execute, embed and mainstream the initiatives that will stimulate the social acceptance of LGBT in sport.

Workshop 3

Cooperation between LGBT and Regular Sport Clubs: Why and How (Denmark)

The LGBT sport movement has changed tremendously over the years. Sport clubs have grown from being small and community based to having large memberships and offering a variety of sports, forming both formal and informal networks and federations regionally, nationally and internationally. Starting out from the experiences in Copenhagen, this workshop focussed on the question what local LGBT sport clubs and international federations can gain in working together with regular sport clubs and federations. Speakers: Mr Tommy Kristoffersen, Director of Sports Programme, World Outgames Copenhagen 2009; Mr Peter Munk, Chairman of Pan Idræt (Gay and Lesbian Sports Club Copenhagen); Mr Henrik Hansen, Board member of Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI)-Greater Copenhagen.

The present situation in Denmark: sport venues are being offered free of charge, sport for members under the age of 25 is subsidized and there is €40.000 available for projects with young LGBT's in sport. The Danish government respects the work of Pan Idræt and Pan Idræt participates in mainstream tournaments. All the sports of Pan Idræt are working together to reach mutual goals (e.g. the World Outgames) and it has about 700 members (only 250 in 2000) in nineteen different sports. Pan Idræt is an umbrella and 'houses' nine different sport clubs for men and for women. It offers policy, funding and support and helps to establish new clubs.

Pan Idræt was founded in 1984. In the early nineties it became a member of DGI. In 1998 DGI mediated the process of revitalizing Pan Idræt setting new objectives, which were: increasing the number of members to 500 within two years and being the host of EuroGames within a few years. In 2007 DGI awarded Pan Idræt with €1.300 for being a role model sports club. DGI doesn't allow groups who cannot finance themselves, but those groups are still included on the website (as associated members). DGI, DIF Federations (The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark) and the city of Copenhagen became partners of EuroGames 2003. DGI took care of the registration of participants and the

finances, the city of Copenhagen offered the venues for free and a mainstream sport club arranged the five and ten kilometre run at EuroGames 2003.

The EuroGames 2003 resulted in the establishment of Copenhagen Frontrunners and more cooperation with and respect from mainstream sports organisations and the city of Copenhagen. Since then Pan Idræt also has officials at mainstream handball and swimming tournaments. Several Pan Idræt sport clubs now participate in mainstream tournaments in Copenhagen (badminton, football, handball, rugby, swimming, tennis and volleyball). Members of Pan Idræt join the boards and committees in mainstream organizations and participate in relevant sport meetings in Copenhagen. LGBT groups participate in mainstream sport clubs (e.g. rowing). Same sex dancers are instructors in a mainstream sport club (USG). There is an ongoing dialogue with mainstream sports organizations (i.e. the Danish Volleyball Association, the Danish Swimming Federation, the Danish Rugby Association and the Danish Dance Sport Federation).

In 2005 GLISA (Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association) and AGA (American Gaming Association) chose Pan Idræt to be the host of World Outgames 2009. A Steering Committee with representatives from the city of Copenhagen, Wonderful Copenhagen (tourist organization) and Pan Idræt was established and was in place between 2006 and 2008. World Outgames 2009 will be sanctioned by the National Sport Federations and the International LGBT Sport Federation. Pan Idræt and mainstream sport clubs will arrange the tournaments.

Social and strategic aspects

A question that is often asked is: ‘Wouldn’t it be better if there was no need for the Outgames?’ But the fact is that sport clubs offer a social environment for minorities and LGBT will always be a minority. However, the success of LGBT sport clubs is not entirely dependent on their social aspect. If the quality of sport within LGBT sport clubs is not good, then people will find other social venues and the club will lose members. If LGBT sport clubs are organised well, there will still be LGBT sport clubs in the future. Moreover, finding local partners to work together is essential in strengthening the club as an organisation and to define goals for the future.

In hindsight, Pan Idræt could have networked better within the LGBT community. A ‘normal’ sport club has been established, but now we need to work on being a part of the gay life. Social events can be planned throughout the year to make people feel connected to the club. Giving opportunity for people to feel connected to the association and the association’s ability to treat its members well gives members reason to participate with the club. It is simply not enough to say it is a gay or lesbian sport club.

Workshop 4 With Sports Against Homophobia (Norway)

Mr Havard B. Ovregard is project manager for ‘With Sports Against Homophobia’, a collaborative project by The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, The Norwegian LGBT Association and the Norwegian People’s Aid.

Based on Norwegian experiences he presented strategies and tools for including LGBT-awareness and work against homophobia in mainstream sports organisations.

Light and practical solutions

A concrete barrier for partners to take part in this project is that they find its subject too complicated. Reasons for homophobia are very hard to make clear, because most people never reflect on their position as a heterosexual and feel uncomfortable with the subject. We can't expect a high level of reflection, so we need to have really simple practical solutions, in order to prevent uneasiness, avoidance and fear. Heterosexuals are also afraid of being stigmatized as gay themselves. We should recognise the fact that people feel fear about discussing this topic. It helps to name this fear while giving presentations, because the subject becomes less scary once the audience reflects on it. If you can get people to feel more comfortable about this subject, half the work is done.

Focus on what partners can do on a practical level. Coaches do not feel secure on the topic, so tell them exactly what they can say. Choose the light solution. Never say what they do wrong, be positive towards everyone, even if they don't deserve it, focus on positive examples. E.g. when people say 'fag' don't criticize them, but explain what is the effect and force them to work on it. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy: good examples normalise the new norm. People don't want to out themselves as homophobes. Also important: if you get the subject into the base proposal, it will be harder for someone to say it should not be there. Bring it from being a 'nice' topic to 'hard politics'.

Open and inclusive

Key topic of the policy document is an open and inclusive sport. This means two things: open to all, from a general approach, but also a need of strategic aims for inclusion. There are three of these aims: 1) adaptation (strong tradition of sport for disabled in Norway) including adaptation to other groups (i.e. religious groups), 2) recruitment (if there are groups that are not included, need to include them; but I don't mention LGBT here) and 3) anti-discrimination (key point for anchoring work on homophobia).

Treat sexual orientation as a part of diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, instead of as a separate issue. Avoid the words 'homophobia' and 'LGBT'. Those words sound negative and strange. I prefer to use 'gay harassment', because everybody is against harassment, everybody understands what it means and this word has no negative connotations. I prefer 'gender' instead of 'LGBT', because everyone understands what gender is. Define it as a project against gay harassment, not as a project for LGBT. LGBT don't need special facilitation, we just need to get rid of stereotypes. The same goes for educational material: we don't need specific material on LGBT-issues, nobody likes to be the subject of specific material. The issue should be integrated in the curriculum, in mainstream textbooks, PowerPoint's, etc. Work on how to get it into the curriculum.

Top down

Who is responsible for fighting homophobia? Not the individual LGBT, but the board: so work top down. Role models are in this respect not the right solution, because then the top doesn't feel the need to act anymore and the role models must do all the work. It's better to work structurally from the top.

The goal of our work is sport as vanguard in society. This approach is conducive to creating an environment in which all well-known heterosexual people in Norway make clear they don't accept harassment for any reason including sexual orientation, and in which every coach in Norway feels a responsibility to work against discrimination and harassment. This will have an effect in schools and in neighbourhoods.

Workshop 5

Campaign Against Homophobia in the World of Sport (Belgium)

This workshop was about the background and methodology of a campaign against homophobia in the world of sports. The campaign, sponsored by the Flemish government, focuses on creating LGBT awareness and was actualised during the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE)-action week. Speaker: Ms An Gydé, team coach of 'Equal Opportunities', Holebifederatie, Belgium. The Holebifederatie is the umbrella Foundation for LGBT in Belgium. Sport is not the core business of the federation, which represents about ten LGBT sport clubs.

In Belgium the official and legal position of LGBT is relatively good. Equal rights and anti-discrimination laws do exist. Gays and lesbians have the opportunity of same-sex marriage and can also adopt children. However there is a tension between this legal and official conception of equal rights and the attitude of the Belgian population towards gays and lesbians. There are hardly any open active gay role models in Belgium sports, apart from two famous lesbian role models: Ann Wouters, a top basketball player who is married to her girlfriend and former (kick)boxing world champion Daniëlla Somers.

The Belgian campaign against homophobia in the world of sports started in 2007. In that year the EuroGames were held in Antwerp. A gay sport group platform was founded, and a non-discrimination charter and brochures were developed. There was some publicity during the Tour Féminin (Tour de France for women). In 2008 homophobia in sports as an issue was tackled at the Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride. Cute guys dressed as soccer players gained a lot of attention, using the motto: 'Rode kaart voor de sport' ('Red Card for homophobia').

The campaign against homophobia in the world of sport was meant as a visibility campaign at a grassroots level. Partnerships between organizations were important. Sport federations and sport clubs were requested to put up posters in a visible place, sign the anti-discrimination charter and adapt the policy of their club. The posters used in the campaign were made available in a male and female version. The male version showed a rugby scrum with mud, and male asses and male touching. The female version had a big photo of two women in the gym with intimate body contact. Both versions had the provocative text: 'Are you thinking of sex now?' The answer offered was: 'It's not because we're gay that we continuously flirt on the pitch, in the locker room or in the... Give everyone the chance just to be themselves. That, too is fair play. Fair play, fair gay'. An extra Radio Brussels joined the campaign and offered a pink shoe to a gay soccer player. Unfortunately no famous football player came out of the closet, but this action generated a lot of extra publicity for the campaign.

The charter on homophobia was a joint declaration on the equal treatment of heterosexuals and gays, lesbians and bisexuals in sport. The declaration was subdivided into nine separate statements. By signing the declarations clubs promised to post this declaration at a visible place, (e.g. at the entrance of their sport halcentre). The charter has so far been signed by fifteen sport federations (out of 89), two local clubs and seven cities/municipalities. The charter had a larger and unexpected impact on the local level: two big Flemish cities linked signing the charter to funding, so signing the charter has become a formal requirement for sport clubs to receive city funding.