



Unison Scotland

Editor: Alec Deary

LGBT in UNISON
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Vienna Calling—What is ILGA?

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) is a world-wide network of national and local groups dedicated to achieving equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people everywhere.

Founded in 1978, it now has more than 600 member organisations.

Every continent and over 90 countries are represented. ILGA member groups range from small collectives to national groups and entire cities. ILGA is to this day the only international non-profit and non-governmental community-based federation focused on presenting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation as a global issue.

What ILGA do

ILGA's aim is to work for the equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people and their liberation from all forms of discrimination. We seek to achieve this aim through the world-wide cooperation and mutual support of our members.

We focus public and government attention on cases of discrimination against LGBT people by supporting programs and protest actions, asserting diplomatic pressure, providing information and working with international organisations and the international media.

ILGA held its 24th world conference Nov 3 – 6 in Vienna, Austria. 200 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex activists from over 80 countries attended the event, providing an occasion to celebrate ILGA's 30-year-long history. 120 of those delegates are scholars from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe

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Special points of interest:

- ILGA MEANS
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Solidarity
- Partnership
- Worker's Rights
- Human Rights
- Fairness
- Respect
- Civil Right
- Justice
- Change



EUROPE –Think globally act locally—

The theme of the ILGA Europe Conference was “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally” and keynote speakers in the opening plenary such as Morten Kjaerum (Director of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights) urged conference participants to use human rights law and EU directives to try to win equal rights for LGBT people across Europe. We were advised that at present almost ½ of EU states have no marriage or civil partnership rights for LGBT people, whereas there are clear and consistent laws across Europe outlawing racial discrimination.

This theme was developed in a workshop I attended entitled “Strategic Litigation” in which Professor Robert Wintemute of Kings College London urged that strategic cases be taken to the European Court to try to win LGBT rights across Europe by establishing case law. He stressed the importance of the role of LGBT activists in identifying such cases, although stressed that there are no instant answers and advised that cases can take 6-10 years to see a case through to The European Court. He reminded us that it is up to activists to publicise judgements that are won and clearly there is a role for us in Unison to continue to do this—David Calderwood.

Women’s Caucus – Denmark are undertaking a LGBT living conditions survey – it appears that there are more “hate crimes” against lesbians than gay men there. There was a discussion on aids. It was agreed that this is an issue for women, but campaigns seem to focus on men and aids. There was an interesting discussion on reproductive rights. For example, in Slovenia IVF was open to all. However, there was a big debate on this subject, and a referendum was held, which resulted in IVF being available for married couples only.

Panel session – there was a discussion on human rights. It was said that human rights is all about non-discrimination. The speakers spoke about EU directives, and their implications. For example, if a civil partnership happens in one country, is it recognised in another country that does not have civil partnerships (or equivalent) – what are the implications if you move? There is a common thread happening in that “hate crimes” are being legislated against.

Hostile questioning workshop. This workshop I found enlightening and interesting. We started off thinking about negative experiences, and the best responses. Every one had fascinating experiences to relate. We ran out of time to role play, so another session was organised. They had 2 people on a panel – and the subject was LGBT people having a family. One person supported LGBT families, and the other person supported the “alleged” norm of one male, one female parent. Speakers spoke for a couple of minutes, and then questions were asked. A feeding frenzy of hostile questions ensued. The person dealt with the questions well, in terms of keeping calm, but immediately became defensive. I learned tools to combat hostile questioning, and can’t praise the facilitator enough.

Employment Equality Workshop. This is a workshop on LGBT employment equality. There is an All-Clear project in Sweden which consists of 20 Swedish trade unions, and the Swedish Federation of LGBT rights. The objective is to develop the participating trade union work with LGBT issues, based on experience from the equal project of All-Clear. The network is open to all trade unions, regardless of how far they are with LGBT issues. Training is the key, as well as training the trainers. Organisations are in the network because they are trade unions, not just because of LGBT groups. Verdi (German public sector union) are undertaking development work (in conjunction with UNISON) in Poland, talking to the Government and trade unions. They managed to get a promise that human rights would be investigated, including LGBT issues.

Liz McKay



Addressing Diversity in the LGBT Community. We explored and celebrated the diverse identities that exist within the LGBT community. A contribution to the development of a strategy on mainstreaming diversity at ILGA Europe. The Chief Executive of ILGA Europe spoke about the organisation trying to look at, and develop diversity through projects. Participants were asked what diversity means to them, and the answers encompassed a wide range of answers. Liz

David also attended a workshop facilitated by Sabine Jansen from COC in the Netherlands entitled “Dealing with Asylum Issues: an exploration of issues and debates on National and European Level. COC are clear that LGBT people have the right to seek asylum if they are LGBT based on the fear of persecution in their country of origin. They advised that the Dutch Government now give asylum to all LGBT people from Iran as they recognise that they are at risk of persecution if they are returned there. They have been defined by the Dutch Government as a “group at risk”. Unfortunately the UK Government do not afford LGBT people from Iran such protection and clearly there is a role for us as trade unionists to campaign for this. I was similarly ashamed to learn in this workshop that our UK Government refuses to give asylum to lesbian women from Zimbabwe as if they have children. ILGA has written to Gordon Brown about these issues and clearly Unison should use its influence with the government to do the same.

I was also lucky enough to attend a workshop facilitated by The World Health Organisation – Europe entitled LGBT Health and HIV/ Aids. The workshop presented outcomes of the men who have sex with men (MSM) and HIV meeting which was held in Slovenia in May 2008. We sadly learned of the HIV epidemic among MSM in 27 Eastern European Countries. The study reported an under diagnosis in these countries where there is little data. Men are scared to come forward for treatment and testing for fear of discrimination.

We then heard about a work being undertaken in Spain by BCN Checkpoint which is targeting HIV testing and treatment at MSM in Barcelona, where HIV infection among the MSM community is also on the rise. Depressingly we heard this message too from Greece where they reported an increase in HIV infection among the MSM and heterosexual community, while infection rates among drug users are dropping. It is estimated that 1/3 of these men in Greece are unaware of their HIV status; and 70% of men in Eastern Europe are unaware of their HIV status.

Sexually transmitted infections are increasing throughout Europe.

The workshop ended by reminding us of The Dublin declaration of 2004 which stated that health promotion needs to go hand in hand with tackling discrimination.

In the final plenary we heard from Thomas Hammarberg (Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe) who stated that everyone has a duty not to violate the rights of LGBT people – or indeed anyone’s rights. He advised that states have a duty to protect peoples’ rights and to provide goods and services without discrimination. This is what we all need to be working towards and it would seem we are progressing towards this in the U.K. Thomas advised that we need to encourage wider society not to merely “tolerate” LGBT people, but to embrace the diversity which should be reflected in their attitudes. This reminded me of The Scottish Government’s “Hearts & Minds Agenda” which the Scottish LGBT Committee has been undertaking over the past year and will continue into our work programme for this year.

I would like to thank Scottish Council for the opportunity of attending two such invaluable conferences. I hope it is evident from the report how much I have learned and how invaluable this knowledge will be to the work of The Scottish LGBT Committee.

& David’s reaction:

This was my first ILGA Conference and it was a fantastic opportunity to meet LGBT people from other countries and explore the issues affecting them.



This year's conference explored the current state of the international human rights standards related to sexual orientation and gender identity and explored a vision of human rights in the next decade and the strategies needed to achieve that vision. Two conference panels included the following distinguished guests and experts:

- Thomas Hammarberg, Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe - Morten Kjaerum, Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union - Belinda Pyke, Director of the European Commission's Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and equal Opportunities - Professor Jack Donnelly, Denver University, author of highly acclaimed by academics, students and human rights activists alike book "Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice".

The panels were echoed and complimented by a rich and diverse workshop programme.

The Annual Conference is also ILGA-Europe's annual general meeting and following last year's constitutional changes a new Executive Board election system was put into practice: half of the Executive Board was elected for the next two years and half for the next year. The following individuals were elected as ILGA-Europe's Executive Board (first 5 for the next two years (2008-2010), and second 5 for the next year (2008-2009):

1. Renato Sabbadini (Italy) 2. Deborah Lambillotte (Belgium) 3. Pierre Serne (France) 4. Linda Freimane (Latvia) 5. Ruth Baldacchino (Malta) 6. Martin K.I. Christensen (Denmark) 7. Paata Sabelashvili (Georgia) 8. Christine Le Doaré (France) 9. Louise Ashworth (UK) 10. Tomasz Szypula (Poland)

Natasa Sukic (Slovenia) was elected as reserve member of Executive Board. Janfrans Van Der Eerden (The Netherlands) and Jackie Lewis (UK) were elected as reserve European representatives on ILGA Executive Board.

Ruth Baldacchino and Soren Juvas (Sweden) were elected as European representatives on ILGA Executive Board.

The Conference has also voted to host ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in 2010 in The Hague (The Netherlands).

This year's Annuals Conference was co-hosted by HOSI Wien and was the first ever ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference under the patronage of a state head - Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, had agreed to be honorary patron of the Conference. Dr. Maria Berger, Federal Minister of Justice of Austria, attended the opening plenary of the Conference and delivered her greeting. A greeting to the Conference from Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council (Parliament) of Austria, was also read out. During the Conference the participants were invited by Michael Häupl, Mayor and Governor of Vienna to a reception at Vienna City Hall.

The next Annual Conference of ILGA-Europe in 2009 will be held in Malta and co-hosted by Malta Gay Rights Movement.

ALEC SAYS:

As an old timer, working for equity in communities for the last 40 years I have to say it was a privilege to be elected to represent Unison Scotland at both ILGA Europe and World Conferences. The 10 day work load was demanding as was the emotional toll of hearing people's personal journeys of discovery. The challenge for us is to maintain the links with LGBT trade union activists at national, international levels, learn from each other and support the struggles for that elusive equity in the work place and lives of our brother & sisters.



Organising and self-organising – challenges and opportunities for lesbians and bisexual womens groups within ILGA World. This workshop broke in to groups and shared problems and opportunities with each other. I was very moved when the participants from Jamaica and St Lucia spoke. They reported that they never gave their names and addresses out, as they would be probably targeted for abuse. Word of mouth/internet were the best ways to advertise their organisation. It was agreed that ILGA could assist organisations by building an email list to share information. Participants from other regions were interested in Scotland's "third-party" reporting system.

Organising locally to bring about global change. Problems that LGBT people face include lack of information, linguistic barriers, culture, social stigma, etc. In pan-Africa that have developed a Committee, and are having a memorandum of understanding. One of their challenges is communication (as 4/5 main languages), so it was decided that English and French will be the official languages. Most of the work is undertaken through the internet. However, this can be expensive, and security is an issue, as there may be taps on the computers. Some Committee members have been forced to flee the country due to their activities.

Feminism for all! A participant from the Lebanon reported that they had to carry out their feminist work underground. It is illegal in all Arab countries to be LGBT, and there is no real gender equality in her country. The main issues she raised from her organisation were:

- Understanding feminism – it is a fluid and alive concept, and the basic idea of gender equality
- Understanding the lesbian movement. There is a problem with the gay movement understanding lesbians, as they need their own space to deal with issues such as their own bodies. If come from ethnic minorities, issues get more difficult. Globally lesbian issues are still defining.
- Infiltrating social movements. They have to infiltrate social organisations and get to know people, then raise lesbian issues
- Embracing the sexual rights approach. There is a sexual rights issue – eg women denied the right to have an abortion.

Applying feminist values to our own work. Addressing groups of people like migrant workers.

Trade union discussions. This is a trade union workshop organised by UNISON, Public Service Internations, and Education International. The aim of the workshop was to introduce the document "trade unions together for LGBT rights". The handbook gives a simple guide on how to organise and progress LGBT issues in the workplace. There was an LGBT member from the Nigerian Labour Congress, who was sponsored by the TUC to attend the conference, at the workshop. She encouraged people to contact African Governments, and ask them what they are doing for LGBT people in their country.

AND THEN LIZ SAID:

It was an honour and a privilege to be part of the UNISON delegation to ILGA in Vienna. We split up the workload so that as many workshops were covered as possible. I learned so much from delegates from other countries, and I hope I conveyed the good work that UNISON is doing with LGBT issues in the workplace. Thank you for allowing me to go.

VIENNA 08

Rathaus (City Hall) with two receptions in this remarkable place!



Liz—
never
off
duty!



Raymond Brown
in full fling—
surprised at how
many delegates
remembered and
loved their Glas-
gow ILGA!



Norbert (in the
middle) CEO of
the Vienna Tourist
Board who hosted
a not to be forgot-
ten welcome to
their beautiful
city!



***We all thought we had missed
Halloween until David reminded
us of the ghosts!***

Lynn said “ all our delegates made constructive con-
tributions within the workshops and the delegation, I
believe were a credit to Unison Scotland” We work
and play hard! Editor!

WHAT ILGA THINK! This conference, which coincided with ILGA's 30th birthday focused on building regional associations of African, Asian, and Latin American activists and on moving away from a traditional binary gender representation.

The conference strongly pushed the organisation "to promote equality of women, trans and inter-sex persons within and outside ILGA" and decided to move away from the traditional binary gender representation: all positions to be filled within the organization will now need to include two representatives, of whom one at least identifies as a woman". This proposal, put forward by the LGBT section of the UK trade union UNISON, enables activists who do not wish, for political or personal reasons, to identify as a man or a woman or identify as both to occupy a position within the association while ensuring the organisation is not ran by men only. A UNISON representative noted "there should be space for non-gender specific self-perceptions in ILGA and in its Constitution, if anywhere in the world".

"With the creation of the Trans Secretariat, we've succeeded in establishing a body to coordinate trans issues at a global level and have a say at ILGA's world board" says Belissa Andía Pérez, trans activist from Instituto Runa (Peru), the group which was re-elected for another two years as ILGA World Trans Secretariat. "This is key as it allows us to put forward the demands of the trans community within ILGA". She adds: "Vienna was the opportunity for an extensive dialogue on gender issues. It is important within ILGA, when amending ILGA's constitution and the way it deals with gender for example or by ensuring trans activists are given scholarships to attend conferences, but also important in the whole LGBTI movement: our aim is to achieve real inclusion of gender identity and advocate for non discrimination of trans persons, by far the most vulnerable group in the LGBTI community".

Trans issues were also discussed during a full pre-conference day for trans participants. A second pre-conference event for lesbian and bisexual women explored the link between the feminist and lesbian movements and the importance to include a feminist approach in activism, be it gay, lesbian or trans.

With approximately 200 activists coming from 81 countries, this 24th ILGA conference gathered a balanced number of participants from almost all regions of the world thanks to a scholarship scheme which allowed 120 activists from the Global South to participate.

ILGA invited the regional boards of ILGA Asia, ILGA LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean), and Pan Africa ILGA, which had been elected by activists during regional conferences over the previous two years in Johannesburg, Lima and Chiang Mai. Conference organizers also made a particular effort to ensure participation of activists from the Caribbean region. This provided the opportunity for these regional groups to hold regional and inter-regional meetings, to discuss and make progress within the global ILGA structure.

"ILGA really showed an international face, faithful to the diversity in our movement with activists equally represented from each region, gender identity and sexual orientation. We will continue working to have African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean activists run their own ILGA structure on a regional basis so that lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex activists from each region of the world can speak on their own behalf" says Gloria Careaga (Mexico) who was elected as Co-Secretary general of ILGA together with Renato Sabbadini (**Italy**). The conference thanked former co-secretaries general Rosanna Flamer Caldera (Sri Lanka) and Philipp Braun (Germany) for their years of work for ILGA.

"It is particularly important that we, as a global association are committed to helping activists to self organise locally: it should never be arguable that homosexuality is a western import, our Association and its 600 organisations from 111 countries are a living testimony, if need be, that same sex love exists in every country of the world in spite of the many laws criminalizing us around the world" says Renato Sabbadini.

Participants also discussed the way forward around LGBTI issues at the United Nations and other international forums such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting or the review of the Durban conference, a follow-up to the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. "In line with its previous work, ILGA will continue working on ensuring that both gender identity and sexual orientation are properly addressed within the UN system" says Gloria Careaga. ILGA works together with other human rights and LGBTI rights NGOs such as Amnesty International, Arc International, Global Rights, Human Rights Watch and The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Maria Sjödin, from the Swedish Lesbian and Gay Federation RFSL which was re-elected ILGA world Women's Secretariat adds: "ILGA occupies a very special place at the UN as it draws its legitimacy from the many groups it represents over the world; ILGA is our channel to have an influence on our struggle at the global level. ILGA can base its actions and recommendations on its membership's collective experience and knowledge". The Swedish group was among the six which gained ECOSOC status at the UN in the last two years within the framework of ILGA's campaign to give direct access by LGBTI groups to the United Nations.

But the political discussion did not only focus on the United Nations. Three motions were approved by the conference: the first one was presented by ILGA LAC. The Latin American and Caribbean region asked the conference to express its rejection of the Vatican's decision to have "to-be priests" undergo a psychological exam in order to determine if they are gay. Secondly, LGBT LEGAL (Peru), MUMS (Chile) and El Closet de Sor Juana (Mexico) asked for the end of persecution of the women's and human rights defenders movement by the government of Nicaragua. In a more joyful note, the whole conference spontaneously celebrated the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States of America and passed a motion to congratulate him. Engelbert Theuermann, head of the Human Rights Directorate of the Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs, opened the conference which benefited for the first time in ILGA's history from the patronage of a head of state, as Heinz Fischer, Federal President of Austria, assumed this role. IBM Director of Austria Leo Steiner also greeted the participants and spoke of IBM Diversity programme to promote LGBTI rights within IBM and the corporate sector while Paula Ettelbrick (IGHLRC) praised our individual commitments, the connection between local and global, the interdependence of both. She spoke of the value of network and the power of joining forces, celebrating, in the 30th anniversary of ILGA, the very concept of "association" which lies at its core.

Conference participants were invited to receptions both to the City Hall by Michael Häupl, the Mayor of Vienna, and to the Austrian Parliament by its President Barbara Prammer, who, in her welcoming speech, praised the work of ILGA on the occasion of the organisation's 30th anniversary. The first "GO Visible" award, an initiative of the Austrian Green Party was awarded to Aswat, a lesbian and bisexual women's group in Palestine. The second prize was granted to Labrys, an LGBT group from Kyrgyzstan, and the third prize was granted to MEEM, an LBT group from Lebanon.

ILGA would like to acknowledge the tremendous work and commitment of local group HOSI Wien for hosting an ILGA world conference for the third time in its history. "We are very pleased that in the end we managed to co-organise a full-fledged world conference despite the fact that we only took over this task last April", explains HOSI Wien Secretary-general Kurt Krickler, "We are espe-

cially proud that we could secure such strong support including substantial funding on so short notice here in Austria”.

Participants to this conference chose Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as host city of ILGA’s 25th world conference to be held in 2010.

YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES:

Following a series of hustings the Scottish LGBT Committee elected Alec, David, Lynn, Liz to attend ILGA World Conference. Raymond attended from his service branch and James as the Transgender representative from the LGBT National Committee at ILGA Europe! All in all we had a major input into both the ILGA Europe and World Conference. These had to be combined owing to organisational problems of the original host city Toronto. Saving funds we were grateful that the delegates we able to take annual leave, toil and granted a portion of leave to attend.

WHATS NEXT?

We will endeavour to build upon the contacts and the work begun in Vienna. While ILGA Europe was a conference organised on traditional lines familiar to us, ILGA World was a very different experience and we must learn from that, in preparing our representatives for future events. We are indeed fortunate to have such ability and commitment in the Scottish LGBT Committee to ensure that we are democratically accountable and representative of our members.



“TRUE COLORS” <http://www.truecolorstour.com/>

Delegates met with the planning manager Jeffrey, from Cyndi Lauper’s “True Colors” charity representative. We understand that Cyndi is planning to come to Scotland in 2009. Apparently Cyndi loved Glasgow when she was here previously. Cyndi Lauper has long been a supporter of the LGBT community, and particularly of human rights. Her motivation for True Colors stemmed from her desire to give back to the community for the love and support they have given her throughout her career, while bringing LGBT people together. What happens is that local LGBT acts are asked whether they would like to perform on the tour with Cyndi in whatever city she is in. Some proceeds from event are given back to the community. Contact details were exchanged, and it is hoped that the LGBT community in Scotland will benefit from this initiative.”

So we hope to have development talks with the management team and Glasgay to see how we can best take this contact forward!

LOADS OF STUFF!

As you will imagine our excess baggage included conference papers and a rich assortment of information, literature, DVD’s and handbags! The information we will circulate at our meetings but please feel free to contact any of the delegates* should you wish specific pieces of information. The handbags we are keeping and will be parading at every opportunity! “Vienna a cool city” Actually the weather was superb and we were even wondering about in T shirts—with vast ray of messages displayed.

*Any comments or questions contact Alec for initial response 07721663421