

To:

Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament
José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission
Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

Brussels, 30 July 2009

Re: Homophobic law in Lithuania

Dear Presidents,

Dear Mr Buzek, Mr Barroso, Ms Grybauskaitė,

We are writing to express our deep concerns with regard to the recent legal actions of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania which enacted the homophobic "*Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information*".

EQUINET is the European network of national equality bodies with membership from across the European Union and beyond. EQUINET aims to enhance cooperation between specialised equality bodies and seeks to act as a point of support to and development of national equality bodies in the implementation of their core functions as defined in the number of anti-discrimination EU Directives. Most of the EQUINET members and equality bodies are competent to actively combat discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsman is an active member of EQUINET Network and effectively works towards counteracting discrimination as a national equality body.

We are concerned that the recently adopted anti-gay law creates a significant threat for basic human rights and freedoms. The "*Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information*" practically affirms an anti-gay policy of the Lithuanian authorities which is in breach of the fundamental principles of the European Union as equality and non-discrimination. We are deeply concerned that the new legislation could be used to ban any debate on homosexuality and discrimination experienced by LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people in their every day life. It can also have a ruining effect and lead to the further stigmatization and discrimination of people because of their sexual orientation.

We are also concerned that the new legislation undermines all efforts made recently by the European Institutions and respective EU Members States to erase homophobia and discrimination as a social phenomenon affecting a large number of the European population including young gays and lesbian experiencing high levels of physical and psychological violence all over the European Union. In our opinion the new law can also significantly affect the work of the Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsman which endeavours to promote equality, including protection of LGBT rights. Having the new law entered into force, the Lithuanian government will undermine its own initiatives to protect and promote equal opportunities for all Lithuanian citizens.

We urge the European Commission, the European Parliament and the President of the Republic of Lithuania to undertake all necessary steps to ensure that the basic rights of LGBT people in Lithuania will be protected at the highest possible level and EU fundamental rights and freedoms will be respected entirely in Lithuania as in the rest of the European Union.

We thank you in advance serious consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Chila van der Bas
Chair of EQUINET
European Network of Equality Bodies
& Member of the Dutch
Equal Treatment Commission



Aušrinė Burneikienė
Equal Opportunities Ombudsman
of Lithuania
& Member of EQUINET
European Network of Equality Bodies