

*“Stepping it up - 2017 Renewed Call for a comprehensive policy approach at European Union level and across the European Union member states on LGBTI issues”*

On the first Ministerial IDAHO Forum in 2013 a first Call for a comprehensive policy approach on LGBT issues was delivered to the European Commission. This Call initiated a process of coordinated international efforts and activities in the fights against homophobia and transphobia at all levels. Since then, we have welcomed the adoption of the ‘List of actions to advance LGBTI Equality’ by the European Commission as a response to a resolution from the European Parliament and commend the Council conclusions on LGBTI equality of June 2016, calling Member States to consider working together with the European Commission with regard to its List of actions to advance LGBTI equality.

We believe that the European Union, as a key player in the area of human rights, is in a unique position to support Member States’ efforts to improve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons’ enjoyment of human rights. The EU should take a leading role, complementing and supporting national policies where relevant. We, European ministers, make this renewed *Call for a comprehensive policy approach at European Union level and across the European Union member states on LGBTI issues*, aiming at improving human rights and mainstreaming equality for LGBTI persons. With this Call we are engaging ourselves to progress the rights on a domestic and international level, including at the United Nations.

We have concerns about the living situation of many LGBTI persons around Europe and are committed to taking action in order to build on the achieved progress and improve the lives of LGBTI persons. LGBTI persons still face violence, discrimination, lack of freedom of assembly and expression and problems with freedom of movement for both couples and their children. We note with concern the reported increase of hate speech and other incidents of homophobic and transphobic nature in public spaces, the workplace, online and at school as well as prejudice-based stereotyping of LGBTI persons in Europe and abroad. We reaffirm that we will continue to work for ensuring that cultural, traditional or religious values cannot be invoked to justify any form of discrimination, including discrimination against LGBTI persons.

We commend the European Commission’s statements on the occasion previous IDAHOT fora and its participation in and commitment to the European Informal Network for Governmental LGBT Policy Focal Points. We also welcome the positive measures that have been taken in many European countries and at the European level, noting however that advancement at both levels has been uneven. We are confident that the European Commission shares our concern and our commitment to improve the situation and consolidate achieved progress.

While the EU already is a key player in combating discrimination against LGBTI persons, it is now time to consolidate its position in this area, by ensuring that its actions are and will remain, consistent and sustainable. By stepping up efforts towards a comprehensive and consistent policy approach, which has already proven effective in tackling other forms of discrimination, the European Union can make a difference in the fight to combat all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of SOGI, to ensure that, in accordance with Article 10 TFEU, the Union, defines and implements “its policies and activities, [...] (with the) aim to combat discrimination”.

To fully enforce the principle of non-discrimination and equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in all spheres of life, it should be carefully examined what measures could be taken in the respective areas of competence of the European Union and the Member States in consideration of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) studies.

The results of the FRA European LGBT survey continue to serve as a very useful basis for discussing the pan-European situation of LGBTI persons. Moreover, the recent study of the FRA that examines the current migration situation in the EU for LGBTI asylum seekers, the study on the challenges to achieving equality for LGBT persons and the study on ensuring justice for hate crime victims and the Comparative Analysis of the EU LGBT survey data “Being Trans in the EU” are important instruments in tackling different LGBTI-issues. The research of the Council of Europe on LGBT-children, on LGBT inclusion in sport, on Protecting Human Rights of Transgender Persons is an important source of information as well. These findings will guide the development of priorities, effective measures and follow up within a clear timetable.

We look forward to follow-up research on this topic, and welcome that the research recently has been extended to the inclusion of the situation of intersex persons as well.

We concur with the European Parliament, which has supported the adoption of a Call on equal treatment in employment and occupation for LGBTI persons on the 15th of September 2016 and a Call to protect LGBTI persons against harassment in the workplace and to revise the current EU framework decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia. Together with other reports from the Parliament, these are useful resources that the Commission should consider when further defining its approach.

We agree that the responsibility to respect and protect fundamental rights lies both at the Union level and at the level of Member States.

At the level of our Member States, we are committed to following up the Council of Europe Ministers’ Recommendations on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Similarly, the Council of Europe Ministers’ recommendations are a useful resource for Member States to consider when identifying appropriate measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Moreover, the Declaration of Intent, which was adopted during the IDAHO Forum in 2014 in Valetta and the Declaration of Intent adopted in 2016 in Copenhagen, are important instruments as well in adopting measures in combatting discrimination of LGBTI persons.

Therefore, we call upon the European Commission to use its competences to the fullest extent to facilitate co-operation within the European Union and to assist and support Member States to tackle discrimination of LGBTI persons within their own countries whilst having regard to these recommendations. The Commission should assume leadership in assisting Member States through a variety of policy instruments, co-ordinating initiatives and by establishing clear timetables for making progress towards realising LGBTI equality by providing funding and support, establishing simple measurements and encouraging campaigns to achieve these aims.

EU action is necessary to co-ordinate and to promote efforts at the EU level and share good practice and to support efforts at the national level in order to make progress towards a Europe free from homo- and transphobia. Taking action to prevent discrimination and providing remedies can make a difference not only for the millions of LGBTI citizens in Europe, but for all. We call upon the EU to ensure coherence between its

internal and external policy as well as to focus on internal coherence within its own policies regarding LGBTI person's enjoyment of human rights.

We are ready to support the process towards a comprehensive policy approach at EU level and to share our expertise with the European Commission. We call all EU actors to commit to developing and adopting a comprehensive policy approach, which builds on the recommendations of the Fundamental Rights Agency Survey and the study of the European Parliament.

Luxembourg, June 16, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a vertical line and a short horizontal stroke at the bottom.

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