

STATEMENT

by the

EUROPEAN PRIDE ORGANISERS ASSOCIATION (EPOA)

to the

2007 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 24 September – 5 October 2007

Working Session 17:

Fundamental Freedoms III, including Freedom of assembly and association

(4 October 2007)

This statement is presented on behalf of the European Pride Organisers Association (EPOA). EPOA is the European federation of associations organising gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pride events and pride parades. EPOA was established in 1991 and has since been licensing the title “EuroPride”, an annual event that is taking place in a different European city every year. All across Europe, LGBT pride marches bring millions of people into the streets to celebrate diversity.

EPOA has addressed the HDIM in the last three years to denounce the problems and difficulties LGBT pride organisers had faced in recent years in various cities in OSCE member states such as Croatia, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia and Serbia. Unfortunately, we cannot report that the situation has improved since last year everywhere. However, at the legal front, some very positive developments can be highlighted, both at the national and European levels:

On 3 May 2007, the European Court of Human Rights published its landmark judgment against Poland. The Strasbourg Court ruled that Polish authorities, by banning the Equality Parade in Warsaw in 2005, had violated the European Human Rights Convention. Two weeks later, on 19 May, the Polish capital witnessed the largest gay pride parade ever – it was professionally protected by police forces, and only minor counter protests occurred. EPOA is also pleased to

announce that last month the licence to host EuroPride in 2010 was awarded to the organisers of the Equality Parade and therefore will take place in Warsaw.

In Latvia, the Supreme Court ruled last November that some provisions in the law regulating the right to assembly were unconstitutional, and new provisions entered into force on 1 June 2007. Now authorities only need to be notified about a demonstration, but organisers do not need to obtain an explicit permission for it. And so, after last year's ban and the attacks of a violent mob on the visitors of a church service held au lieu of the march, Riga experienced a successful pride event this June, professionally protected by the police.

Also in Moldova, the Supreme Court had ruled, in February 2007, that the ban on the pride parade in Chişinău last year was illegal. However, the city authorities ignored this ruling and refused again to give permission that a parade be held this year.

No changes have also occurred in the attitude of the Moscow city government. Again this year, mayor Yuri Luzhkov banned the pride parade planned last May. The alternative plan of the organisers of MOSCOW PRIDE 07 to hand over a petition at City Hall was also considered an illegal gathering, and like last year, the police allowed a right-wing and religious mob to attack those denouncing the breach of their right to freedom of assembly. And like last year, some of them were physically injured by violent counter protesters, and arrested by the police, including several members of the European and of national Parliaments.

EPOA, therefore, once again, calls upon the OSCE member states – especially the Russian Federation and Moldova – to respect both the rulings of their own courts and the landmark decision of the Strasbourg Court, which must be valid throughout all 47 Council of Europe member states, and to guarantee the right to freedom of assembly for all citizens, and to ensure, by protecting them in the event of violent counter demonstrations and hate speech, that everybody can exercise this right.