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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Summary report of the High-Level Conference “Pride Alliances and Policy: Towards a Union of Equality” held on 17 May 2024

Delegations will find in Annex the summary report by the Presidency on the above-mentioned Conference.



FPS Justice

Directorate-General for Legislation, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

Summary report of the High-Level Conference “Pride Alliances and Policy: Towards a Union of Equality”**17 May 2024**

Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental rights and core values of the EU. Affirming the principle of equality is imperative and putting it into practice is equally essential. This also holds true for LGBTIQ persons who remain at risk in this regard.

The Commission's first 'LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025' has led the way in this regard. The Strategy sets out a series of targeted actions towards three main goals: tackling discrimination against LGBTIQ people, ensuring LGBTIQ people's safety, and building LGBTIQ inclusive societies. It encourages Member States to develop their own action plans and adopt measures to promote and ensure LGBTIQ equality in all areas of Member State competence.

Over the past five years, the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Member States have actively sought to improve the protection and equal rights of LGBTIQ persons. This can only be achieved if the rights of LGBTIQ persons remain a priority on the European agenda.

To this end, the Belgian Presidency hosted a high-level conference in Brussels on 17 May – the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia – in the continuity of the 10th IDAHOT+ Forum of the Council of Europe, hosted by the Netherlands in The Hague on 14-16 May.

This conference took place at a pivotal moment, right before the end of the European parliamentary term as well as the approaching end of office of the current European Commission's College of Commissioners, including the first ever Commissioner for Equality. The aim of the conference was to discuss the progress in and obstacles to the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and the way forward for the next term,

thereby calling on Member States and the Commission to renew their commitment towards a European Union where the human rights of LGBTIQ persons are fully guaranteed, respected, implemented and enforced.

Opening: The conference was opened by Marie-Colline Leroy, Belgian State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunity and Diversity, who recalled that the Belgian Presidency put the issue of equality and the rights of LGBTIQ persons at the heart of the European agenda. She expressed concerns over the growing backlash against human rights and fundamental freedoms, making the continued political commitment to work towards a Union of Equality all the more necessary.

In her keynote speech, Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality, highlighted the key achievements made in the field of equality and non-discrimination over the past 5 years, notably the elaboration and implementation the first EU Strategy for LGBTIQ Equality. She acknowledged the work of the Belgian Presidency in advancing legislative files and giving focus to equality issues. Though much remains to be done, the Commission is committed to continue building a Union where equality is a reality for all and encourages Member States to maintain the momentum going.

In her keynote speech, Sirpa Rautio, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), indicated that the findings of FRA's third LGBTIQ survey present a paradox: on the one hand, the survey shows some positive developments in the fight for equality, and on the other hand, LGBTIQ persons face more harassment, bullying and violence than before. These results should impel governments and EU institutions to sustain their efforts to ensure that LGBTIQ persons feel safe and live with dignity and respect.

MORNING SESSION: LOOKING BACK AT KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Review of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

Setting the scene for the discussions, Irena Moozova, Deputy Director-General at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission, presented a review of the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, which will come to an end next year. She recalled the Commission's legislative initiatives with regards to standards for equality bodies, the extension of the list of EU crimes and the mutual recognition of

parenthood. She highlighted the developments in the sharing of best practices and guidelines among Member States through the setting up of the LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup. Finally, she took stock of the funding granted under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

Lessons learned from implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy

Following the presentation, a first panel discussion took place, with representatives from Member States at minister-level: Ana María Calvo Sastre, Spanish Secretary of State for Equality and the Eradication of Violence against Women, Dan Juvan, Slovenian State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and Sven Lehmann, German Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and Queer Commissioner.

The second panel discussion brought together representatives from civil society organisations Transgender Europe (Deekshitha Ganesan) and the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (Dragana Todorovic), with Vice-President of the European Parliament and Co-President of the LGBTI Intergroup Marc Angel.

Both panels discussed key achievements in, as well as remaining obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights by LGBTIQ persons. In doing so, they shared good practices or challenges in their home countries, as well as advice and findings informing future work at EU level.

Signing of the declaration on the continued advancement of the human rights of LGBTIQ persons in Europe

The highlight of the day was the signing, by 18 Member States and the co-presidents of the LGBTI Intergroup of the European Parliament, of a declaration on the continued advancement of the human rights of LGBTIQ persons in Europe.

This declaration calls on Member States to reaffirm their commitment towards LGBTIQ Equality, notably through the adoption and/or updating of national action plans, as well as through support for the reappointment of a Commissioner for Equality in the next term, who will continue to focus on and advocate the EU's commitment to inclusion and equality for all with dedicated attention to the rights of LGBTIQ persons.

The declaration also calls on the Commission to remain committed to the rights of LGBTIQ persons, to the fight for equality and against discrimination, and to the rights of LGBTIQ persons to non-violent living, through a strong institutional Equality Framework, including the full implementation of the current strategy and through formulating a new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for the new mandate. This new strategy should include appropriate initiatives, targeted actions and policies, apply intersectionality as a horizontal principle, be developed and implemented in collaboration with civil society, and be allocated sufficient resources.

Signing of the declaration is open to all Member States wishing to do so. The list of States supporting this declaration may be extended over time.

AFTERNOON SESSION: TOWARDS A UNION OF EQUALITY

EU LGBTIQ Survey III Findings

The afternoon discussions were introduced by a presentation from Siobhán McInerney-Lankford, Head of Unit at the FRA, of the third EU LGBTIQ Survey titled “LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads. Progress and challenges”. Over 100,000 LGBTIQ persons in the 27 EU Member States, as well as in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, have responded to the survey. The results show signs of slow but gradual progress with regards to respondents’ openness about being LGBTIQ as well as feelings of discrimination in everyday life. However, experiences of violence and harassment are dangerously on the rise, with even fewer victims reporting it to the police or any organisation. Trans and intersex persons are most affected.

Towards a new LGBTIQ Strategy

Following the presentation, a first panel discussion took place, with representatives from Member States at minister-level: Zafeiroula Dimadama, Greek General Secretary for Equality and Human Rights, and Roderic O’Gorman, Irish Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The following panel discussion brought together representatives from civil society organisations International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation (Rú Ávila Rodríguez), International Lesbian and Gay Association Europe (Chaber), and Organisation Intersex

International Europe (Dan Christian Ghattas) with Member of the European Parliament and LGBTI Intergroup Saskia Bricmont.

Speakers on both panels were invited to provide advice and insights on the run-up to the new mandate of the European institutions, with regards to the future composition of the Commission and a possible new Strategy on LGBTIQ Equality. They discussed the drivers for the progress made in EU LGBTIQ Equality policy, as well as the remaining gaps and emerging issues requiring particular attention in the future. In doing so, they shared lessons learned from experience on the ground that could inform the continuation of the work at EU-level.

Closing: The closing session provided insights into the forthcoming Presidency Trio with a statement from Magdalena Dropek, Advisor on LGBTQIA Rights to the Polish Minister of Equality Katarzyna Kotula. She commented on recent developments at the national level, giving hope to LGBTIQ communities for a new impetus towards greater equality.

Marie-Colline Leroy, Belgian State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunity and Diversity closed the conference, by sharing her conviction that building alliances between all stakeholders, in particular between institutions and civil society organisations, is key in achieving a true Union of Equality.