

## local news

### GALE starts three school projects in Andean countries

After a Latin America and the Caribbean wide quick scan and a strategy meeting in Mexico City, GALE has decided to start the work in South America with three projects in Peru, Colombia and Chile focussing on combating homophobia in schools. These projects will be funded with the core budget HIVOS provides to GALE. For three additional plans in Brazil, Argentina, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, other funds need to be acquired.

#### The three projects in the Andean countries

are similar on key issues, which allows a transnational comparison and collaboration. The partners will develop similar questionnaires and contain questions that allow for scientific cross-cultural comparison. The questionnaires serve to explore the situation in schools and to do baseline research before starting innovation processes. Also, the partners will develop ways to approach schools and to collaborate with them and develop ways to interactively and effectively discuss heteronormativity and homophobia with students, school staff and (if possible) with parents.

This collaboration project aims to promote, within the framework of human rights, action and reflection which results in a higher level of respect for the diversity of sexual practices and which prevents homophobia specifically. An integral part of this is the effort to not only change individual attitudes and behaviour but also structural and systematic oppression and discrimination of LGBT people and men and women. When we talk about "homophobia" in this project, we refer to this wider understanding. Photo: the Latin American team meets in Mexico City, 2008



### Lithuania adopts law to prevent education about LGBT issues

On the 14th July 2009, the Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information has been adopted by the Parliament of Lithuania. This law presents public information that 'agitates' for homosexual or bisexual relations as detrimental to the development of minors, and as defying family values. A range of international organizations has protested against the law. During a visit to the Netherlands, Minister Vygaudas Usackas assured his Dutch colleague the law will not operate in a discriminatory way towards LGBT people.



## Harmful effects

Neither 'agitation' nor 'family values' are defined in the newly-adopted law. International youth organizations fear the law will allow the prohibition of any non-negative information about homosexuality and bisexuality accessible for minors, such as movies, websites, articles, sexual education and even psychological help. Such information is much needed when a significant proportion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people experience mental health problems and attempt suicide.

The law will have a tremendously harmful effect on homosexual and bisexual children and adolescents, and potentially on other young people indirectly affected by the law. It further encourages the marginalization and stigmatization of young people from sexual minorities, and restricts their access to adequate information and support.

## Breaches of international legislation

Furthermore, this piece of legislation is in breach of Article 10 § 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that 'Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'.

The law also breaches the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Chapter III, Article 21, Part 1), which states that 'Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited'.

Finally, the law is in breach of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child's Article 13, which guarantees the 'freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media'.

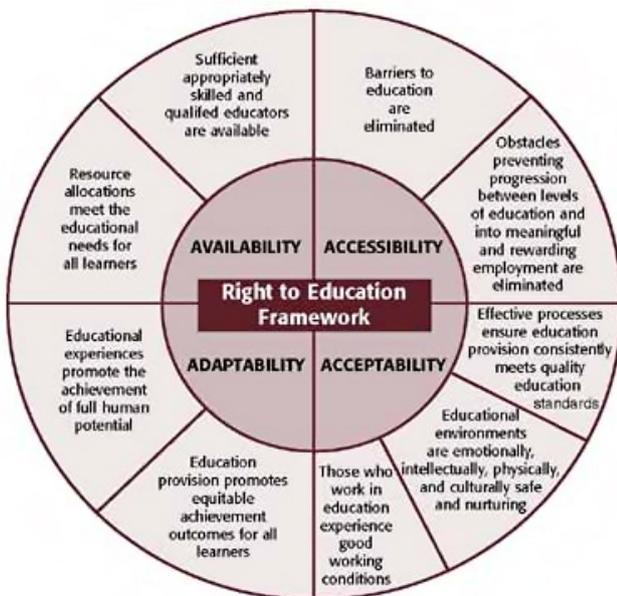
The World Health Organization took homosexuality off the list of mental disorders in 1990, and national legislations in Europe have steadily progressed in the past 20 years towards greater protection of sexual minorities. The Seimas has taken several steps backwards, doing so against the rights and interests of Lithuanians.

## Risk to education initiatives

Earlier this year, GALE developed a transnational project in which volunteer groups will offer education about LGBT issues; however, the European Community decided not to reward the application. This is a great disappointment, especially with a view at the conservative backlash in Lithuania and the wider region. Already similar measures were taken by the Polish government. It seems there is a trend in this region to curb the early attempts to generate any form of tolerance towards LGBT issues. This shows the great need to combat discrimination and to support the LGBT movement and her allies in these countries.

Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas got a lot of criticism on the law. During his visit to the Netherlands, he assured his colleague Maxime Verhagen the law should not lead to discrimination of LGBT people. He did not say how he intended to do this, or how he would prevent social exclusion due to the ban on information about gay and lesbian issues.

## global news



## GALE advises on draft UN declaration on education

At the invitation of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, GALE has submitted four suggestions to improve a draft declaration on human rights education and training.

The four suggestions are:

1. To recognize in education that not all citizens are heterosexual, that not everyone is born automatically as either a man or a woman, and intersex is an option
2. To acknowledge that students and educational staff should not be discriminated based on their sexual orientation and gender identity
3. To adopt Article 16 of the Yogyakarta Principles (<http://yogyakartaprinciples.org>) as a framework for a minimal standard of how human rights standards should apply to sexual orientation and gender identity
4. UN organizations could collaborate with both LGBT organizations and mainstream organizations in further establishing these rights and their implementation by raising education issues in the LGBT sector and by raising LGBT issues in the education sector. Fruitful strategies include linking mainstream and LGBT networks and experts, and including LGBT issues in mainstream UN strategies, such as the UNESCO strategies Education For All, Inclusive Education, Intercultural Dialogue and Building Inclusive Knowledge Societies.



## GALE charts Right to Education worldwide

This summer, The Global Alliance for LGBT Education starts a working group to globally chart the Right to Education for LGBT people. The network is looking for volunteers to join the team and help chart this right in their countries. With this initiative, GALE follows the example of the International Lesbian and Gay Organization (ILGA) which mapped the legal situation concerning sexual orientation.

**Charting the Right to Education** is less easily done than mapping the basic legal situation. Many aspects of proper education geared to the needs of sexually diverse citizens are essentially not legal in character. This is why GALE created a working group which has to establish a research instrument to adequately map the situation in each country. (Read more on page 3)

### Working group

After creating the research instrument, the working group will expand itself to find "country monitors" who will take the initiative to chart the Right to Education in specific countries. Where possible, they will not only chart the Right to Education itself but also the needs for improvement of the situation, the relevant stakeholders and existing good practices. Interested volunteers should become member of GALE and mention in their submitted profile that they are interested in participating in the monitor group.

### The Right to Education

A firm basis to start from are the Yogyakarta Principles, which were established in 2007 by an expert committee. Article 16 is the one on education. It lists 8 demands to state authorities:

1. provide equal access to and equal treatment in education
2. take care of the needs of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities
3. support the development of LGBT students
4. provide education about respect for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
5. protect students, staff and teachers against social exclusion and violence
6. provide care against marginalization or segregation of victims of exclusion
7. ensure that discipline is administered without discrimination
8. ensure that everyone has access to lifelong learning (summarized by GALE)

## GALE applies to UNESCO for operational partnership

GALE has formally submitted a request to UNESCO to engage in operational relations. If UNESCO accepts the request, it will be easier for GALE to achieve effective collaboration in a range of UNESCO strategies.



**The status of operational partner** will enable GALE to be invited as observers at conferences and make it eligible for financial collaboration with UNESCO. GALE may also be invited to participate in current programs UNESCO is implementing.

### Human rights and sex education research

GALE identifies four areas which it would like to collaborate on with UNESCO. The first is human rights and sex education research. UNESCO has carried out several researches focusing on human rights and sex education. The inclusion of LGBT issues in such research is extremely important to make educators and authorities aware of problems at hand. Next to monitoring surveys, exploratory research to make interventions more evidence-based and evaluation research are essential. GALE itself carries out quick scans on the Right to Education for sexual minorities and on good practices. GALE wants to support UNESCO in exploring LGBT issues and to enhance questionnaires. UNESCO may support GALE in connecting researchers and educators to local GALE activities in order to enhance this local work.

### Teacher training

GALE has started to develop a format for effective teacher training modules on "sexual diversity". It would be useful to exchange expertise on this with UNESCO-related general experts on teacher training.

## Internet-based knowledge-sharing

GALE is a virtual learning community of educators. Its website community is an experiment with online sharing of expertise. GALE would like to share and enhance these experiences with other virtual networks and interventions, notably with UNESCO.

In the future, e-learning may be an important capacity building instrument for students of sexual diversity and social inclusion. GALE will take a lead in this area and hopes UNESCO can assist in the development and implementation of such programs.

## Intercultural Dialogue

UNESCO aims to promote tolerance, respect, mutual understanding and interest by cultural exchange. Sexual

diversity often takes the shape of defined local subcultures. However, such subcultures are not always included in the intercultural dialogue. One of the core activities of GALE is to collect life stories of sexually diverse people and to share them. It is expected that such storytelling will help to decrease social exclusion, stereotyping and discrimination. GALE is interested to explore with UNESCO how such storytelling can be integrated in more general intercultural dialogues. There are already some interesting good practices in this area that can be shared and collaborated on, like the UNESCO Mondialogo School Contest and Gigapan Conversations and the Lesbian and Gay Panel Sessions that take place in Europe and Canada.

## alliance news

### GALE starts network in UNESCO

During the International Conference on Education (ICE) of UNESCO, which was held from 25 to 28 November 2008 in Geneva, GALE started a network of government representatives to how LGBT issues can be further included in UNESCO and in governments agenda's. The Dutch government graciously invited the GALE representatives to participate as part of the formal Dutch delegation. This formal representation allowed the GALE representatives to be able to speak during sessions.

## Inclusive education

The International Conference on Education is a conference for government representatives to discuss how access to education and educational strategies can be strengthened. In the UNESCO tradition, 'inclusive education' originally referred to special needs education, that is to provide disabled students more access to schools. In the past decade, the concept has been expanded first from just access to include educational strategies and school policies and, more recently, to a wider interpretation of the concept of 'inclusion'. GALE drew the attention to the situation of students who are not able to conform to expected male or female gender roles. They are often objects of ridicule and bullying, which often remains unchallenged by school staff. GALE estimates this type of bullying annually results in about **six millions cases of drop-out worldwide**. GALE advised governments to engage in an open dialogue between several government authorities, both on the national and local levels and civil society organizations and mentioned good practices from the Brazilian, Dutch and South African governments who have forged national alliances for this purpose, involving -among others- trade unions, professional networks, commercial companies and gay, lesbian and transgender organizations with different religious and cultural backgrounds.



In the conclusions and recommendations the ICE acknowledged that inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at quality education (...) eliminating all forms of discrimination. This statement is another step to broaden the concept of inclusive education.

## Follow-up action by GALE

GALE is using the contacts made to start an informal GALE mailing list to discuss further collaboration in the UNESCO context. In December 2008, GALE submitted a request for operational relations with UNESCO. Subsequently, GALE has been exploring the possibilities to include explicit mention of LGBT concerns in new declarations on human rights education and training. GALE will also explore the possibilities to include mention of LGBT needs for inclusion in education in the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) of the human rights situation in countries.

### Colophon

LGBT Education, 2009 no. 1

Published by GALE, The Global Alliance for LGBT Education

Vinkenstraat 116-a – 1013 JV Amsterdam, The Netherlands

[info@lgbt-education.info](mailto:info@lgbt-education.info)