

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
Vienna, 16 May 2008

Promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the European Union

“The combat against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a priority issue to ensure equal rights to all people in the EU”, said Constantinos Manolopoulos, FRA’s Acting Director, ahead of International Day against Homophobia on 17 May 2008. “This day is an occasion to recall the discrimination and prejudices that many LGBT people still face in some EU Member States. We must address this social ill head on.”

FRA joins in the efforts by developing a comprehensive study on homophobia and discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation across the European Union. This study has been requested by the European Parliament to examine the need for new European Community legislation to combat discrimination. Initial results of FRA’s ongoing project highlight that key issues include the access to civil partnerships or marriage, the achievement of social acceptance and visibility in areas such as employment, sports and the media as well as the importance of fair and non-discriminatory pension and tenancy laws. Effective legislation is hereby seen as a key instrument in tackling and overcoming such challenges across the EU.

The European Union and the Council of Europe play a lead role in promoting human rights and equality for LGBT people in Europe. The European Community Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights list sexual orientation among the prohibited grounds for discrimination. The European Parliament has taken a strong position against homophobia in its [Resolution of April 2007](#). It also gave its full support to the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity in the recently adopted “[Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2007 and the European Union's policy on the matter](#)”. There have been some recent landmark decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice. Finally, the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), in his latest viewpoint, called on States to take concrete action to make “human rights principles apply also to sexual orientation and gender identity”.

“The fight against homophobia must continue with all possible means. Our forthcoming study aims to make a strong contribution to this common effort and to help the EU institutions and Member States in making equality a reality for all people in the EU who face discrimination today”, said Constantinos Manolopoulos.

Notes to editors

- The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) is an independent body of the European Union. Its task is to provide advice and expertise on fundamental rights matters to the EU and its Member States. The aim is to support them to respect fully fundamental rights in the application of European Community law. FRA is based in Vienna and builds on the former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). It publishes an annual report on fundamental rights and thematic studies based on its research and surveys. FRA also works to raise awareness on fundamental rights issues.

- Discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is one of the thematic areas specified in FRA's first [Multiannual Framework](#) and has been included in FRA's annual work programme for 2008.
- In late 2008, FRA will publish the first comparative EU study on the situation concerning homophobia and discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in all 27 Member States of the European Union. This study, which has been requested by the European Parliament in June 2007, is based on official and unofficial information on both national and EU level. It will examine existing case law and legal instruments while providing evidence on homophobic incidents and discrimination. It will also outline existing policies and good practice by public authorities and civil society organisations.
- As requested by the European Parliament, the study shall support discussions on the need for a Council Directive covering all grounds of discrimination listed in the Article 13 of the European Community Treaty, including in the areas of education, social security, healthcare, and access to goods and services.
- For further information, see <http://fra.europa.eu>