

United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva, 19th September 2012

Universal Periodic Review: Finland

Statement delivered by ILGA-Europe (an organization in ECOSOC consultative status) and Seta - LGBTI Rights in Finland

Dear Madam President,

We commend Finland for accepting the recommendation to increase its efforts in combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. We are looking forward to an effective and comprehensive implementation of the commitment.

Whilst we welcome this progress, significant challenges still remain. Transgender and intersex persons face serious discrimination. Gender nonconforming children face transphobic bullying in schools. Discrimination in the employment market is common, and many transgender persons remain unemployed. Intersex children sometimes suffer mental and physical complications due to surgical operations that lack medical grounds.

The government states that a working group will be appointed to examine the need to amend the Act on Legal Recognition of the Gender of Transsexuals. We urge the government to proceed with this commitment very soon. Persons applying for gender marker change currently face degrading conditions such as the infertility requirement. This shows the legislators' lack of understanding of the everyday lives of transgender persons, many of whom already have children and families.

The government states that a possible need to amend family legislation will be discussed. Currently there are several legislative procedures where the equal treatment of families of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual, transgender and intersex persons should be taken into account. Children should not be treated unequally depending on their parents' gender or sexuality.

The recently adopted National Action Plan for Human Rights has very few references to LGBTI people. The government must show concrete commitment to creating policies to improve the human rights of LGBTI people. While many authorities are already addressing these issues of equality there is a need for a more coherent and coordinated policy. We suggest drafting a comprehensive LGBTI policy action plan and defining responsibilities for implementation and monitoring the plan.

Finally, we thank Finland for a constructive dialogue during the UPR process and stand ready for further interaction to ensure that all LGBTI people can enjoy their citizenship in full equality.

Thank you Madam President