

## Report from the office for the period 2015-2016

This short report complements the report from the Executive Board of ILGA and aims at giving a summary of the work undertaken by the office since the last World Conference in Mexico City in October 2014. For more information please check ILGA annual reports on [www.ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org) (please note that the 2016 annual report will be available as from April 2017) or attend the workshops dedicated to ILGA's governance and affairs (for example on finances, proposals, etc.) during the world conference where we will provide more information on some of the points below.

### Office: Registration

As from July 2015 ILGA is registered as a not-for-profit association at the *Registre du Commerce* of the Canton Geneva, Switzerland. Tax exemption status will be granted by the relevant tax authorities once ILGA's Constitution specifies that Board Members do not receive salaries or fees for performing their roles (reimbursement, on the other hand, are allowed) and that in case of dissolution all assets will go to another not-for-profit organization with similar aims to those of ILGA. The relevant amendments to the Constitution have been put forward by the Board with the Second Mailing and will be discussed at the ILGA Constitution workshops at the World Conference.

The ILGA a.s.b.l. (first registered in Belgium in 1997) and the ILGA a.i.s.b.l. (registered in Belgium in 2008) entities will be lying dormant until a world conference will take place in Europe or in Belgium: unless current regulations in Belgium change, this is the prerequisite for a conference to dissolve a Belgium-based organization.

### Office: Staff

Several changes occurred in the staffing structure of ILGA since the last World Conference in Mexico City, as highlighted in the table below:

Position	Staff Member
Executive Director	Renato Sabbadini
UN Programme and Advocacy Manager	André du Plessis

Finance Officer	Esperance Kana (until September 2015)	
Finance Manager ( <i>new position</i> )	Natalia Voltchkova (from June 2015)	
UN Programme Officer (UPR)	Alberto Quero (until 2015)	Ulises Garcia (until October 2015) Diana Carolina Prado Mosquera (from January 2016)
UN Programme Officer (Treaty Bodies) ( <i>new position</i> )	Helen Nolan (May 2015-July 2016)	Kseniya Kirichenko (from September 2016)
Gender Identity and Gender Expression Programme Officer ( <i>new position</i> )	Zhan Chiam (from December 2014)	
Membership and Communication Officer	Alessia Valenza (until April 2016)	
Events, Logistics and Administration Officer ( <i>new position</i> )	Senka Juzbasic (from June 2016)	
Media and Communication ( <i>new position</i> )	Daniele Paletta (from June 2015)	

A call for application for a new position, i.e. Development and Fundraising Officer, will be published by the end of November 2016, in order to hire a person by February 2017.

In the three regional offices of Buenos Aires (ILGALAC), Johannesburg (PAI) and Hong Kong (ILGA-Asia), supported in part or entirely thanks to funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the staff composition has been the following:

- ILGALAC: Pedro Paradiso, Director, and Paul Caballero, Communication and Administration Officer.
- PAI: Lame Olebile, Coordinator until February 2015; Jacobus Witbooi, Coordinator from May 2015 until May 2016, currently Programmes Director; Latheem Nair, Communication Officer from September 2015 to July 2016; Monica Tabengwa, Director from June 2016.
- ILGA-Asia: Sattara Hattirat, Coordinator until August 2016; Vu Lieu Anh, Coordinator from October 2016.

The office of ILGA-Asia will move from Hong Kong to Bangkok.

## **Finances and funding**

The budget has registered a growth from 1,220,000 EUR in 2014 to almost 1,500,000 EUR in 2016 (please refer to the accounts and financial reports in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> mailings for details), as a result of increased funding by four governments (Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway) and two Foundations (Arcus and Open Society Institute), and the arrival of new funders like the European Commission (in relation to the protectdefenders.eu project) and the Ford Foundation. The fact that ILGA passed an 'equivalence determination test' in 2015 with a specialized firm in the US (to see whether or not ILGA could be compared to a charity according to US Law), means that funding from US based funders is for general support and not project-specific, thus adding to the core funding coming from Sida and therefore allowing greater flexibility and freedom for ILGA when allocating resources to the various chapters of the budget.

The adoption by the Board of a Finance Manual (March 2015), the hiring of a Finance Manager (Natalia Voltchkova, from June 2015) and having the 2015 accounts audited by KPMG Switzerland increased the profile of our organization in terms of transparency, efficiency and accountability.

As far as development and fund-raising are concerned, in view of the current uncertainties of the funding environment, with governmental support less certain in the future due to the impact of the current refugee crisis in Scandinavia (and the concrete possibility of cuts to international aid and development funding due to public opinion pressure) and private support of LGBTI-friendly funding organisations facing requests of support from a growing number of organisations, ILGA intends to diversify its sources of income by hiring an in-house human resource who can take care of the fund-raising needs of the organisation with a unified approach. The hiring of said professional is planned for February 2017.

For more information on these subjects, please attend the workshop on finances during the conference (refer to the conference programme for the exact date and time).

## **Membership**

ILGA's membership increased by more than 10% in two years, from 1029 at the end of 2014 to close to 1200 in 2016 (as this year has not finished yet), showing a growth of confidence by many organisations of the LGBTI global movement for ILGA, which at the same time places a greater responsibility on ILGA to respond to the expectations of the membership. The extraordinary work of the regional offices, particularly in connection with the organization of the regional conferences, represents the most important asset in guaranteeing that the expectations of the members in the regions will not be disappointed.

Regrettably, the new membership database, which supplanted the previous one in October 2015, has not performed according to expectations: too many actions which should be straightforward (e.g. producing excel file of members list based on regions or files with updated payments on a regional scale, or files with the most recent applicants for membership) have to be performed by the staff manually or by a specialised technician. The cause of this state of affairs is to be traced to the company originally contracted for the creation of the new database, which was unable to complete the work, which had in turn to be contracted to a new company, which struggled with the source codes of the former company. Three new specialists were consulted in the last year and all of them eventually suggested only one possible course of action: designing a new database from scrap. A new contractor, with very positive credentials from ILGA-Europe, will be contracted as from January 2017.

## **ILGA programmes and activities**

The programme and activities of ILGA revolve around the three strategic objectives of the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan:

- *Strategic Objective 1. Become a representative voice of LGBTI civil society within international organisations, particularly the United Nations, through collaboration, engagement, support of members and partners.*
- *Strategic Objective 2. Promote diversity, advance equality and effective application and enjoyment of human rights standards and principles without discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression, and sex (intersex).*

- *Strategic Objective 3. Reinforce and develop ILGA's organisational capacity (Executive Board, Regions and Members) to achieve social and institutional change.*

At the core of Strategic objective 1 are the **UN related activities**, which cover the monitoring of LGBTI related issues discussed at the general sessions of the **Human Rights Council**, the submissions of reports (either by ILGA or its member organisations) to the same Council within the framework of the **Universal Periodic Review** and the submissions of reports (again, either by ILGA or its member organisations) to **Treaty Bodies** and **Special Procedures**.

The UN Programme of ILGA has expanded considerably over the last three years as has the team working on it (from 1 to 3 staff members), and more and more LGBTI activists around the world are becoming more familiar with the UN system and realize the advantages and the impact, also and especially at local/national level, of engaging with it. Furthermore, The UN Team of ILGA has provided **training** both in Geneva and at regional conferences, while populating the ILGA website with news items, advocacy tools and reports, written in-house or in partnership with other organisations, like **“Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expressions, Sexual Characteristics at the UPR”** (in partnership with Arc-International and the International Bar Association).

The success of the programme owes a lot also to the positive collaboration between ILGA and its member organisations and allies, both very active during Human Rights Council sessions, as in the case of the campaign to establish a UN Independent Expert On Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, i.e. Arc-International, COC The Netherlands, RFSL, and ISHR, GATE and Human Rights Watch.

At core of Strategic objective 2 are **research and communication** activities aimed in part at providing better tools for LGBTI activists to educate their respective governments as to the impact of certain policies in relation to the rights of LGBTI people, and in part to educate the general public, the media, academia and governmental or international agencies on the discrimination and persecution faced by LGBTI people in many countries as well as on the concrete impact (or lack thereof) of legislative changes (positive or negative) in relation to LGBTI rights.

These activities have also expanded in the last three years, thanks to the improvements to the **State-Sponsored Homophobia report**, the launch of a partnership with the Canadian data company Riwi which led to the first **global survey on attitudes towards LGBTI people** (65 countries, 96,000 responses in 2016) and the launch of a **Gender Identity and Gender Expression Programme**, which not only has put the basis for greater collaboration between ILGA and main trans\* led organisations like Transgender Europe, APTN and GATE, and produced (together with the UN Programme Officer for Treaty Bodies) resources like **“Advocating on**

**Gender Identity and Gender Expression at the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**”, but will also result in the productions of **Trans\* Legal Mapping Reports**.

In terms of Media and Communication, the presence of ILGA in social media has increased constantly in the last 18 months, with likes of our **Facebook** page going from 5,800 to 9,300 and **Twitter** followers from 8,400 to 13,100, while more and more mainstream media around the world quote ILGA reports (more than 70 in 2016).

At the core of Strategic objective 3 are activities aimed at the further **development of the head office based in Geneva as well as of the regional structures** based in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, both in terms of support to their operations and human resources and of support in the organisation of their respective regional conferences, as well as the organisation of the World Conference, and, as from October 2015, the activities that fall under the EU-funded protectdefenders.eu project.

While the number of staff members has grown over the years (see above), we organised also a number of trainings and staff retreats – facilitated by external professionals – to elicit feedback from all the staff members and to ensure ownership of the programmes implemented; as a result staff meetings and supervision meetings have reduced in frequency, but increased in efficiency. As the organisation continues to grow and develop, a new configuration of the staffing structure, in terms of teams, will be needed, to ensure the optimisation of the available resources.

The support for regional activities in 2015 and 2016 consisted mainly of direct support for staff and/or renting costs and of contribution to the regional conferences (Taiwan 2015, Wellington 2016, Johannesburg 2016; ILGALAC will have its conference in 2017).

Protectdefenders.eu is the **European Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders**. ILGA takes part in this project together with other 10 non-LGBTI Human Rights NGOs (the Consortium is led by Frontline Defenders), and provides digital security trainings to LGBTI activists in Africa (the first such training took place in Johannesburg in May 2016), in Asia and in Latin America, while producing leaflets in 7 languages to advertise among LGBTI human rights defenders the existence of the 24/7 helpline for activists in need of urgent relocation or financial help to strengthen the security of the premises of their organisations, and producing videos on activists who benefitted from the mechanism in the previous year.

### **A glimpse into the future**

As ILGA grows from strength to strength, in terms of staffing, output, finances and presence in the regions, it becomes exciting to picture the possible futures of ILGA: the main hub for LGBTI rights advocacy at the

UN? A credible collector of data and analyses to support LGBTI rights advocacy? A reliable partner for flourishing or fully autonomous regional entities? All of these?

The current process of growth, however, does not come without challenges: the expansion of activities requires on the one hand both greater professionalism and increased funding to implement them, while posing the risk of stretching the energies of the organisation too thin.

We like to look at these challenges as opportunities: the increased visibility of ILGA and the relevance of its work will attract new funders and professionals willing to work for us, while the check and balances of our governance will ensure that the new activities remain within the possibility of the organisation and centred on our mission.

This process of growth would not be possible without the leadership of the co-Secretaries General and the Board, the dedication and professionalism of the staff members and – ultimately – the support of the whole membership: these three elements are and will continue to be the key ingredients of ILGA's success.

Renato Sabbadini  
Executive Director  
November 2016