

## **"Members of the European Parliament and NGOs protest against homophobic and harmful law in Lithuania."**

Members of the European Parliament's Intergroup on gay and lesbian rights will join today other people and NGOs in a demonstration outside the Lithuanian permanent representation in Brussels to protest against new homophobic and oppressive law in Lithuania.

On 16 June 2009 the Lithuanian parliament adopted an amended Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information. According to this law, "propaganda of homosexuality and bisexuality" is one of the detrimental affects on the minors and information on homosexuality and bisexuality is banned from schools and any other places where it can be accessed by youth.

"It is my duty as an elected member of the European Parliament to act strongly against grave attempts to diminish human rights of EU citizens", said Michael Cashman, President of the Intergroup. "This new law is a spit in the face of the European values. To limit freedom of expression based on homophobia is a clear breach of EU's fundamental rights and principles."

"Our recent research, *Social exclusion of young LGBT people Europe* brought to light the fact that young gays and lesbians experience high levels of physical and psychological violence all over the European Union. We found that the highest levels occurred in schools. Similar surveys from other countries find that suicide rates among young LGBT people are up to 10 times higher than among their heterosexual fellows," said Simon Maljevac Chairperson of IGLYO (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation). "All this suffering is caused by stigmatisation, intolerance and lack of access to information about homosexuality which young people need, both to understand their identity and to respect others differences. The new Lithuanian law will render even higher levels of suffering. We deplore the adoption of this law. It will harm young people, not protect them."

**ENDS**

Representatives of European Parliament's Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights:

**President: Michael Cashman MEP (UK/PSE)**

Vice-President: Lissy Gröner MEP (DE/PSE)

Vice-President: Sophie in 't Veld MEP (ALDE)

Vice-President: Raül Romeva MEP (G/EFA)

Vice-President: Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP (EPP-ED)

Chairperson of IGLYO: Simon Maljevac

Executive Director of ILGA-Europe: Dirk De Meirlei