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Que(e)rying political practices in Europe: Tensions in the struggle for sexual minority rights

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Interview Questions

This list of questions was a guide for my interviewing. Not all questions have been asked in this formulation nor in this order. In the interviews with EU officials I did not refer to ILGA and also shortened the list of questions for reasons of time constraint. Yet, every area of concern was covered.

- 1) What types of political activism in relation to gay and lesbian issues were/are you involved in? What are the most important dates, events, and goals of ILGA for you, particularly in relation to the European context?
- 2) What kind of hope do you connect to the EU as an international political stage for gay/lesbian political activism? How can your goals be achieved there? Why not just lobby nationally?
- 3) What forms of discrimination against gay/lesbian people are of main concern to you? What is the relative importance of partnership regulations and formal/legal rights in comparison to other areas of discrimination? How can ILGA argue that sexual rights are human rights?
- 4) Is the concept of minority an important strategy for gay/lesbian politics in the EU, e.g. is it important to argue that gays/lesbians in the EU are a discriminated minority group and, therefore, either need to gain access to rights or obtain anti-discrimination protection? Are your—or ILGA's—politics, therefore, politics for a certain group, or for freedom of sexuality as a concept for all people, or even against the concept of normative heterosexuality in general?
- 5) How does ILGA negotiate its politics of representation, i.e. speaking for l/g/b/t people? Can that be problematic? If yes, could ILGA pursue non-representational politics at all, or is speaking for a group simply the most effective and pragmatic way to reach political goals? Is the concept of identity important for politics? How definable are sexual identities for specific political purposes? Do you think politics around gay/lesbian issues take part in defining, or re-defining, what gay and lesbian identities are?
- 6) How important is gender to your and ILGA's political work? Is the dominant definition in our culture of two clearly distinct genders—assumed to be heterosexual—the main “enemy” which, for example, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals share with transsexual/transgender people or should sexual orientation be regarded as a different issue from gender identity?
- 7) Is race/ethnicity important for your work on the European stage?
- 8) How do you measure success? What kinds of standards are implicitly/explicitly implied? How does that influence the planning of further political action?
- 9) What do you get out of your activism personally? Does it give you a form of professional identity? Does your possible position of relative power and influence within the gay and lesbian community, or other communities, help fuel your continuing activism? Is the fact that gays and lesbians are discriminated important for the formation of your own identity? Do we share a sense of community, of somehow belonging together, because we experience similar discrimination?
- 10) Is there any other issue that is important to you in European gay and lesbian politics that you think my research should cover?