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

Beger, N.J.

Publication date
2001

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Citation for published version (APA):

Beger, N. J. (2001). *Que(e)rying political practices in Europe: Tensions in the struggle for sexual minority rights*.

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Glossary

Committee of Ministers: Meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the 41 member states of the *Council of Europe*. It is the legal decision-making body of the *Council of Europe*.

Council of Europe: 41 member states who have signed the *European Convention on Human Rights*. Its bodies are the *Parliamentary Assembly*, the *Committee of Ministers*, and the *European Court of Human Rights*. The flag of the Council of Europe is blue with a ring of yellow stars and a capital C in the middle. Its seat is in Strasbourg, France.

Council of Ministers: The *European Union's* main decision making body, consisting of the ministers of the 15 member states in charge of the topic to be decided. The meeting of the heads of state is called the *European Council*. Meetings held in view to amend or change treaties are called *Summits*.

EGALITE: Gay and lesbian staff organisation of the European institutions (EU and Council of Europe). Mainly concerned with issues relating to employment in the European institutions and with social reunions, but also an excellent source of information on political lobbying, EU law and upcoming EU programmes.

European Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms: New human rights charter of the *European Union*, declared in December 2000. It has no legal status or binding nature so far. It contains the fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the *European Conventions of Human Rights* and certain social rights which pertain to EU citizens specifically as far as EU law is concerned. The Charter has the furthest reaching anti-discrimination article of an international charter in the world (art. 21). Art. 21 refers to sexual orientation, but not to gender identity.

European Commission: Executive organ of the *European Union*. Its civil servants draft all legislation, administer finances and control execution of EU legislation in member states. The Commission has its seat in Brussels.

European Community: Predecessor to the *European Union*. Also known as *EEC*.

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): International human rights treaty signed by 41 European countries since 1949, extending from Vladivostok to Lisbon and from Istanbul to Helsinki. It is enforced through the *European Court of Human Rights*.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR): Court of the *Council of Europe*. Can be approached by individuals in relation to human rights violations, provided they have exhausted the legal possibilities in their countries. Approximately 800 million people are eligible to appeal to the *European Court of Human Rights*. The ECHR has its seat in Strasbourg. Its judgements are binding on the member states, but it cannot enforce them through penalties.

European Court of Justice (ECJ): Court of the *European Union*. Has two principal functions: to check whether instruments of the European institutions and of governments are compatible with the treaties and, at the request of national courts, to pronounce on the interpretation or validity of EU law. The ECJ has its seat in Luxembourg.

European Parliament (EP): Parliament of the *European Union*. Directly elected by the citizens in the 15 member states. It is divided into party groupings not nationalities. The EP has its seat in Brussels, but assembles in Strasbourg for one week every months. The EP is not as powerful as national legislative bodies, yet through its agreement to the

budget of the EU it can issue considerable pressure. Since 2000 it has its own building in Strasbourg. It used to share the building of the *PACE*.

European Union (EU): Founded in 1958. By 2001, the EU has 15 member states. It is primarily an economic union. Since the Treaty of Maastricht the *European Community* (EC) gave way to the *European Union* (EU). Its main bodies are the *European Parliament*, the *European Commission*, the *Council of Ministers*, and the *European Court of Justice*. The flag of the EU is blue with a ring of yellow stars.

European Union Law: Three types of binding legislation exist: *Regulations*, *Directives*, and *Decisions*. Regulations have direct effect and apply in all member states. Directives are binding but must be enacted in national law, form and method is left to the decision of the member states. Decisions are legally binding for those to whom they are addressed.

ILGA: The International Lesbian and Gay Association, largest umbrella organisation for l/g/b/t groups throughout the world. Its European branch—*ILGA-Europe*—is the major lobbyist at the European institutions with official consultative status to the *Council of Europe*.

Intergovernmental Conference: Preparatory group for the *Summits* of the *European Council*, the meetings at which new EU treaties are decided.

PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of the *Council of Europe*. MPs are sent by national parliaments, the composition of each national delegation reflects that of its parliament of origin. Parliamentarians meet in political groups and forms committees on certain issue such as, for example, the Committee on Human Rights and Legal Affairs. PACE issues reports, recommendations, and opinions, which are published and sent to the *Committee of Ministers*. It assesses the application of new member states and can suspend the voting rights of member states if their human rights record is not satisfying (recent example: Russia). The Assembly has its seat in Strasbourg and meets four times a year.

Social Policy Platform: The Platform of European Social NGOs was established in 1995, and now regroups 30 European non-governmental organisations, federations and networks which are working to build an inclusive society and promote the social dimension of the *European Union*. It brings together over 1700 direct member organisations, associations and other voluntary bodies. The Social Platform channels the concerns of European citizens who have come together in these organisations on issues of common interest. It also ensures a wide circulation of information on EU activities and policies to its members at the national level.

Summit: Meeting of the heads of member states of the *European Union* with the aim to amend or decide new treaties.

Treaty of Amsterdam: Treaty of the *European Union*, which came into force on 1 May 1999. It includes an Anti-discrimination article, Article 13, which led to a new *European Union Law* (directive) in 2000 with respect to anti-discrimination.