

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

DIRECTORATES Human Rights and Democracy / Russia,
Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation & OSCE
Divisions Human Rights - Policy Guidelines and Russia

Brussels, 1 February 2012

Dear Petitioner,

Thank you for your petition dated 13 December 2011, concerning the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals in the Russian Federation. The High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton, who as you know received the petition in the margins of the European Parliament Plenary Session in Strasbourg, has asked us to reply.

The European Union is committed to the principle that all people should be able to enjoy the full range of human rights without discrimination. For this reason, the European Union has made its concerns clear to the Russian authorities over the introduction by the legal committee of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly of a bill prohibiting so-called 'propaganda of sodomy, lesbianism, bisexuality and transgenderism, and paedophilia to minors' and introducing administrative penalties and fines against such practices'.

Such a law is in contradiction with Russia's federal law and Russia's international obligations. Both the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulate, under Articles 10 and 19 respectively, that the freedom to receive and impart information cannot be limited, except under the ambit of public order. The EU is also concerned that such a law could reinforce prejudice and significantly worsen the human rights situation of LGBT individuals.

The EU has raised these concerns in recent contacts with the Russian authorities, including during the last round EU-Russia human rights consultations held on 29 November 2011 in Brussels. The EU has called on Russia to step up protection of LGBT individuals in Russia, notably in light of recent instances of threats and harassment.

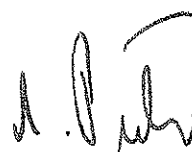
Because gender identity and sexual orientation continue to be used as a pretext for serious human rights violations around the world, I am grateful for this opportunity to reaffirm the EU's determination to take a firm stance against these abuses, to offer practical support on how to end discrimination and to encourage an inclusive approach, notably through the use of the EU's "Toolkit to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People" by our delegations and Member State embassies.

The EU will continue to follow these developments closely.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Riina Kionka'.

Dr. Riina Kionka

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael Pulch'.

Dr. Michael Pulch