

OPEN STRONG AND FREE

Global Trade Union collaboration on LGBT



**UNION
TO UNION**

LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL



PHOTO: UNION TO UNION

Göran Arrius, chairman of SACO, and Kristina Henschen, head of Union to Union, during Stockholm Pride, 2015.

LGBT GLOSSARY

Source: Human Rights Campaign

- **LGBT.** An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.”
- **LESBIAN.** A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.
- **GAY.** A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.
- **BISEXUAL.** A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.
- **TRANSGENDER.** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
- **QUEER.** A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations.
- **GENDER IDENTITY.** One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **COMING OUT.** The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.
- **HOMOPHOBIA.** The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

A Natural Part of Working Life

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons are subjected to serious violations all over the world. The alarming degree of discrimination has been mapped by the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO). According to their investigation, discrimination and harassment are common, there is a lack of protective legislation, and where legislation does exist it is not put into practice. People are excluded from the workplace only because they are perceived as deviating from the norm. Discrimination often begins in the education system, and affects the future prospects of those who are subjected to it. The situation is most serious for transgender people who are often barred from the job market. As a result, their chances of making a living for themselves and their families are limited, which often results in a marginalised life in poverty.

LGBT awareness is about human rights and decent work. We, as part of the global trade union movement, will need to act more forcefully in order to make a decent working environment a right for all, for example by improving our knowledge and expertise and developing existing tools.

We hope to inspire trade unions and organisations to embrace everyone's right to an inclusive working environment.

Kristina Henschen, Director, Union to Union

THE SWEDISH FEDERATION FOR LGBT RIGHTS (RFSL) CERTIFICATION

Union to Union is LGBT certified since 2016. LGBT certification means that everyone working within an organisation has to undergo LGBT awareness training in order to acquire the knowledge and tools they will need to introduce changes within their own organisations in terms of rights, equal opportunities, conduct and human rights. While the main focus is on the living conditions of LGBT persons and social attitudes, the certification includes trainings of all forms of discrimination. The RFSL LGBT certification consists of approximately 16 hours of training divided into several half-day sessions. It also includes the formation of an internal LGBT team tasked with producing an action plan in order to ensure the implementation of measures at the end of the training period. Find out more on www.rfsl.se/en/



”A Trade Union Must Represent All”

While trade union efforts to promote LGBT rights are proceeding slowly in some areas of Latin America, they are gaining momentum and acceptance within the teachers’ unions.

According to Fatima da Silva – member of the CNTE teachers’ union in Brazil and vice chairperson of Education International (EI)* – it should be taken for granted that LGBT rights have to be embraced by the trade unions.

“The union represents all employees, and employees have different sexual orientations. A union has to represent everyone and guarantee the rights of all employees. No one should have to be discriminated against on the labour market,” she says.

The EI adopted a resolution on LGBT rights at their international conference in 2015. It states, among other things, that the EI and all their member organisations across the world are to promote human rights regardless of sexual orientation, identity or expression, but it will be a challenge, according to Fatima da Silva.

“We try to include LGBT issues on our regional agendas, and a number of trade unions are doing a great job working towards these goals. But it’s not easy, many trade unions are not at all open minded when it comes to this,” she says.

Fatima is also working within an equal opportunities network that EI, the Swedish and the Norwegian Teachers’ Unions are running together with their sister organisations in Latin America. One of the purposes of this network is to improve women’s empowerment in the workplace, but it also includes LGBT rights.

“Some unions are at the forefront; others have only just begun to work with these issues.”

According to Fatima da Silva, the degree of commitment has to do with the political situation in each individual country. If society and the state have a conservative view of LGBT issues, it may be reflected



Fatima da Silva, Education International. She believes in a bright future for LGBT rights in the workplace

within the unions, says da Silva.

“But when governments implement positive change, it makes it easier for the unions and other organisations to follow suit.”

She mentions Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina as positive examples in Latin America. In Argentina, for example, you have the right to define your own gender identity without a lengthy legal procedure, which is necessary in many countries, Sweden for example.

“Argentina also allows same sex marriages.”

Even though there are still many challenges to overcome when it comes to LGBT rights in the workplace, Fatima da Silva is convinced that the future is bright.

“I have no doubt that LGBT rights will be on the agenda within all Latin American trade unions in ten years’ time,” she says.

*The global trade union Education International (EI) is a teachers’ unions umbrella organisation. Swedish Lärarförbundet and Lärarnas Riksförbund are members.

The Union Has the Power to Bring About Change

The union plays an important part in the struggle for LGBT rights in Africa, says Patricia Nyman, national co-ordinator in South Africa for the global trade union IUF's regional women's projects, which actively promotes LGBT rights in the region.

“The unions have the power to bring about change,” she says.

LGBT rights are restricted by law in many African countries. But the challenge also lies in people's attitude, according to Patricia Nyman, national co-ordinator for the global union IUF's regional women's projects in South Africa.

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are stigmatised, so it's hard to be open about it. Many are subjected to beatings, rape and murder,” she says.

Nyman is actively promoting these issues within various trade union networks throughout the region. She says that campaigns and education is one way of increasing awareness about LGBT rights in the African countries. It is also important to work towards inclusive legislation, and the union has an important part to play in this work, she says.

“The unions have the power to influence and push for new legislation because of their access to third party institutions for social dialogue.”

Patricia Nyman also believes it is important that the unions have the courage to openly condemn all forms of discrimination and to speak up for LGBT rights. At SACCAWU, the South African union where Nyman is the equal opportunities officer, LGBT rights are now policy and they support LGBT organisations and their campaigns. They have educated their members and invited their sister organisations to participate in their activities.

“Our vision is for these rights to be passed into law, that people will accept LGBT people and that the stigma and discrimination will be a thing of the past.”



PHOTO: WALTIN KLINGZELL-BRULIN

The union has an important part to play in the work for LGBT rights in Africa, says Patricia Nyman of the global trade union IUF.

In April 2015, the global trade union IUF's board adopted a resolution on LGBT rights. It states, among other things, that the IUF are to use their resources to support LGBT employees across the world.

Also in 2015, they discussed these issues at regional meetings held in Togo, West Africa, attended by representatives of trade unions from some twenty African nations.

“The discussions were heated, and reflected overall challenges,” says Patricia Nyman.

But some major breakthroughs were made as well.

“We agreed that we will need to continue these talks within our own unions. We also discussed that those of us who are heading these organisations will need to think more about our own role since we are all part of the system. It's our responsibility to protect and defend all employees – regardless of sexual orientation.”

*The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) organise employees within the agricultural and food industries, the hotel and restaurant trade etc. In Sweden, HRF, Livs, Kommunal and Unionen are members.

An LGBT Committee Makes the Union Stronger

The Public Services International Union (PSI) has introduced a dedicated LGBT committee for Latin America and the Caribbean. “It makes the union stronger when we are there for all, and LGBT people feel less vulnerable in the workplace,” says Jocelio Drummond, regional secretary of PSI Interamerica.

The regional LGBT committee meets regularly in order to share experiences and work on action plans that are later distributed to the member organisations.

“We work with labour legislation, workplace discrimination and work-related inequalities, but also civil rights such as same sex marriage, pensions and social security,” says Jocelio Drummond, regional secretary of PSI Interamerica.

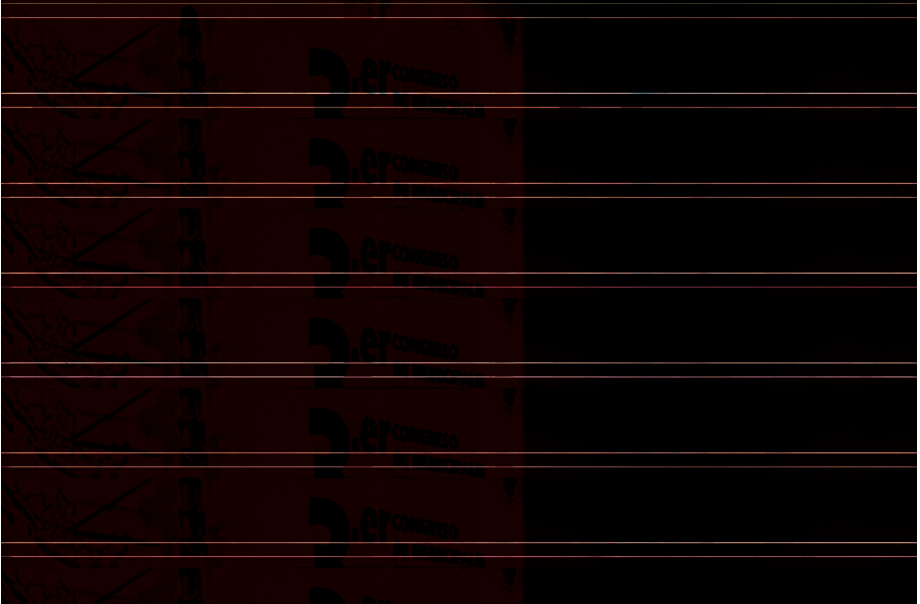
PSI* have also produced publications on LGBT rights for employees in Latin America and they have initiated a collaboration with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association for Latin America and the Caribbean in order to consolidate PSI’s knowledge and expertise within the area.

“Working with LGBT rights in the Caribbean and Latin America is always difficult, not only for the PSI, but for all trade unions. But we have been able to contribute to some important changes: no trade union leaders are against their unions promoting LGBT rights anymore. It may be a small step in the right direction, but it’s still an important achievement,” he says.

According to Jocelio Drummond, countries such as Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina have come far in terms of LGBT rights within the region in recent years, but there is still much left to do.

“It’s obvious that LGBT persons are still at risk in Latin America, so we need to do more in order to achieve a more equal society.”

It is now important to make sure that the member organisations



Even though there is still much left to do, important changes have been made in the struggle for LGBT rights in Latin America, says Jocelio Drummond of the global union PSI.

will implement the action plan that was adopted at the last LGBT committee meeting, he says.

The United States and Canada will also be included in the PSI regional LGBT committee in the future. The committee is currently planning a meeting between LGBT leaders at the PSI international congress.

“Unions become stronger when we are there for all,” he says.

*Public Service International (PSI) is a global federation of trade unions for public servants. In Sweden, Seko, ST, Kommunal, Vision, Akademikerförbundet SSR, Vårdförbundet and Transportarbetareförbundet are members.

Tips from Union to Union:

How can you work with LGBT issues within your own trade union organisation? We are aware of that the possibilities to work with LGBT issues varies depending on context. Consequently, context sensitive approaches are necessary and this list needs to be adapted:

Source: RFSL Sweden

- Disseminate the latest information on how LGBT persons are treated on the labour market and what your union is doing about it.
- Support and encourage LGBT persons to join the union.
- Make sure you know how to deal with LGBT-related harassment and discrimination.
- Help ensure that the union is perceived as an open, inclusive organisation from an LGBT point of view.
- Make sure you are well informed about LGBT rights at all times.
- Scrutinize internal processes and procedures within your organisation in terms of, for example, recruiting, parental leave, employee assessments, working environment etc. with a focus on LGBT.
- Attend LGBT events
- Focus on LGBT issues at internal and external events such as conferences, internal education events, panel discussions, etc.
- Make the politicians aware of LGBT issues.
- Co-operate with LGBT organisations on, for example, different projects, approaching the media or influencing legislation.



THIS IS WHAT UNIONS IN SWEDEN ARE DOING

Swedish trade unions are committed to LGBT rights. Below are some examples of what is being done now and what has been done in the past:

- The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have published a report entitled Öppenhet i arbetslivet (A Workplace without Prejudice) on how LGBT persons can participate in working life on equal terms.
- Fritt fram (All Clear) was a collaboration project against discrimination on account of sexual orientation in the workplace that involved a large number of trade unions. The project was concluded in the autumn of 2007.
- Saco and Akademikerförbundet SSR organise LGBT education for their employees and representatives. Saco have published a study material entitled "Du ska kunna vara dig själv på jobbet" (The Right to Be Who You Are at Work).
- IF Metall organise workshops in collaboration with the RFSL about everyone's right to be the way they are.
- The trade union Vision have an LGBT network for members who want to find out more about LGBT issues in the workplace.
- Several organisations and trade unions participate in Stockholm Pride every year.
- At their congress in 2016, the union Handels decided to introduce LGBT certification.

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) all over the world are excluded from the labour market due to being perceived as deviating from the norm. Swedish and international trade unions must do more to consolidate their efforts against the discrimination of LGBT people. By gaining knowledge and expertise, and by developing existing tools, we will be able to stand up for human rights in the workplace. The purpose of this publication is to disseminate information on measures that some global trade unions are taking in order protect LGBT rights. We hope it will encourage trade unions and other organisations to increase their efforts in making decent work for all a reality.

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