

# „... More than **Playing Games**“ - Conference

July 12, 2007. Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp

*"You know that you betray the whole world and most of all oneself."*

John Blankenstein  
FIFA Referee



## Supported by:

FARE - (Football Against Racism in Europe)  
English Football Association  
UEFA

Ministry of Sport Flanders  
City of Antwerp

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## Introduction

### „... More than **Playing Games**“ - Conference

Thursday July 12, 2007 from 14 to 18 hours. Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp.

According to surveys 5 to 10 percent of the population are homo- or bisexual. Sport is an integral element in the daily lives of many gays and lesbians as well. Based on their sexual orientation, however, they are sometimes excluded, discriminated against, or forced to conceal an important part of their identities to avoid discrimination. Homosexual athletes may experience discrimination in all sports and on all levels of sport. Stereotypical images and homophobia are widespread, among players, coaches, referees, clubs, associations, and fans. As a result of persistent negation, homosexuality becomes a taboo. There are even extreme instances of discrimination as well such as physical violence and exclusion from clubs after homosexuals have decided to come out.

The „...**More than Playing Games**“ - Conference in Antwerp in cooperation with the Belgium HoLeBi Federation offers two workshops which give the opportunity to

- learn about homophobia in football and good practices in the fight against it or
- discuss a joint declaration about equal treatment of heterosexuality and homosexuality in sport.

The EGLSF wants to help create a sportsworld where all sportswomen and sportsmen can enjoy sport without any discrimination. Therefore we need YOUR support!

## Conference Program

- 14.00 - 14.30 Arrival of participants
- 14.30 - 14.35 Opening of the Conference by Ben Baks
- 14.35 - 14.50 Welcome by the hosts:  
EGLSF Mr. Pepe García Vázquez  
HolebiFederation Ms. Mieke Stessens.  
UEFA Mr. Patrick Gasser
- 14.50 - 15.10 Opening speeches by the City of Antwerp and FARE
- 15.10 - 15.25 Equal treatment of heterosexuality and homosexuality in sport. Key note speech by Mr. Alain Courtois
- 15.25 - 15.40 Coffee and tea break
- 15.40 - 17.10 2 workgroups:
- Homophobia in sports, what can sports clubs do to prevent this. Examples of good practices in Belgium and Holland. (Mr. Bas Koppers + NN)
  - Homophobia in Football. Status Quo and examples of good practices. (Flutlicht e.V. Mr. Gerd Dembowski and English FA Ms. Tracey Bates)
- 17.10 - 17.45 Plenary session on workgroups
- 17.45 - 18.00 Closing speech by the Minister of Sport, Flandern

## Opening

Pepe García Vázquez  
EGLSF Male Co President

Dear Friends,  
Welcome to our Conference.  
Cliché, Insult and Taboo.

Perhaps these three phenomena can summarize and illustrate the LGBT issue, concerning discrimination, in the field of sport, and most concretely in football.



Pepe García Vázquez, EGLSF Male Co President

There are still people that keep on asking "how do you gays are able to play football on high heels", a homophobic remark parallel to the both homophobic and sexist one addressed to women, lesbian or not, playing football.

If we check football stadiums in Europe and worldwide, we will still find us, together with aggressive racist attitudes, facing homophobic and sexist insults as well.

Not many sport practitioners, from amateur to elite, feel safe to express freely their sexual orientation. Being this true generally speaking about sport, its incidence is much more important concerning football.

Cliché, Insult, Taboo.

They show a dark and widespread side of our societies.

Sport, with the intensity of personal involvement that demands, is a prism that reflects and highlights the best and the worst of ourselves. Sport fields, as witnesses of identification mechanisms and human conducts, speak by themselves about how and what our cities are. Once again, all this is much more blatant and evident with football, due to its enormous popularity, dissemination and number of practitioners, as well as to its social, political, economic and show business dimensions.

EGLSF, from its very inception almost twenty years ago, assumed as one of its main tasks the fight against discrimination and in this sense it has been developing its advocacy instruments, as cooperation, conferences and EuroGames, an important event also in this context. EGLSF has developed and is developing a network of cooperation based in the common ground of anti discrimination, as a way of entering into the lion's den and facing the beast of hate and resentment.

It is time to coordinate our forces and decide by ourselves what is the best way of pursuing this combat.

It is time to assume our responsibilities, each person or institution according to its own competence.

It is time to make of sport, and particularly of football, the role model for civil antidiscrimination actions that helps to have clichés erased, insults not tolerated and taboos overcome and to promote the general implementation of rights.

We are now in Europe in a crucial moment that can define the future of our continent for the coming years. But there are around as well old and new sinister forces at work that have also find an important echo in this beautiful and welcoming city of Antwerp, that so warmly hosts us.

Huge is the task we have in front of us as the sports people, Europeans, citizens and human beings we are, and perhaps not many the means available. But together we have to keep on walking and building a common path of acceptance and recognition.

Thank you.

Pepe García Vázquez

EGLSF Male Co President

**“We take a stand against any kind of discrimination, and part of it is obviously homophobia. We have put it on our agenda.”**



Patrick Gasser, UEFA

## Results of the workshop: Homophobia in sport

Homophobia in sports, what can sports clubs do to prevent this. Examples of good practices in Belgium and Holland.

by

Mr. Davy van Slycken - holebi federation

Mr. Bas Koppers - Netherlands Cultural Sport federation

After an introduction by Mr. Davy van Slycken and Mr. Bas Koppers an interactive program started. All participants were asked the following questions

1. *What can you and/or your organisation do to tackle homophobia?*
2. *What do you expect from others in fighting homophobia in sports?*

Unfortunately there was little time to discuss the various input of the participants. The results of all the ideas from the workshop are underneath. They are categorised in order to make them better accessible. Hopefully they give some 'food for thoughts' and even some ideas for actions.

### Sports Clubs

#### Statements

- Say no to discrimination
- Take a stand against homophobia in general as well towards homophobic club members

#### Visibility

- Combine gay and straight clubs in tournaments
- Visibility of gay sportsmen/woman
- Participate in LGBT oriented games (eurogames, outgames, gaygames, local events)

#### Support

- find support at LGBT organisations
- get support from or confront responsible body/actor to follow up the issue
- Invite LGBT-members for an informal board meeting

#### Communication

- Talk with each other
- Advertising gay sport events (at a national level)
- Communicate clearly that lgbt's are welcome in your club, in leaflets and on website

#### Practical:

- Let a soccer team wear a t-shirt that says: 'I could be gay, is that a problem'
- Organise an annual antidiscrimination day

#### Diverse

- Attention for bisexual people
- Attention for transgender
- A lot of questions about the gender issue have to be solved
- Have fun

## Grassroots Level

- Report incidents
- Use cards to interact with mainstream clubs
- Invite partners (your significant other) to social activities
- Explain the need for LGBT-Sports
- Commercial campaign for Sponsoring of LGBT-events
- Awareness raising: teachers and schools that focus on sports
- Focussing on taboos and how to break them in media
- Strategy to find 'Role model' in sport
- HR-organisations include LGBT issues more than now

## Sports Federation

### Statements

- Ask the national sports umbrella federations to sign a charter against homophobia
- let them follow up on this charter
- Publicly condemn homophobic declarations from clubs and trainers
- Put anti discrimination policies on the agenda of general assemblies

### Communication

- Invite LGBT for a dialogue meeting
- use the theme of the European year of equal opportunities for all to discuss/raise awareness for homophobia
- raise awareness on homophobia
- collaboration with LGBT association to promote a culture of inclusion and punish acts of homophobia

### Visibility

- Try to include all clubs in 'cross' experiences, hetero and LGBT tournaments
- Invite all sportclubs to LGBT-oriented games

### Legislation

- apply penalty fees to sport clubs with members or fans that out themselves in a homophobic way
- make official complaints in cases of homophobia (before, during, after matches)

### Education

- train football stewards on homophobia
- make workshops/course on homophobia obligatory for trainers and referees

### Divers

- create or promote a LGBT sport federation with some 'straight' sportclubs representatives involved in it.
- Make a 'label' of gay friendly sports clubs
- Make Straight-Gay alliance
- Identify responsible unit/persons within the sport federation
- Raise awareness on safety for LGBT's in sport

## Government

### Legislation

- Enforce anti-discrimination legislation
- Monitor homophobia in stadiums; sensitise police
- Adopt EU policy regarding homophobia
- Create rules against homophobia, but let them be effective

### Education

- anti-discrimination as part of all (sports) teachers education
- educate the children

### Funding/support

- support sport clubs/organisations that give a good example
- put action/awareness against homophobia as a criterion for public funding
- funding research in order to get a clear view on LGBT-issues in sport
- fund/support LGBT-sport tournaments like outgames, eurogames, gaygames.
- Co-finance projects joint with sport federations/organisations

### Statements

- ask the pope to say that GLBT people are normal people
- management by speech: be a role model
- ask government what follow up they give to recommendation of the council of Europe
- ask government if they include non-discrimination in their contribution to European Commission white book on sport consultation process

### Diverse

- create anti harassment counsellors for sport
- invite commercial or governing body's to a 'cocktail' to celebrate your club's success (or anniversary)
- World Outgames 2009 human right conference: collect and distribute best practices and methods for fighting homophobia worldwide



## Results of the workshop: Homophobia in Football

Homophobia in Football. Status Quo and examples of good practices.

by

Ms. Tracey Bates - The FA

Mr. Chris Basiurski - Gay Football Supporters Network (GFSN)

Mr. Gerd Dembowski - Flutlicht/BAFF

### Part 1: The campaign in England:

Tracey Bates and Chris Basiurski gave an overview on the anti-homophobia approach of the English FA and how the Gay Football Supporters Network (GFSN) is linked to it.

- 2004: The FA hosted a meeting on how to address homophobia in football.
- 2005: more regional meetings followed, including gay & lesbian groups such as the gay rights group Stonewall and GFSN.
- Next step: "law 12" clearly mentions homophobia: spectators who act in a homophobic way can be objected and arrested. This law 12 is not only a change of legislation: more and more clubs are making use of it.
- The FA produced a widely spread information brochure.
- The FA will support the Gay World Championships / football in 2008.
- Main idea is to break the subtle hierarchy of dealing with different kinds of discrimination. The campaign should lead to the understanding that homophobia has to be tackled in the same way than racism e.g.

To develop the campaign The FA signed an official partnership with the GFSN and established Chris Basiurski as FA Liaison & Campaigns Officer.

The mission of the Gay Football Supporters' Network is to promote the support and participation of gay men and women in football. The GFSN will work to establish a social network for gay football supporters, to encourage the formation of gay teams for players of all abilities and to campaign against homophobia in football, with a view to creating a safe and tolerant environment and to gain the respect and recognition for gay involvement in football.

A new League can be like a new life: Ten years ago, the assaults and taunts were so offending and frequent that Chris Basiurski was about to quit playing football. Now England established the only gay-friendly Football League in Europe. The main idea is that people of the same interest, with the same experiences, with fear of playing in "the established" FA-linked competition can find a place less stressful and free from homophobic abuse. A league like this should also create more visibility on the issue while being accessible for gay friendly heterosexuals.

And now, Chris is responsible to promote the issue, make it more visible and develop the campaign. The GFSN is free of choice how to do the daily work. Most of his work is to confirm homosexuals not to hide anymore because the wind is changing, down from the top. Chris also visits a lot of football clubs to promote the new official line and try to build up a basis at local clubs. He offers each club to install volunteers as liaison officers to locate a person to turn to, constantly available and from a local gay team or gay rights group. This is a long process but the only way to establish a constant level of nationwide work. All liaison officers are volunteers so far, but it's a start.

He is also about to strengthen the network towards anti-homophobia activists by sharing of experiences and finding more effective ways against homophobia.

It's important not for Chris not to use sexuality or gender as a weapon in any way. He wants to advise targeted groups, distribute anti-homophobia information, provide symbolic support and help creating a safe environment.

Chris wants to develop the campaign to a point where it is as established as for example the Kick it out campaign against racism., including the better budget. More money is needed to top the scheme down.

A success of the campaign is that the professional teams of Bournemouth and Manchester City started to support the local gay team. Man City e.g.:

- paid a four-figure sum to join the Diversity Champions Scheme run by Stonewall.
- is now officially recognised as 'gay-friendly' by Stonewall.
- wants to create a more gay-friendly environment in and around the stadium: sending a strong message to the public, enforced by media releases as a welcome message for gay, lesbian and bisexual supporters.
- develops progressive employment with help from Stonewall. This includes a diversity training programme for Man City's staff and recruit and retain homosexual or/and bisexual people.
- offers shared training with Manchester's main gay amateur team, Village Manchester FC.
- advertises in local gay publications and backs the city's Lesbian and Gay Foundation and support Aids fundraising initiatives.
- develops a further action plan with together with Stonewall.
- Village Manchester FC handed out leaflets on behalf of Man City at the Manchester Pride Celebration of Gay Life 2006 in Manchester.

## Part 2: Homophobia in German and European football

Homophobia means the irrational fear and intolerance of homosexuality, lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

"State of the art":

- Football stadium: a mono-cultural and „classic“ male bastion.
- Current hierarchy of discrimination:
  - ⇒ Higher perception of and reaction to racism
  - ⇒ „certain“ awareness of anti-semitism, antiziganism and integration/migration
  - ⇒ Start to recognise homophobia
  - ⇒ Nearly no perception of individual and structural sexism
- Homophobia in and around the stadia:
  - ⇒ Taunts made by players, coaches and managers
  - ⇒ Homophobic chanting and conversations in European stadia are common
  - ⇒ Homosexuality, bisexuality and intersexuality are the biggest taboos in football - „gay“, „fag“, „poof“ are the No. 1-taunts in „classic“ male football surroundings
  - ⇒ Common „classic“ heterosexual male prejudices: tough = heterosexual /

soft = gay.

- ⇒ No questioning of sexuality and gender roles.
- ⇒ Irrational fear of being homosexual (N. Luhmann)
- ⇒ Only a few clubs condemn homophobia in their regulations
- There is no professional football player in Europe who says it in public: „I am gay“.
- Corny Littmann, president of FC St. Pauli: „There are homosexual players in Bundesliga clubs and - as i know - also in the German national team.“
- „I know five dutch professional players who are gay. But the fear of their coming out made them marry a woman and have children with her.“ (John Blankenstein, former FIFA-referee)
- „Of course, I feel bad. Even my wife does not know that I am gay.“ (professional player, 2nd Bundesliga, 2006)
- „There are journalists who know I am gay - but they keep the secret to themselves. In return, they are regularly expecting some information here or there.“ (professional player, Germany, 2006)
- Pél e said his 1st sexual experience was with an older man. Maradona had started to spread the rumour before.
- There is a tendency that in and around a women’s football team lesbian relationships are taken in a more open way - although there is still fear of a public coming out.

#### More or less established ways to campaign against homophobia in football so far:

- **European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation**
  - ⇒ Since 1989: European network of lobbying & campaigning against discrimination based on sexual orientation
  - ⇒ EuroGames (every year): visibility of the situation, sports without (fear of) the daily pressure (everybody can take part), part of the annual FARE action programme
- **Football against Racism in Europe (FARE) against Homophobia**
  - ⇒ Since 2001: EGLSF became main partner of the network Football against Racism in Europe (FARE) & part of the annual FARE action programme
  - ⇒ Since 2002: homophobia is a part of FARE-Week of Action
- **Fans against Homophobia in Germany**
  - ⇒ 1999 first supporters’ activity against homophobia ever reported in Europe: Tennis Borussia Berlin, palying in (violett/white shirts) play an away game at Energie Cottbus. Remembering the homophobic abuse by lots of teams and especially Cottbus supporters of Tennis Borussia decided to dress as heterosexual homophobic people might think that all homosexuals like to be dressed. They wore high heels, and other stuff like this, entered the stadium like this and showed a big banner saying: “Violett and white is gay!” This activity should show the others: We have no problem to be gay. The cottbus fans couldn’t didn’t know what to do and avoided their homophobic taunts for the whole game.
  - ⇒ 2001: The B ndnis Aktiver Fu ballfans (BAFF) tackles homophobia in its touring exhibition „Target Stadium“

- ⇒ 2002: BAFF-campaign „Show Football the Pink Card!“ . 3000 stickers came with fanzine „Übersteiger“ of FC St. Pauli
- ⇒ 7-Point-Plan, public talks with John Blankenstein
- ⇒ Constant media work and lobbying
- ⇒ More gay & lesbian supporters clubs

### There is something about to happen:

2005: The English FA started a campaign (2000)

2006: UEFA started to get active

2006: The Task Force of the German FA includes homophobia as an important issue

2006: An issue of the German magazine „Rund“ attracts a lot of attention, conference in Oktober of 2007 to follow up

2007: German FA takes a stand against homophobia at „1. Fankongress“ in Leipzig

### What can be done first?

- To undertake efforts to include gay and lesbian football clubs in exploring ways to abolish prejudices, rather than through exclusion.
- The launch of a campaign & project by FAs in which homophobia in football is documented and analysed to challenge homophobia. To establish the foundation of a network with other relevant groups and institutions under the leadership of FAs.
- Active and visible participation of (inter-)national FAs in the organization and management of *EuroGames* if staged in their country (patronships, etc.)
- Clubs should adopt both an anti- racist, and an anti-homophobic paragraph in stadium and club regulations. It should state opposition to discrimination or harassment on grounds of race, sexual orientation or gender.
- To ensure broad awareness of this statement it should be actively accompanied by a public relations campaign run by clubs (with events such as panel discussions, leaflets, statements from players, etc).
- To overcome fear and prejudice clubs should provide rolling educational programmes on homosexuality (in particular to youth teams).
- Spectators should be encouraged to report and take action against homophobic and sexist slogans in stadiums, if necessary by addressing the perpetrator directly.

## Outcome of the Plenary session:

Future ideas and some points for further discussion:

- Every institution in football should be encouraged and educated to start thinking what is wrong in their structure. There is still an exclusion of the habit and 'subtle' structure of the football system.
- The Dutch FA provides a diversity course including homophobia for coaches



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and referees as part of their general training course that is a good practice for all other FA's

- The Dutch FA is about to launch the EGLSF birthday party in The Hague in 2008. That would be a chance for other to support the EGLSF as well.
- Fighting against homophobia is not volunteer work. Clubs and FA's should take over responsibility.
- The media is yearning for the first professional player to come out. This supports the big fear of gay players that their coming out would become a media scandal.
- How can examples like the English one be developed to reach the lower leagues and homophobia on a lower, daily level? What about a guide for daily interactions, daily situations and possible reactions?
- What about writing letters to all European FAs introducing the English role model, UEFA's stand against homophobia and calling for action? They should be asked to reflect on stereotypes and that's it better to abolish them. According to that: the FIFA paragraph 58 should work for every european League. The regional FA's and clubs should be asked what they do to implement the FIFA regulation.
- Gay and lesbian Teams should be encouraged to take part in regular leagues.

- Most of the audience has the impression that a start has been taken and that it's good to learn from other countries and coalitions. This conference is a good signal for such a way and to extend contacts.
- Make more use of different round EU tables /create a round table on that level.
- The charter, singed at the end of the conference in Antwerp should be well promoted and used by local groups.

## Joint Declaration

The following joint declaration on the equal treatment of heterosexuals and gays, lesbians and bisexuals in sport was signed at the end of the conference by:

François De Keersmaecker (President of the Belgian FA)  
 Alain Courtois ( Honorary Secretary Belgian FA )  
 Ludo Van Campenhout (Aldermen City of Antwerp)  
 Jozef De Witte (Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism )  
 Yves Aerts (Holebifederatie)  
 Kurt Wachter (FARE)  
 Pepe Garcia Vazquez (EGLSF)  
 Bert Anciaux (Flemish Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports)  
 Philip Heylen (Aldermen City of Antwerp)

## Joint declaration on the equal treatment of heterosexuals and gays, lesbians and bisexuals in sport

Our sports federation declares that it will

- ❑ be open to diversity in sexual orientation;
- ❑ treat all people, whatever their sexual orientation, respectfully and equally and reject all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation;
- ❑ actively combat unequal treatment and adequately protect and accept members, coaches, supporters and co-workers who suffer harassment or discrimination due to their sexual orientation;
- ❑ spread a message of tolerance, respect and dignity;
- ❑ actively offer equal opportunities for all;
- ❑ write into its house rules an explicit prohibition against all forms of homophobia and all other forms of discrimination, such as anti-Semitism, sexism and Islamophobia, and against the symbols that represent such discrimination;
- ❑ ban from access to sport activities anyone who demonstrates racist or discriminatory behaviour and/or wears provocative symbols or clothing;
- ❑ remain vigilant and act preventively against any sign of nascent discrimination;
- ❑ support the victims of homophobia and discrimination with the help, if necessary, of appropriate organizations, such as the Centre for Equal Opportunity and Antiracism.

The clubs promise to post this declaration so that it can be seen and read at the entrances to the playing fields and in the changing rooms, cafeterias and viewing stands.



Mr. Bert Anciaux, Flemish minister for Culture, Youth and Sports

## Important Addressess

### EGLSF

European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation: [www.eglsf.info](http://www.eglsf.info)

Tanja Walther: [tanja@eglsf.info](mailto:tanja@eglsf.info)

Ben Baks: [ben@eglsf.info](mailto:ben@eglsf.info)

Johan van de Ven: [johan@eglsf.info](mailto:johan@eglsf.info)

### Holebifederatie

[www.holebifederatie.be](http://www.holebifederatie.be)

Davy van Slycken: [davy.vanslycken@holebifederatie.be](mailto:davy.vanslycken@holebifederatie.be)

### NCS

Nederlandse Culturele Sportfederatie: [www.tolerantesporters.nl](http://www.tolerantesporters.nl)

Bas Koppers: [b.koppers@sport4all.nl](mailto:b.koppers@sport4all.nl)

### The FA

The Football Association: [www.theFA.com](http://www.theFA.com)

Tracey Bates: [tracey.bates@thefa.com](mailto:tracey.bates@thefa.com)

### BAFF/Flutlicht

Bündnis Aktiver Fußball Fans: [www.aktive-fans.de](http://www.aktive-fans.de)

Gerd Dembowski: [fefczak@web.de](mailto:fefczak@web.de)

### GFSN

Gay Football Supporters' Network: [www.gfsn.org.uk](http://www.gfsn.org.uk)

Chris Basiurski: [chris.basiurski@nortonrose.com](mailto:chris.basiurski@nortonrose.com)

### FARE

Football Against Racism in Europe: [www.farenet.org](http://www.farenet.org)

Kurt Wachter: [wachter@vidc.org](mailto:wachter@vidc.org)