

We demand the introduction of registered civil partnerships in Ukraine!

Appeal to the President, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine from the conference "**Same-sex Partnership in Ukraine: Today and Tomorrow**" (Kyiv, March 21, 2017)

In 2015 the Ukrainian government adopted an Action Plan to implement the National Strategy on Human Rights until 2020. In Ukraine's history this is the very first ever comprehensive policy document which provides a number of concrete steps to achieve the standards of a modern democratic society in this area. Paragraph 105 of the Plan particularly envisages "**Drafting and submitting to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine a bill on legalization of registered civil partnership in Ukraine for different-sex and same-sex couples taking into consideration property and non-property rights, in particular to own and inherit property, to support one partner by the other in case of incapacity for work, the constitutional right not to testify against the partner**", with the implementation deadline being the second quarter of 2017.

However, as of the first quarter of 2017 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has so far not even defined a central executive authority responsible for drafting this bill. Official responses from both the Ministries of Justice, and Social Policy, in effect state that neither governmental department is going to fulfil this paragraph of the Action Plan; instead each department shifts the responsibility for its implementation fulfilment to the other. An appropriate order of the Prime Minister is still absent.

Sociological data show that hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine are interested in the legal recognition and protection of their same-sex partnerships today – hundreds of thousands of Ukraine's citizens who, as well as the rest, pay taxes and contribute to the development of our country and its defence from foreign aggression. However, by not recognizing same-sex families, the State is trying to dodge implementation of its set obligations to its own citizens. This situation cannot be considered as procedural (instead, it appears purposely stalled). Previous acceptance of the Action Plan shows that the Ukrainian government does indeed recognize its responsibility to address and bring same-sex partnership into law.

According to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks, "*Providing access to legal recognition to same-sex couples boils down to a simple concept: equality before the law,*" and the recent decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, which in Ukraine are recognized as sources of law, impose "*a positive obligation on states parties to the ECHR to provide legal recognition to same-sex couples as a way to protect their right to family life.*" Thus, the introduction of civil registered partnerships available to same-sex couples in Ukraine is a topical issue – both in terms of the realities of modern life in Ukraine and within the context of its international obligations.

We urge the Ukrainian government to draft a bill on registered civil partnership within the prescribed time. We are willing to render every assistance to bring this into actuality. We call upon the Ukrainian authorities as a whole to submit such a bill to the Parliament promptly and to have it adopted.

Our country has already made its historic choice – it is time to implement that choice and to live by the standards of the modern Free World.