

Dear Friends, colleagues,  
Comissioner (Martin) Callahan  
Mr. Vice President (Paul) Franey,  
Minister (Allan) Shatter.

First of all i would like to welcome you all to Dublin. To Dublin Castle and to already the 6<sup>th</sup> European Gay Police Association conference.

It is now more than 2 1/2 years ago that Jan Snijder approached me, and asked me if i would consider taking over his place as a policy advisor for the National Expertise Centre on Diversity at the Police Academy of The Netherlands. Which sounded a bit boring to me, at first, I must admit.

Why on earth should i do that? I asked Jan. I had a great job at that time and had not even thought about changing jobs. Next to that, i did not have so much to do with a lot of the LGBT-matters. Yes, i was openly out and Yes, in my job as a confidential officer i had heard quite some stories about equal rights for Gays and Lesbians been desecrated. (At that time we hardly spoke about Bisexuals and Transgenders). But i was not the kind of guy that climbed up the barriers to demonstrate for LGBT rights, so why me?

Well.... and then Jan started telling me..

What he had done in the past 6 years, what his personal and most of all his professional mission was. And that it was not just finding someone to take over his job, but he was on the lookout for someone who would take over his passion and mission. Because Jan wanted to retire and enjoy the rest of his life-after-work in some more peace, together with his husband Raymond, his dogs.

But why me?? Well, Jan had met me several times and we talked a bit, exchanged some ideas, philosophized a bit and most of all, found out we had the same sort of drive: Helping to make the world a better place. I had had the same drive in previous functions. In Rotterdam, working on the streets and at vice-squad, with the "Royal" National Police department, and even on my moonlight job at Dutch Olympic Comittee. So there it was, the click.

But still, Jan had to convince me to leave a great job and take over his. And he did. By letting me read about the Dutch GPA, the boardmembers who stuck a lot of their spare time in the "Pink in Blue" network, the NGO's he networked with, the Hatecrimes project he worked on, the Diversity unit at Police Academy, the disappointments he ran into, the successes he had experienced. And... he told me about EGPA. A black sheep in the world of EU, Europe, Euro-countries, NATO, to name a few. Why? Because the EGPA members did not have expensive meetings to fight over issues they did not agree on, and take months and months of discussing and more meeting, but all had one main goal: to make the police forces they worked for more safe for LGBT personnel, and increasingly

try to build bridges between the police-organisations and the LGBT community in the cities, metropolises and even countries they worked for.

In the beginning they found each other while on holidays in (probably) gay-friendly places, swapped experiences about how it was for them as a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender to work for a mainly heterosexual-orientated workplace, that happened to be called "The Police". And they came out of the closet to their workplace, Europe wide.

Anyway, i'm sure you understand that Jan caught my attention and made me more than curious. Curious enough to make the step into a new job less than a year later. And here i am. Totally not a same guy as Jan, but believe me, with just as much passion and drive to stand up for equal rights. In this case for LGBT, but if you ask me, if we tackle this problem, we can deal with any kind of discrimination, exclusion, bullying, mobbing, assault... killing. Crimes committed just because some people think being 'different' than the majority means being inferior and that this being different therefore should be punished.

As President of the Dutch GPA and EGPA it did not take me long to become proud of the people I work with and of the work I do. And who are these people? Actually no more than hard working police men and women, in actual police duties, or supporting the forces in other ways. But people that have found a mutual drive: working towards safety and equal rights. For everyone.

During this conference i'm sure we will learn to understand more about fighting hatecrimes, not only committed by offenders in the outside world. Because let's admit, internally there is also still work to be done to make it a safe and enjoyable workplace for everyone. In my opinion this also means that we, people in this room and people we work with, should sometimes take some more time to look at themselves in the mirror and ask themselves: "am I on the right track? Am I giving each individual the equal rights they deserve?"

In the next two, even 3 days, we will experience both sides. Internal and external policework.

This brings me to what the EGPA stands for:  
Optimizing the position of LGBT police-workers within European police forces.

The EGPA can support the already existing Networks in their methods towards

police-workers (uniformed and non-uniformed), but also by the exchanging of projects, best practices (and bad practices), that prove and confirm the value of Diversity. This by implementing projects in favor of LGBT and thus have a positive effect on the execution of police tasks related to the people. The public, our “clients”

For instance I can name the Hatecrimes Project, named True Vision in the UK. Almost 4 years ago taken over in The Netherlands as a try-out, but now being implemented as core police business. Hereby I must admit that Hatecrimes is far from being a succes, but it’s a start in telling the people: we take hatecrimes seriously and we want you to report them!!

And Europe wide we see initiatives like these being taken over and sometimes being put together so well, the Netherlands go shopping for input in these countries. And that’s what it’s all about: learning from each other and wanting to teach the other your skills

Also police workers in the whole of Europe are now being encouraged to found a gay police network in their own country.

In the past 3 years EGPA has taken action on mainly the following goals:

- A. Placing the position and situation of gay police workers on the European agenda in several EU countries
- B. Exchanging of Best practices and experiences within Europe, concerning the internal police organisations as well as the operational police work, as a result of which the attention is focused on the prevention of discrimination amongst both the public and police officers.
- C. In police education (police schools, police academies) the boost will be given for LGBT related subjects to be part of different courses and studies (especially leadership programmes).

I would like to mention the countries to you that are now partner of EGPA. And

may i ask the representatives of these countries to stand up, so we can all see who is in the Board.

In 2004 the EGPA – Euro Gay Police Association – was founded by the following countries and their LGBT networks:

Gay Police Association (UK),

Gaypolisen (Sweden),           Jeanette Larson/ Göran Stanton

Velspol (Germany),           Thomas Ulmer

Flag ! (France)               Steeve Bouali

and

LHP 'Pink in Blue'(The Netherlands). Pierre van der Steen Janine Kranenburg

Promptly followed by:

Garda Gay (Ireland), Paul Franey

Polis Aperta (Italy),       Simonetta Moro

Gay Police Network (Norway), Baord Stensli

Gaylespol (Spain),       Manuel Gonzalez

PinkCop (Switzerland)    Petrik Thoman / Peter Sahli

GayCops (Austria)

Ewald Widi

And, since February, officially:

Rainbow Cops (Belgium).

Dirk Maes /Yannick Lecomte

Sadly Portugal has made some attempts to join us, but it never really worked, which proves for me that there is still a lot of work to be done, also close to home. And what to say about Denmark, Luxemburg

Going back to our friend Jan Snijder.....

“Dear friends, I wish all the participants, but especially the board of EGPA, a very good conference and lots of succes, but also support and friendship! A great parade in uniform on saturday as well! I hope, I am able to be at the conference in 2014 in.....Berlin(?); to celebrate, the start of EGPA in 2004! Big compliment to Paul Franey and G-force; well done! Kind regards, Jan Snijder

Well, what else can i say?

Have a great conference !!