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# Rights of the child and freedom of expression for LGBT-persons in Russia

**Written question No. 614 to the Committee of Ministers**
by Mr Håkon HAUGLI, Norway, Socialist Group

In March St Petersburg joined three other Russian regions, Ryazan, Archangel, and Kostroma, in restricting the freedom of expression with a law entitled "public actions aimed at propaganda of sodomy, lesbianism, bisexualism, transgenderism amongst minors".

This was addressed at the United Kingdom Chairmanship Conference in Strasbourg on 27 March 2012 on "Combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity across Europe". The Russian Foreign Ministry Commissioner for Human Rights, Konstantin Dolgov, argued that the laws did "not interfere with the international obligations of Russia", and fitted "into the Russian legislation framework and efforts to adequately protect the rights and interests of children."[1] Two days later a bill entitled "Propaganda of homosexualism among minors" was tabled in the Federal Duma.

On 5 April the St Petersburg city authorities cited the new law when refusing permission for a street protest. On 7 April two persons were arrested for "propaganda of sodomy and lesbianism". Their "offence" was to carry placards saying "No to silencing of the hate crimes against gays and lesbians" and "A friend of our family is a lesbian. My wife and I love and respect her, her way of life is as normal as ours, and her family is socially equal to ours". The trial is pending.

In *Alexeyev v. Russia* the European Court of Human Rights notes that there is no scientific evidence that open public debate about sexual minorities has an adverse effect on children and that the Russian authorities were "unable to provide justification" for "[forcing] gay men and lesbians out of the public eye". On the contrary, the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers from 2010 focuses on the importance of objective information on sexual orientation and gender identity being provided in the education system. Its explanatory memorandum notes that sexual orientation is regarded as a prohibited ground of discrimination by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Mr Haugli,

To ask the Committee of Ministers:

– What will the Committee of Ministers do to draw the attention of the Russian authorities to the fact that the laws in question are contrary to their international human rights obligations, both in respect to freedom of expression, and of the rights of the child?

– Will the Committee of Ministers request that the Russian authorities reject proposals for the introduction of such legislation at the federal level, and work for the repeal of the legislation adopted in the four regional assemblies?

1. Press release at website of Russian Embassy in the UK, "Russian MFA on LGBT rights" – 28.03.2012