

Activity Report

2006



**Association of Nordic LGBT
Student Organizations**

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ANSO, the Association of Nordic LGBT Student Organizations, was founded in 2004 and has its seat in Copenhagen. Member organizations 31/12 2006 are:

BLUS, Denmark
Friðarborgin, Faroe Islands
FSS, Iceland
Homoglobiini, Finland
SFG, Sweden
UgleZ, Norway

The main aims of ANSO are to improve the situation for LGBT students throughout the Nordic region, provide a platform for addressing LGBT student issues and enhance cooperation between LGBT student groups throughout the Nordic region.

Board

Before the AGM in August 2006 the following were in the board:

Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir, president
Manijeh Elsa Modi, vice president
Maren F. Granlien, treasurer
Hallvard Øren
Linda Vapalahti
Petter Kringberg



ANSO board 2004-2006

From left: Ásta, Maren, Manijeh, Linda, Hallvard, Petter

Jó Tore Berg, substitute
Tina K. Jakobsen, substitute
Henrik Hynkemejer-Østergaard, substitute
Eirunn Thun, substitute
Ralf Strandell, substitute
Maria Hansson, substitute

At the AGM, the following were elected:

Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir, president
Jonna Asplund, vice president
Auður Halldórsdóttir, treasurer
Eirunn Thun
Ralf Strandell
Sonja Jógvansdóttir



ANSO board 2006-2007

From left: Erla, Eirunn, Ásta, Linda, Brynjar, Auður, Jonna

Erla Katrine Løvseth, substitute
Linda Elstad, substitute
Tina K. Jakobsen, substitute
Juhani Mehto, substitute
Signe Vad Kaastrup, substitute
Brynjar S. Hermannsson, substitute

Meeting in Oslo, Norway

The year started by the planning of a meeting with the purpose of brainstorming about future activities of the organisation focusing on research promotion, and a board meeting. That meeting was sponsored by the Nordic Youth Committee, and was held in Oslo the 24th – 26th of February.

Participating in the meeting were 2-3 people from each organization, except that our members from the Faroe Islands were not able to join in. We also invited a prospective member, Sekava from Finland. At the meeting we compared the amount and quality of research on LGBT issues in our countries, seeing that the situation was quite different in our respective countries, and so was our awareness. We could all agree that more research was needed.

The main results from that meeting were to start a project to promote and collect research done by students and to have a conference in Finland on Sexual and gender minorities: Services, subcultures, community, networking and happiness. As the organization was not yet a legal entity, the responsibilities for each project were put to individual member organizations, as had been done before. Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir from FSS got the responsibility for the database project and Ralf Strandell from Homoglobiini got the responsibility to organize the conference.

The database project

After the meeting in Oslo the project was formulated further, using our online communication tools, such as our forum and instant messaging. It should be about building an online database containing research on LGBT issues done by students (bachelors, masters, etc) with the aim of promoting LGBT research, connect young LGBT people and academia, and strengthen the relationship between the organizations involved.

The Icelandic National office granted the project a Youth Initiative Grant in the spring and in the summer the work formally started. The overall project manager is Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir. The work is divided into 3 main groups and all groups have representatives from all countries.

System Development: The role of the group is to define the needs of the database and work closely together with a professional to create the system. They started their work already in the summer and worked with a professional in the autumn. That professional is now completing his work in the end of December. This group is managed by Maren F. Granlien.

Data collection: Although the main aim of the database is to be a sustainable database into which students submit their projects, it is necessary to have as many as possible projects in the database when it is launched. Therefore a group has been working on finding projects and getting permissions to put them into the database. This group is managed by Auður Halldórsdóttir.

PR and graphic design: A very important factor in making the database a successful one, is finding a design and PR concept that is appealing and makes people remember and check out the database. A special group has been working on developing these concepts with the help of a professional graphic designer. This group is managed by Gunnar Guðjónsson and Monika Grzywnowicz.

The groups do most of their work using the ANSO communication mediums, the forum and instant messaging. A coordination meeting was held in Copenhagen the 5th – 8th of October, where a lot of work was done, and the next steps were decided on.

The promotion of the database has already started and during the weekend 24th- 25th of November, Ásta Ósk Hlökkversdóttir and Jonna Asplund introduced the project at a large queer research conference in Lund, Sweden, where all the main researchers in Scandinavia, having to do with queer research were. During the same weekend Laura Tulehmo introduced the project at a similar conference at the University of Jyväskylä, Agora, Finland.

Other promotional work includes for example sending out Christmas cards to important organizations and people. In all promotional work for the project we also try to establish the name of ANSO as clearly as possible.

The final step in the actual project was an evaluation meeting held in Reykjavík the 13th – 15th of April 2007. The regular maintenance of the database will afterwards be done by the staff of ANSO.

Conference in Turku, Finland

Sexual and gender minorities: Services, subcultures, community, networking and happiness

It was decided in Oslo that our next conference should be in Turku, focusing on young LGBT people not living in the capitals or larger cities, and the

problems that can come with the lack of services related to that. The Finnish European Youth Programme office granted the project a Youth Exchange Grant in the spring and the conference/youth exchange was held the 20th – 27th of August.

During the conference the needs of LGBT youth in smaller communities were assessed, best practises were discussed and possible projects for

improving the situation were discussed. Various institutions important for students and youth were visited, and they told about their practises and got advice from the participants on how to improve their work.



A lot of time was spent on getting to know Finnish culture which in many ways is different from the other Nordic cultures, and maybe more in the line of the Baltic. This helped inspiring the project Nordic diversity, along with the problems faced in the Faroe Islands.



Important discussion about future activities took place at this conference, as can be seen in other sections of this report.

The Faroe Islands

The first ANSO conference was held in the Faroe Islands in August 2005. The conference initiated a lot of media attention and visibility of LGBT issues, that before had been almost invisible. The islands were the only Nordic territory that didn't legally recognize LGBT people in any way. Since then ANSO has been monitoring the situation and supporting the activists in Friðarbogin. After a highly publicised gay-bashing in the autumn of 2006, that support grew even more, with press releases and pressure on parliamentarians to approve a proposal to prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The third and final debate on such a proposal was on the 15th of December 2006 and 17 against 15 accepted the proposal. The fight for human rights for LGBT people in the Faroe Islands has only just started and ANSO will continue to be the main support mechanism for the only LGBT organization in the Faroe Islands, Friðarbogin.

Poland and the Baltic countries

ANSO believes in solidarity across borders and wants to work for LGBT rights internationally when possible. We have therefore in the last year started working closely with organisations in Poland where help is desperately needed. Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir participated in a meeting in Berlin in November, with participants mainly from Poland, but also activists from various European countries, and the result of that meeting that Lambda – Warsawa and ANSO would partner up to organize an event during the Week against homophobia in Warsaw in March, organized by the Council of Europe as a part of the All different – All equal campaign. The project is called “Global Village – Diversity fair” and is a festival against homophobia taking place in a tent centrally located on a square in the city centre of Warsaw.

This project has been granted a Youth Initiative Grant from the European Youth Foundation.

Contacts have also been established with Latvian organization Mozaika and Lithuanian organization Lithuanian gay league, in order to establish a platform for LGBT students in Latvia and Lithuania. Furthermore have connections been established with the Roundtable network, run by Swedish RFSL Ungdom together with representatives from Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland.

Nordic Diversity

During the autumn 2006 a lot of work has been put into how to continue the activities during upcoming years. One project outlined is called Nordic Diversity –Are we all equally equal? The project will start with a conference in Bergen in February 2007 with the first part, and the second part will take place in the Faroe Islands in August 2007. The first part will focus on how to fight heteronormativity in higher education, to educate our activists and members to do that work locally. The second part is about supporting the LGBT movement and visibility on the Faroe Islands, as well as arranging seminars and the second Pride Parade.

Involvement in other organisations

During 2006, ANSO joined IGLYO - International Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organization and immediately got active, by sending Ásta Ósk Hlöðversdóttir and Jonna Asplund to the IGLYO conference Beyond Coming Out: Discussing Mental Health Issues Among LGBT Youth and Communities which took place in Riga, Latvia from 3-10 December.

A connection is also being made to ESIB, The National Unions of Students in Europe and NOM, which is the consultative meeting of the National Unions

of Students of Nordic Countries. Working on the relationship with ESIB and NOM will be an important task for the year 2007.

Press

During 2006 ANSO has initiated a media work, both in member organizations as well as on a Nordic level. ANSO has sent out pressreleases on a number of occasions. Some articles supported by these can be found on:

<http://www.qx.se/nyheter/artikel.php?artikelid=4766>

<http://www.flamman.se/inrikes.php?id=3837>

<http://www.gaylesbiantimes.com/?id=8523>

<http://studvest.uib.no/arkiv/studvest200632.pdf>

<http://www.gaysir.no/artikkel.cfm?CID=11830>

http://www.sfbaytimes.com/index.php?sec=article&article_id=5656

<http://www.tobe.ca/tobe/content.jsp?sid=43571510185907260616534331&ctid=1000351&cnid=1000903>

Policy papers

During the conference in Turku, Finland, a very important work began, the process of writing policy papers. This work includes thorough discussions and debate, and active participation of all members of ANSO. The work has continued on the online forums since August and drafts will be presented for next AGM to decide on. The policy papers will state the official opinion of ANSO on certain matters related to higher education, LGBT issues, society and Nordic, European and international work.

In short

2006 has been a vital year for the development of ANSO. The initial meeting in February set the tone, and the year has been filled with activity and ambition. During the final months of 2006, a lot of work has been spent on planning and applying for organizational and staff funding, which would mean a solid base for ANSO work. As we approach 2007, we do so with great hopes for the future.