**THE RUSSIAN LGBT NETWORK 2015-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Introduction**

The Russian LGBT Network (hereinafter referred to as the Network) was established in 2006. By far, it is the largest LGBT organization in Russia. It is composed of individual and collective members performing activities in more than 20 regions of Russia.

In cooperation with other initiative groups and civil society organizations, the Network promotes and defends human rights and combats discrimination. Our activists successfully represent LGBT community in the Russian regions, on the national and international levels.

The Network holds systematic activities to increase capabilities of the movement for equal rights without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. With our support, new initiatives and organizations are emerging, the number of their supporters and volunteers is increasing; they are acquiring the required skills for their work and discover opportunities to enhance them in various regions of Russia. We aspire to support activists in their heavy work and promote their security.

Our organization holds various campaigns and takes steps to protect public interests. Particularly, we make all possible efforts to attract attention of general Russian population and international community to hazardous consequences of the so-called “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” law and homophobic and transphobic hate crimes. In spite of difficult relations with the state officials, we have established regular contacts with the authorities (including Human Rights Ombudsman of the Russian Federation and Ombudsmen in several regions of Russia, Russian Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights); we also regularly monitor hate crimes and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Our lawyers won many cases related to persecution under infamous law banning “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations”, to the right of LGBT to create their associations, rights of transgender people (which includes cases related to parental rights, changing documents and name, punishment of persons guilty of hate crimes).

The Network is enhancing the availability of qualified legal and psychological aid for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people and for their family members. Hundreds of consultations and other types of supports are provided annually to those who suffer from hate crimes, discrimination and persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or their human rights defense activities. Our activists take active steps to increase the awareness of citizens regarding human rights and social, legal and psychological aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Network is composed of individual members, regional branches and collective members. The Network’s superior body is the Conference of its members. The activities of the Network are led by the Board headed by the Chair of the Board, and the Interregional Coordination Council composed of the representatives of the Network’s regional branches and collective members (between the Conferences).

The Network performs its activities on the basis of the Strategic Plan, which is adopted by the Conference once every three years. This Plan determines priorities in development of the Network for the next three years. It is based on the analysis of internal and external factors, social, economic and political trends within Russia and abroad. All members of the Network can participate in the development of the Plan, for which reason polls and discussions are held and proposals are accumulated.

This Strategic Plan was adopted by the Conference in November 2014, and it determines core activities of the Network for 2015 to 2017.

**Environment**

Russia is the integral part of the international community. Now it is in a complicated and conflicting transition to a modern society to achieve harmonized coexistence of people with different identities, opinions and cultural habits united in a common pursuit of happiness. Only this kind of society can bring peace and free development of individuals. It is impossible to move to this type of society without abandoning patriarchal prejudices about people who differ from the majority because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

LGBT community is becoming ever more visible and active part of the society. More and more people are open about their sexual orientation both in their closest social circles and in general public. Various forms of LGBT community’s self-organization are becoming widespread, especially initiative groups and civil associations. LGBT community members openly declare their existence and approach the society and the state with a demand to respect their human dignity and human rights.

Thanks to the activities of LGBT organizations, LGBT community got an access to professional legal, psychological, medical and social aid and actual information. LGBT movement in Russia is becoming more and more diverse.

However, LGBT community and LGBT movement face new challenges and risks. These mainly include repressive laws and policies of the authorities who confine freedom of expression and other rights of LGBT, as well as activation of the far right and fundamentalist groups, which endanger safety of LGBT.

Violence and abasement of human dignity of LGBT are open, widespread and organized in contemporary Russia. Cases of violence and incitements to violence against LGBT prevails in the Internet. Homophobic and transphobic hate speeches are delivered freely in mass media. It is damaging for physical and psychological well-being of all Russian LGBT. They cannot feel safe in their own country.

Transgender people are deprived of basic social protection and an opportunity to access qualified medical aid due to the absence of the procedure for gender reassignment in the legislation. Most of Russian transgenders face problems while obtaining documents reflecting their gender identity. The right of transgender people for social security is not exercised in Russia as there is no financial support from the public funds.

The state has formalized “social unequivalence” of homosexual and heterosexual relations in the so-called “propaganda law”. The position of LGBT was constantly ignored during the discussion about this law. The state consistently proclaims the priority of the notorious “traditional values”’ over human rights and the “rights of majority” over the “rights of minority”, both on the international level and within the country. Thus, it denies the principle of universality of human rights.

Evolution of the LGBT movement is part of the general process of civil society development in Russia. Forming meaningful partnerships with other civil society groups, LGBT activists have become its important component, and an important factor of its development.

Problems of social and legal status of LGBT in Russia have recently become a topic of wide discussion and attracted significant attention of politicians, public and religious figures both inside the country and beyond. LGBT community won the recognition of its fight for equality from many public figures and nongovernmental organizations, celebrities and independent journalists. This creates an opportunity for advancement of the dialogue between LGBT movement and other civil society groups, opportunity to set common agenda and to promote joint actions to defend human dignity and human rights.

International tensions, possibility of economic crisis and political instability within the country pose serious threats to equality of LGBT and other groups of civil society in Russia. We all already face and—very likely—will face even growing aggression and xenophobia in the society, ranging from domestic violence to militarization of the country and aggression against minorities and dissidents. Children, women and members of various minority groups are in the most vulnerable position in this situation.

Another general challenge is attempts of the authorities to restrict legal space for civil society’s activities and to compromise the public image of independent organizations and individual activists. Only together with other human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions, professional associations and other advanced groups of civil society, we can continue our fight for equal human rights and dignity.

**Mission**

Russian LGBT Network is an interregional nongovernmental advocacy group that promotes equal rights and respect for human dignity regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity through unification and development of regional initiatives, advocacy (which includes both national and international levels) and providing social and legal services.

**Our ideal of society**

Environment

The society where diversity of identities, views and lifestyles are recognized and respected because of the common values - peace, nonviolence and pursuit of happiness. Different people - shared values.

Organization

Developing sustainable organization that unifies regional initiatives and organizations, which is recognized both on the national and international levels as a representative of interests of Russian LGBT community, and capable to achieve social change in a short-term and long-term perspective.

**Our values**

• Nonviolence. We believe in common sense and humanity. We do not tolerate physical and verbal violence when tackling social issues.
• Respect of human dignity and nondiscrimination. In our activities, we try not to allow any discrimination on grounds of ethnic background and national origin, religious and political views, age, social standing, health condition, sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
• Gender equality. We aspire to provide equal opportunities for women and men in discussions and decision-making, elections of governing bodies and implementation of the programs and services.
• Our knowledge, professionalism and good organization can change the situation for the better.
• We welcome productive cooperation with public authorities at all levels. We are eager to support the efforts of the state to promote human rights and freedoms.
• We do not participate in election campaigns, political solicitation and other activities aimed at achieving and exercising state power. The Network’s members can participate in political activities only in their own name and may not use the Network’s title and symbols in that case.
• We do not enter any coalitions or alliances with political parties and organizations whose goal is race for power.
• We form our relations with religious organizations based on the principles of mutual respect, freedom of conscience and secularization.
• We believe that even the most complicated public issues can be resolved by means of dialogue and respect of diversity of opinions and convictions. References to the freedom of religious, political and other convictions cannot excuse violence and incitements to violence, discrimination and abasement of human dignity.
• We consider homophobia and transphobia as part of the common problem of xenophobia. We welcome cooperation with everyone who shares the principles of equality of rights and freedom, non-discrimination, peace and tolerance.

**Our goals and methods to achieve these goals**

1. To extend the potential of LGBT community, their family members and close ones in protection of their rights through raising their awareness of various issues related to defense of their rights and human dignity. To extend availability of professional legal and psychological aid and to promote public authorities’ efficient prevention or investigation and prosecution of hate crimes and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

To achieve this goal, we will:

• monitor crimes and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity on the regular basis;
• distribute information materials and hold outreach activities for the LGBT community, their family members and close ones in relation to social and psychological aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity, safe conduct and methods of protection of their rights and human dignity;
• enlist the services of professional legal advisers and psychologists and promote their capacity-building;
• develop facilities for timely communication with victims of hate crimes and those in danger regardless of their place of residence;
• provide face-to-face and remote consultations of legal advisers and psychologists;
• provide victims of hate crimes and discrimination (or those in danger) with timely help;
• provide victims of hate crimes and discrimination (or those in danger) with professional aid by their recourse to a court and other state institutions;
• draw Russian and international public attention to incidents of hate crimes, discrimination and abasement of human dignity on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;
• ensure that public authorities undertake efficient measures to prevent and efficiently investigate and prosecute those guilty of hate crimes and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;
• ensure that interstate and international organizations react to incidents of abuse of rights and abasement of human dignity on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity within their mandate.

2. To enhance the potential of the existing and newly emerging initiative groups and organizations within the LGBT movement in the Russian regions through providing them with various resources and capacity-building activities.

To achieve this goal, we will:

• provide the Network’s members with various resources;
• provide organizational, informational and methodological support to initiative groups and organizations within the LGBT movement in the Russian regions in their fundraising activities to achieve their goals;
• research the demands of LGBT community and distribute the results among LGBT activists on the regular basis;
• hold informational campaigns and distribute informational materials among the LGBT movement leaders (devoted to human rights defence, methods of cooperation with LGBT, society and state, personal and corporate security, management of nongovernmental organizations, etc);
• hold activities to share experience among activists;
• establish the system of sponsorship (oversight) by more experienced organizations and initiative groups for newly emerging ones;
• provide the LGBT movement leaders and activists with consultations related to their work;
• hold informational campaigns for supporters of the LGBT movement;
• distribute information and raise visibility of the Russian LGBT movement on the national and international levels;
• develop and implement measures to increase personal, informational and legal security of leaders, activists and volunteers of the LGBT movement.

3. To win recognition of LGBT’s demands for security, respect of human dignity and self-expression from Russian human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions and professional associations through development of cooperation of the LGBT movement with other civil society groups.

To achieve this goal, we will:

• hold capacity-building activities for LGBT movement leaders and activists (in cooperation with various civil society groups);
• monitor (on the regular basis) activities of human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions, professional associations and other civil society groups to discover potential for dialogue and cooperation;
• organize platforms for dialogue between LGBT activists and representatives of other civil society groups on the regional and national levels;
• hold awareness-raising campaigns to involve LGBT community in the activities of human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions and professional associations;
• distribute informational materials and hold awareness-raising campaigns for leaders and activists of human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions and professional associations and other civil society groups about the demands of LGBT and legal, social and psychological aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity;
• hold activities (visits, seminars, etc.) to familiarize leaders and activists of human rights and social organizations, independent trade unions, professional associations and other civil society groups with the experience of work (related to sexual orientation and gender identity and cooperation with the LGBT movement) of their colleagues abroad;
• participate in joint activities (forums, conferences, etc.), awareness raising campaigns and public campaigns;
• initiate joint projects and participate in such projects;
• initiate coalitions for development and promotion of joint proposals for public authorities and international human rights organizations, prevention of offence and violence, social security, etc., and participate in activities of such coalitions.

4. To ensure the Network’s adaptation to the changing environment through strengthening corporate security, development of an efficient democratic system of administration, improvement of financial sustainability and strengthening public relations

To achieve this goal, we will:

• monitor physical, legal and informational security of the Network, its activists and volunteers on the regular basis;
• monitor representation of the Network and threats to its image in public space on the regular basis;
• develop and implement
- activities to ensure physical, legal and informational security of the Network, its activists and volunteers;
- safe and transparent financial system;
- system of control of operations by the Board;
- the Network’s communications strategy;
- policy of recruitment and work with supporters, partners and volunteers of the Network;
• diversify financial sources (15% of funds from a single source at most);
• hold discussions about the strategy and methods of operations and administration of the Network open for all Network members;
• establish and support partnership with nongovernmental organizations and business;
• involve Russian supporters of the Network into financing system (at least 15% of the annual budget must be set through donations by Russian supporters);
• hold activities and campaigns to inform the society about the Network operations;
• hold activities and campaigns to recruit and keep supporters and volunteers of the Network;
• raise the amount of volunteers in professional services;
• hold capacity-building activities for the Board and the Interregional Coordination Council;
• hold capacity-building activities for the Network’s managers