

Press release: Opening of Euro Pride House in Warsaw on Friday, 8th June

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Friday afternoon saw the official opening of Euro Pride House in Warsaw. The project is an initiative of the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF), and part of a wider programme of anti-discrimination activity during Euro2012, Football For Equality. It is an anti-homophobia space for football fans to gather, watch football and network in Warsaw located close to the National Stadium.

The opening event saw speeches from Louise Englefield, Director of the UK's LGBT Sports Development & Equity organisation, Pride Sports and representative of EGLSF, who carried messages of support from both UEFA and human rights activists in Ukraine, and staff from EGLSF's Central & Eastern Europe Development project (CEED).

As Louise explains,

"It's not only amazing to have an anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia space open to all at a European Football Championship, but also amazing that it is held for the first time ever in Poland. Of course, Poland elected their first ever gay member of parliament, Robert Biedron and openly trans MP, Anna Grodzka in November, so it is a country very much changing in terms of its attitudes to human rights for all and I have been very proud to be part of that here this afternoon."

Following the opening speeches, attendees, largely a Polish home crowd, settled down to watch the first match of the Championship, Poland v Greece. The opening event was also attended by Piara Powar, Director of the FARE Network and staff of the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue, Nikola Staritz and Elisabeth Kotvojs who represented Football for Equality.

Euro Pride House in Warsaw is linked to LGBT empowerment activity in the Ukraine, scene just 3 weeks ago of the savage beating of Svyatoslav Sheremet in the efforts to achieve a public manifestation of Kyiv PRIDE 2012, which could not proceed due to the threat of massive violence.

Clare Dimyon from the Pride Solidarity Campaign has been Ukraine since attending the foreshortened Kyiv PRIDE 2012, investigating and supporting LGBT activity around Euro2012 with the realistic hope of Euro2012 "PRIDE House" activities in perhaps three out of the four footballing host cities of the Ukraine.

The 'YOUR Euro Pride House' initiative enables LGBT people in Ukraine to hold their own Euro Pride Houses in environments in which they feel safe and fully at home. It also enables other European LGBT players, fans & activists to engage with Ukrainian LGBT people through football, using Euro 2012 as a vehicle to mobilise connectivity and solidarity.

"YOUR Euro Pride House" initiative will enable fans, both LGBT and LGBT-friendly wherever they are in Europe, to be a part of Euro Pride house, by printing out the Euro Pride House logo from the Euro Pride House Facebook page www.facebook.com/EuroPrideHouse and posting a photo of themselves and their friends/team mates celebrating Euro 2012 wherever they are in Europe.

Photos:

- Fans celebrate as Poland score
- Nikola Staritz (VIDC), Louise Englefield (EGLSF) and Piara Powar (FARE) cut the Euro Pride House cake at the Opening.
- YOUR Euro Pride house

