We believe that the European Union, as a key player in the area of fundamental rights, is in a unique position to support Member States’ efforts to improve the fundamental rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The EU should take a leading role, complementing and supporting national policies where relevant. We, European ministers, make this Call for a comprehensive policy approach at European Union level and across the European Union on LGBT issues, aiming at improving human rights and mainstreaming equality for LGBT people.

We have concerns about the living situation of many LGBT people around Europe and are committed to taking action in order to improve the lives of LGBT people. LGBT people still face violence, lack of freedom of assembly and expression and problems with freedom of movement for both couples and their children. We are aware of the reported incidents of suicide and bullying of LGBT children, homophobic and transphobic incidents in the workplace and at school, and prejudice-based stereotyping of LGBT people in Europe and abroad.

The Strategy for the effective Implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the European Union, adopted by the European Commission in October 2010, announced the “development of individual policies concerning specific fundamental rights […] examples being […] non-discrimination”. According to the Strategy, the Union being exemplary is “vital not only for people living in the Union but also for the development of the Union itself”. We fully support this approach.

We commend the European Commission’s previous statements on the occasion of IDAHO 2011 and 2012 and its participation in and commitment to the European Informal Network of Governmental LGBT Policy Focal Points. We also welcome the positive measures that have been taken in many European countries and at the European level. We are therefore confident that the European Commission shares our concern and our commitment to improve the situation.

By adopting a comprehensive policy approach the European Commission is in a position to make a difference. This policy approach should ensure that, in accordance with Article 10 TFEU, the Union, “in defining and implementing its policies and activities, […] shall aim to combat discrimination”. While the EU already is a key player in combating discrimination against LGBT people, it is now time to consolidate its position in this area, by ensuring that its actions are and will remain, consistent and sustainable.

To fully enforce the principle of non-discrimination and equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in all spheres of life, it should be carefully examined what measures could be taken in the respective areas of competence of the European Union and the Member States in consideration of the EU-Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) studies.

The results of the FRA European LGBT survey will serve as a very useful basis for discussing the pan-European situation of LGBT people. Those findings should guide the development of priorities, effective measures and follow up within a clear timetable.

We concur with the European Parliament, which has supported the adoption of a comprehensive policy for equality on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The study: Towards an EU Roadmap for Equality on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, recently published by the European Parliament, is a useful resource that the Commission should consider when defining its approach.

We are committed to following up the Council of Europe Ministers’ Recommendations on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Similarly, the Council of Europe Ministers’ recommendations are a useful resource for Member States to consider when identifying appropriate measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission to facilitate co-operation within the European Union and to assist and support Member States to tackle discrimination of LGBT people within their own countries whilst having regard to these recommendations. The Commission could assist Member States through a variety of policy instruments, co-ordinating initiatives and by establishing clear timetables for making progress towards realising LGBT equality by providing funding and support, establishing simple measurements and encouraging campaigns to achieve these aims.
EU action is necessary to co-ordinate and to promote efforts at the EU level and share good practice and to support efforts at the national level in order to make progress towards a Europe free from homo- and transphobia. Taking action to prevent discrimination and providing remedies can make a difference not only for the millions of LGBT citizens in Europe, but for all.

A comprehensive approach has already proven effective in tackling other forms of discrimination.

We are ready to support the process towards a comprehensive policy approach at EU level and to share our expertise with the European Commission. We call on the European Commission to commit to developing and adopting a comprehensive policy approach which builds on the recommendations of the Fundamental Rights Agency Survey and the study of the European Parliament.

Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education, Culture and Science - The Netherlands

Helena Dalil, Minister of Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties – Malta

Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, Minister for Women and the Civil Service – Austria

Anna-Maja Henriksson, Minister of Justice – Finland

Josefa Idem, Minister for Equal Opportunities – Italy

Vesna Pusić, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs – Croatia

Manu Sareen, Minister of Gender Equality and Ecclisastical Affairs – Denmark

Pascal Smet, Flemish Minister of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels – Belgium

Marc Spautz, Minister for Family and Integration – Luxembourg

Erik Ullenhag, Minister for Integration – Sweden

Najat Vellaud-Belkacemi, Minister for Women's Rights – France

*) on behalf of the federal and federated governments of Belgium
International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia 2014 - Valletta

An Annex to the 2013 Call for a comprehensive policy approach at European Union level and across the European Union on LGBT issues

Kathleen Lynch, Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older persons – Ireland

Martina Vuk, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities – Slovenia