

BACKGROUND: LGBT families: the new minority?

Family is a challenging concept. Its definition has been changing over time and there has always been debate over who has the power to define who and what the family is. Family is therefore a political battle ground, constantly shifting to suit the culture, class, the economy of the time. The idea that family should be discussed in the plural – as families – has been well accepted in the social sciences. GLBT community has a great share in making family types plural.

In his award winning documentary “Daddy and Papa” Johnny Symons, a gay dad, tells a story of how one of the amusement parks in USA had all children rides closed on the day, when the park was opened especially for gays and lesbians. “This says something about gay culture,” comments Symons’ partner. “The gay culture is not yet aware of the fact that children are becoming part of the community.”

On the other hand, the opponents of LGBT families seem to be acutely aware of it. They fear that the meaning of what they understand as a true and the only valid form of family – that of one man and one woman and children – is going to change. It seems that these fears – translated into fears of losing a popularity vote – heavily affect politicians as well.

It is for this reason that in the political struggles for the legal recognition of same-sex partnership the issues of LGBT families and the adoption of children by same-sex partners are often set aside. Same-sex families are seen as a “disturbing element” in the endeavors for legal victories related to “gay marriage”. It is often explained that LGBT families should “wait a bit” to become a topic on the political agenda. But how long do they have to wait? Doesn’t the “politically pragmatic approach” construct a new minority within a minority: that of LGBT people with children?

The main aim of the conference is twofold: in the conference part of the seminar we want to make an overall review and comparison of the existing qualitative and quantitative data on LGBT families, primarily in the new EU member states. In the workshop part of the conference, we will organize a public round-table in order to stimulate the debate on the legal and social position of same-sex families, to exchange examples of good practices, to address practical problems and issues same-sex families face in everyday life etc.