

## **PRESIDENT – Hans De Meyer**

Within the last year of my presidency, many things started moving forward. The board decided a coach would be a good idea to help us move forward not only as a board but also as an organisation. Through the help of Iris De Caluwé, we managed to pinpoint some of the issues we were dealing with. In addition, it helped each board member better define their strengths and weaknesses both personal as well as related to their position. Overall, the board became more of a team rather than individual people around 1 table – all working closely together in order to achieve the goals for this year.

We completed successfully 4 (physical) board meetings outside the AGM and several Skype calls. For this reason, I would also like to thank again the team of HOSI Wien for their warm welcome as well as the visibility for EPOA at the Regenbogen Ball. Another thank you goes to the wonderful team of Dublin Pride, even though they were not a member yet, they helped us to organise everything within their city. I am also happy to say they have in the meantime become a member and they will have some interesting experiences to share with all the other members.

Overall as President, I have actively worked to increase EPOA's visibility, both in the LGBTIQ media as well as in the field. Several interviews were done, mostly linked to the EuroPride event in Riga this year. Of course, together with the other board members, we actively participated in the EuroPride program this year to show our presence but also to learn from others. It was in many ways an eye opener and very emotional experience. This was the first time in a very long time that the Board attended a EuroPride event from the start until the end.

I have participated in several other Pride events, either on invitation or on my own accord. I also would like to say extra thank you to West Pride, Mado (Madrid Pride) and Lesbian & Gay Pride Montpellier for inviting some of the board members and myself to experience their events first hand.

West Pride has a great event and is again a fantastic example on how a city can come together, both young and old, to celebrate Human Rights. In my experience, it was a Pride event with the true spirit of Pride, for the people and close to the people. On top of that, West Pride has a very large selection of cultural events taking place in some of the main cultural “temples” of the city, which makes it even more special. Thank you again to the West Pride team for that great experience and heartfelt welcome!

I was also very honoured to receive the international Muestra-T award from Madrid Pride during the opening ceremony in the heart of Chueca, the LGBTIQ district in this city. This award was dedicated to EPOA for 10 years supporting Madrid Pride in its international development.

In addition, I also attended the Belgian Pride in Brussels and Marche de Fierté in Paris (they are also considering joining again).

All these experiences gave me the opportunity to listen and discuss with many individuals (volunteers and participants), as well as other organisations. It opened up doors and opportunities for EPOA, which I hope, will be help the next president together with the other board members to develop further our beloved Pride family. More of this will be discussed and brought forward during our meeting in Amsterdam.

Finally yet importantly, the Board worked very hard on keeping its promise: a first draft for the strategic plan and a communications plan. I am happy to say that EPOA has now a real mission statement, a first draft for a strategic plan – which will be discussed during the AGM – and the start of a communications plan.

I want to thank Tomasz, Juan Carlos, Ruben, Stein, Kristine, Mattias and Vincent for their hard work and dedication to EPOA. I am aware this is not always easy, but they were committed until the end.