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WORLD news

EUROPE

MAN'S DRIVER'S LICENSE PULLED BECAUSE HE'S GAY

A Sicily court June 7 overturned a decision by officials in the city of Catania to suspend a man's driver's license because he is gay.

The man, Danilo G., had his license pulled after authorities learned he was exempted from military service because of his sexual orientation. The officials said they needed to investigate the "suitability" of allowing him to drive.

Danilo's lawyer called the move "utterly scandalous and offensive" and sued for half a million Euros.

"Danilo...is deeply perturbed by what has happened," attorney Giuseppe Lipera told the Ansa news agency. "He has lost his hair and is suffering shock."

In siding with Danilo, the court declared: "It is clear that sexual preferences do not in any way influence a person's ability to drive motorcars safely. [Homosexuality] cannot be considered a true and proper psychiatric illness, being a mere personality disturbance."



Sexual orientation affects the right to drive in Sicily.

100,000 ATTEND MILAN PRIDE

Some 100,000 people gathered June 4 in Milan's Piazza della Repubblica for the city's Gay Pride parade.

Organizers and marchers demanded passage of a partnership law for same-sex couples. Numerous politicians joined the parade, including the president of Milan province, Filippo Penati; the openly gay president of the Puglia region, Nichi Vendola; and openly gay Member of Parliament Franco Grillini.

ACTIVISTS STAGE 'WEDDING' IN NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL

A total of 20 members of ACT UP/Paris staged a mock gay wedding June 5 inside Notre Dame Cathedral.

They chanted, "Pope Benedict XVI, homophobe, AIDS accomplice." The group was attacked by security personnel, and a priest was injured in the ensuing melee.

"They are savages...barbaric, odious and scandalous," the priest, Patrick Jacquin, told the French Press Agency. "I was pushed to the ground and trampled, kicked in the neck. It's a scandal for these people to lash out at me and the pope."

An ACT UP spokesman blamed the violence on the church security team's tactics.

ROMANIA SEES FIRST PRIDE PARADE

Romania's first GayFest Parade went ahead as scheduled May 28 despite efforts by the Bucharest mayor's office to ban it. Local officials reportedly backed down under pressure from Romanian President Traian Basescu, who received thousands of angry e-mails orchestrated by Metropolitan Community Churches and others.

About 500 people marched, protected by riot police. Passers-by booed and yelled insults, including "Get out of Romania" and "Homosexuality is a sin."

Police detained several members of the New Right organization when they tried to cross police lines and attack the marchers.

"We want to show people that we exist and

that we are not afraid," George Iacobescu of the gay group Accept told Reuters.

Accept leader Florin Buhuceanu told the French Press Agency, "We are very happy with our first historic march, which has allowed us to show ourselves to the world in broad daylight."

SWISS VOTERS OK PARTNER LAW

Swiss voters approved a same-sex registered partnership law June 5. About 58 percent of voters favored the measure.

Although numerous European nations have enacted such laws, this was the first time the matter was put to a public vote in Europe—and the first time in the world that voters passed a gay partnership law. The measure had passed Parliament in June 2004, but religious conservatives then collected enough signatures to force a referendum on it.

The law extends numerous marriage rights to registered same-sex couples but withholds rights in the areas of adoption, in vitro fertilization and taking each other's last name.

A total of 19 of the nation's 26 cantons, or states, approved the law. The highest level of support was in Basel-

Stadt—68.59 percent. The lowest level was in the small northeastern canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden—41.6 percent.

"[The result] shows that we are a pluralistic society that defends its minorities," activist

Christian Verdon told SwissInfo.org. "Homosexuals have earned their place in society today. [This law] will give gay couples far more visibility. People only fear what they don't know."



Filippo Penati, president of Milan, joined openly gay politicians in the city's Pride parade June 4.

LONDON BOROUGH BANS RAINBOW FLAGS

Westminster City Council has banned rainbow flags from storefronts in London's gay Soho district. Councilors declared the flags to be advertising rather than a symbol.

London Mayor Ken Livingstone responded by calling the councilors "Neanderthals."

"Westminster's decision...shows that its planning committee is completely out of touch with the needs of 21st century London," Livingstone said. "Lesbian and gay businesses make an enormous contribution to the life of this part of London. They should be congratulated, not discriminated against."

MIDEAST/AFRICA

NIGERIAN SCAMMERS TARGET GAY CHAT ROOMS

The United Kingdom's Gay Police Association has issued a warning about Nigerian fraudsters targeting users of various online gay chat rooms.

"Many people are familiar with receiving e-mails from people based in Nigeria asking for money and are now wise to this fraud, but it is much easier to be taken in by someone if you have spent some time chatting with them online," said community adviser Ian Saunders. "People using gay chat rooms need to...treat with caution any requests for money or bank details from people they have recently chatted to."

The scammers often claim to be dying of cancer or involved in charity work, the association said.