

## THE HISTORY OF GLK GROUP

Everything started four years ago, when five boys met on an only-for-gay dating site, decided to start a group named “I Figli del Sole” [The Children of the Sun], trying to absorb other young gays.

Few months later, they were 11.

Every now and then, they went out on Saturday afternoons to have a chat.

About three years ago, one of them met me and another boy at school: we organized groups during recreational breaks in our (high) school to sensitize and let other guys do their “coming out”. Successful as it was, we had the idea to make a group on Facebook, the “GLK-BRESCIA, Kingdom of Gay & Lesbian”. Thanks to the school grapevine, in few days the group went up to 50/60 people. To join it, requirements were: being homosexual, living in Brescia or in its district and being under-25. The group was obviously secret in respect of those who still haven’t come out to their families. Now we are 240, but many removed themselves from the FB group because they mistook it for a dating site. The group’s aim was and still is to inform members through links and to socialize. One day, about one year ago me and another girl went to meet the “Circolo Arcigay” people in Brescia (a not-for-profit association for the rights of homosexual people, *n.d.t.*), to ask them room for our meetings: that’s how the “Gruppo Giovani di Brescia – Una zebra a pois” (Brescia Youth Group, “A polka-dot zebra”) started, the largest one in Italy, so they say.

## WHY DID WE JOIN GLK?

- «Because I’m sexually confused and just to have an idea of this “new” world, since I’m very shy and insecure, I felt it more reassuring to have a look inside from behind a screen»
- «I chose to join GLK, because it has been one of the first LGBT communities to gather all the guys from Brescia and its environs together to have a chance to get acquainted with»
- «I decided to join GLK to approach Arcigay’s and LGBT’s associations world to get interested in political issues concerning gays, in particular civil rights issues»
- «I didn’t know any other homosexual boy or girl and wanted to join this world»

## WHAT’S IN IT FOR US?

- «I’ve known and keep on knowing many people, even of different age, whom I’ve made friends with»
- «In a word: everything! GLK has only been a stepping-stone to gay association groups and

visibility. Well, I got out of it a better life, a greater self-reliance, a strengthening of my personal and social identity»

- «Joining this community, I could expand my personal acquaintances and relationships and build new ones with people having the same sexual orientation as myself. Besides, I found out that in my town and around me people hiding themselves were even more than I could imagine. In fact, I used to believe to belong to a restricted and cut-off group of people»

#### SOME PROBLEMS TACKLED BY THE GROUP

There were moments of tension in that we are many, with exchange of contrasting views and exchange of insults, as well. We eventually overcame these arguments thanks to the group's mediators and to other group's members. In addition, we dealt with many issues and subjects not exclusively with LGBTs': and yes, we are a LGBT group with personal values and views as well. Episodes were in which some guys needed help on how to behave with a boy or on how to come out to their parents.

There was also the case of a girl who, run away from home, asked for shelter to the group. In such cases the whole group actively participated to find a solution and help her.