
**Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on
Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

**Sociological Report: “the former Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia”**

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A. Executive summary

1. There are very limited official data on the position of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Also, the LGBT community is rather weak and unorganised.
2. The public opinion towards LGBT people is reported to be generally negative. In 2002, The Centre for Civil and Human Rights conducted a survey, which revealed that 80% of Macedonians saw homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder that was a danger to the family. The same survey revealed that 65% of those surveyed perceived homosexuality as a criminal offence.
3. In terms of freedom of assembly, there are some concerning incidents. The biggest LGBT organisation MASSO, has been closed during the process in which the role of the state remains unclear. At the same time, some LGBT events were not allowed to be held in public because they were marked as “unsuitable”.
4. There are several accounts of hate crimes (also involving the police as perpetrators) and hate speech, although none of them have been fully processed nor have any perpetrators been convicted. Usually victims do not report the incidents or if they do, they often withdraw from proceedings. On different occasions police forces reportedly harassed or discriminated against LGBT persons (harassment, rape, blackmail, etc.).
5. According to representatives of some non governmental organisations (NGOs), there is a “holy matrimony” between the Church, Muslim figures and the government on LGBT issues in the sense that all three actors strongly oppose the rights of LGBT persons.
6. There is no same-sex union allowed in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. On the question “whether the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia needs to be changed in order to define marriage as a community exclusively between a man and a woman” 77.1% of the questioned citizens responded affirmatively, and only 14.6% of the citizens responded negatively.
7. There are examples of text books in the educational system with outdated definitions and anti-LGBT discourse. There is no appropriate or comprehensive sex education or education on life skills or LGBT related issues.
8. The only documented incident of discrimination in employment is of a policeman who was suspended because of his sexual orientation. The lack of official data in the area should also be seen in light of the fact that LGBT persons are typically not “out” at work.
9. There is anecdotal evidence of discrimination against same-sex couples renting apartments. Otherwise, when renting an apartment, there is a tendency for same-sex couples to present themselves as friends living together.
10. Same-sex partners are often not recognised as next of kin by health professionals, and there are no possibilities for gender reassignment treatment.
11. Although there are examples in the media of LGBT identities and practices being categorised as a Western phenomenon and of LGBT issues being presented in an overly sexualised manner, there seem to have been improvements in recent years with an increasing number of neutral or affirmative articles. This is not least ascribed to the activities of LGBT activists.

12. Transgender persons remain highly marginalised and the transgender community is largely invisible, with the exception of a few drag artists and a small Roma transgender community. Limited employment possibilities, harassment by police and the absence of gender reassignment treatment reportedly lead many transgender persons to leave the country.

B. Data collection

13. Data have been collected for this report through:
14. A study of available online and print data on the situation regarding homophobia, transphobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.
15. Data collection through interviews in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” held in Skopje 26 - 29 April 2010 with:
16. Authorities:
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
17. NGOs:
 - The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia
 - Equality for Gays and Lesbians (EGAL) - Skopje and Sutka
 - Coordinator of the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities
 - Women's Alliance
18. National Human Rights Structure:
 - Ombudsman's Office

C. Findings

C.1. Overall legal framework

19. Consensual same-sex sexual acts were decriminalised in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in 1996. Since then publicly available reports suggest that “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” is making some progressive and positive steps towards harmonising its national legal framework with international human rights and equality standards.¹
20. However, public opinion towards LGBT community reportedly continues to be generally negative. In 2002, the Centre for Civil and Human Rights conducted a representative survey, which revealed that 80% of Macedonians saw homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder which they perceived as a danger to the family. The same survey revealed that 65% of those asked still saw it as a crime.²
21. In 2007 the research project “Inclusiveness of Macedonian public” showed that 62.2% of the interviewed citizens (n=1,600) answered negatively to the question “would you accept persons who are having sex with the same sex as your neighbour”.³
22. Interviews conducted during this study confirmed the view above. All representatives of institutions and organisations interviewed described the general attitude as negative and hostile.⁴ The primary force of reproducing negative stereotypes and views was assessed to be the ruling conservative coalition who prevented the inclusion of sexual orientation as an explicitly forbidden discrimination ground in the anti-discrimination law which was adopted in April 2010. The Government removed sexual orientation from the proposed list of the draft law (the draft was the result of a large consultation process).⁵ In 2008 the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights stressed the need for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law including sexual orientation.⁶ The main argument put forward by the government to not include sexual orientation in the law was that this would be the first step towards accepting same-sex marriage.⁷ The Social Democratic Party in opposition supported the inclusion of sexual orientation in the anti-discrimination law, and has earlier suggested adopting a law on same-sex partnership. This has been used actively by political opponents to discredit the party.⁸

1 *Violations of the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in the Former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, Shadow Report, March 2008; see also Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Thomas Hammarberg on his visit to “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, 25 – 29 February 2008.

2 *Violations of the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in the Former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, Shadow Report, March 2008.

3 *Annual Report on sexual and health rights of marginalised communities*, Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities 2009, p. 8.

4 All persons interviewed 26-29 April 2010.

5 Meetings with the Coordinator of the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010, the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010, and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

6 Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Thomas Hammarberg on his visit to “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, 25 – 29 February 2008.

7 All persons met, 26-29 April 2010.

8 Meetings with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010, the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010, and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

23. The negative attitudes coupled with a weak tradition for self-organisation mean that there are no regular LGBT venues in Skopje and a close to non-existent LGBT scene.⁹
24. Representatives reported of big differences between the capital and smaller cities and rural areas. In the latter the situation is reported to be extremely harsh and characterised by no visibility. Social demarcation lines are also drawn between the Macedonian, Albanian and Roma communities. The small and weak but existing LGBT community/scene in Skopje is thus dominated by Macedonians.¹⁰
25. An interview with EGAL in (Suto Orizari, also know as Sutka), a large Roma settlement in the outskirts of Skopje, reveal that the issues of discrimination of LGBT persons in the Roma community to a large extent resemble those in the rest of the country.¹¹ However, they differ for the higher degree of acceptance of practice of pre-marital same-sex relation, and a somewhat complete invisibility of lesbian and bisexual identities.
26. In one sentence the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities sums up the current situation and its consequences: “the fear of psychological and physical violence, the fear from the police maltreatment, the fear of harassment in the workplace and in the family is discouraging the LGBT and MSM population to publicly declare their sexual orientation and identity”.¹²

C.2. Freedom of assembly and association

27. There are several organisations in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” working on LGBT issues – an example is several NGOs collaborating in the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities. Other NGOs are the Women's Alliance (primarily working with LB women) and Equality for Gays and Lesbians (EGAL - primarily working with men who have sex with men).¹³ The first organisation working on LGBT issues was the Centre for civil and human rights (CGCP) established in 2002. Even though it was established by LGBT people, it was not an openly LGBT organisation but a human rights organisation in general who announced that part of their work was in issues related to LGBT people. They were afraid of the feedback of the public if they established themselves openly as an LGBT organisation. In 2004, the first openly LGBT organisations were established: the Macedonian Association for Free Sexual Orientation (MASSO) and Equality for Gays and Lesbians (EGAL). MASSO focused on advocacy, legal changes and awareness activities, while EGAL is dedicated to gay health issues and outreach activities (HIV and STI prevention).
28. The previous, and first, LGBT organisation MASSO, founded in 2004, has been closed down. The role of the state is very unclear and undefined in the case of shutting down the LGBT organisation MASSO.¹⁴ According to ex-representatives of MASSO, official state Register played a crucial role in the forced closure of MASSO. Allegedly, during 2008 the state Register allowed to an unauthorised person to change the name of the president in the official State Register and to enact a new president thus enabling the take over of the organisation. After the takeover, all the equipment was taken out from the offices of

9 Meeting with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010.

10 Meetings with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010, the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010, the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010, and EGAL Skopje and Sutka, 28 April 2010.

11 Meeting with EGAL Sutka, 28 April 2010.

12 *Annual Report on sexual and health rights of marginalised communities*, Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities 2009, p. 39.

13 Meetings with the NGOs, 26-28 April 2010.

14 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

MASSO and the organisation's accounts were transferred to independent accounts. The ex-president of MASSO has pressed charges against the State Register and the person who took over MASSO, and the court process is currently ongoing - the Public Prosecutor's office has informed the Helsinki Committee for the Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia that the case is still under investigation.¹⁵ According to ex-representatives of MASSO, the closure was done with the support of the ruling party (VMRO DPMNE) in order to prevent MASSO taking full part in the public discussion on the Anti-discrimination Act discussed at the time.

29. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders referred to the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI) as an 'emerging area' in civil society: "While the difficult access to public authorities for NGOs working on LGBTI rights is a concern, the Special Representative notes as a positive development the solid work of defenders on LGBTI rights, who are well-integrated among human rights organisations, formed a coalition to pursue improvements in the legislation, and achieved changes in media ethics banning homophobic positions."¹⁶
30. ILGA-Europe reports of an incident in October 2007, where the Macedonian LGBT NGO, MASSO, was denied the right to peaceful assembly. MASSO was arranging a "Love is love" party at the square in front of the army club in Skopje. The party was supposed to be a part of the Queer Square Festival. The organisation submitted their application to the Central Municipality four months before the event, but a month prior to event, their request was denied. The Municipality argued that another organisation (BORKA - working with cancer) had been granted permission to hold their event instead. MASSO representatives contacted BORKA and confirmed that although their event was indeed taking place on the same day, they would be finished at 6 pm, after which MASSO could hold their party. Despite being informed of this, the Municipality still refused to issue permission, on the basis that a monument for Mother Theresa stood on the square, and that BORKA's event was much more serious, and morally "appropriate" for such a place.¹⁷
31. In 2009 the Helsinki Committee organised a March for Tolerance in Skopje - not least focusing on the acceptance and rights of LGBT persons, which occurred with no restrictions and with good cooperation with the police.¹⁸ According to the Ombudsman representatives of the Ombudsman and the Helsinki Committee, counter-demonstrator tried to provoke incidents.¹⁹ Although the march was focused on anti-discrimination in general, the public reacted very negatively because the event was linked to the promotion of the rights of LGBT persons.
32. See also chapter *Hate crime - hate speech* about homophobic slogans in relation to an attack on a demonstration in Skopje.

C.3. Freedom of expression

33. There are no LGBT clubs or cafés in Skopje as such and the LGBT population is largely invisible.

15 E-mail correspondence from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, 10 August 2010.

16 Special Representative of the Secretary General, PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT, General on the situation of human rights defenders, Mission to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", 2008, p. 13.

17 Ilga Europe, www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/fyrom/masso_is_denied_the_right_to_the_freedom_of_assembly, accessed 3 February 2010, and confirmed during meeting with Helsinki Committee. The incident was confirmed by a meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

18 Meetings with the Ombudsman's Office and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

19 Meetings with Ombudsman and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

34. The Queer Square Festival (2005 and 2007) has, with no major obstacles other than the party mentioned in the previous chapter, been organised as a cultural/art festival in Skopje.²⁰

C.4. Hate crime - Criminal law

35. According to representatives of the Ministry of Justice, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” is still in the beginning with regards to monitoring and classifying hate crimes.²¹
36. A shadow report, drafted in 2008 by ILGA-Europe, MASSO and Global Rights report several cases of harassment towards LGBT persons from the police. The report describes the case of a pharmacist killed in Kumanovo. After the police found out that he was a homosexual, they started arresting every homosexual from this area. The report states that the arrested were humiliated countless times during the arrests. One of the interviewed persons reported: “It would’ve been OK if they [police] held us for questioning... They completely forgot why they brought us there...”²²
37. The Helsinki Committee pointed to two incidents:
38. First is a gay police officer from Kumanovo who was suspended because he arranged a meeting via the internet with a male partner. During the date he was attacked, forced to have oral sex while he was being filmed. When reporting the attack, he was suspended from the police force and the perpetrators although found were not charged. After reporting the case to MASSO and starting the court process, the victim was returned to his job, but the process never ended because he decided to drop the process.²³
39. The second incident is about two men who were having sex in a car. When the police patrol came they allegedly started harassing them, forced them to have sex, and raped one of the persons.²⁴
40. There are several accounts of police abuse, and all the NGOs plus the representative of the Ombudsman interviewed present anecdotal evidence of such incidents. However, as no one wants to report or press charges it is very difficult to substantiate the cases and impossible to assess the prevalence.²⁵ According to the representative of Ombudsman office, the LGBT population, especially transgender persons, are targets of the special police forces Alpha - a special unit formed to combat street crime.²⁶
41. There are also numerous cases of hate speech, although hate speech is not defined by the Law.
42. A member of the ruling party speaking at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Commission for Rights and Liberties and a famous doctor in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” made the statement that “Gay people are sick people and we need to cure them instead of protecting them with law”. According to representatives of Helsinki

20 Meeting with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010.

21 Meeting with Ministry of Justice, 27 April 2010.

22 *Violations of the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in the Former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, Shadow Report, March 2008, p. 9.

23 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

24 Ibid.

25 Meetings the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010, the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010, the Ombudsman's Office, 28 April 2010, the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010, and EGAL Skopje and Sutka, 28 April 2010.

26 Meeting with Ombudsman, 28 April 2010.

Committee, this should be seen in relation to the fact that the ruling party, VMRO DPMNE, wanted to spin the debate about the anti-discrimination Law and to change it into a debate on “the law on homosexuals”.²⁷

43. Homophobic speech is additionally fed by both representatives of the Muslim and Orthodox faiths:
44. A day before the protest “Do not rape Skopje” in 2009 (against the construction of a church in the centre of the city), organised by a group of students and supporters, the blog “Eat Burek” announced a call for organised opposition to the group of demonstrators, which were devaluated and insulted as “a group of gays and atheists”. The following day the group of peaceful demonstrators, joined by advocates for LGBT rights, was violently attacked by a much larger and organised group of contra-demonstrators. They were calling out slogans of hate speech and antagonism in particular towards homosexual persons, sex workers and drug users, in front of the police, who did nothing to prevent the violence and hate speech. The discriminative speech against marginalised groups continued by some of the pro-government media who merely passed on the violence and hate speech, and stigmatised the organisers of the peaceful protest²⁸.
45. Political parties at times use the word “faggot” to discredit political opponents.²⁹ There is a “holy matrimony between the Church, Muslim religion and the government”³⁰ on LGBT issues in the sense that all three actors are strongly opposing any sort of LGBT rights.

C.5. Family issues

46. In 2005/2006 MASSO prepared a draft Law on registered partnerships.³¹
47. On 10 May 2009, VRMO-DPMNE’s Centre for Communication (ruling party’s Centre) issued a statement to the media, regarding the results from a public opinion poll concerning three current issues. The survey was ordered by the Pavel Satev Institute and conducted by the Democracy Institute, with over 1100 participants. The citizens were asked “whether the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia needs to be changed in order to define marriage as a unity or union exclusively between a man and a woman”. The ruling party interprets this in the sense of “removing the possibility for homosexual marriages”.³²
48. According to the results, 77.1% of the questioned citizens responded affirmatively and only 14.6% of the citizens responded negatively."
49. The Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Groups protested against the ruling party politics of manipulation with public opinion by way of public surveys, suggesting that their purpose was to provoke “traditional” homophobic feelings in citizens:
50. "The formulation of the question leads to the conclusion that the ruling party is not satisfied by the fact that homosexual marriages are prevented [merely within] the Family Law,³⁸ nor that the new amendments to the Law denies the right of homosexual persons to have

27 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

28 *Annual Report on sexual and health rights of marginalised communities*, Coalition for Protection and Promotion of the sexual and health rights, 2009, p. 60.

29 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Information received from representative of MASSO.

32 *Annual Report on sexual and health rights of marginalised communities*, Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 2009, p. 55.

“close personal relations” like the heterosexual.³⁹ It is suggested that such possibility might be excluded by an amendment to the Constitution.³³

51. Such attitudes play out within the families of LGBT persons, for example:
52. The Women's Alliance mentions one case as an example of the problems some LGBT persons face in relation to their families: when the parents of one of their members who is a teacher found out that she is a lesbian, they put her in “house arrest”, not allowing her to meet with friends. This “house arrest” lasted for some time, until the parents decided that she had finally healed.³⁴
53. Another issue highlighted by the Women's Alliance is that lesbian and bisexual women most often face discrimination in private settings, e.g. from family members. In addition the Women's Alliance report of the strong family pressure on women to get married.³⁵

C.6. Asylum and refugee issues

54. There are no data on any cases of people applying for asylum due to persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

C.7. Social security, social care and insurance

55. There are no data on discrimination in the area of social security, social care and insurance. However, there is a general problem for Roma people in getting health insurance as a certain level of education is often required, and Roma people often do not attend primary school long enough. This of course also affects the Roma LGBT community.³⁶

C.8. Education

56. In the *Pedagogy* text book (for secondary education, published in 2005 and edited by Eli Makazlieva) the chapter on “Negative aspects of sexual life” describes homosexuality as “abnormal”, and homosexual persons as “highly neurotic and psychotic persons” and participants in “abnormal, not natural and degenerated sexual life”.³⁷
57. In 2009, the Coalition against discrimination addressed a written request to the Minister of Education, Mr. Pero Stojanovski to withdraw from use the controversial textbook, pointing out to that the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (MKB-10) explicitly states ‘sexual orientation is not considered to be a disorder’. The Coalition also directed an appeal to the Ministry of Education for systematic revision of the educational programmes as a whole, in order to correct and prevent all possibilities of homophobic (and other types of) hate speech and discrimination in the educational system.
58. The Ministry of Education has neither issued an answer to the request to withdraw the textbook nor to the appeal. In the interview for “Sega” magazine, Minister Stojanovski stated: “I do not know under which conditions and how the textbook was approved”. He

33 Ibid.

34 Meeting with the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010.

35 Ibid.

36 Meeting with EGAL Sutka, 28 April 2010.

37 *Annual Report on sexual and health rights of marginalised communities*, Coalition for Protection and Promotion of the sexual and health rights, 2009, p. 54.

stated that he was not able to use his discretion until he hears the opinion of experts in this field.³⁸

59. On 17 May 2010 the Helsinki Committee held a public debate on this issue marking the IDAHO day in the EU Info Centre where representatives from the EU Commission, UNICEF and the Dutch Embassy were present, but no one from the Ministry of Education and Biro for developing of the educational system appeared. The conclusions of the debate were sent in writing to the Ministry and the Biro.³⁹
60. A study on "discourses, power, and sexual minorities in transitional Macedonia" concludes the following in the area of education:
61. "Although there are few positive examples, Macedonian institutional scientific (and educational) system still lacks a serious interdisciplinary approach that would reconsider issues of culture, gender and sexuality in its approach and curricula. This is firmly connected to the same lack in epistemologies and methodologies arts, humanities and social sciences are operating with. There is still significant lack of direct tackling of issues of sexuality in academic curricula. Worrying fact is that there are still put in circulation textbooks which explicitly promote homophobic attitudes and the same are supported by the state university or the Government itself. However, the recent years also have showcased very few positive examples of inclusion of courses in the official curricula treating sexuality in non-heteronormative and non-homophobic manner."⁴⁰

C.9. Employment

62. In the absence of effective laws on discrimination, there are very little data on discrimination at the work place.
63. It is not clear if the Law on labour relations covers sexual orientation as a forbidden ground for discrimination. Moreover, while Article Six of the Law on Labour Relations refers to sexual orientation, the reference may be translated as "sex orientation," which adds ambiguity to internationally adopted norms.⁴¹
64. This problem is not a semantic one. MASSO provides an account of this problematic difference:
65. '[S]exual orientation' has to be distinguished from the narrow concept that the term 'sex orientation' evokes. The internationally used term 'sexual orientation' refers to sexuality, underlying the conceiving of sexuality in all of its aspects, including the biological, cultural, social, psychological and political condition (gender norms as well) in the development and the forming of sexuality. On the contrary, the term 'sex orientation' not only refers rigidly to the biological sex (and not to sexuality in its complexity), but even more, is a term that can not be found and adjusted to any international legislation or any contemporary theory and methodology. Given the use of such an ambiguous term, the LGBT population can hypothetically be under the protection of this law, within the scope of "other personal characteristic."⁴²

38 Ibid.

39 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

40 Slavco Dimitrov, *Sexualities in Transition: Discourses, Power and Sexual Minorities in Transitional Macedonia*, Euro-Balkan - Institute for Humanities and Social Science research, Skopje, 2009, p. 86.

41 Macedonian Association for Free Sexual Orientation, *Report on the Situation of the Human Rights of the LGBT Community in Macedonia*, 2008, p. 4.

42 LGBT Shadow report to ICCPR by Global Rights, ILGA Europe and MASSO.

66. According to the Ombudsman's Office, the majority of all complaints they have received is in the field of employment.⁴³ The Ombudsman's Office does not have any jurisdiction over private companies and that part of work is reserved for the Commission established by the Antidiscrimination Act. Nevertheless, there are doubts on efficiency of this Commission because of the weak mandate of the Commission and it may be politically influenced.⁴⁴
67. The only documented incident of discrimination that was mentioned during the interviews was of the policeman who was suspended because it became known that he had had sexual relations with another man (see chapter 3.4).
68. The NGOs met state that LGBT persons are typically not out in their workplace.⁴⁵

C.10. Housing

69. An international portal on LGBT issues around the world, www.globalgayz.com, tells the story of a gay couple in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" who were thrown out of their apartment by the landlord because of their sexual orientation. The couple were unable to find a new apartment until one of their female friends agreed to "play the part of" a girlfriend to one of them.⁴⁶
70. Otherwise, when renting apartments, there is a tendency that same-sex couples present themselves as friends living together - something not unusual due to the current economic situation in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".⁴⁷

C.11. Health care

71. There are no official data on discrimination in the health system. Nevertheless, several of the members of the Women's Alliance have been in situations where they could not visit their same-sex partners in hospital, because they were not recognised as next of kin. That is why the organisation has developed a programme involving health workers. Unfortunately, the achievements of the programs are based only on the good will of individuals working in the health institutions.⁴⁸
72. There is no gender reassignment treatment available.

C.12. Access to goods and services

73. There are not any official cases on discrimination in access to goods and services.
74. A specific problem to be mentioned is the access to venues such as bars or clubs that is, at times, restricted for Roma people.⁴⁹ The representative for EGAL in Sutka thus told of an incident where he was denied entrance to a gay party held in Skopje. The organisers acted on the discriminatory door policy and stopped the cooperation with the manager of the place, but the incident is indicative of discrimination facing Roma people in "the former

43 Meeting with Ombudsman, 28 April 2010.

44 Ibid.

45 Meetings with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalised Communities, 26 April 2010, the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010, and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

46 Global Gayz, www.globalgayz.com/country/Macedonia/view/MKD/gay-macedonia-news-and-reports-2 \ "article0, accessed 3 February 2010).

47 Meeting with the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010.

48 Meeting with the Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010.

49 Meeting with EGAL Sutka, 28 April 2010.

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” - including Roma LGBT persons facing discrimination in the LGBT community. Such discrimination is exacerbated by the fact that the access to e.g. LGBT events is already limited because Roma people most often live outside of Skopje (in Sutka), where events usually take place, and that their mobility is in practice often limited due to poverty.

C.13. Media

75. The situation with the media seems to be good in comparison with other fields of investigation. MASSO organised a series of trainings on LGBT rights for Macedonian Institute for Media. Unfortunately, the trainings were usually only attended by journalists and not by editors.⁵⁰
76. A study on media representations of LGBT people suggests tendencies to portray LGBT identity as a Western phenomenon as well as tendencies of sexualisation (exaggerated focus on sexual aspects). The following quote sums up the analysis of the media from 1999/2000 on:⁵¹
77. "From 1999/2000 on the situation has drastically changed which has been influenced by the growing emergence of new Media, printed and electronic as well. Besides the difference that can be noticed on quantitative level in general treatment of the topic, it should still be noticed that there is an increase in the number of articles related to non-heterosexuals and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. This has further been caused by the emergence of LGBTQ activism mostly.
78. The main characteristics of the newspapers' articles from this period, and their main difference from the previous one, is that homosexuality is not anymore just a Western phenomenon, but it has now acquired status of visibility in the local context as well. It is still significant that a demarcation line between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ is drawn, but it has now been internalised, and the binary division is further sustained (hetero/homo). Considering the influence of NGOs targeting human rights of LGBT people, the Media discourse showcases significant increase in this direction. Important discursive characteristic of Media articles from this period is the tendency for normalization. Most of these arguments are used as implicit justification for enjoying equally the rights ascribed for heterosexuals."
79. The analysis further shows that neutral or affirmative attitudes are prevalent, and that the use of stigmatic terms and words has significantly decreased.
80. A representative of the former MASSO adds that in the past years some of the media have had a "hidden homophobic approach". For example, they would publish a balanced report on MASSO activities, but on the same page they would publish an interview with a priest from the Macedonian Orthodox Church which produced an ambivalent impression of the information.⁵²

C.14. Transgender issues

81. Stakeholders talk of two of the transgender communities most visible in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, distinguishing between communities of drag show

50 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

51 Slavco Dimitrov, *Sexualities in Transition: Discourses, Power and Sexual Minorities in Transitional Macedonia*, Euro-Balkan - Institute for Humanities and Social Science research, Skopje, 2009, p. 88.

52 Information received via email.

performers and Roma transgender people. The rest of the transgender community is very invisible.⁵³

82. Some transgender persons work as sex-workers since it is very difficult to get employment as a transgender person and, due to their visibility, they are often subject to police maltreatment.⁵⁴ Due to those difficulties, and due to the fact that it is not possible to get gender reassignment treatment in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, there are several accounts of transgender persons leaving the country.⁵⁵ The nearest possibilities for treatment are in Athens or Belgrade.⁵⁶

C.15. Other areas of concern

83. As described in the various chapters in this report, the conditions for Roma LGBT persons is a particular concern due to generally lower standards of living and a somewhat widespread discrimination of Roma people.
84. This problem of being a “double minority” reflects also on the Albanian LGBT population, assessed as being the most invisible and hard to reach LGBT persons.⁵⁷

53 Meeting with the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

54 Meetings with the Ombudsman' Office, 27 April 2010, the Helsinki Committee and EGAL Sutka 28 April 2010.

55 Ibid.

56 Meetings with Women's Alliance, 27 April 2010 and the Helsinki Committee, 28 April 2010.

57 Meetings with the Helsinki Committee and EGAL, 28 April 2010.