

Homophobia in Greece

Love for equality

by Miltos Pavlou

iORED
Institute for Rights
Equality & Diversity





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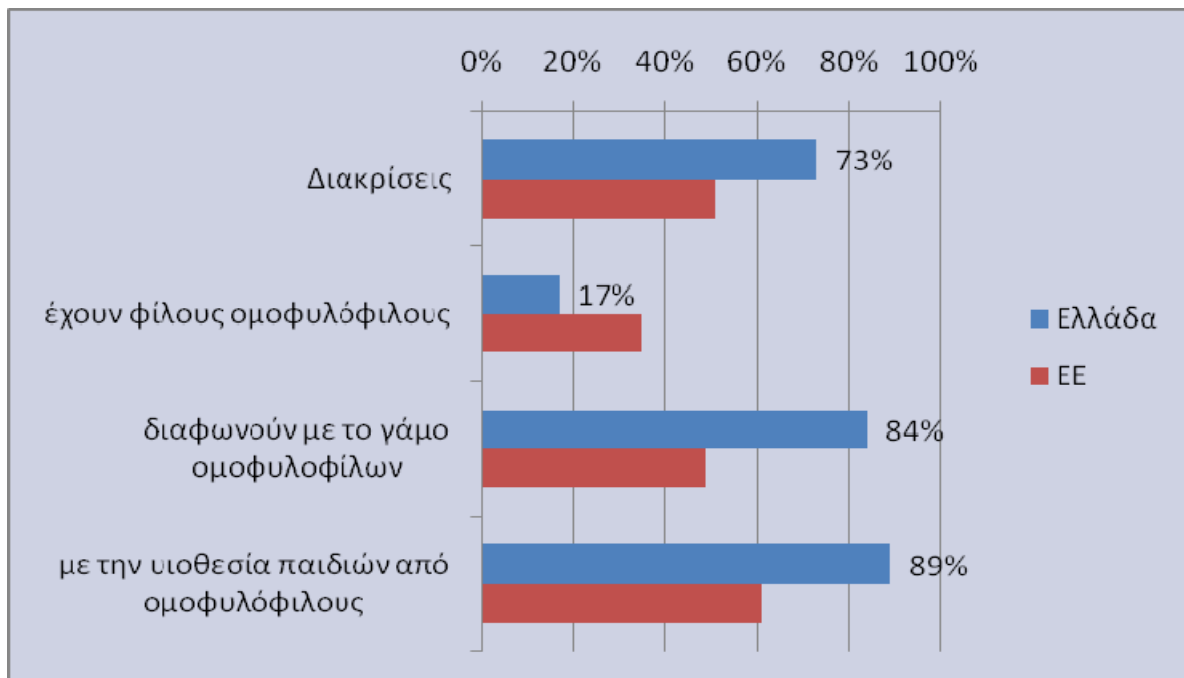
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Συμπεράσματα [EL]

- Η Ελλάδα τοποθετείται ανάμεσα στις πιο ομοφοβικές χώρες απέναντι στους ομοφυλόφιλους στην Ευρώπη ως προς τις στάσεις που δηλώνουν οι πολίτες στις σχετικές ευρωπαϊκής εμβέλειας δημοσκοπήσεις.
- Το Ευρωβαρόμετρο του 2008, η Ελλάδα και η Κύπρος ήταν η χώρες στις οποίες οι διακρίσεις με βάση το σεξουαλικό προσανατολισμό είναι πιο διαδομένες (73%, έναντι 51% του Ευρωπαϊκού μέσου όρου).
- Μόνον 17% των Ελλήνων έχουν φίλους ομοφυλόφιλους, έναντι 34% του Ευρωπαϊκού μέσου όρου.
- Σύμφωνα με το Ευρωβαρόμετρο 2006, 84% των Ελλήνων διαφωνούν με το γάμο ομοφυλοφίλων, έναντι 49% των Ευρωπαίων. Το 89% των Ελλήνων διαφωνούν με την υιοθεσία παιδιών από ζευγάρια ομοφυλοφίλων έναντι 61% των Ευρωπαίων.
- Στην αγορά εργασίας στην Ελλάδα, έρευνες discrimination testing δείχνουν ότι οι ομοφυλόφιλοι έχουν 26,1% λιγότερες πιθανότητες απάντησης ως υποψήφιοι σε θέσεις απασχόλησης.
- Η Ελλάδα είναι ανάμεσα στις 14 χώρες της ΕΕ που δεν δίνουν δικαιώματα συμβίωσης (γάμου ή ελεύθερης συμβίωσης) ενώ δείχνει να βρίσκεται κοντά στον Ευρωπαϊό μέσο όρο ως προς τις αντιδράσεις απέναντι στις δημόσιες συναθροίσεις-εκδηλώσεις των ΛΟΑΤ (Λεσβιακά, Ομοφυλόφιλα, Αμφισεξουαλικά, και Τρανσεξουαλικά άτομα - LGBT) όπως το Athens Gay Pride, που στην Ευρώπη ποικίλουν από τη βίαια παρεμπόδιση, παρενόχληση και απαγορεύσεις (Βουλγαρία, Εσθονία, Λεττονία, Πολωνία, Ρουμανία) ως την ευρεία συμμετοχή υπουργών, κομμάτων και θρησκευτικών φορέων (π.χ Ολλανδία).
- Είναι ανησυχητική στην Ελλάδα η βία και η παρενόχληση ΛΟΑΤ από αστυνομικά όργανα, ενώ σημαντικό είναι το φαινόμενο των πολλαπλών διακρίσεων τις οποίες υφίστανται στο δημόσιο χώρο και στην οικογένεια, ΛΟΑΤ με πολλαπλές ταυτότητες, όπως πρόσφυγες αιτούντες άσυλο, μετανάστες, τρανσεξουαλικά άτομα, άτομα με αναπηρίες, ηλικιωμένοι και νέοι-έφηβοι.
- Τέλος, στο νομοσχέδιο για το σύμφωνο συμβίωσης - το οποίο δυστυχώς δεν αναγνωρίζει τα ομόφυλα ζευγάρια παρά τις αντιδράσεις φορέων και της κοινωνίας πολιτών.
- Η Ελληνική κοινωνία μοιάζει να αποδέχεται βαθμιαία τους κοινωνικούς χώρους και εκδηλώσεις των ΛΟΑΤ χωρίς να έχουν αναφερθεί τα τελευταία χρόνια σοβαρά περιστατικά βίας και επιθετικότητας, όπως αντιθέτως συμβαίνει σε άλλες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες κυρίως της Ανατολικής Ευρώπης.
- Ωστόσο, πρόσφατα περιστατικά βίας και ξυλοδαρμού με προφανή χαρακτηριστικά εγκλημάτων μίσους έχουν αναφερθεί μέσα στο πλαίσιο μιας συγκυριακής μεγεθυνόμενης κουλτούρας της βίας.

- Είναι θετική η εισαγωγή νέας νομοθετικής πρόβλεψης σύμφωνα με την οποία αποτελεί επιβαρυντική περίπτωση για την επιμέτρηση ποινής από το δικαστήριο η τέλεση της πράξης από μίσος λόγω διαφορετικού γενετήσιου προσανατολισμού (άρ.79.3 του Ποινικού Κώδικα). Ωστόσο, απομένει στην ελληνική πολιτεία και στο δικαστικό σύστημα (αστυνομία, δικαστές) να την εφαρμόσουν στην πράξη. Το πρόσφατο περιστατικό στο κέντρο της Αθήνας (Εξάρχεια) η δραστηριοποίησή του τελευταίου παρέμεινε ζητούμενο.
- Το μεγαλύτερο χάσμα από όλα φαίνεται να είναι της ενημέρωσης και της επίγνωσης του ευρύτερου κοινού για την ομοφυλοφιλία, την ομοφοβία, τις διακρίσεις λόγω σεξουαλικού προσανατολισμού. Όπως επισημαίνουν οι οργανώσεις των ΛΟΑΤ: 'Η άγνοια είναι ο εχθρός'.

Γράφημα Ι - Οι στάσεις των Ελλήνων απέναντι στην Ομοφυλοφιλία



Πηγή: Ευρωβαρόμετρο 2006 - 2008

Executive summary

Given the absence of major violent incidents, Greece may be generally perceived as a tolerant country for LGBT. However, discrimination, exclusion and verbal violence are frequently met and spread widely throughout the country, while dated law provisions create a highly negative and hostile landscape depriving them from partnership rights and creating a discriminatory public space.

Below follows a short overview of the main findings:

A. Attitudes towards LGBT people

- The most recent European wide surveys indicate that Greek public opinion is the most negative among Europeans in regard to the rights of same sex couples. Sexual orientation appears to be the most common ground of discrimination in the country.
- The only available research about the access to the labour market has shown that gay workers are not only negatively discriminated against in their search for employment, but also harassed by the potential employers.
- Age, sex, education and political orientation are decisive factors for negative attitudes. The elderly, men, less educated and conservative individuals are far more negative and intolerant towards LGBT.

B. Criminal Law - Hate Crime

- Although there are no officially available data, the most common pattern of violence towards homosexuals is verbal insults and harassment, while police officers are frequent perpetrators.
- The behaviour of police officers may draw their safety and impunity from the generally legitimised homophobic prejudice permeating the entire Greek society.
- Extreme right-wing attacks have been frequent in general, and according to the LGBT representatives, recently they have become more violent, possibly inspired by the election of a far right party for the first time in the parliament (September 2007 elections).
- in late 2008 the Penal Code was amended in order to include hate crime because of sexual orientation as aggravating circumstances in the computation of punishment by a court

C. Freedom of Assembly

- Greek society seems to gradually accepting gay bars and socio-cultural spaces while no major violent reactions to the LGBT gathering places and associations were reported. The reactions more commonly occur at the micro-local level. Nonetheless, in March 2009 an unexpected violent attack targeted a gay-bar (Kerido-Cookoo) in the central Athens bohemian and multicultural quarter of Exarhia. Despite the obvious character of a hate-crime no relevant police investigation has been reported.
- There is an absence of public funding of LGBT social and political activities.
- The major annual event of Athens Pride enjoys yearly increasing participation and success.

D. Family and Other Social Issues

- Greek legislation grants no legal status to LGBT families/couples and therefore, no right to adoption, family benefits and welfare, health, fiscal, employment, housing, social security or heritage rights whatsoever.
- One of the major public issues around the LGBT rights in Greece over the last years, and especially very recently, has been the issue of political marriage and legal recognition of partnership status for same sex couples. In March 2008, the Government excluded same sex couples from the legal provision that introduces the recognition of unmarried couples through a legal partnership status ('cohabitation contract', law n.3719/2008). After the pressure from civil society stakeholders culminated in a relevant proposal of the NCHR, on 29.03.2008 the Justice Minister announced a legal, scientific committee to be set up in order to examine the future extension of the 'cohabitation contract' provisions to same sex relationships. Up to date no such initiative took place.
- Nevertheless, according to LGBT activists, family in Greece is an important support structure for gay people. The main source of reaction and negativity is the fear of the social homophobic microenvironment, and not an attitude against homosexuality per sé.

E. The Labour Market

- There are no complaints recorded by competent bodies for discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in employment. However, complaints mechanisms are in place.
- The only available research conducted through discrimination testing methodology show that 1 of 4 employers are reluctant to invite the 'gay-labelled' - potentially or presumably gay - candidates to job interviews. This percentage is higher for male employers (1 on 3).
- Law provisions regarding and administrative practices exemption or deferment from military service of gay men, treated as psychiatrically ill, result in serious impediments and obstacles to

labour market access. Despite the decisions and recommendations of the Greek Ombudsman and the Data protection Agency, the administration has not reformed the law and practice.

F. Asylum and Subsidiary Protection

- There are no official data or recording procedures in place regarding asylum seekers' applications on grounds related to sexual orientation and the outcome of cases.
- In the last years gay men asylum seekers, mainly from Iran, found it difficult to claim refugee status in a country granting a negligible number of asylum status permits per year.
- In a notorious case of an Iranian gay man, many civil society organisations and political actors in Greece and Europe have intervened in order to convince Greek administration to re-examine his - initially rejected - asylum application.

G. Family Reunification

- National legislation on family reunification excludes same-sex partners from its provisions. Same-sex partners who are registered as such in other EU member states are not considered family under national law and therefore have no family rights in Greece.
- Greece, in transposing the family reunification directive has chosen not to authorise the entry and residence of unmarried partners, or of a third country national who is bound to the sponsor by a registered partnership

H. Education

- LGBT organisations report that difficult peer relations in relation to LGBT pupils/students include harassment and bullying, while the 'outing' of LGBT identity of teachers results in their dismissal from work or change of school.
- In the only case handled for discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation by a foreign student, the Greek Ombudsman as an Equality body judged that problems were based on problematic personal relationships rather than on the sexual orientation of the complainant. However, following the intervention of the Ombudsman, the recommendation for the expulsion of the student was withdrawn and he was allowed to continue his studies.
- LGBT organisations and the National Commission for Human Rights have recommended to the Ministry of Education to assure that sexual orientation does not lead to discrimination against teaching personnel, and to include references to sexual orientation in sexual education classes that need be introduced at schools.

I. Health Service

- Health sector is marked mainly by ignorance of medical staff and by the lack of any particular procedures, or attention to the LGBT population's specific needs. There are no publicly available data or research. There is no special scientific or public service research for LGBT issues and all surveys-researches are implemented under the man/woman perspective.
- Nevertheless, in a recent 2006 case, the Central Council for Health accepted the request of a public service employee for coverage of the expenses of his sex change operation in Netherlands by the public insurance fund.

Religion

- The LGBT community has a notably bad relation with the Greek Orthodox Church. Occasionally, Church high officials and representatives have made homophobic or blatantly racist public statements. In 2004, the late Archbishop of Athens declared, while preaching, that homosexuality is an "evident sin" and a "defect".

K. Sports

- Sport is an area of high invisibility of LGBT. Debates or initiatives in regard to LGBT people and sports do not take place, although notable incidents involving media exposure highlight the way that LGBT label stereotyping is a major threat to professional athletes.

L. Media

- The media public sphere is where the gay identity is mostly portrayed and discussed publicly often in a controversial way with tensions and disputes.
- Several issues have been raised about the National Council for Radio and Television NCRTV and its homophobic stance. On a number of occasions the NCRTV imposed sanctions on radio and TV channels for showing or naming homosexual relationships (a soap-opera man-man kiss and a gay lesbian radio show were the most notorious cases).
- However, there are indications that homosexuality is becoming less of a taboo and LGBT issues are enjoying growing visibility through the media, from print to cinematography although not without reactions and public tensions.
- The major LGBT public event in Greece, Athens Pride, has never been publicised or covered by TV media. All media reports come exclusively from specific liberal newspapers.

M. Transgender persons

- There is lack of awareness of transgender issues in Greece and even the word is entirely unknown or unrecognised. Nevertheless, transexuality is listed as a psychiatric disorder when it comes to males doing or deferring their military service, and is generally seen as a biological anomaly.

N. Multiple discrimination

- In view of lack of official data, the activists' experience of supporting discrimination victims has shown that immigrant-refugees, teenagers and disabled LGBTs are those who suffer MD the most.

O. Good practices

- It has been hardly possible to identify good practices in a landscape where the LGBT people have no rights or recognition and are not considered to be a social group eligible for public policies whatsoever.

A. Attitudes towards LGBT people

Opposed to homosexual marriages and child adoption

The most recent Eurobarometer survey (EBS 66 Public Opinion in the European Union / September 2006)¹ on attitudes towards homosexuality indicate that Greek public opinion (together with Latvia and Poland) is most opposed to homosexual marriages and to child adoption by homosexual couples.

- A very high 84% of the sample in Greece claimed that marriage of homosexual couples should not be allowed (the same opinion expressed 49% of all Europeans), while
- 89% of Greeks believe that homosexual couples should not be authorised to adopt children (the EU25 average is 61%).

The above confirm the results of the 2003 EOS Gallup Europe opinion poll² concerning the authorisation of homosexual marriage and the adoption of children by homosexual couples in 30 European countries. In particular:

- 81% of the Greek respondents disagrees to homosexual marriage (10% rather disagree – 71% strongly disagree) which brings Greece to be the most negative end among 30 countries, followed by Cyprus (80%) and Turkey (79%).
- Greece is also by far the most negative country with respect to attitudes to wards child adoption by homosexual couples, with 87% of negative views (10% rather disagree – 77% strongly disagree) followed by Malta (86%), Romania (85%) and Cyprus (85%).

Sexual orientation discrimination higher in Greece across EU

According to the findings of another Eurobarometer survey (Special EUROBAROMETER 263 “Discrimination in the European Union” / January 2007):

- 68% of Greeks believe that a widespread form of discrimination in their country is the one related to sexual orientation. This was the view of 68% of Greek respondents, much higher than the 50% figure recorded across the EU (a difference of 18 percentage points).

¹ Eurobarometer survey (2006) STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 66 – Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results. Autumn 2006 – TNS Opinion & Social.
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.htm

² <http://www.eosgallupeurope.com/homo/index.html>

- Like other Southern European countries (Cyprus 86%, Portugal 83%), the wide majority of the population (85% for Greece) feels that homosexuality in their country is still a taboo (EU25 average: 48%).
- Greek respondents tend to have a less diverse range of friends and acquaintances than is evidenced for the EU as a whole and only 16% declare to have friends or acquaintances who are homosexuals (EU25: 35%).
- Compared to EU opinion as a whole, being homosexual is perceived by Greeks as being considerably more likely to be a source of societal disadvantage: an overwhelming 77% of Greeks hold this view, 23 percentage points more than the 54% at EU level.
- Similarly Greeks are more likely to believe that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is becoming more commonplace in the last years (37% vs. 31% at EU level).
- Nevertheless, Greek opinion is highly favourable towards the idea of introducing specific measures related to sexual orientation (75% towards the EU25 average of 66%) to provide equal opportunities in employment.
- Most Greeks are in favour of the provision of anonymous information as part of a census, in order to help combat discrimination in their country; however the greatest level of opposition is that expressed against providing information on sexual orientation (33% opposed).

Previous surveys (European Social Survey round2 – 2004) suggest that 50% of the respondents agree and 30% disagree that ‘gays and lesbians are free to live life as they wish’. Also, according to the findings of European Social Survey 2005, Greece with a mean value of 2.7 (where 1 = absolute agreement and 5 = absolute disagreement) is among the six EU countries with the lowest rates of social acceptance of homosexuals.

Discrimination in employment and employers’ attitudes

Only one research project has been implemented in Greece regarding discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and it concerned discrimination testing.³ According to the findings:

- The estimated probability of gay-labelled applicants to receive an invitation for a job interview was by 26,1% lower than that of straight applicants. In addition, the informal wage offers on the part of tentative employers were found to be 2.6% less for gay-labelled applicants.
- The estimated probability of male employers to practice occupational access discrimination against gay-labelled applicants was by 35% higher than that of females. Moreover, males were found to practice wage discrimination of a statistically insignificant 3.2% against gay-labelled applicants, while females were found to provide them with a minimal wage premium of 0.6%.

³ Drydakís Nick (2007), Dual Life for Equal Labour? Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Greek Labour Market, Department of Economics, Gallos Campus at Rethymno 74100, University of Crete, Greece, Business Economics and New Technologies Laboratory B.E.N.E.Tec
http://www.soc.uoc.gr/econ/wpa/docs/Sexual_Orientation_Discrimination_in_Greece_Drydakís.pdf

A significant side-finding of the above research, that led to an additional unpublished survey, is that a number of the employers from the discrimination testing sample that were approached by phone, fax or e-mail for the purposes of the research, in turn contacted by mobile phone calls and SMS the presumed gay applicants in order to either molest and harass them, or to, in some cases, propose further contact giving sexual hints.⁴ In all cases the callers and sms senders were men, and mostly under 35 years of age (54.7 – 68.5%) and married (61.5 – 69%). The overwhelming majority had a university education (75-86.9%).

Age, sex, education and political orientation are important factors for anti-LGBT attitudes

The European Values Study implemented for Greece in 1999⁵ similarly shows a net contrast of attitudes among respondents of different age and with different education level. The majority of the respondents (58.6%) find homosexuality likely not to be justifiable. However, this percentage is much higher among people over 50 (84.7%) and with lower education (86.8%), while it is much less for people under 30 years of age (44.7%)

Furthermore, a survey among Greek MPs, conducted in 2003 and presented by the Hellenic Homosexual Community (EOK), raised the issue of recognising taxation, inheritance and other legal rights to same-sex couples. The results of the survey showed that the majority (55%) of parliamentarians were against such granting (41% were in favour). Among the socialists (PASOK) MP's, the majority (55%) were favourable, compared to 27% of Centre-Right New Democracy MPs. The party with the highest MP favourable responses was the leftist Synaspismos (67%) while the majority of Communist Party MPs abstained. MPs favourable responses were relatively higher among women, younger and Athenian MPs. This result goes along with the findings of the above research on discrimination in employment, where women employers are clearly an exception to the discriminating trend.

Anti-discrimination campaigns - policies

No state-policy oriented good practices or anti-discrimination campaigns have been identified.

The major anti-discrimination event aiming at sensitising the wide public about the LGBT community is the annual Athens Gay Pride parade, held every June in the centre of Athens. This event is implemented under an organised public presence since June 2005, while its predecessors have been Athens pride, Gay and Lesbian week, and party events in the late 90s. The Athens Pride is characterised by a rapidly growing participation of the LGBT community and it receives growing national and international media attention.

⁴ Drydakis Nick, (2007) unpublished survey. The researcher has provided the original data sets to the author of the present survey, as well as related research considerations and conclusion.

⁵ European Values Study-Greece (1999) <http://www.jdsurvey.net/web/evs1.htm>

B. Criminal Law - Hate Crime

There are no official or scientific quantitative data available on hate crime on the basis of sexual orientation. Therefore, there are no data about the extent and character of hate crimes in Greece, no comprehensive registration of hate crimes towards sexual minorities by public authorities, and no scientific research carried out on the matter.

The antiracist criminal legislation (law n.927/1979) and the relevant Police Chief circular regarding investigation of racist violence, make no specific mention of LGBTs.

- However, it goes noted that in late 2008 the Penal Code was amended in order to include hate crime because of sexual orientation as aggravating circumstances in the computation of punishment by a court.⁶

Unofficial sources for hate crime and violent incidents are media reports and LGBT associations and organisations. On the basis of interviews with the representatives of LGBT organisations, data collected show that the incidents concern mostly verbal violence and are only occasionally of the physical kind. Extreme right-wing attacks have been frequent in general, and according to the LGBT representatives, recently they have become more violent, and somehow inspired by the election of a far right party for the first time in the parliament (September 2007 elections).

Another interpretation of the above trend is that the intensity and frequency of violent attacks have increased since 2002, as a result of the public 'outing' of LGBT organised groups and associations, claiming public presence and visibility. During the Athens Pride events anti-gay fliers have been disseminated, but most aggressions and violent incidents occur at the parks, where LGBT people are more vulnerable.

LGBT organisations also claim that police violence has increased over the last period of increased visibility. The most frequent form of police violence against LGBTs is verbal, through insults, swears and sexual harassment.

In June-July 2007, a mobile phone video clip published on the YouTube showing police torture against two young immigrants in summer 2006 was followed by other mobile phone videos showing police officers mistreating and humiliating two transvestites/transsexuals, asking them to expose nudity and perform sex acts while detained in the police station.⁷ While police officers involved in the torture of immigrants were sacked from the police corps and prosecuted under criminal charges, no disciplinary or penal action whatsoever was started for the second incidents involving LGBTs.

⁶ Art.79, par.3 of the Penal Code as amended By Law n.3719/2008.

⁷ <http://fr.youtube.com/watch?v=RvMdUoatkMA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8QMy4Yfd7s>

According to the Greek National Human Rights Commission (NCHR) ‘such police officers behaviours draw their safety and impunity from the dense net of homophobic prejudice permeating the entire Greek society’.⁸

Furthermore homosexuality is traditionally seen as a crime itself. Article 347 of the Criminal Code still describes the homosexual male act as unnatural indecency (‘buggery’). In its 2004 report the NCHR called for the abolition of the Article, while recommended that the Ministry of Public Order should take measures so that insulting and discriminatory behaviour of law enforcement officers during stop-and-search of homosexuals ceases.

NCHR also recommended the amendment of the anti-racist law 927/79 (concerning hate speech) to include protection against incitement to discrimination or hatred on the basis of sexual orientation.

Good practices

An OLKE (Homosexual Lesbian Community of Greece) campaign launched in 2004–05 provides support to victims of harassment, verbal and physical police violence and exploitation. No data or assessment are available.

The HLHR-KEMO RAXEN National Focal Point has elaborated and disseminated in 2007 on-line anti-discrimination forms⁹ to NGOs, civil society organisations and stakeholders, as well as to the wider public, in order to facilitate and increase the validity and credibility of reporting of racist violence incidents and of good practices related to combating discrimination and racism.¹⁰ However, such tool is not specifically oriented to LGBT but to all racist violence victims’ groups.

C. Freedom of Assembly

Regarding freedom of assembly, in principle there are no considerable problems related to LGBT manifestations such as Gay Pride parades. Nevertheless, in a couple of occasions, fliers were distributed mocking and creating a hostile environment at the Athens Pride event.

8 Greek National Human Rights Commission (NCHR), decision-opinion of the NCHR plenary about discrimination against sexual minorities in Greece (upon request of Amnesty International) and the extension of political marriage to same-sex couples (upon request of the Homosexual Lesbian Community of Greece), 16.12.2004.
http://www.nchr.gr/media/word/gay_rights_final.doc

9 www.hlhr.gr/hlhr-kemo/hlhr-kemo.htm.

10 The respective forms ΘΕΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΒΟΥΛΙΕΣ & ΚΑΛΕΣ ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΕΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΔΙΑΚΡΙΣΕΩΝ (‘Positive initiatives and good practices against discrimination’) and ΠΕΡΙΣΤΑΤΙΚΑ ΡΑΤΣΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΒΙΑΣ (‘Racist Violence Incidents’) were also distributed to the competent public administration services within the framework of networking and data collection for RAXEN 2007. The forms may be found here: www.hlhr.gr/hlhr-kemo/hlhr-kemo.htm The on-line ‘Racist violence incident’ form serves for recording violent incidents against immigrants and minorities, irrespective of whether the relevant complaint has been lodged. It is a victimisation survey form, available in Greek language. The objective of this initiative is to raise the visibility of racist violence and to improve the validity and credibility of reporting such offences. It also aims at encouraging the NGOs and immigrant and minority communities to report the racially motivated violent incidents to the police and competent authorities. It aids the process of collecting necessary data to establish facts for an alleged racist motivation. This form has been elaborated on the basis of the minimum requirements for data required for the RAXEN National Data Collection Report.

Generally, according to LGBT organisations, Greek society is gradually accepting gay bars and socio-cultural spaces while no major violent reactions to the LGBT gathering places and associations are reported. The reactions more commonly occur at the micro-local level against a nearby LGBT assembly (in some cases disturbed neighbours call the police complaining about the noise and breach of the peace) and when visible public associations claim soundly political visibility.

Nonetheless, in March 2009 an unexpected violent attack targeted a gay-bar (Kerido-Cookoo) in the central Athens bohemian and multicultural quarter of Exarhia. Despite the obvious character of a hate-crime no relevant police investigation has been reported.

There is absence of public funding of LGBT social and political activities. As the Greek Homosexual community and the Athens Pride organisers claim, they have requested repeatedly and unsuccessfully from the Athens Mayor to put the event under his auspices. It goes noted that the Athens Mayor does so for a wide number of other cultural initiatives taking place in Athens, and has never reasoned his denial to express support to the Athens Pride event.

Nevertheless, Athens Pride enjoys yearly increasing participation. The 2007 event counts 800 e-mail list subscribers, 40 member organisations and 27 participating co-organisers. For the Athens Pride 2008 programmed for next June it is planned that the German migrant Greek community participates, as well as LGBT associations-communities from other Greek cities and regions, such as Thessaloniki, Patras, Corfu.

D. Family and Other Social Issues

Greek legislation grants no legal status to LGBT families/couples and therefore, no right to adoption, family benefits and welfare, health, fiscal, employment, housing, social security or heritage rights whatsoever.

In fact, according to the LGBT activists, a problem that emerged in some publicly known cases, was that when one partner deceased, the other partner had no rights to inheritance. Instead, the family inherited him/her, even though their relationship was ruptured long before the person's death, due to their intolerance to his/her homosexuality. The same problem appears regarding the right of the partner to assist his/her partner in the intensive care hospital units and take necessary decisions, because of the lack of a formal partnership status.

One of the major public issues around the LGBT rights in Greece over the last years, and especially very recently, has been the issue of political marriage and legal recognition of partnership status for same sex couples. In a heated debate most political actors have claimed that Greek society is not ready to accept the introduction of legal recognition of same sex couples.

According to LGBT organisations and activist campaigns, the Greek Constitution and Civil Code in regard to unions through marriage use the term ‘persons’ and not sexes and therefore do not prohibit same sex marriage, but such argument is of doubtful legal validity. In fact, the NCHR, in its 2004 report on gay rights, considering such impasse, recommended to the Greek government to recognise the same sex couples so that they cease to be discriminated against on matters of inheritance, tax, social security, health and welfare, pensions, and work.

In April 2006 the major opposition socialist party (PASOK) presented a legislative proposal to be submitted in parliament for the recognition of unmarried couples, homosexual and heterosexual, following the French example of the Pacte civil de solidarité. However, according to some LGBT groups, the proposal's controversial terminology made little headway on LGBT rights. Furthermore, the proposed 'partnership' status explicitly denied same-sex couple's right to adopt.

In March 2008 the Government announced the promotion of a law draft introducing the recognition of unmarried couples and granting them legal partnership status through a ‘cohabitation contract’ (*σύμφωνο συμβίωσης* translated textually/literarily as ‘agreement of cohabitation’). According to the government, the law concerns unions between men and women, and shall exclude same sex couples. (law n.3719/2008).

LGBT organisations as well as left wing political parties and civil society organisations¹¹ reacted against this law proposal, while the Greek Orthodox Church expressed a clear opposition to the partnership law altogether, by defining any relationship out of marriage as ‘prostitution’. The Greek Homosexual and Lesbian Community OLKE met with the Justice Minister and engaged in campaigns such as the one for political marriage to be accessible to same sex couples.¹²

After the pressure from civil society stakeholders culminated in a relevant proposal of the NCHR, on 29.03.2008 the Justice Minister announced a legal scientific committee to be set up in order to examine the future extension of the ‘cohabitation contract’ provisions to same sex relationships.¹³ Once more, Greek Orthodox Church bishops have reacted negatively to such news during their Sunday pulpit preaching.¹⁴ Up to date no such committee has been established and no relevant initiative by the Ministry of Justice took place.

Nevertheless, according to LGBT activists, family in Greece is an important support structure for gay people. The main source of reaction and negativity is the fear of the social homophobic microenvironment, and not an attitude against homosexuality per se.

11 Hellenic League for Human Rights, A positive but imperfect step, Press release, www.hlhr.gr

12 [www.olke.org/advocacy/index.php?menu=Πολιτικό%20Γάμος&submenu=Καμπάνια
για%20τον%20Πολιτικό%20Γάμο
σε%20ζευγάρι%20του%20ιδιου%20φύλου](http://www.olke.org/advocacy/index.php?menu=Πολιτικό%20Γάμος&submenu=Καμπάνια%20για%20τον%20Πολιτικό%20Γάμο)

13 www.in.gr/InqEntityID=886051&InqDirID=244

14 The Thessaloniki Bishop Anthimos in a manifestation of homophobia said that if homosexuals will be recognised legally as partners, “we will become worse than animals”. *Ta Nea*, Imerisia, 31.3.2008.

In early June 2008 the first 2 gay couple marriages were held in the island of Tilos through civil ceremonies despite ammonitions of the Supreme Court prosecutor G.Sanidas who issued a statement against same –sex unions. Penal action has started against the island’s mayor. The Justice Minister sent urgent circulars to mayors throughout Greece notifying that same-sex civil ceremonies are illegal in order to prevent them. The heated public discussion included diverging legal opinions and acute criticism.¹⁵

E. The Labour Market

There are no complaints recorded by competent bodies for discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in employment. However, complaint mechanisms are in place: the Greek Ombudsman as Equality Body deals with discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment in the case the employer is a public agency/service, and with sexual harassment in all employment cases with the support of the Labour Inspectorate Body. The latter is competent for handling discrimination cases on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment in the private sector.

The only available research data¹⁶ produced through discrimination testing methodology show that 1 of 4 employers are reluctant to call candidates eventually or presumably gay (‘gay-labelled’) to job interviews. This % is higher for male employers (1 on 3).

In addition to the homophobic attitudes of employers, there are two major instances of the state-institutional discrimination against homosexuals deriving from law provisions in force and administrative practices that result in serious impediments and obstacles to labour market access.

In the first case concerning the Greek army, homosexuals are exempted or suspended from serving obligatory military service because of their ‘condition’, considered to be a pathological and psychiatric disorder on the basis of the Presidential Decree 1333/2002¹⁷ and its application.¹⁸

In the second case according to the PD 155/1996, those deferred from military service on the basis of a neurological or psychic disease, if wanting to obtain a driving license, have to be subjected to medical examinations by a competent Medical Committee that must certify that

¹⁵ Cfr. Hellenic League for human Rights press release of 7.6.2008. ‘Same-sex marriage is not an offence’

<http://www.hlhr.gr/press/PR-gamos-omofylon7.6.2008.doc>

¹⁶ Drydakís Nick (2007), *Dual Life for Equal Labour? Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Greek Labour Market*, Department of Economics, Gallos Campus at Rethymno 74100, University of Crete, Greece, Business http://www.soc.uoc.gr/econ/wpa/docs/Sexual_Orientation_Discrimination_in_Greece_Drydakís.pdf

¹⁷ The PD excludes from serving the army persons ‘suffering from serious psychosexual disorders (paraphilia) and sex identity disorders (parendysia, transsexuality’, par.179.

¹⁸ Leontopoulos P., *Παρά φύσιν... νόμοι*, 23.4.2006, www.enet.gr/online/online_print?id=14269244

they fulfil minimum requirements for corporal and mental ability to drive. This committee requires a certification of mental health provided by a public hospital doctor. For the doctor to issue such certification to the applicant, the latter needs to be kept under medical observation during a six-month period in a public mental institution. For this purpose, the Ministry of Transportation maintains a personal and sensitive data archive in cooperation with the Defence Ministry, indicating the persons suspended from military service due to mental disorders, homosexuality included. The persons of this archive are not allowed to submit regularly an application and take the driving license exams. The National Data Protection Agency (DPA), through its 66/2002 decision, judged that this is in breach with the national data protection legislation and ordered the immediate deletion of such data from the ministry's archives. In a *bras-de-fer* the Ministry refused to apply the decision, considering that it regards exclusively the specific individual complainant to the DPA, and does not entail a change of the generally followed illegal practice. The above have been highlighted by the Greek Ombudsman, who intervened upon a 2003 complaint and filed the case through a multi-page recommendation to which the Ministry unfortunately did not comply.¹⁹

In a most recent case, the DPA fined Ethniki Insurance Company with 60.000 € for denying a life insurance contract to a homosexual. The company refused to provide service arguing that the client had not served his military service and therefore suffered from a health condition as above.²⁰

Furthermore, the complete lack of recognition of marriage and/or partnership status of LGBT couples, affects also partner's benefits and worker rights, and this is why the LGBT movement in Greece focuses strategically on that front (see above).

F. Asylum and Subsidiary Protection

There are no official data or recording procedures regarding asylum seekers' applications on grounds related to sexual orientation and the outcome of cases.

In its 2004 report the NCHR recommended to the government to facilitate granting asylum to people persecuted in their countries for their sexual orientation. In the last years gay men asylum seekers, mainly from Iran, found it difficult to claim refugee status in a country granting a negligible number of asylum status permits per year.

The 'Alex' case of an Iranian gay asylum seeker in Greece is a notable example. Following the denial of Greek authorities to grant a refugee status to a 40-year-old Iranian gay man, arrested

¹⁹www.omhroi.gr/advocacy/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=2100&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0

²⁰ Kathimerini, "No" to a homosexual, fine to an insurance company, 15.3.2008.

and tortured in the past in Iran for being homosexual, and after the issue received substantial media attention, certain politicians and various organisations intervened supporting the re-examination of his asylum application. On 29.10.2007 the Greek Homosexual Community (G.H.C. - E.O.K.) issued a press release and an open letter addressed to the European Parliament, European Political Parties, Humanitarian Organisations, and International Press. www.eok.gr. Upon the initiative of the Greek MEP D. Papadimoulis, members of the European Parliament from a wide political spectrum questioned the European Commission about the Greek government's rejection of asylum status, and asked for its immediate intervention on the basis of the Directive 2004/83/EC, in order to prevent the man's deportation.²¹ www.syn.gr In view of the relevant reactions, the Interior Ministry announced the investigation of the legal ways to grant this person asylum status. Many EU-based portals have reproduced the news and press releases and supported the man's claim. Due to public pressure the asylum application procedure is currently under re-examination after the initial rejection and the claimant enjoys full residence, working and social protection rights. Among MPs asking for re-examination of his application, are the leader of the far-right parliamentary party LAOS and a leftist MPs who previously had expressed himself negatively about gay people in the media, receiving heavy criticism from the LGBT community.

It goes noted that a nickname ('Alex') was used in order to protect the asylum seeker from his own ethnic community. In fact, it was his Greek partner who initially sought OLKE's support and later on the wider political and media support.

There are no specific conditions for LGBT people in relation to the asylum process (information, interviews etc.), and the staff's knowledge is far from adequate. In fact, in the above 'Alex' case, the DG JLS Commissioner Frattini intervened with a public letter addressed to the Greek authorities in order to precise that fear of prosecution on the grounds of sexual orientation falls within the provisions of the Geneva Convention and the definition of refugee.

There are no special conditions for LGBT people in asylum centres/refugee camps.

G. Family Reunification

The lack of official partnership status or marriage recognition for same sex couples hinders possibilities of family reunification. In fact, the wording of the migration bill in force transposing the family reunification directive (art.54 of the law n.3386/2005) explicitly names the sponsor's spouse as wife in the case of the provision of art.4.4 of the Directive 2003/86/EC. Equally,

²¹ Pniknews, Greek gay community protest Iran deportation <http://www.pniknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-5885.html>, Tetu, Mobilisation contre l'expulsion d'un gay iranien http://www.tetu.com/rubrique/infos/infos_detail.php?id_news=12005, <http://www.gk.nl/index.php?id=9&a=bericht&bericht=4011> Eleftherotipia, G.D., Ου σούθει; 02.11.2007

Greece has chosen not to authorise the entry and residence of unmarried partners, or of a third country national if bound to the sponsor by a registered partnership (as provided by art.3.4 and 5.2 of the Directive).

A most recent and long awaited Interior ministry circular outlining the residence rights and obligations of non-European Union citizens who are the spouses, children or other dependent family members of EU citizens living in Greece on the basis of the 2004/38/EC Directive, excludes same-sex partners from its provisions. Same-sex partners who are registered as such in other EU member states like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, are not considered family under national law and therefore have no rights of family reunification in Greece. This negative development comes after European Commission Vice-President Franco Frattini warned in 2006 EU member states about discriminating against same-sex couples.²²

Consequently there are no specific administrative procedures, application forms of immigration service staff or any known examples of substantiated individual incidents of homophobia or discrimination related to family reunification application.

H. Education

There are no publicly available data or any official complaints for homophobic incidents in education.

The only complaint handled by the Greek Ombudsman as an Equality body for discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation concerned education, a field for which protection against discrimination is not provided by the anti-discrimination law transposing minimally the Directives 43 and 78. The case consisted of a complaint by a post-graduate student, citizen of FYR of Macedonia with a Greek government scholarship, for discriminatory behaviour against him, due to his sexual orientation by the administration of a department of the University of Athens. The Ombudsman investigated the case, although not under its anti-discrimination, but its general mandate and judged that 'the University quite correctly understood that there could be a conflict between students that was based on problematic personal relationships rather than on the sexual orientation of the complainant.' However, following the intervention of the Ombudsman, the recommendation for the expulsion of the student was withdrawn and he was allowed to continue his studies (Ombudsman case 2967/2005).

As the NCHR puts it: 'in Greek society, the apparent tolerance towards homosexuality – especially true for the art sector, considered as an area where creativity and 'liberality' rightfully coexist - hides a harsh collective attitude that comes forth as soon as homosexuality is connected to persons representing in some way role models to the society (i.e., politicians, teachers etc.).'

²² Athens News, Greeks' non-EU relatives get more rights http://www.athensnews.gr/athweb/nathens.pnrt_article?e=C&f=13279&t=11&m=A14&aa=1#top

The NCHR also recommended to the Ministry of Education to assure that sexual orientation does not lead to discrimination against teaching personnel, and to include references to sexual orientation in sexual education classes that need be introduced at schools.

Although no official data are recorded, LGBT organisations report that difficult peer relations in relation to LGBT pupils/students include harassment and bullying, while the outing of LGBT identity of teachers results in their dismissal from work or change of school.

According to LGBT activists, in 2007 a math school teacher was sent away from school because he was seen at gay meeting place at a park. Generally, it seems impossible to 'come out' in the education sector. A transsexual teacher working in Keratsini School (Piraeus area) is a notable exception, enjoying the support of the educational community, as well as of the students' parents.

There is no reference in the school curriculum to LGBT issues as there are no anti-bullying policies in place.

I. Health Service

Health sector is marked mainly by ignorance of medical staff and by the lack of any particular procedures, or attention to the LGBT population's specific needs. There are no publically available data or research. There is no special scientific or public service research for LGBT issues and all surveys-researches are implemented under the man/woman perspective. Therefore, once more the absence of information sources are a problem, and issues are reported by LGBT organisations. Namely:

- The Medical Doctors association does not react to claims of homo presumed as biological anomaly.
- Data collection on HIV concerns and record only gay men excluding lesbians
- Medical treatment is designed and performed as regarding exclusively heterosexual individuals (under the point of view of man/woman distinction). Therefore, a homosexual/lesbian is treated as man or woman respectively even for individual medical examinations, where individual sexual behaviour is crucial in determining medical diagnosis and treatment.
- While there is no obvious discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, often the latter is used as an interpretation attribution of symptoms, or medical staff appears shocked when patient's sexual identity is revealed.
- Refusal of serious chirurgical operations because of HIV fear is a very frequent occurrence. Dentists refuse to provide services in the case an HIV patient states his/her condition.

- Furthermore, there is a lack of information on HIV and sexual diseases, of special interest to LGBT people.

Nevertheless, in a recent 2006 case, the Central Council for Health accepted the request of a public service employee for coverage of the expenses of his sex change operation in Netherlands by the public insurance fund.²³

There is no good practice, policy or initiative regarding education of staff in minority issues.

J. Religion

The LGBT community has a notably bad relation with the Greek Orthodox Church of the predominant religion dogma of the country. In some cases Church high officials and representatives made homophobic or blatantly racist public statements, publicly condemned by civil society and non-governmental organisations, but not by public officers or political parties other than the leftist party SYN.

Generally, it is difficult for LGBT labelled people to practice religion at the level of local communities. The Orthodox Church accepts LGBT to church (in the case they repent for their sinful life) but not their practice. In the best of cases a paternalistic approach is adopted.

The homosexual is seen by the Orthodox Church as a sinner and homosexuality as a biological anomaly. In the most notable case, on October 31, 2004, the Archbishop of Athens declared, while preaching, that homosexuality is an “evident sin” and a “defect”. He also defended the “right” of representatives of political institutions (meaning the Italian candidate for the European Commission) to publicly express their disapproval of a whole social group of European citizens.

The Hellenic League for Human Rights in its 9.11.2004 press release noted that, as the Greek Orthodox Church is also a State institution, its representatives are also high-rank State officials and their scope of intervention is the public political sphere. In that sense, their discourse, even when racist, has an institutional dimension. This discourse is therefore obviously unacceptable as it encourages discrimination and racist practice, instead of preventing them. HLHR added that *‘in that sense, the expression of such views no longer enjoys the protection of freedom of speech and conscience. Whoever considers himself free to preach such ideas, in his capacities as religious leader, with a self-proclaimed political mission, spares those who criticise him the burden of proof of his institutional racism.’*

²³ Newspapers have reproduced the news with a negative ironic tone (Apogeymatini, first page, 11.10.2006), although LGBT organisations welcomed this however soft law development.

K. Sports

Sport is an area of high invisibility of LGBT. Debates or initiatives in regard to LGBT people and sports do not take place. Stigmatising of highly successful athletes who do not reflect to the macho athlete stereotype occurs occasionally in public discourse

There is a notable incident highlighting very sharply how LGBT label stereotyping is a major threat to professional athletes. In the 2000 Sydney Olympics the gymnastics Greek gold medallist Melissanidis was called by his enthusiast trainer right after his performance as 'a boy to kiss'. Their live TV embrace after they knew they were going for the golden medal, caused a series of libellous and insulting publications in tabloid media (mostly Espresso newspaper) showing how the public image and a career of an eventually gay athlete could be ruined.

L. Media

The media public sphere is where the gay identity is mostly portrayed and discussed publicly often in a controversial way with tensions and disputes.

According to the Greek National Human Rights Commission (NCHR) the Greek television shows periodically a sudden and transient interest to homosexual issues, in more or less serious debates, as a taboo transformed to a spicy subject ideal for a sensational television. Common element of such approaches is the perception of LGBT as a threat for the definition of love and sexuality through family, and the caricature of the homosexual stereotype.

In its 2004 report, the NCHR also called on the Greek media regulation authority, the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) to sanction programs where there are insulting or discriminatory references to homosexuals. Instead several issues have been raised about NCRTV and its homophobic stance, according to LGBT groups and most civil society stakeholders. In a number of cases the reasoning of its rulings has been allegedly homophobic:

- On November 2003, the NCRTV fined one of the largest TV networks in Greece, Mega Channel, with 100,000 € (Decision n.371-2003/11.11.2003), partly for having aired a kiss between two male characters of the popular TV serial show 'Klise ta Matia'. In December 2006, Greece's Council of State, the country's Supreme administrative court, annulled this decision, ruling that NCRTV's fine was unconstitutional. According to the court, the TV scene reflected an 'existing social reality, related to a social group, among many that make up an open and

democratic society, whose sexual preferences are not to be condemned'. (Decision n.2856/2006, Chamber D (Τμήμα Δ')

- On December 21 2004 the NCRTV fined '94 Epikoinonia FM' (Greek: *94 Επικοινωνία FM*), a municipal radio station in Athens, with 5,000 Euros, judging the content of the 'Athens Gay and Lesbian Radio Show' as 'degrading' (Decision n. 408/21.12.2004) because of the use of words such as 'lesbian' and 'gay'. As a result the station decided to shut down the show.
- On September 2005, NCRTV formally enquired another one of Greece's largest TV networks, ANT1 (Antenna), for airing a publicity spot, by a popular chewing gum brand, depicting two women kissing.

In January 2008, during a morning TV show, the TV host and a well-known sexologist discussed about the normality of gay children using inappropriate terminology ('what should we do to avoid our sons becoming sissies?') causing fierce reaction of homosexual organisations.²⁴

However, there are indications that homosexuality is becoming less a taboo and LGBT issues are enjoying growing visibility through the media, from print to cinematography although not without reactions and public tensions.

Within the framework of the well known Thessaloniki International Film Festival, a Gay Movie Panorama takes place each year since 1999, upon the initiative of the Thessaloniki 'Consortium against homophobia' ('Sympraxis').²⁵ However, on May 2007, a conservative independent MP (St.Papathemelis) questioned in parliament the Minister of Culture about the rationale of such initiative causing the reaction of the Greek LGBT community.

In fact, it is through the media that various political representatives have occasionally expressed homophobic opinions or mocking and denigrating comments. The New Democracy MP and former undersecretary of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, G.Giakoumatos has repeatedly expressed such views allegedly through mocking homosexuals. The government spokesman has refused to comment on the MP's alleged references.

A notorious incident of physical violence due to media controversy on LGBT issues has occurred in April 2005 in Athens, when a lawyer has beaten publicly a journalist and LGBT rights' activist. Both are highly visible public persons especially through their presence in TV shows and debates. The lawyer A.Kougias insulted and punched G.Vallianatos, as a reaction to 'offending statements' made by the latter in a morning television program six weeks before. Furthermore, before and after the incident the lawyer expressed publicly (on TV) blatantly homophobic and insulting views and comments on homosexual community members.

It goes noted that, the latest media TV news story related to LGBT in Greece concerned the Iranian gay asylum seeker, and therefore the homophobic attitudes of another country (Iran).

24 http://www.enet.gr/online/online_text/c=113,id=48839472#top

25 <http://www.geocities.com/sympaxis/index.html>

[1].

During the most recent major public debate about the civil pact, and on the reactions against it, especially by the Church, TV media dedicated little or no attention to the same-sex couples being excluded by it, an issue of major concern for LGBT community in Greece.

The major LGBT public event in Greece, Athens Pride, has never been publicised or covered by TV media. All media reports come exclusively from specific liberal newspapers.

There are no good practices identified as public service policies about sexual minority representation through the media.

M. Transgender persons

There is lack of awareness of transgender issues in Greece and even the mere word is completely unknown and unrecognised. Nevertheless, as already mentioned above (Labour Market chapter) transsexuality is listed as a psychiatric disorder when it comes to males doing their military service.

According to LGBT activists, transsexuals often face very serious everyday life problems leading to social exclusion and discrimination even because of petty issues, due to the difference between their identity and appearance, and lack of comprehension and acceptance. E.g. transsexuals often face problems when attempting to travel by plane and they are mistaken for transvestites. In addition, legal practice and experience has shown that transsexuals are not considered by judges to be reliable witnesses in court.

N. Multiple discrimination

In view of lack of official data, the activists' experience of supporting discrimination victims has shown that immigrant-refugees, teenagers and disabled LGBTs are those who suffer multiple discrimination the most. It goes noted that under a caricatured representation of LGBT, multiple social – family roles (a gay person may be immigrant, old, father-son and disabled) are downplayed or completely ignored. This stands either for interpersonal social and every-day relations or in the relations to the state administration and policies.

Immigrants, mostly Arab, LGBTs are often in conflict with and in fear from their own ethnic immigrant community. The case of the Iranian gay 'Alex' above is highly indicative.

Teenagers and adolescents deal with the threat of being bullied and excluded at the micro-social level, as well of disapproval on behalf of the family. For this reason the issue often remains unknown, due to the highly emotional and devastating character of the expected reactions, to

be attributed mainly to the family's stigmatisation by the social environment and surrounding community.

Disabled LGBT people are highly excluded from public space in Greece, because of inaccessibility issues - most public and private premises, as well as urban infrastructure are inaccessible to paraplegics and disabled. Moreover, there is a lack of access to social services and welfare or education provisions. Thus they are far more vulnerable to multiple discrimination than any other LGBT group. Disabled LGBT participated in Athens Pride 2007 as a particular group formation.

O. Good practices

There is no good practice in accordance with the criteria of innovation, effectiveness, impact, transferability, participation of beneficiaries or in the light of and above EU and international legal standards.

P. Other areas of concern

The greater gap of all seems to be the one regarding information and awareness of the wider public, as well as informed policies and availability of data on the situation of homophobia and discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation. As the LGBT organisations well put it: professionals' (medics, public and police officers, teachers, and others.) training and people's education at all levels is the major challenge. 'Ignorance is the enemy.'

Annex

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