

Situation of bisexual and homosexual persons in Poland

2005 and 2006 report

Edited by Marta Abramowicz



Warsaw 2007

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Introduction

We present herein a detailed analysis of the social situation of bisexual and homosexual people in all aspects of life in Poland. The first part of this report covers the analysis of data obtained in the poll carried out in late 2006. One thousand bisexual and homosexual persons participated. The second part of the report is the analysis of the society's attitude towards bisexual and homosexual people in different spheres of life, such as the political life, mass-media, education, etc.

Glossary

Homosexual or bisexual person – a person that has the ability to engage in sexual, romantic and emotional relations with persons of the same sex.

Transsexual person – a person that defines their own sexual identity (self-identification as a man or a woman) differently from the majority of people, e.g. self-identifies to be partially a woman and partially a man, contemplates sex reassignment surgery or defines/expresses his or her gender in yet another way.

Discrimination takes place when one treats another person in a different way, usually worse/less favourably, from the way they would treat different people in the same situation, only because he or she perceives this person (justly or unjustly) to belong to a certain social group. The treatment of a person less favourably because one considers them to be bisexual or homosexual, constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Homophobia consists of the dislike of as well as negative emotions expressed towards bi- and homosexual persons; sweeping generalizations about usually negative features that are allegedly characteristic for all representatives of this group. Furthermore, homophobia is manifested through behaviours that consists of different, usually less favourable treatment of persons perceived as belonging to this group. This different treatment can have a verbal form (for instance, expressing false and/or negative beliefs, verbal aggression) or physical (for instance, avoiding contact, condescending treatment, provocation, physical aggression, violence, refusal or impeding access to the same goods, services or privileges that the persons perceived as heterosexual have access to). Worse treatment takes also on the form of written and unwritten social rules and legal and formal regulations, which exclude bi- and homosexual persons from access to goods, services and privileges that are accessible to heterosexual persons.

Part One

Situation of bisexual and homosexual persons in Poland Research

Marta Abramowicz

THE AIM

The aim of this research was to collect data referring to the social situation of homosexual and bisexual people in Poland in 2005 and 2006. The material was collected in order to find an answer to the questions: how widespread is discrimination against homosexual and bisexual people, what forms of physical and mental violence are they subjected to and to what extent, and in which spheres of life do they conceal their sexual orientation.

METHODOLOGY

THE TOOLS

A questionnaire was developed for the needs of this research, consisting of 59 detailed questions. Some of them were multiple-answer questions, while others required a short account of events from the respondent.

All the questions referring to discrimination covered the 2005-2006 period. Since the research was carried out in November

and December 2006, the questions were formulated according to the following model: *Between January 2005 and today, have you been subjected to any of the following situations on the grounds that you are known or suspected to be a bisexual or homosexual person?* A list of situations connected with different treatment followed. The questions referred to the following issues:

1. the occurrence of physical or mental violence (has it occurred, how often) and the description of events (by whom, where the act of violence took place), whether it was reported to the police or to the boss/teacher (if it took place in a school or a workplace), and – if they were notified, what was their reaction,
2. the occurrence of the following events in the workplace: refusal of employment or promotion, dismissal or higher requirements in comparison with other employees,
3. concealing one's sexual orientation in the workplace (to what extent, from whom, for what reasons) – if the respondent was employed at the time of the research,
4. concealing one's sexual orientation at school (to what extent, from whom, for what reasons) – if the respondent was a student at the time of the research,

5. the occurrence of a different treatment (on the grounds of suspected or factual knowledge about the sexual orientation of the respondent) in such aspects as:
 - rent/lease or purchase of a flat/house,
 - relations with neighbours,
 - contacts with representatives of the health service,
 - direct, personal contacts with representatives of different denominations, and in such places as:
 - public offices (e.g. local authorities, courts) and public places (e.g. pubs, clubs, local transport, taxis),
6. the feeling of freedom in demonstrating affection to a partner in public places
7. allowing for the sexual orientation to be disclosed to people not belonging to the closest circle of friends,
8. allowing for the sexual orientation to be disclosed to relatives (which of them know, which of them fully accept the respondent, how they have learned about the respondent's sexual orientation),
9. sociometric data (sex, orientation, age, address, education, relationship status, duration of the relationship, children – if any, social contacts).

In the description of the results, whenever it was possible, we cited the original question that the participants were supposed to respond to – in most of the cases, the questions can be found in the titles of tables and diagrams, some of them were presented in a separate text box.

THE PROCEDURE

The research was conducted in November and December 2006. A total of 1023 questionnaires were returned, out of which 1002 were correctly completed and qualified for further analysis. The questionnaires were distributed both by pollsters who approached respondents in places of bisexual and homosexual people's meetings, such as clubs, organisations, cultural events

– in several different regions of Poland, and through the internet – the questionnaire could be downloaded from a website and returned in an electronic form or printed, completed and delivered by post.

The information about the research was published on websites for bisexual and homosexual people, disseminated through internet forums and emailed directly to the registered users of such websites. Moreover, each respondent was asked to inform others about the research. The sampling method used in this research is called snowball sampling. Out of the 1002 questionnaires, 725 were collected electronically and 277 by pollsters.

PROBLEMS WITH SAMPLING

Every researcher trying to collect information on the social situation of bisexual and homosexual people faces a major problem of insufficient information on what the representative sample of bisexual and homosexual people is, about the percentage of them that live in big towns and outside of big towns, the percentage with higher education and with vocational education, etc. This results partly from the fact that many people prefer to conceal their orientation therefore the data that concerns the spread of bi- or homosexual orientation collected in the course of this research is only an estimate. Moreover, such data differs depending on whether questions relating to sexual behaviours (homosexual behaviours in the case of this research) are asked or the respondent is asked directly to indicate his/her orientation. When asking about behaviours, we receive a higher rate reaching even 20% of respondents that admitted to have practiced such behaviours, while asking about orientation – only 4%–6%. Self-designation as a bi- or homosexual person is extremely subjective. A number of persons who consider themselves to be bisexual live in long-term relationships with a person of the same sex, while their environment considers them to be homosexual.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

THE SAMPLE PROFILE

The analysis covers 1002 questionnaires completed solely by bi- or homosexual respondents. The sample includes slightly fewer women than men – see the detailed data in **Figure 1**. The analysis of the data allowed us to establish whether any differences occurred in the results according to the respondent's gender. Wherever the difference was significant, such data was presented further in the report in a breakdown by gender.

Figure 2 presents respondents according to the sexual orientation declared by them. The respondents could also choose the *other* option, and in most cases the answer given under that heading *queer* most frequently denotes a homosexual person.

As far as the respondents' age is concerned, the sample is not highly differentiated. The detailed data is presented in **Figure 3**. More than 50% of the respondents are young people in the 18–25 age group. Slightly fewer respondents (36.5%) are in the 26–40 group. The small number of respondents above 40 is the result of difficulties connected with approaching such persons. With rare exceptions, members of this group conceal their sexual orientation, have little contact with the bi- or homosexual community, do not frequent clubs, do not belong to organisations and rarely visit websites for bi- or homosexual people.

Therefore, we should bear in mind that the collected data refer mainly to the social situation of young bi- and homosexual people (below the age of 40). There are reasons to believe that 40+ people that spent a major part of their life under a different political system, in times when the issue of gay and lesbian people was hardly addressed and only in negative terms, may have com-

Figure 1. Respondents: breakdown by gender (n= 1002)¹

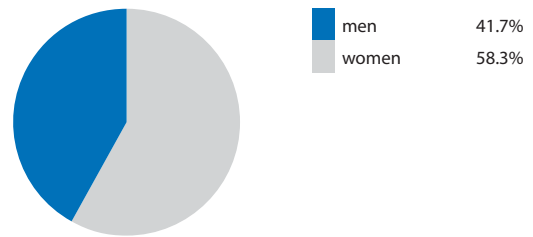


Figure 2. Respondents: breakdown by sexual orientation (n=1002)

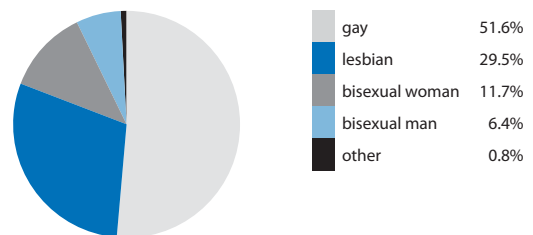
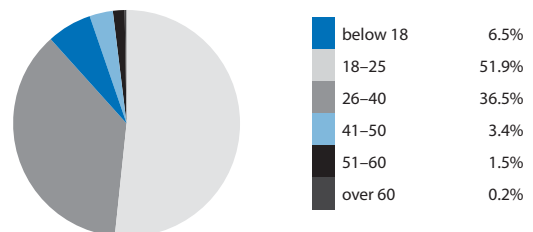


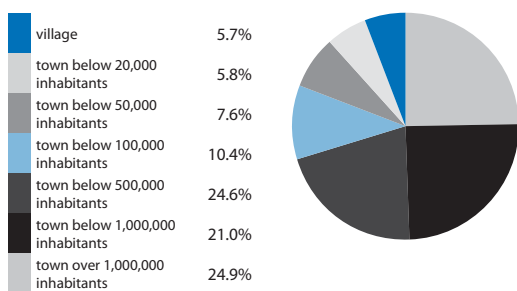
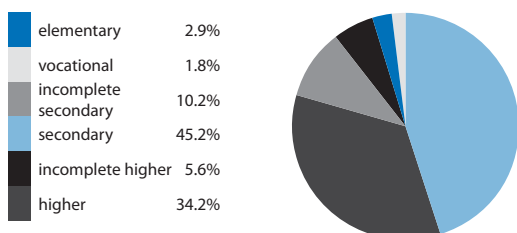
Figure 3. Respondents: breakdown by age (n= 995)



¹ Symbol *n* was used with the titles of the tables and diagrams, for instance n=992 means the number of respondents who answered a particular question or that the question concerned them, in this case it means that the question concerned or was answered by 992 respondents.

pletely different problems and experiences than the generations who started their adult life after 1989.

Data by the population of the place of residence are presented in **Figure 4**. Thanks to the internet we reached respondents from smaller towns more suc-

Figure 4. Respondents: breakdown by place of residence (n= 983)

Figure 5. Respondents: breakdown by education (n= 988)


cessfully than in former years. Nevertheless, inhabitants of big towns prevail in this research, and only over 30% of them live in small towns and villages. There are reasons to believe that homosexual people move to big towns more often than heterosexual people of the same age (due to the more widespread tolerance of same-sex relationships in big towns), therefore in the future, a question should be added to the questionnaire about the population of the place of birth.

Figure 5 presents data on the respondents' education. Persons with secondary, higher and incomplete higher education prevail. This group is more easily reached through the internet and pollsters (usually university students) than people with elementary or vocational education. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that the results of the research refer mostly to the experience of young people of at least secondary education.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Physical violence towards bi- and homosexual people is the most dangerous form of discrimination, since it may lead to grievous bodily harm, physical disability, and in drastic cases, to the death of the victim. Physical violence – mainly battery or rape – has a grave impact on the victim's mind. Post-traumatic stress disorder, characterised by recurrent, obsessive thoughts about the event, including frequent reconstructions of it in thoughts and dreams, panic attacks often without a reason, withdrawal from social contact, sleeping disturbances and depression, are just some of the consequences of physical violence that may be experienced by the victims.

Therefore, the data pertaining to physical violence should be analysed with the utmost attention. **Table 1** below shows data on the spread of physical violence. Lack of data was interpreted as non-experience of such violence. 17.6% of respondents experienced a form of physical violence in recent years, and the percentage of men is slightly higher than women. The analysis of the data according to gender – separate for men and women, shows that almost 14% of women and over 20% of men experienced physical violence.

It is alarming that out of the respondents who were subjected to physical violence within the last two years, as many as 41.9% experienced it more than three times in that time – **Figure 6** presents the data concerning the frequency of assaults.

The analysis of data pertaining to the type of violence (**Figure 7**) shows clearly that the majority of the respondents who have experienced physical violence (67.6%) were pushed, hit or kicked. The second most frequent type was sexual harassment infringing upon bodily inviolability (e.g. touching someone against his or her will) – 32.4% – directed both at men and women. Almost one-fourth of the respondents were battered and 4% experienced sexual violence.

As far as the perpetrators of physical violence acts are concerned, in over half of the cases (59.7%) the perpetrators were not personally known to the victim, in 29.5% the perpetrators were schoolmates, and in 10.2% – close friends. Among the perpetrators, family members were also reported – mothers (6.3%), fathers (5.1%) or other family members (5.1%).

The acts of physical violence most frequently occurred in public places: streets, roads, parks etc. – 56.8%, and in shops, clubs and on public transport, etc – 28.4%. Less frequent places included school (24.4%) and own flat (15.9%).

As many as 85.1% of the cases were not reported to the police. The most frequently quoted reasons for failing to report violence acts to the police were as follows: *I don't believe in the effectiveness of the police in such cases, I was afraid that the police would not treat me seriously, I was afraid of their malicious comments on my sexual orientation and I was afraid of the perpetrator(s)'s revenge.* This shows that the level of confidence placed in the police by the bi- and homosexual victims of violence is very low.

130 accounts of physical violence acts have been collected. Below we present ten of them that constitute only a small sample of what has been experienced by almost 20% of the respondents.

A16: *I was summoned to appear at the police station to give evidence in a different case that I knew very little about. The officers (I don't know how) knew about my sexual orientation. They offended me, humiliated and battered. I complained to their superior, but he refused to believe me.*

A21: *He was my close friend. When I came out to him, he flew into rage. He was under the influence of alcohol. He started kicking me and hitting me in the head. I managed to run from the flat and went straight to the police station, but they only ridiculed me.*

Between January 2005 and now, have you experienced any of the following situations on the grounds that you were known or suspected to be a homosexual or bisexual?

- pushing, hitting, kicking or pulling
- battering
- armed assault
- sexual harassment infringing upon bodily inviolability (e.g. touching against your will)
- sexual violence (e.g. rape or rape attempt)
- other form of infringing upon bodily inviolability – please specify
- none
- other – please, specify:

Table 1. Experiencing physical violence (no reply = no experience) (n=1002)

	Total [%]	Women [%]	Men [%]
Yes	17.6	13.9	20.2
No	82.4	86.1	79.8

Figure 6. Frequency of assaults – physical violence (n= 172)

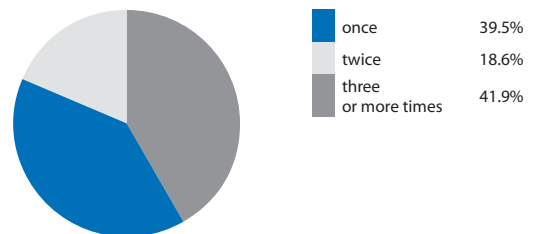
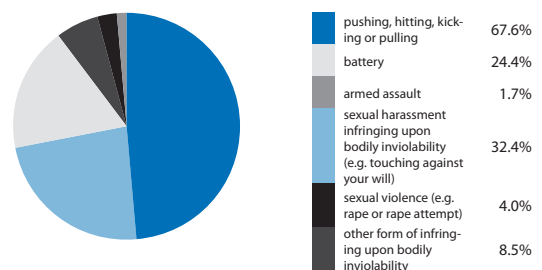


Figure 7. Type of the experienced act of violence (n= 176)

The percentages do not sum up to 100, since the respondents could choose more than one answer



A98: *It all took place in the street. We were standing there with my girlfriend and talked, exchanging kisses in a somewhat provocative manner. Suddenly two girls appeared who started calling as 'dykes', claiming that we should not show up in public places and that generally there is no place in society for people like us. The exchange of views continued until the moment when some male friends of the two aggressors appeared, inciting them to violence, which eventually happened. I was hit in my face twice. My girlfriend, trying to defend me, was hit as well. We were rescued by some people walking by. The two girls departed and we went home.*

A123: *The news of my homosexuality has spread in the place where I live. About two weeks ago a group of seven drunk boys approached me. They started calling me names, harassing me and beating me. I recognised one of them as one of my brother's friends, so they let me go. My family has to listen to insults and bad words about my sexual orientation all the time.*

A126: *When I walk home after school, people provoke me, push, kick or ridicule me because of the way I dress. They say that although I am a girl, I dress in boy's clothes, and that I pay attention to women... Sometimes someone says: 'Oh, there goes the dyke, the freak' and others say even more unpleasant things... People in the street pass me indifferently, they do not want to get involved out of fear of being hit or ridiculed.*

A192: *A group of young people from my town have harassed me many times to 'persuade' me that there is no place for lesbians here. They've assaulted me verbally and physically. Once, I was beaten, too. They threatened that they would rape me to show how good it is to be with a man, because I need a man.*

A317: *As soon as I got into the taxi that was waiting for me in front of a Warsaw gay dis-*

co, three young men got into it as well. After a short ride they told the driver to stop the car and tried to pull me out of it. Since they failed, they hit me and kicked me in the face. I managed to shut the doors and asked the driver to take me to a police station. He said that if I wanted to go to police, I had to leave his taxi, so I told him to drive me to my place.

A342: *At first, my colleagues were teasing me, saying that I might be gay. But soon they started nudging me, groping me (which to them was supposed to be funny) and, of course, abused me verbally (everyday I experienced mean comments, and even threats of beating). All that happened within several weeks in the place where I work (a logistical centre warehouse). I decided to quit the job.*

A361: *The man with whom I used to have a relationship, later my friend. When I told him that I am a lesbian, he tried to persuade me that I was wrong. Certainly, I tried to explain everything and protested against what he was telling me. A moment later he decided to convince me physically that I was wrong. He practically raped me.*

A450: *A typical day in a typical school. I walk down the corridor and hear such comments as 'The moron from the equality parade', 'We are all equal', 'Queer', 'Fairy' (although only close friends know about my orientation). But even worse things happen as well – kicking, verbal humiliation – 'give me a blowjob for 1 zloty – I know you can'. Initially my friends reacted to that, but eventually they got used to it.*

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Psychological violence directed at bi- and homosexual people is such a common phenomenon that it could even be purported that people tend not to notice it anymore. Psychological violence is defined as mentally harming a victim through intimidation, offending, ridiculing, disseminating nega-

tive opinions about, and humiliating both the victim and his or her family. In everyday life it is mainly manifested by insults, such as *faggot* or *dyke* and the whole spectrum of vulgarisms referring to the intimate life and relationships of bi- and homosexual people, alienating such people from a society leading to social exclusion.

The experience of psychological violence influences the victim's self-esteem and the frame of mind. It may result in bad moods, frustration, anger, helplessness, and even in depression and suicidal attempts. Lack of self-confidence and self-perception as an inferior person, e.g. incapable of building lasting relations with others, coupled with a lack of support of the people around – family, colleagues, friends and schoolmates, have very serious consequences on the affected person's life quality. Psychological violence experienced at school age is extremely dangerous – young people picked on by their schoolmates have to make enormous efforts to overcome fear, suffering and to be able to achieve their full potential.

The analysis of the data pertaining to psychological violence indicates that it is very commonly experienced. Over the past two years, more than 50% of the respondents have experienced a form of psychological violence, usually more than once. Among the persons that have experienced psychological violence, as many as 70% have been subjected to it more than three times. Similarly to physical violence, more men than women fall victims to different forms of psychological violence. **Table 2** and **Figure 8** present the detailed data concerning the spread and frequency of psychological violence.

Figure 9 shows that as many as 75% of the victims of psychological violence have experienced verbal aggression over the past two years. The respondents were very often offended, humiliated, ridiculed (55.8%), and negative opinions were spread about them (44.6%). Verbal threats were expe-

Between January 2005 and now, have you experienced any of the following situations on the grounds that you were known or suspected to be a homosexual or bisexual?

- verbal harassment/aggression
- insults, humiliation, ridicule
- spread of negative opinions about you
- threats
- hateful letters to you or to your close relatives
- blackmail
- vandalism, devastation of property
- graffiti/posters/leaflets about you
- other forms of psychological harassment
- please, specify
- no
- other answer – please specify:

Table 2. Experience of psychological violence (no reply=no experience) (n=1002)

	Total [%]	Women [%]	Men [%]
Yes	51	45,9	54,6
No	49	54,1	45,4

Figure 8. Frequency of assaults – psychological violence (n= 493)

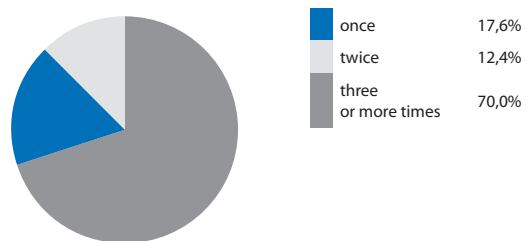
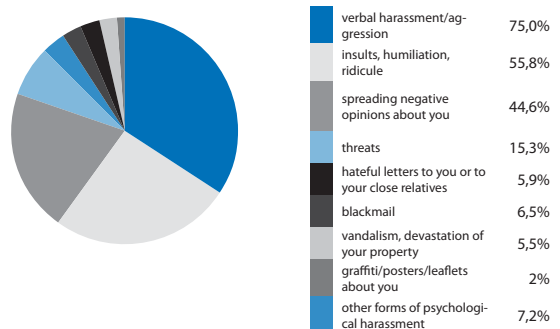


Figure 9. Type of experienced psychological violence (n=511)

The percentages do not sum up to 100, since the respondents could choose more than one answer



rienced by over 15% of the respondents, 6.5% of them were blackmailed and 5.9% of the respondents or their close relatives received hateful letters. 5.5% experienced acts of vandalism or devastation of their property. Although the least frequent forms of psychological violence indicated by the respondents were graffiti/posters/leaflets disclosing the sexual orientation of the respondents (2%), other, related forms were often listed under the *other* heading. A new category of psychological harassment has appeared – or, perhaps, grew in prominence – through the internet. It includes offensive comments on blogs (internet diaries) run by the respondents, comments on internet forums on homosexuality, often directed at the respondent, or the hate-inciting RedWatch website that publishes photos and personal data of some of the respondents (see more about the RedWatch website in the Internet chapter). The analysis of descriptive data referring to violence on the Internet suggests that it is perceived by the respondents as equally unpleasant and hurtful as *real-life* violence.

The perpetrators of the acts of psychological violence were in most cases – 57.7% – not personally known to the victims. Schoolmates constituted 29% of cases, colleagues 10.6%, friends 9.6%, mothers 12.7%, fathers 7.8% and other family members 10.6%.

The acts of psychological violence most frequently occurred in public places, such as a street, road, park, etc. (55.8%). Other places were indicated equally often – shops, public transport, clubs (29%), schools (26%), own flat (24.7%). Workplace was listed by 13.3% of respondents, and other places by 11.7% of them. It should be stressed here that Internet sites – blogs, forums, the RedWatch website – were often indicated as *other* places.

In practice, psychological violence is hardly ever reported to the police. As many as 96.1% of the respondents did not inform the police about their experience. Although

not all acts of psychological violence require actions by the police, such a high percentage of usually recurring cases not reported to the police is alarming. Among the reasons for not reporting acts of psychological violence to the police, the victims usually gave the following explanations: *I did not think it was necessary, I do not believe in the effectiveness of the police in such cases and I was afraid the police would not treat my problem seriously.*

A total of 293 descriptions of psychological violence acts were collected. Below we present the ten most symptomatic ones:

A38: *Acts of harassment on my blog. By whom? The Nazis (I know because they were not even trying to hide it, in fact, they were proud of it!). From time to time they visited my private blog in which I openly admitted to being gay and wrote about my experiences. They posted hideous jokes or offensive comments. For almost a year I received several emails per day saying that my blood would flow down the streets. They offended and harassed me. Each comment finished with the words 'Kill yourself'. They knew I was 17. They harassed me, but I would not give up (they blackmailed me – promised that they would leave me alone if I closed the blog). I refused to do so since I did not want to give them the satisfaction. When, after more than six months I lost my nerve, they threatened that they would go to the police and report a libel. They knew my last name. They had my pictures. Eventually, I gave up and closed the blog. A month later I started a new blog, but they found me in about two weeks. From then on I withdrew into myself. Frankly, I am a bit scared...*

I have not reported the problem to the police because I am not of legal age yet, so only my parents can do that. And I know their attitude toward homosexual people. I cannot afford such a coming-out.

A84: I often hear groups of boys/men in the street calling me 'faggot'. This is my everyday life. Because of that I got addicted to listening to music on my earphones. I put them on before I leave home and do not hear the offences (they are silicon earpieces so they provide good sound insulation).

A201: When I walk down the street holding my partner's hand, we often fall victim to verbal aggression from people that pass by, from vulgar remarks like 'you haven't had a good fuck yet' or 'give me a blowjob' to people with wry faces, turning their heads away or comments like 'They are not afraid of God' delivered by elderly women. As far as domestic aggression is concerned, my father has never come to terms with the fact that I am a lesbian and occasionally he calls me names like 'hooker', etc., even though he is an open-minded and educated person. Fortunately, my situation at home is slowly improving.

A229: Blackmail – a few years ago, someone 'from my past' threatened that he would inform my husband, his family and everyone in our elite neighbourhood about my orientation if I refused to sleep with him. I pulled some strings and he stopped blackmailing me.

A237: When my parents (and my sister) found out that I had a girlfriend, they went mad. Surprisingly, women were the main troublemakers. Men only rarely took part in the battle for the daughter to 'remain human'. Generally, they kept on calling me and my partner, harassed her, threw dirt at her, visited us at home, called her mother; in churches near her parents' home they spread information about her sexual orientation ('a menace to public morality'), even at her work. I have not reported this to the police since I feared long questioning, the involvement of my partner and the confrontation with the family. I was afraid that it would only make the situation even worse, instead of solving the problem.

A320: Aggressive comments like 'How I hate faggots' said in passing in a low but clearly audible voice, when, e.g., I get into a train compartment.

A321: Often, in the street, I hear offensive comments like 'there goes a faggot'. They purposefully block the pavement so that I have to push through.

A449: I had known my girlfriend for a year and a half. I met her parents and they liked me very much. In fact, they adored me. They appreciated my manners, my professional skills etc. But since my girlfriend told them that we had a relationship, their attitude has changed completely. They called me a deviant and told me not to visit them anymore. They threatened their daughter that unless she stops seeing me, they would disown her, that her father would have a heart attack, etc. Whenever I tried to call her, I always heard offensive comments from her family.

A450: Indeed, threats and vulgar letters are something usual. It happens that at school I get notes from my schoolmates saying 'Give me a blowjob'. or 'Give me your phone number, I will send it to a whorehouse so you can get a job'. And threats, such as: 'don't you look at me or I will report to the police that you are abusing me sexually, you bastard faggot!'

A467: I am a student at the Medical Academy in Warsaw. During one of the first lectures the lecturer said (and the auditorium was almost full) that the Academy does not wish to have 'such students' and that there is a proposed 'ban on employing such people in medical professions'. The lecturer was laughing all the time and clearly expecting the students to laugh as well – obviously, he did not have to wait long. It was an extremely unpleasant experience, even more so, since all the students present had a good laugh as well.

During an international conference held at the same Academy one of the lecturers read a text on what it would be like if the Earth was reduced to the size of a small village of 100 inhabitants, maintaining the proportions present in the global population. 'They would have' – he read on, but instead of reading '11 homosexuals', he said in his own words 'well, they would have 11 deviants there, homosexuals, you know, 11 freaks.' I was shocked, particularly since the lecturer in question is a respected professor, a moderator of the students' club. The auditorium, of course, laughed. And the next lecturers referred to his lecture as 'splendid'. By the way, ironically, the ending of the story read by the professor was: 'When you look at the world from such a perspective, you see clearly the need for acceptance, tolerance, understanding and education.' How ironic! During the break that followed, the majority of students praised the professor for his 'sense of humour'.

Another experience: I had a dislocated arm. In a corridor I heard a comment of a passer-by that I probably had a lot of fun the night before and had strained my arm.

THE WORKPLACE

Discrimination in the workplace is a hardly researched phenomenon in Poland and not only in the context of discrimination of bi- and homosexual people. Unequal treatment in the workplace is difficult to prove and moreover, as the result of the low level of awareness of employees' rights, different forms of discrimination are viewed by the general public as something natural. On the other hand, due to high unemployment in Poland, employers can afford a high staff turnover.

In the period under analysis, 63.8% of the respondents worked or searched for work (n= 993). Within this group, 10.3% experienced a form of discrimination. Most frequently, employers had higher expectations from them other employees/can-

didates – 44% of the cases in the group of people were subject to discrimination; refusal of employment – 27.9%; dismissal – 23%; refusal of promotion – 14.8%. 16.4% of the respondents indicated *other* forms of discrimination. Since the questionnaire also measured the degree of concealing one's homosexuality in the workplace, we checked whether the persons that were open about their orientation in the workplace were subjected to less fair treatment – see **Table 3**. It turned out that there was hardly any difference between people that concealed their bi- or homosexuality and those that did not. In the group of openly homosexual persons, 13% experienced unfair treatment in the reported period, and in the group of people that – to a different extent – tried to conceal their orientation in the workplace – 9.6%.

When analysing the representative quality of the results, one should remember that the majority of the respondents are young people, often attending schools at the same time, therefore their work was likely to be of a temporary character.

Figures 10 and **11** present data on concealing one's orientation in the workplace. Admitting one's orientation in the workplace is a highly controversial issue – under the *other* heading the respondents presented different opinions. For example, they refused to answer the question on whether they found it necessary to conceal their sexual orientation or to avoid the subject, claiming that it is their private matter that should not be discussed with co-workers. Other statements showed that not revealing one's sexual orientation is a matter of choice for some of the respondents, rather than a necessity, and that they discuss their private matters with co-workers, but without revealing their sexual orientation.

The construction of the question most probably evoked some controversy, since its assumption was that discussing one's private life means discussing one's sexual orientation as well. Judging from the comments

given under the *other* heading at least some proportion of participants do not share this particular understanding of the term *private life*. Therefore, in the future, the question should be modified.

However, the question revealed a serious problem. On one hand, sexual orientation is treated as an intimate issue that can be discussed only with the closest friends and relatives, on the other hand, by avoiding the subject of orientation, one is avoiding the whole sphere connected with one's relations with the partner and, often with friends (gays and lesbians), ways of spending one's free time, etc. As a result, people tend to avoid answering everyday questions, such as *what film did you see in the cinema last night* (if the movie was, e.g., "Brokeback Mountain") or *Whom have you gone on holidays with? With a girlfriend? Weren't you afraid to go, just the two of you?* This problem is mentioned here since it is customary in Poland to discuss one's own private life, family, etc. with colleagues. People that refuse to do so, rarely have good relations with their co-workers and are treated as outcasts – with all consequences. Therefore, in order to obey cultural norms and have a chance to strengthen social bonds in the workplace, one should be open about his or her private life –however, disclosing one's sexual orientation is often treated as a departure from obeying such norms.

Another issue is of the extent to which concealing one's homosexual orientation is a question of free choice. Taking into consideration that disclosing one's sexual orientation may result in physical or psychological violence and bring many adverse consequences, from the psychological point of view, the aim of concealing sexual orientation is a form of self-protection, and the "free choice" is just a form of rationalisation, a defence mechanism protecting from such feelings as helplessness, fear or anger that accompany a dilemma that has no right solution.

Between January 2005 and now, have you experienced any of the following situations in the workplace or while applying for work on the grounds that you were known or suspected to be a bisexual/homosexual?

- refusal of employment
- refusal of promotion
- dismissal
- higher expectations in comparison to other employees/candidates
- no
- other answer – please, specify:

Table 3. Did you experience less favourable treatment at workplace because of your sexual orientation? (n=595)

	Total [%]	Persons that do not conceal their orientation in the workplace (n=69) [%]	Persons that conceal their orientation in the workplace (n=499) [%]
Yes	10.3	13	9.6
No	89.4	87	90.4
Other	0.3		

Figure 10. Between January 2005 and now, have you felt the need to conceal your sexual orientation or to avoid discussing it in the workplace? (n=611)

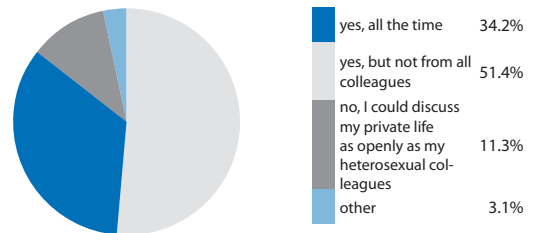
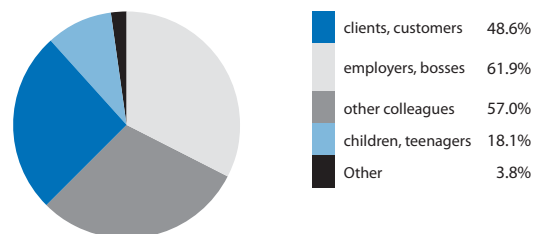


Figure 11. Whom did you keep your sexual orientation back from in the workplace? (among the respondents that conceal their sexual orientation n =525)

The percentages do not sum up to 100, since the respondents could choose more than one answer



The analysis of data presented in **Figures 10 and 11** shows that the vast majority of the respondents (84.6%) conceal their orientation – and, consequently their private life – in the workplace. In the last two years more than one-third of them felt the need/necessity to conceal their orientation or to avoid discussing it with everyone in the workplace. Around half of the respondents revealed their orientation to some colleagues and just over 10% could discuss their private life as openly as their heterosexual colleagues. In the majority of cases the respondents kept their orientation back from the employers and bosses (61.9%), from their co-workers (57%) and clients/customers (48.6%).

Since the majority of the respondents were young and well-educated people, the percentage of bi- and homosexual people concealing their orientation in the workplace may be higher.

Figure 12. Between January 2005 and now, have you felt the need to conceal your sexual orientation or to avoid discussing it at school/university? (n=639)

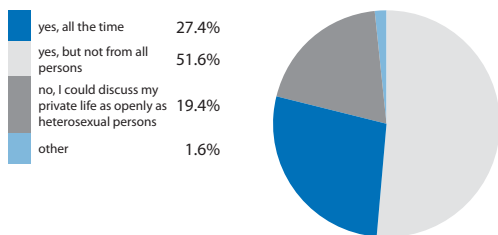
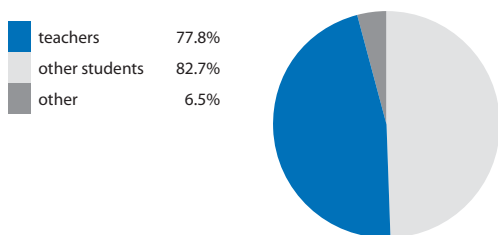


Figure 13. Whom did you keep your sexual orientation back from at school/university (n=509)

The percentages do not sum up to 100, since the respondents could choose more than one answer



SCHOOLS

In the reported period about 65.1% of the respondents were high school or university students (n=990). The degree was examined to which they concealed their sexual orientation in their schools – **Figures 12 and 13**. As it turned out, as many as 79% of the respondents concealed their sexual orientation and consequently, their private life in their schools. Out of this number 27.4% kept it back from everyone, and 51.6% only from some persons, equally as often from teachers and schoolmates (77.85 and 82.7%, respectively). Almost 20% of the respondents declared that they could discuss their private lives as openly as heterosexual persons, about 10% more than in the case of the question about revealing one’s sexual orientation in the workplace. Also, the answers provided under the *other* heading were different – the respondents did not doubt the sense of this question. Such a difference may result from the fact that students are generally younger than employees therefore, they are members of a different generation growing up at a time when the issue of homosexuality is widely discussed in mass-media, when many websites for sexual minorities exist. Probably they have fewer problems discussing their sexual orientation with their schoolmates. However, it should be stressed here that the 10% is a small difference.

HOUSING

Another sphere, in which bi- and homosexual people experience unequal treatment on the grounds of their sexual orientation is the rent, lease or purchase of a flat/house, as well as living in a neighbourhood and relations with neighbours and administrators. Concealing one’s sexual orientation in such an environment is often far more difficult than in the workplace or at school, particularly in the case of same-sex relationships.

Just over 50% of the respondents answered the question about housing – see **Table 4**. We have omitted the *other* field in

this table, treating it as *n/a*. Only 8.4% of the respondents that answered the question experienced housing problems – connected either with the rent/lease/purchase of a flat/house, or with harassment by neighbours. The latter was indicated three times more frequently than problems with the rent/lease/purchase of a flat/house. However, it should be noted here that only 20% of the respondents admitted that their sexual orientation was undisguised; as many as 72% selected the answer *n/a, people generally do not know about my orientation*. Therefore, if we narrow the group to those respondents that openly admitted their orientation, then 30% of them experienced problems connected with housing.

The next question concerning the fear of disclosing one's sexual orientation to neighbours or landlords was answered by the vast majority of the respondents – see **Figure 14**. As many as 62.2% admitted that they sometimes concealed their sexual orientation from such persons, fearing their reaction; 37.3% declared otherwise. **Figure 15** shows data concerning the fact of concealing living with a same-sex partner. Out of the respondents that have lived with a partner over the past two years, 53.6% never concealed this fact from their neighbours, while 46.4% did.

38 accounts of problems connected with the housing aspect were collected. Most of them referred to neighbours hurling abuse at the respondents. Below we present several of them that show the spectrum of the problems that bi- and homosexual people experience in their relations with landlords, co-tenants or neighbours.

A16: *The example... I needed to borrow a hammer from my neighbours but they said they did not want to talk to a deviant.*

A153: *Stupid comments by female neighbours, such as: 'well, I am not going to be in the same lift with you' only because they have seen me with my girlfriend.*

A278: *My partner had to move out for twelve months, since I was trying to get a job where the recruitment procedures involved community interviews.*

Table 4. Between January 2005 and now, in light of the fact that other people suspected your sexual orientation or knew about it, have you experienced any of the following problems connected with renting/leasing/purchasing a flat/house or with living in your neighbourhood? (refusal to rent/lease/sell; harassment by neighbours) (n=557)

	Total [%]	The N/A, people generally do not know about my orientation answer has been omitted (n=156) [%]
Yes	8.4	30.1
No, everyone knows my orientation and I have not experienced any problems as far as housing is concerned	19.6	69.9
N/A, people generally do not know about my orientation	72	

Figure 14. Between January 2005 and now, have you concealed your sexual orientation from your neighbours or landlords, fearing their reaction? (n=949)

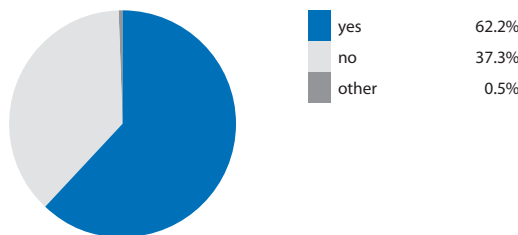
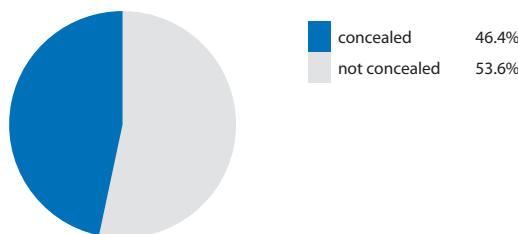


Figure 15. Concealing the fact of living with a same-sex partner (n=377)



A410: *For some time my girlfriend and I lived in a flat shared with other students. Our flatmates with whom we had rather bad relations (they were untidy and disagreeable) informed our landlady about our sexual orientation, hoping that she would give us notice. However, the landlady said that our sexual orientation was of no importance to her and eventually they had to move out. A small victory.*

A227: *My neighbours' children would ring the doorbell and yell: 'faggots', 'fuckers', etc.*

A752: *At a certain point the neighbours realised that I was a lesbian. An 'old Catholic ladies' council' met to discuss the matter and the neighbours stopped greeting me in the street. They pointed their fingers at me, and told stories about me (e.g. that there are no men in our neighbourhood that would want to have sex with me, or that I was a drug addict – generally, a bunch of crap).*

HEALTH SERVICE

Bi- and homosexual people relatively infrequently face the necessity to disclose their sexual orientation in contacts with medical services – usually when visiting a gynaecologist, donating blood, being tested for HIV, visiting a psychologist/psychiatrist. The homosexual orientation may also become

evident when visiting a partner in a hospital. The Health Service chapter discusses the problems encountered by bi- and homosexual people in dealing with the health service in greater detail.

Figure 16 presents data pertaining to the different/less favourable treatment by health service employees. Within the last two years only 20% of the respondents disclosed their orientation in contacts with health professionals. Out of that group nearly one fourth of the respondents – 23.5% experienced a less favourable treatment by representatives of health services (4.7% of all respondents).

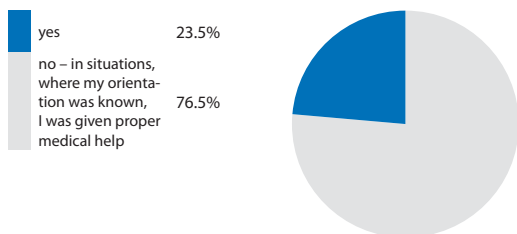
60 accounts of events connected with the unequal treatment by health professionals were collected. The majority of them referred to the refusal of blood donation by bi- or homosexual people, both men and women (see more in Health Service chapter). The following five accounts represent some other problems experienced by the respondents.

A15: *A female doctor during the examination: 'I am sure you suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, it must be very unpleasant, I sympathise with you. Haven't you considered changing your ways?'*

A123: *In a hospital, during a gynaecological examination (I had appendicitis), the doctor asked me about my sex life and I admitted being a homosexual person. He told me to take a blood test and asked me whether I was HIV positive, about the number of partners. He also made stupid remarks about my sexual orientation.*

A410: *I went to a family doctor, since I almost lost my voice. The doctor prescribed me some medicines, and when I was just about to leave, she asked me if I was 'all right'. I said that I did not quite understand, so she explained that she meant whether I approved of myself, of my gender, etc. I said that I did and that my short hair had nothing to do with it, but if she wanted to know my sexual orien-*

Figure 16. Between January 2005 and now, have you experienced a situation where a representative of the health service, having learned about your sexual orientation, treated you differently/less favourably than before or than heterosexual patients (e.g. requested additional tests, used additional hygienic protection, refused access to medical services, rejected you as a blood donor, patronised you, commented on your lifestyle in an admonitory manner, refused to provide help, was not able to provide you with specialised help, etc.)? (n=196)



tation, then, yes, I was a lesbian. She asked whether I had sought counselling or tried to 'cure it'. I said I had talked to a psychologist, but there was nothing to cure. Then she asked me if I believed in God, and when she found out that I didn't, she suggested that I meet a person that could talk with me about God, 'a very good, compassionate person'. I refused in a kind manner, saying that my faith was my private matter. I never went to see that doctor again.

A776: *When the dermatologist found out that I was a homosexual, he told me to go to see a vet.*

PUBLIC PLACES

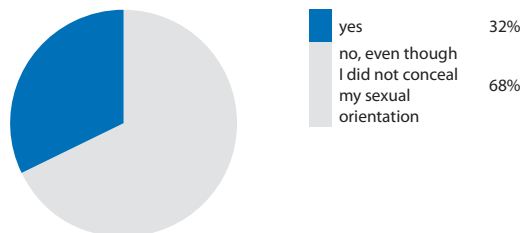
Another aspect of life includes problems of dealing with authorities and courts, as well as problems encountered in public places, such as pubs, shops, public transport. Some of the former questions pertaining to violence have partially addressed that aspect. 23.5% of all respondents have, on occasion, revealed their sexual orientation in public places. From the data presented in **Figure 17**, we can see that 32% in this group have been treated in a different/less favourable way (this constitutes 7.5% of all respondents).

The question was formulated in a manner general to the extent that it did not reveal the types of problems encountered by bi- and homosexual people in such places, therefore it is necessary to modify it in future questionnaires. The problems in question have been partially indicated in the accounts of events provided by the respondents. 74 such accounts were collected. The following ones present the types of problems encountered by bi- and homosexual people in public places.

A161: *Offensive comments and unkind treatment by taxi drivers. Indirect insults in public transport, sneers.*

A427: *During a hearing before the District Court in Szczecin, where I participated as*

Figure 17. Between January 2005 and now, have you been treated differently/less favourably than heterosexual people on the grounds of your sexual orientation when dealing with public authorities (e.g. local authorities, courts) or in public places (e.g. pubs, clubs, shops, public transport, taxis, beaches)? (n=228)



an auxiliary prosecutor, I was instructed by the court that being gay, I have no right to present my opinions, since I am no better than the defendant.

A703: *My girlfriend and I were "asked" to leave a pub because we were holding hands. The pub owner said: 'people are not allowed to act like this here'.*

A809: *The groundless refusal to legalise my stay in Poland by the Provincial authorities and by the Office for Repatriation and Aliens after I admitted being gay! (since 2002).*

THE CHURCH

The problem of the attitude of religious authorities, notably of the Roman-Catholic Church, towards bi- and homosexual people, has been much publicised in Poland in the last two years. This issue is covered in greater detail in the Catholic Church chapter.

The aim of the present research was to collect data concerning different/less favourable treatment of bi- and homosexual people by church representatives in direct, personal contacts. We wanted to avoid receiving the respondents' opinions on the general attitudes of the denominations in Poland (notably of the Roman Catholic Church) towards homosexual people that were not based on their personal experience.

Within the group of respondents, who had some personal contact with a church representative during the timeframe that was included in this research, 20% had revealed their sexual orientation during this encounter (n=367). In this group as many as 43.6% experienced different/less favourable treatment because of their sexual orientation (this constitutes 13.1% of the overall number of respondents). The data is shown in **Figure 18**.

68 accounts of bi- and homosexual people's contacts with church representatives were collected. They included accounts in which the respondents reported friendly treatment by church representatives, although in such cases it was usually stressed that the priest/monk was gay. The following 8 accounts show the range of problems encountered by the respondents.

A1: *When a Roman Catholic priest knocked at our door to pay the Christmas call, we invited him in out of courtesy. He said repeatedly that our relationship was a grave deviation, a disease. An argument followed and eventually we asked him to leave.*

A11: *A Christian church. During confession, when I mentioned my sexual orientation, the priest refused to grant me absolution on the grounds that I was not repentant for being gay, and asked me to leave the church immediately. So I did, and haven't gone back since Easter 2005.*

A22: *During confession a priest in Czestochowa called me a 'devil' and forbade me to lead such a life.*

A35: *When I went to confession, the priest told me to choose: either to leave my woman or the Church. I have not left my woman, but I still go to church, because I go there to meet God, not priests.*

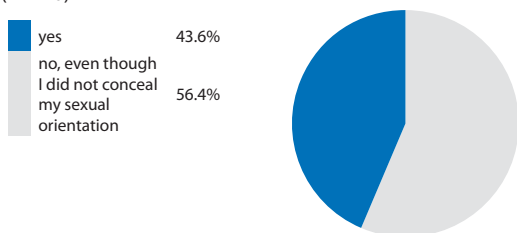
A221: *My parents, confused about my orientation, went to see a family counsellor at one of the Catholic churches. They asked me to go with them, and I agreed. My private conversation with the priest-counsellor lasted well over 30 minutes and I must say that not even once I felt being treated bad/worse/differently than on any other occasion.*

A355: *The pastor wanted me to be 'treated' and warned the congregation against dealing with me.*

A442: *I went to confession. When the priest found out that I lived with my partner, he said that I was a sick person and needed help. He was disgusted and he blamed me for my father's alcoholism, saying that he drinks because his son is gay... (my father does not know I am gay).*

A669: *During a religion lesson the priest tried to persuade all of us that no-one is born gay and the sickness, the deviation doesn't even deserve to be discussed, since it staggers the imagination. When someone protested, the priest said that we either agreed with him or stopped coming to his lessons... This year I am not attending religion lessons anymore...*

Figure 18. Between January 2005 and now, PERSONALLY or in DIRECT CONTACT with a church representative, have you experienced a different/less favourable treatment than heterosexual people on the grounds of your sexual orientation? (n=110)



STRATEGIES OF PASSING

Showing affection to a partner publicly by bi- and homosexual people is not easy. Although public demonstration of affection (e.g. kissing) in public places is often unwelcome also in the case of heterosexual people, in the case of persons of the same

sex even holding hands evokes negative emotions of witnesses.

Heterosexual couples only occasionally meet with physical aggression when displaying affection for the partner publicly while homosexuals are regularly exposed to it.

Table 5 presents data concerning the discomfort experienced by bi- and homosexual people when displaying affection to the same-sex partner in public places. Only 18.2% feel at ease to do so, and the analysis by gender shows that more women (27.1%) than men (11.7%) declare that they feel comfortable showing affection to their partners. This confirms the notion that two women showing affection to each other are more accepted than two men. It is worth noticing here that the difference according to the gender of the respondents is clear in the n/a field. Perhaps some of the men in homosexual relationships would not even imagine a situation when they show affection to their partners, for fear of the witnesses' reaction, and possibly due to cultural norms according to which men are generally less prone to display their feelings in public.

The data in **Figure 19** reflects the degree to which bi- and homosexual people consider the possibility to reveal their sexual orientation to persons other than their close friends and relatives. A high percentage of the respondents – almost 70% – contemplated such possibility within the last two years; the results were almost identical to those in 2002, which shows that the number of persons that know personally bi- and homosexual people is steadily growing.

Figure 20 and **Table 6** present data referring to how often bi- and homosexual people are asked about their sexual orientation, and how many of them are ready to give the true answer. During the last two years almost half of the respondents – 47.3% – have been asked directly about their sexual orientation by people not belonging to the circle of people with whom they feel safe. Out of that group as many as 62.5% respondents

Table 5. Between January 2005 and now, have you been equally comfortable kissing or holding hands with your partner in public places, as most heterosexual people are when showing affection to the partner of the opposite sex? (n=997)

	Total [%]	Women (n=417) [%]	Men (n=580) [%]
Equally comfortable	13.3		
I have never been in such a situation with a suitable person, but I think I would feel equally comfortable	4.8	18.2	27.1
Less comfortable	55.8		
I have never been in such a situation with a suitable person, but I think I would feel less comfortable	11.2	67	64.2
I don't know	5.7	5.7	4.8
N/A	9.1	9.1	3.8
			12.9

Figure 19. Between January 2005 and now, have you informed persons from outside of your closest circle of friends and relatives about your sexual orientation, or contemplated doing so? (n=989)

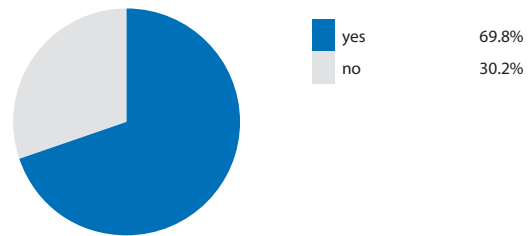


Figure 20. Between January 2005 and now, has anyone not belonging to the circle of people with whom you feel safe, asked you directly about your sexual orientation? (n=995)

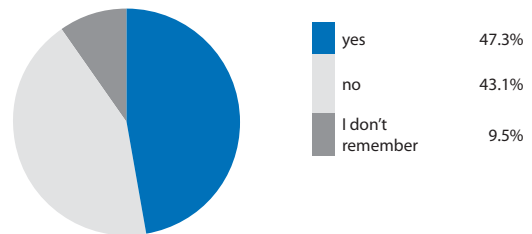


Table 6. What was your reaction? (n=477)

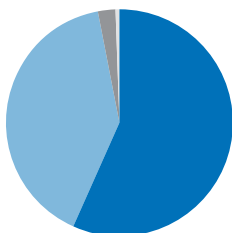
	Total [%]	Women (n=204) [%]	Men (n=273) [%]
I directly admitted my orientation	62.5	68.6	57.9
I denied my real orientation	10.5	4.4	15
I avoided a direct answer	25.8	25.5	25.3
Other	1.3	0.5	1.8

Table 7. In your opinion, are the following people generally approved of and respected in Poland?:

	Homosexual people (n=997) [%]		Transgender people (n=988) [%]	
Yes	0.5		0.3	
Fairly approved of	13.2	13.7	1.7	2
Rather not approved of	49.4	84.3	20.7	82.8
No	34.9		62.1	
No opinion	1.9	1.9	15.1	15.1

Figure 21. Relationships (n=996)

I am in a homosexual relationship only	56.8%
I am in a heterosexual relationship only	0.5%
I am in both a homo- and heterosexual relationship	2.4%
I am not in a relationship	40.3%


Table 8. Duration of homosexual relationships (excluding persons in both types of relationships) (n=554)

	Total [%]	Women (n=261) [%]	Men (n=293) [%]
Less than 6 months	24.5	20.7	28
6-12 months	17	15.7	18.1
1-2 years	22.9	29.9	16.7
3-5 years	24.4	22.6	25.9
6-10 years	7.9	7.7	8.2
Over 10 years	3.2	3.4	3.1

Table 9. Does anyone in your family know about your sexual orientation? (n=993)

	Total [%]	Women (n=418) [%]	Men (n=575) [%]
Yes	69.9	76.3	65.2
No	22	17.5	25.2
I don't know	8.1	6.2	9.6

admitted their true orientation, 10.5% denied it, and 25.8% avoided giving the true answer.

The respondents were also asked about their general opinion as to whether homosexual people and transgender people are approved of and respected in Poland. The results are presented in **Table 7**. According to the respondents, homosexual people are neither approved of, nor respected in Poland – 84.3% (*not approved of* and *rather not approved of*); only 13.2 declared that they are *fairly accepted* or *accepted*. The results are similar in the case of Poles' attitudes towards transgender people – 82.2% believe that they are not approved of and respected, and only 2% of the respondents hold a different view.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

At the time of this research nearly 60% of the respondents were in homosexual relationships – **Figure 21** presents the detailed data. Some of the respondents were at the time in both, homosexual and heterosexual relationships. In further analysis of the duration of the relationships we excluded those of them that were in heterosexual relationships only and those in both kinds of relationships – see **Table 8**.

The above data shows that over half of the respondents had relationships lasting longer than one year. Most frequently the relationships lasted between 3–5 years (24.4%), and between 1–2 years (22.9%). Taking into account that most of the respondents were relatively young people (over half of them between 18 and 25), such average duration does not differ considerably from the average in that age group. Even if we only account for those respondents whose relationships lasted longer than one year, over 1/3 (36.4%) of all the respondents (n=996) lived in lasting relationships. Such data prove that the stereotypes on homosexual people's relationships being short-lived and not lasting is completely false.

Among the respondents (n=939), 5.4% had children or were raising them. Out of this group 2.9% (27 persons – 19 women and 9 men) lived at the time of the research in homosexual relationships (people in both types of relationships at the same time were not taken into account).

One of the most important problems that every homosexual person faces is the issue of coming out to their family. **Table 9** and **Figures 22–25** present data referring to this issue. Nearly 70% of bi- and homosexual people admitted that a family member knew about their orientation, and 8.1% were not sure about that. 22% completely concealed their sexual orientation from their families.

The persons that most frequently know about the sexual orientation of the respondents are mothers – in 80.7% of the cases. In over half of the cases, where the mother knows about the sexual orientation of her child, she also fully accepts her child. The respondents most frequently came out to their mothers out of their free will – 60.8% of the respondents.

Equally trusted members of families are brothers and sisters. The questionnaire did not ask about whether a respondent had any siblings, therefore we do not know how frequently they are not informed. 63.5% of the respondents declared that their brothers and/or sisters knew about their sexual orientation, and nearly half informed them out of their free will. Siblings are the family members that most frequently fully approve of their brother's or sister's orientation – 3/4 of those who were informed.

55.2 % of the respondents declared that their fathers knew about their sexual orientation. Fathers, who knew about the sexual orientation of their child, like mothers, in almost half of the cases, accepted their child fully.

Such high percentages of homosexual people's acceptance in their families seem to contradict the stereotype that the vast majority of homosexual people are rejected by their families. It means that, contrary to

All data expressed in per cent in the following tables are relevant only for the group of research participants where at least one person in the family knew about the sexual orientation of the participant (n=694). The percentages do not sum up to 100, since the respondents could choose more than one answer.

Figure 22. Which members of your family know about your sexual orientation?

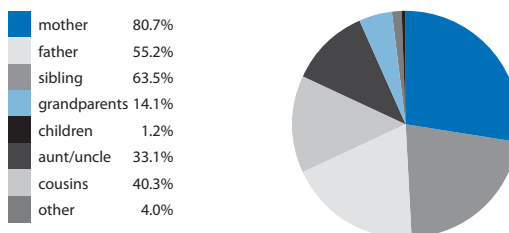


Figure 23. Which of the following family members have you come out to out of your free will?

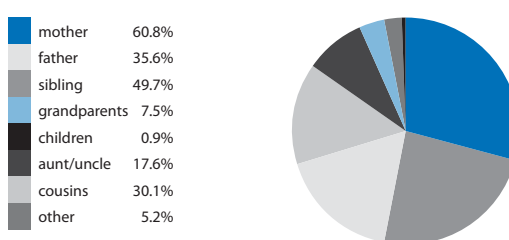


Figure 24. Which of the following family members have learned about your sexual orientation against your will?

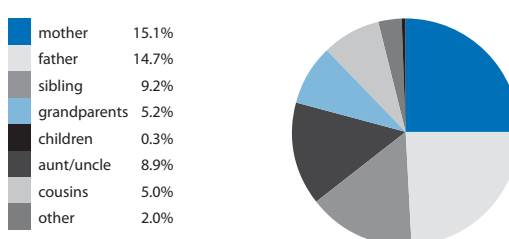
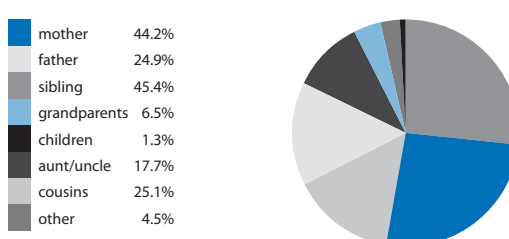


Figure 25. Which of the following family members fully approve of your sexual orientation?



the widespread opinion, parents can fully approve of their children and such is the situation in a growing number of families. Certainly, a large number of bi- and homosexual people are still rejected by their families, as is the case for those who decide not to come out for fear of rejection.

The respondents were also asked to write a short account of their coming-out. 563 such accounts were collected. Below we present different types of experiences.

A65: *I come-out to my mother when I was 36 (soon after I fell in love with a woman). She understood, although asked me to keep it secret from our more distant relatives. It was then that I told my husband and asked for a divorce. I informed my dad a year later. He sent me an SMS: 'It's possible to get used to everything – said a mouse kissing a hedgehog'. He is very kind to me but he never mentions my partner and refuses to meet her.*

A76: *When I told my mother about my orientation, I was going through a very difficult time, splitting up with my girlfriend, whom I loved very much. I was taking it very hard and needed someone to talk to. My mom has always been such a person. I told her about everything – how afraid I was and how hard it was for me. I told her everything about my relationship with the girl I lived with at the time. My mom said that she understood and promised to always support me. She told me how much she loved me. She helped me a lot. She is still very supportive, nothing has changed between the two of us – in fact, we have a closer relationship now. I was 26 when I came out to her.*

A84: *I was 20 when I told my mother that I was gay. She cried, because my coming out was a hard experience to her. She explained that she was sad because my life was difficult. She accepted my ways, even though – I am sure – she would rather have a heterosexual son. She said that I was not worse than other*

people, only my life was harder, which bothered her. Today, just over six months later, my relations with my mother are... close to none. She shows little interest in my private life (which, to me, is not just another, separate aspect of my life, but the one that affects all its spheres). My strategy is to tell her, unasked, about my dates and relationships. She listens patiently, but I can see she doesn't understand, even though the basic concept of relationships/affection is similar for heterosexual and homosexual people – it is only the context that is different. I guess my mother doesn't understand my relationships since she doesn't understand her own ones, so I don't count on her advice.

My father doesn't know about me. My parents divorced when I was 6 and he has not lived with us since. I see him about twice a year. Recently he asked me about 'chicks' – he obviously has a very patriarchal view of gender roles. I told him that I had too much work to think about 'chicks'. I've used that excuse for years now.

A93: *My coming-out: I was 17 then. My mother's reaction was very emotional. She blamed herself, then a moment later, she blamed my friends, then she blamed my girlfriend for seducing me. Her reaction really scared me at the time, I expected something different. But now, four years later, we have very good relations, my mother likes my girlfriend a lot, she even says she is her 'second daughter'.*

A95: *I told my father about my sexual orientation when I was 24. I planned being alone with him and, in the course of the conversation, as if by chance, I mentioned problems with my girlfriend. Although he was shocked, his reaction was pretty cool – 'it is your life and your choice'. Only two years later I decided to come out to my mom. I wrote her a letter, thinking it would be a safer form of letting her know, giving her time to think it over. She was deeply shocked and she has never got over it. She even tried to commit*

suicide. Both of my parents blame me for ruining her life, their plans as far as I am concerned. Today we are only rarely in touch (I don't live in their town) – casual exchanges over the phone every few months, occasional visits at Christmas, holidays or funerals. Any more serious conversation results in a fight, reproaches and tears. I have been suffering from bipolar depression since, and for over a year I have been going to a counsellor.

A109: I told my mother and father about my orientation when I was 19 (in fact, my parents were the last ones to find out). My mom was upset, she was concerned about me and my health. She didn't want me to contract HIV – which she believed was inevitable. My father delivered the meaningful opinion that I am 'a socially useless, mentally immature person who fucks everything that moves'. I haven't talked to my father since – in fact, even before my coming-out we had had little contact. But we are in touch with my mother and it seems that she has come to terms with her son being gay.

A155: It happened at the end of 1996/ in early 1997, when I was 23. I tried during Christmas, but was too scared. Less than a month later, leaving on a Sunday night for Wrocław (where I was studying at the university), I left a book for my mom – 'My Son Loves Men' – putting myself at a point of no return. We talked the following Saturday. My mother and I cried a lot, and my father, even though I had heard his offensive remarks about homosexual people before ('They are all screwed up. We should send them to the bottom of the ocean'), that time said: 'So now you have to explain everything to me, because it seems to me that I know nothing'. I think he understood. We have talked about this many times since. He knows how difficult it was for me to come out to them.

A232: I was 28 at the time. My mother called me on the phone and asked me to admit

I was a 'deviant'... Then she told me to keep away from their home as long as I live. My homophobic brother helped me lose my job... They offended me and left me alone with my problems. They don't keep in touch with me. I went through surgery recently, but none of them came to visit me at the hospital. I don't want to know them...

A640: I was in my early twenties (I'm 40 today) when I finally told my parents that I was gay, following my mother's stinging remarks. Their reaction was pretty typical for the times. Fortunately, I had a place to go, so I moved out, and even today our contacts are rare. However, my brothers' reaction was OK.

A707: When I was 25, I came out to my mother, later to my younger brother, and quite recently to my dad (I am 26 now). They all reacted in the most beautiful way, hugged me and wished a lot of courage and luck living in this sick society, but were also concerned about the problems I might encounter later in life.

The data concerning social relations of bi- and homosexual people show that they have extensive contacts with both heterosexual and bi/homosexual people – see **Figures 26–28**. Over 85% of the respondents socialise with more than 5 heterosexual persons. 18% of the respondents do not hide their sexual orientation which is known to all their friends, and nearly 35% have revealed it to most of their friends. However, it should be noticed here that in the case of almost 10% of respondents nobody is aware of their orientation, and in the case of 35% – only some friends.

The respondents also had many bi- and homosexual friends – over two-thirds of them had more than 5 friends in that group, and nearly 20% of them – between 3 and 5. Such results are contrary to the stereotypes claiming that homosexual people are lonely and unable to develop social bonds.

Figure 26. How many heterosexual persons do you socialise with? (n=986)

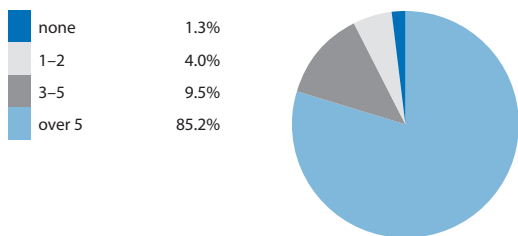


Figure 27. How many of your heterosexual acquaintances know about your sexual orientation? (n=986)

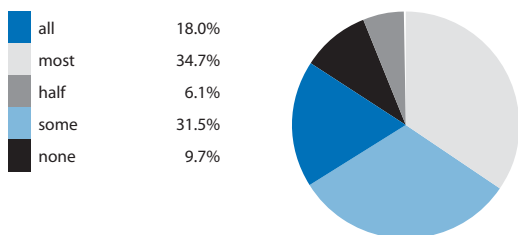


Figure 28. How many bi- or homosexual persons do you socialise with? (n=988)

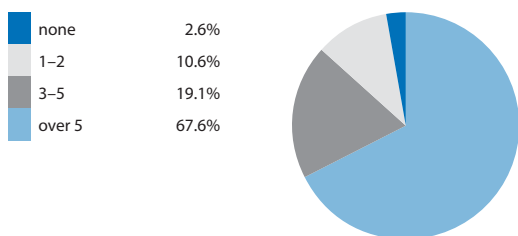
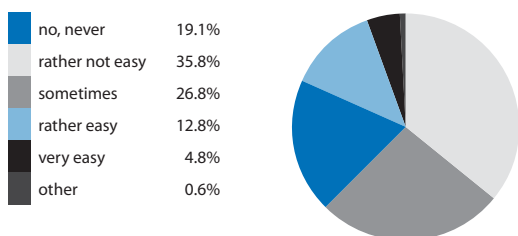


Figure 29. In the opinion of those of your acquaintances who know about your sexual orientation and in your own opinion, is it easy to recognise that you are not a heterosexual person judging by the way you act, dress and speak? (n=991)



Finally, we have arrived at the last issue that we would like to highlight here. One of the stereotypes concerning gays and lesbians is that their sexual orientation is evident to other people. Therefore we asked our respondents whether, in their opinion or in the opinion of their friends, it is easy to recognise that they are of a non-heterosexual orientation. According to the results presented in **Figure 29**, more than 50% of them claim that their appearance does not give away their orientation.

Only 17.6 % of the respondents said that people around them may suspect that they are homosexuals judging from their appearance. This challenges yet another stereotype concerning bi- and homosexual people. It seems that if bi- and homosexual people want to conceal their orientation from their colleagues or schoolmates, in most cases they succeed.

We hope that our society continues to change in a way that eventually allows bi- and homosexual people to talk freely about their personal lives, including their sexual orientation, without the risk of being ostracised.

SUMMARY

The results we have achieved show that a high percentage of bi- and homosexual persons experience physical and psychological violence because of their sexual orientation and that in most of the cases these incidents are not reported to the police. Bi- and homosexual persons are exposed to discrimination in all walks of life – in the workplace, at schools and universities, in housing, in public places (offices, bars, clubs, public transport), in contacts with health services, in contacts with church representatives – about one third of participants signalled that they experienced less favourable treatment because of their sexual orientation within at least one of these spheres.

About 80% of respondents hide their sexual orientation at workplace and

at school/university, close to two thirds hide their sexual orientation from their environment at the place where they live (e.g. from their neighbours), and at least half of them do it, even when living together with a partner in a same-sex relationship.

The data concerning the family and social life belie the stereotypical image of a lonely gay or lesbian, incapable of establishing relationships. A significant majority of respondents keep in touch with many persons/ maintain personal relationships with many persons, both bi- and homosexual as well as heterosexual. Half of respondents claim that all or most of their friends know about their sexual orientation. Close to 60% respondents declared that they were in a same-sex relationship, and at least one third of them have been in a relationship longer than three years. The relationships with the family are also changing for the better – as many as 70% declared that their families know about their sexual orientation. Half of the respondents, whose parents are aware of their sexual orientation, claimed, that they feel total acceptance on part of their family.

A lot still has to change so that bi- and homosexual persons can feel safe in Poland. First of all bi- or homosexual orientation should stop being perceived by society as something that needs to remain hidden. When heterosexual persons talk about their wives/husbands etc. at work, in school or to their friends, they treat it as a natural thing to do. When bi- and homosexual persons, however, start talking about their private life,

including their relationships, there is a consensus that they are flaunting their orientation. If we decide to take honest, open and anxiety-free relationships with other people as fundamental for health and psychological well-being, then bi- and homosexual persons should also have the possibility to establish these types of relationships. This also means that they should be able to talk about their private life without the fear of punishment in the form of violence or social ostracism. According to the scientific research, sexual orientation is inborn and cannot be modified; therefore, there are no grounds on which to assume that revealing somebody's bi- or homosexuality will lead to a change of sexual orientation of persons who were born homosexual.

The fact that gays and lesbians (or bisexual persons) are forced to hide their sexual orientation or become victims of violence and discrimination when their sexual orientation is revealed, does not only concern the victims, that is, gays and lesbians. This violence and discrimination concerns in each and every case their mother, father, brother, sister, relatives, friends, their partner and their family – a huge number of persons who could resist intolerance and violence. They could, but they do not always do it. The question is why? Maybe they are not aware that their attitude is so crucial for change in society – in order to create a society in which bi- and homosexual persons will not be afraid that they will meet violence and rejection when they tell the truth about themselves.

Part Two

Sociological analysis of societal attitudes
towards bisexual and homosexual persons

Politics

How has discrimination against gays and lesbians become a political issue?

Robert Biedroń

GROWING HOMOPHOBIA

The problem of discrimination and intolerance of homosexual people in Poland has very clearly become a political issue over the recent years. The following events have contributed to this: the first social campaign “Let Them See Us” organised by the Campaign Against Homophobia², the Senate’s bill on registered same-sex unions proposed by Senator Maria Szyszkowska (SLD)³, and the bans on the Equality Parades issued by the then Mayor of Warsaw and today the President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński (Law and Justice – PiS party) in 2004 and 2005.

The events in question have shown the scale of homophobia in Polish public life. Right-wing and left-wing politicians have noticed that by addressing problems connected with the presence of homosexual people in society they can draw the attention of the electorate, which undoubtedly translates into their popularity. The stereotypes and prejudices persisting in Polish society are being used in a very particular way by League of Polish Families (LPR) (statements by Wojciech Wierzejski, the actions taken by All-Polish Youth (MW) and Vice Prime Minister Roman Giertych, etc.), Law and Justice (refusals to authorise manifestations, comments on homosexual people by prime ministers Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and Jarosław Kaczyński).

² More at: www.niechnaszobacza.queers.pl

³ More at: <http://www.mojeprawa.info/ustawa.html>

THE NEGATION

The conviction that homophobia is an unimportant problem is very common among many politicians and political parties. As opposed to racism, xenophobia, sexism and other forms of intolerance, homophobia is treated as an excessively amplified problem, and the negation of its existence is a frequent reaction, which was evident in the reactions to the resolution of the European Parliament on the increase of racist and homophobic violence in Europe, adopted on 15th June 2006. The document lists specific cases of intolerance and discrimination, which were condemned by the European Parliament, and calls on the EU Member States to *give proper attention to the fight against racism, sexism, xenophobia and homophobia both in their relations with each other and in their bilateral relations with third countries*. The authors of the resolution condemned the intolerance and discrimination in Poland, mentioning the actions of the League of Polish Families (LPR) in the Cabinet, declarations by the MP and vice-chairman of LPR Wojciech Wierzejski, declarations by Radio Maryja radio station, the attack on the Chief Rabbi of Poland, the dismissal of Mirosław Sielatycki, the director of the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre, and the abolition of the Office of Government Representative for the Equal Status of Women and Men.

In the course of the debate, many Polish MEPs spoke out. Urszula Krupa (LPR) spoke about the *vilification of Poland, Poles and the Catholic radio station, Radio Maryja*. The vilification increased, according to Krupa, since the right took control of the government: *The right has been ferociously fought by international liberal socialists who, having the worldwide press under their thumb, tarnish the good name of Poles*. Jan Masiel (the Self-Defence party) said that homosexual people *oppress that part of society which has a traditional Christian outlook. Why are parades necessary? They are also a form of oppression*

- he specified. Bogdan Pęk (elected from LPR list) put forward the following argument: *One thousand years of Polish history surely prove beyond all doubt that Poland is the most tolerant country in Europe. It is a country that will never allow its good name to be dragged through the mud with impunity*⁴.

The adoption of the resolution stirred up a storm of emotions. The next day, on 17th June 2006, the “Fakt” daily published a picture of nine MEPs on the front page with a headline “They Betrayed Poland”. Two days later, the same paper published an article about the MEP Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg. The first page showed her picture and the headline: “The Corruptible MEP: I will do anything for money”. Pretending to be an employee of a Dutch foundation, one of the paper’s reporters invited her to participate in a conference about intolerance in Europe. He wrote: *We offered her 5,000 Euro for vilifying Poland. She agreed!* Following the publication of the article, Ms Geringer de Oedenberg received dozens of offensive, threatening telephone calls. She also received anonymous emails: *I hope you die soon. For high treason*. She also received signed emails, just like the one from Paweł Zyzak of the Youth Forum of Law and Justice in Bielsko-Biała: *We kindly invite you to an event... You will be beheaded for the crime of offending the name of the Polish State and the Polish Nation that you have been charged with as a result of supporting the resolution of the European Parliament of 15th June 2006 accusing Poland of the increase of intolerance caused by racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and homophobia*⁵.

The resolution was also criticised by Władysław Bartoszewski, former Foreign Minister. *I strongly oppose the opinion that Poland plays some particularly negative role,*

⁴ Full record of the debate at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-8898-165-06-24-902-200606081PR08828-14-06-2006-2006-false/default_pl.htm

⁵ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18.09.06, see: <http://kobieta.gazeta.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,53662,3617997.html>

as far as anti-semitism in Europe is concerned he said to KAI press agency. I would advice the European Parliament to assume as good an attitude towards the state of Israel as Poland has - he added⁶. What is interesting, the former-minister entirely ignored the problem of homophobia in his statement.

On 23rd June 2006 the Polish Parliament (Sejm) adopted a special resolution authored by the Civic Platform, concerning the resolution of the European Parliament, stating that *the Sejm, identifying itself with the Judeo-Christian moral heritage of Europe will not approve of the introduction of such a term as 'homophobia' into the documents of the European Union*⁷. Therefore, for the Polish Sejm such terms as xenophobia and racism are acceptable, while homophobia should not even be mentioned in the documents of the European Union, being a term alien to the Judeo-Christian heritage.

BANS

In the years 2004-2006 in Poland, persons participating in demonstrations organised by the gay and lesbian communities were physically attacked by participants of counter-demonstrations (Krakow, Warsaw, Poznań). The authorities did not authorise the marches in Warsaw and Poznań [see more in the Law chapter]. Their decisions were justified by *safety factors, possible violation of moral norms*, etc. In May 2006, Thomas Hammerberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner of Human Rights, affirmed the Council of Europe's engagement in respecting the freedom to assembly, issuing a public statement, in which he referred to the demonstrations of gay and lesbian people in the Member States of the Council⁸. Moreover, the UN Special



Photo: CAH archive

Warsaw, May 2005. The illegal Equality Parade took place in the streets of the capital in a sign of civil disobedience.

Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions reminded the Polish government about its obligation to protect the security and the right to life of persons belonging to sexual minorities. He recommended that steps taken in that respect included, among others, policies and programs geared towards overcoming hatred and prejudice against homosexual people and sensitizing public officials and the general public to crimes and acts of violence directed against members of sexual minorities⁹. In its resolution “Homophobia in Europe” of 18th January 2006, the European Parliament called on Member States *to ensure that LGBT people are protected from homophobic hate speech and violence*¹⁰.

On 15th November 2005 Ryszard Grobelny, the Mayor of Poznań (elected with the support of the Civic Platform) banned the “March for Equality” assembly organised by different human rights organisations. The March was scheduled for 19th November. According to its organisers, the March for Equality was to be a platform for a debate on tolerance, counteracting discrimination and

⁶ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16.06.06, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/swiat/1,34180,3418918.html>

⁷ The text of the resolution available on the Sejm website: <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc5.nsf/0/F8B6E0E9F4801544C12571990027F8AA?OpenDocument>

⁸ Council of Europe, (2006). <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1010053&BackColorInternet=99B5AD&BackColorIntranet=FABF45&BackColorLogged=FFC679>

⁹ The report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, *UN Doc./CN.4/2002/74*, 9 January 2002, Article 148.

¹⁰ European Parliament, 2006. *Resolution of the European Parliament on the increase of racist and homophobic violence in Europe*, P6_TA(2006)0018, 18 January 2006, Article 2.

Photo: CAH archive



Krakow, April 2006. Opponents of the Tolerance March protesting in the Krakow Market Square, All-Polish Youth led the march with Skinheads behind (below).

Photo: CAH archive



respect for minorities' rights. The Mayor issued the ban, justifying it by the *issues of safety* and the possible *menace to the citizens of Poznań*. Despite the ban, several hundred people gathered in Poznań on 19th November. According to mass-media reports, they were harassed by members of All-Polish Youth and their hatred chants. Police forces intervened one hour after the start of the demonstration, almost over by then. 65 people were arrested and interrogated, mostly members of the gay-lesbian organisations. They were subsequently released¹¹.

In November 2006 several Polish cities saw rallies for the freedom of assembly and expression, including expression of opinions different from those espoused by the majority of society. They were a reaction to the dispersing of the peaceful demonstration in

Poznań. On the day of the rallies, politicians from the Law and Justice party supported the bans, defended the *model* (according to Vice Prime Minister Ludwik Dorn) operation of the police forces that focused their brutal assault on the protesters and only under the pressure of public opinion pacified those calling out *Gas the faggots!* or *We will do with you what Hitler did with the Jews!*

Left-wing politicians took the side of the demonstrators, while the Civic Platform (PO) avoided taking a position. In one of the interviews given after the Poznań events, Janusz Palikot, a PO member and a member of the strategic advisory board of the party commented: *Civic Platform will never accept promotion of homosexual culture. [...] of obscene behaviour, of sex. But, we do not approve of the police operation in Poznań, either. Their brutality. [...] One should analyse each case individually, talk to the organisers. There are no clear rules, apart from the ones that I have just mentioned: 'No' to the promotion of homosexuality, 'No' to the brutality of the police. And, as a side note - I do not think this is the most urgent problem in this country*¹².

When in May 2005 the then Mayor of Warsaw Lech Kaczyński of the Law and Justice party (later elected the President of Poland) banned the Parade for Equality for the second time, he justified his decision by the *obscenity*¹³ of the demonstration and the possible hurting of religious feelings of other citizens. Despite the ban, a spontaneous parade took place on 10th June with a gathering over 2,500 people. Less than a week later the Mayor had no objections to the "Parade for Normality", during which, as it was reported by mass-media, members of All-Polish Youth raised intolerant and homophobic slogans in the streets of Warsaw. In September 2005 a court in War-

¹¹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21.11.05, see: <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36001,3023679.html>

¹² *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26.11.05, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,65646,3034809.html>

¹³ *Statewatch bulletin*, 05/06.05, vol 15, nr 3/4, see: <http://www.statewatch.org/swbul.html>

saw decided that the ban on the Parade for Equality was illegal¹⁴. In January 2006 the Constitutional Tribunal confirmed the decision of the court and stated that the demonstrators' only duty is to notify the authorities about the planned demonstration [see more in the Law chapter].

On 12th May 2006, one month before the 2006 Parade for Equality in Warsaw and in a climate of heated dispute on the formula and location of the Parade, the MP Wojciech Wierzejski from the League of Polish Families, one of the ruling coalition parties, sent a letter to the Interior Minister Ludwik Dorn and the Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro, in which he suggested that representatives of the executive power should examine the *legal and illegal sources from which [the homosexual movement organisations] are funded*. He also demanded the Public Prosecutor General's involvement in this matter. In his letter he also accused gay-lesbian organisations of connections with paedophiles and with drug dealers. Additionally, Wojciech Wierzejski demanded an answer to his question whether gay-lesbian organisations *penetrate Polish schools*. The Public Prosecutor General treated Wierzejski's letter seriously and public prosecution services throughout Poland were engaged in searching for evidence of the criminal character of gay-lesbian organisations. In his letter of 30th May 2006, the Public Prosecutor General ordered all public prosecutors to carefully examine sources of financing of such organisations, their alleged relations with criminal organisations and their presence in schools¹⁵. Just before the Parade for Equality, Wojciech Wierzejski said: *The Warsaw authorities cannot allow this march! If the deviants start demonstrating, then they should be beat with clubs*. Further in his

statement Wierzejski attacked foreign politicians: *And I do not care if some politicians from Germany are going to participate*. The LPR MP leaves little doubt as to why he is not afraid of German politicians: *They are not serious politicians. They are gay. What should be done with them? When they get hit in the head with a club once or twice, they will never come again. By definition, every gay is a coward* – said Wierzejski¹⁶.

The Parade for Equality took place in Warsaw on 10th June 2006 without serious obstacles. However, this positive step has failed to initiate a larger movement for broadening tolerance. In July and August more homophobic statements from civil servants were delivered. The spokesperson for the Mayor of Warsaw Mirosław Kochalski said that the Parade was a *moral corruption and a menace to the citizens of Warsaw*¹⁷.

THE ENTIRE POWER IN THE HANDS OF PiS

The Kaczyński brothers' victory in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 decided about the fate of gay and lesbian people for the next few years. Closing down the Office of Government Representative for the Equal Status of Women and Men was the first action of the new cabinet and a symbolic sign of its dissociation from the policy of counteracting discrimination, intolerance and homophobia.

The Law and Justice party, very actively supported by League of Polish Families and their youth organization All-Polish Youth, ran its election campaign utilising stereotypes and prejudices against gay and lesbian people that prevail in the society. The ban on manifestations organised by the gay-lesbian communities and hate speech towards homosexuals were employed as tools

¹⁴ Amnesty International, (2005). *Poland: LGBT rights under attack*.

¹⁵ Human Rights Committee, (2004). *Concluding observations: Poland, UN Doc. CCPR/CO/82/POL, 2 December 2004, par. 5*.

¹⁶ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11.05.06, see: <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,74679,3337662.html>

¹⁷ *Metro*, 05.07.06, see: <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,41794,wid,8379895,prasaWiadomosc.html>

Photo: Lene Mogensen



Warsaw, June 2006. Such signs greeted foreign guests who came to Poland to attend the Equality Parade.

to achieve victory. Early in 2005 Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski from PiS (the current Minister of Culture) said: *We should not confuse the brutal homosexual propaganda with the calls for tolerance. This is some sort of madness, and from the point of view of that madness, our rule will be a black night*¹⁸.

Shortly after Lech Kaczyński was elected the President of Poland, the European Commission sent an official warning to Poland: Poland may lose its right of vote in the EU if new President continues to defy the rights of homosexual people¹⁹.

The cabinet of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, in which the Law and Justice party forged a coalition with the League of Polish Families and the Self-Defence parties, became President Kaczyński's ally in his attitude towards gay and lesbian people. Shortly after his nomination as Prime Minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, when asked about his attitude to homosexual people said: *If a homosexual person is trying to 'infect' others, then it is a breach of freedom and the state must step in*²⁰.

The position of the leaders of the Law and Justice party encouraged others. Paweł Zyzak,

the editor-in-chief of PiS's "W prawo zwrot!" ["Right about face!"] magazine published an article in which he called homosexuals *animals and the devil's envoys* whose aim is to *destroy the Church. The devil failed to destroy the Church using people, so he wants to use the 'animals'. Faggots, making use of some individual acts of physical and verbal aggression, skilfully win sympathy, posing as victims of repressions and 'intolerance'. Their combat is joined by intellectuals either fascinated by the movement or professed faggots*²¹. Around the same time Waldemar Bońkowski, a PiS MP, and the plenipotentiary of the party in the Kościerzyna Commune, posted a banner on the party's headquarters in the town of Kościerzyna reading: *Lesbians and gays today, zoophiles tomorrow... and the day after tomorrow? Is this freedom and democracy? This is syphilisation! The most eminent Pole [Pope John Paul II] is looking down at us from the Lord's House. Where are you heading, Polish nation?*²²

Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz was replaced by Jarosław Kaczyński, President Lech Kaczyński's brother. Asked in Brussels about the treatment of homosexual people in Poland, he said before the European Commission: *people of such orientation enjoy full rights in Poland; there is no tradition of suppressing them*. Answering the question asked by the President of the European Commission Manuel Barroso, he said: *I do not believe in the myth of Poland as an anti-semitic, homophobic and xenophobic nation*²³.

PSEUDO-LIBERALS

The views presented by Civic Platform (PO) do not differ from the mainstream homophobic attitudes and views, even though the party is often presented by some mass-media as a party of a liberal outlook. In fact,

¹⁸ *Trybuna*, 23.05.05, see: http://www.trybuna.com.pl/n_show.php?code=2005052309

¹⁹ *The Guardian*, 25.10.05, see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/eu/story/0,7369,1599957,00.html>

²⁰ Amnesty International, (2006). *Report on the observance of gay and lesbian people's rights in Poland and Latvia*, available at: <http://amnesty.org.pl/index.php?id=163>

²¹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07.08.06, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,65648,3532930.html>

²² *Trybuna*, 16.09.06, see: http://www.trybuna.com.pl/n_show.php?code=2006091614

²³ *The Warsaw Voice*, 06.09.06, see: <http://www.warsawvoice.pl/view/12686>

the views of its leaders hardly differ from the views of PiS, LPR or Self-Defence.

Characteristically, Senator Stefan Niesiołowski has been designated as one of the chief ideologists of Civic Platform. He is notorious for his contempt for gay and lesbian people and for his vulgar language. When in 05.09.06 Civic Platform organised the so called “Blue Parade”, Stefan Niesiołowski announced in mass-media: *We are not going to expel anyone, but I would not imagine Ms Senyszyn or Mr Biedroń joining our march. We will not have lesbians or some ladies with whips marching along²⁴. I am afraid that various groups of frustrated people may want to join our huge manifestation²⁵. And if they come? Niesiołowski warned that if a homosexual comes, he is sure not to march in the first rows or in any visible place near Tusk [...] We are not in a position to expel such people, but, if they start to chant their homosexual demands, they will be walked out²⁶ - he added. Interviewed by “Gazeta Wyborcza”, Senator Niesiołowski said: *I was brought up to believe that these are sexual deviations. Certainly, I am not going to chant “gas the fags”, because it would be rude. I can even stop calling them “deviants”, because I know it can hurt and they are not guilty of being what they are. On the other hand I get extremely irritated when these communities participate in aggressive demonstrations, men dress as women, kiss each other, cover themselves with saliva on lorry platforms - I will never support such demonstrations. [...] To me it is revolting²⁷.**

Other PO politicians present a similar view. In late June 2006, asked by the citizens of Warsaw about Civic Platform’s attitude



Photo: Lena Mogensen

Warsaw, June 2006. Members of NOP attempt to disrupt the Equality Parade.

towards the rights of homosexual people, Jan Maria Rokita, the Vice-Chairman of the party, said: *My attitude towards homosexuals is the same as towards other ‘sensualists’ - normal. The issue of how one satisfies his sexual needs is an individual problem, his and his confessor’s. Asked why PO did not support the Parade for Equality, he said that he was sceptical about the open manifestation of one’s sexual orientation²⁸.*

Jan Maria Rokita gave the clearest explanation of PO’s position on gay and lesbian people, saying: *The Platform will never be the mouthpiece for two marginal, but opinion-forming social groups that support the Democratic Left Alliance party: those that feel nostalgic about the ancien régime, or, colloquially, the commies, and the noisy minority groups that try to form their political programme on the basis of the demand to privilege sexual minorities, even though I think that both these groups deserve to be treated with respect, not contempt. PO cannot be the mouthpiece of these two parts of the civic society. But both of them are marginal groups. It is our task to create a political plan that would encourage the rest of the society - with the exception of these two groups - to consider PO as the mouthpiece for their opinions and aspirations²⁹.*

²⁴ *Życie Warszawy*, 05.10.06, see: http://www.zw.com.pl/zw2/index.jsp?place=Lead04&&news_cat_id=8&news_id=100660&layout=0&forum_id=7258&page=text

²⁵ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07.10.06, see: <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,53600,3669605.html>

²⁶ *Życie Warszawy*, 5 October 2006, more at: http://www.zw.com.pl/zw2/index.jsp?place=Lead04&&news_cat_id=8&news_id=100660&layout=0&forum_id=7258&page=text

²⁷ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07.10.06, see: <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/1,34591,3326885.html?as=5&ias=6>

²⁸ *PAP*, 29.06.06, see: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kph_pl/message/4533

²⁹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20.05.06, see: <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/1,34474,3357965.html>

THE LEFT WING – NO IDEAS

The biggest Polish left-wing parties – Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), Social Democratic Party of Poland (SdPI) and Labour Union (UP), having suffered an ignominious defeat in the general and presidential elections in 2005, have been almost entirely marginalised by the ruling parties and Civic Platform (PO). Unfortunately, this was due to their own mistakes. Polish left-wing leaders lack the understanding of a cultural left-wing philosophy concerning outlooks. In this issue the language imposed by the homophobic right-wing parties is still dominant, and the left-wing parties only rarely oppose it.

Around the time of the 2006 Parade for Equality, the Chairman of Democratic Left Alliance, Wojciech Olejniczak was asked by the “Trybuna” daily whether, in his opinion, Polish gay and lesbian people expected legal regulations similar to those in force in almost the entire European Union. His answer was: *But there are no such expectations of the sexual minorities in Poland today*³⁰. Interviewed by “Przekrój”, a left-wing weekly magazine, he added: *So we support marches for equality, and we can meet some expectations of the gay communities [...]. But not those connected with propagating homosexuality. Because that is not our problem. This they should do themselves. A parade for tolerance, respect for other people - OK, there we are present. But not at a parade that propagates homosexuality*³¹. Thus, Olejniczak uses the speech of the Polish right-wing parties. For him, a person who merely admits that he is gay (lesbians, similarly to other politicians, Olejniczak would not even mention)

is a *propagation of homosexuality*. He took a similar position when asked by the “Dziennik” daily about the legalisation on same-sex unions: *They should be formalised in a manner similar to other European countries. But without a right to adopt children. [...] That would be one step too far*³².

Polish left-wing parties not only lack comprehension of the importance of propagating left-wing ideas. They are not prepared to discuss difficult issues. Therefore, they have adopted the language and the way of thinking imposed by socially conservative and homophobic right-wing politicians. The best example is the statement by Ryszard Bugaj, ex-chairman of Labour Union, considered by many in Poland to be the authority in left-wing philosophy: *I support tolerance in its maximum scope, but I am against same-sex marriages, since, in my opinion, some taboos should persist in our culture*³³.

The silent and undecided left-wing opened up the opportunities for the right wing which used (and keeps exploiting) the condemnation of homosexuality (as well as abortion and euthanasia) in order to gain the conservative voters. The fight for the listeners of Radio Maryja is the main conflict field between Law and Justice party and the League of Polish Families. The only hope is that the voters who usually abstain will speak out and show clearly that they want to live in a modern, open European state, and not in a fortress permanently under siege, which is full of xenophobia and hate towards everybody who does not support the idea of Fourth Republic of Poland.

³⁰ Trybuna, 12.06.06.

³¹ Tygodnik Przegląd, 26/2006.

³² Dziennik. Poland-Europe-World, 19.01.07 see: <http://www.dziennik.pl/Default.aspx?TabId=209&ShowArticleId=28771>

³³ Dziennik. Poland-Europe-World, 26.08.06, see: <http://www.uniaprac.org.pl/?p=1&a=47>

Law

Changes in the legal situation of homosexual persons in Poland

Krzysztof Śmiszek

The recent years have brought some substantial changes in the legal situation of homosexual persons. The changes have been influenced by three main factors. Firstly, it should be noted here that the main driving force for the legal changes was the determination of the Polish government to join the structures of the European Union, one of whose main principles is non-discrimination, including sexual orientation non-discrimination. Secondly, the proposed bill on registered same-sex partnerships sparked a broad discussion on the legal position of homosexual persons in the society. The draft was proposed by a group of senators, mainly members of the “Left Wing Together” Senate club of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labour Union in the 5th Term Senate. The third factor which not only triggered a general debate on the rights of homosexual persons, but also substantial legal changes, were the administrative decisions of the Mayors of Poznań and Warsaw refusing authorisation of peaceful demonstra-

tions and rallies organised by groups advocating equal rights for gays and lesbians.

When joining the European Union, the Republic of Poland was obligated to fully implement its national legislation on anti-discrimination, including the regulations that protect citizens from unequal treatment on the basis of their sexual orientation. Fulfilling these obligations, on 1st January 2004 Poland introduced amendments to the Labour Code³⁴, imposing a ban on discrimination of employees based on their sexual orientation. The amendments brought into effect the provisions of the Council Directive 2000/78/CE of 27th November 2000³⁵.

The Labour Code was implemented by such provisions as the ban on direct/indirect discrimination and sexual abuse, reversal of

³⁴ Act dated 14 November 2003 *on the amendments to the Labour Code and to some other acts* (Dz.U. No 213, item 2081)

³⁵ Official Journal of the European Communities L 303 dated 2 December 2000, *Council Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation*

the burden of proof in proceedings on unequal treatment (i.e. the employer has to prove that there has been no discrimination, instead of the victim proving that the discrimination took place). Additionally, the amendments introduced a ban on employers to use retaliatory actions on individuals who decide to bring legal actions against them for discrimination based on, among others, the employees' sexual orientation. The Labour Code introduced the right for employees to seek compensation in cases when the employer has breached the principle of equal treatment in the workplace. While the minimum value of the compensation has been set at the level of the minimum wage, no maximum value has been established.

According to the provisions of the Council Directive 2000/78/CE, any action encouraging other persons to infringe the principles of equal treatment in employment is considered to be discriminatory behaviour. According to the Directive, amendments have been introduced in the Code of Civil Proceedings³⁶. Article 61 therein has been implemented with the provisions stating that the bylaws of social organisations shall include the protection of equality clause and a clause on non-discrimination by groundless, direct or indirect differentiation of the rights and duties of citizens; the social organisations may instigate proceedings for compensation in that extent for the plaintiffs - with their consent, and participate in all stages of the proceedings, also with the plaintiffs' consent. Several social organisations acting in the field of homosexual persons' equality have used these provisions, presenting the courts with appropriate opinions for discrimination based on sexual orientation. The first such opinion of a "friend of the court" (*amicus curiae*) in a proceeding

on unequal treatment based on sexual orientation was submitted by the Campaign Against Homophobia in the case filed in 2005 by Bolesław K. of Płock. The second suit in which the Campaign filed such an opinion was a suit for compensation filed by the director of the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre, dismissed by the Minister of the National Education for the fact that the Centre published a manual on human rights containing a short paragraph about the importance of counteracting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Another milestone in the debate about the importance of introducing legal regulations for homosexual people was the bill on same-sex partnerships. In August 2003 Senator Professor Maria Szyszkowska (SLD-UP) publicly presented the bill on registered civil partnerships. Senator Szyszkowska drafted the bill in consultation with gay and lesbian organisations. On 21st November 2003 the bill was submitted to the Senate, to Ryszard Jarzembowski, the Deputy-Speaker of the Senate. The bill was signed by 36 senators, mainly from the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labour Union parties. Its aim was to regulate the legal situation of gay and lesbian people in Poland. Under the law, same-sex couples would be able to register their union and be entitled to some rights, mainly economic ones. The most important of them include the right to inherit from the deceased partner, the right to benefit from social insurance for family members, the right to common taxation and the right to receive benefits of the dead partner (e.g. pension), but not adoption.

In the course of the work on the bill that lasted over one year, the senators adopted some amendments, including the right to receive medical information about partners, to visit hospitalised partners and to participate in making decisions about their treatment. Partners were also granted the right to collect letters addressed to the other partner, and the right to refuse to testify be-

³⁶ Act dated 2 July 2004 on the amendments to the Code of Civil Proceedings and to some other acts (Dz.U. No. 172, item 1804)

fore a court as a witness in proceedings concerning the partner, on the same grounds as spouses in heterosexual marriages. The senators excluded the provision that parties of a civil partnership are persons that *run the same household or intend to do so*. Although the draft did not provide for adoption of children by such couples, the senators discussed the possibility to introduce a ban on mutual raising of children of one of the partners in a same-sex union. Eventually such provisions were rejected. The senators also rejected an amendment that would allow a partner without legal custody of a child to represent the child. A provision was adopted that a person in a civil same-sex partnership is not allowed to enter into marriage.

The bill on the registered same-sex unions was submitted to the Polish Parliament on 23rd December 2004 at the Senate's legislative initiative. Unfortunately, during the 4th Term of the Parliament, no legislative procedure on the bill has been initiated. The draft has not been sent to any of the Parliamentary Committees in order to receive its final form.

As a result of the actions of the organisations representing the interests of homosexual and bisexual communities, the unequal treatment of these communities by the authorities has received the attention of the administrative courts, including The Main Administrative Court and the Constitutional Tribunal, as well as the European Court of Human Rights. The reason for the courts' involvement in the issue of the status of homosexual persons in Poland were the decisions made by the Mayor of Poznań Mr Ryszard Grobelny and the Mayor of Warsaw Mr Lech Kaczyński, imposing a ban on the peaceful demonstrations defending the rights of, among others, homosexual persons and protesting against discrimination of this social group.

On 15th November 2005, the Mayor of Poznań refused to authorise a rally and a march organised by the Organisational Committee of the Equality and Tolerance

Days. The Mayor's justification for his decision on the event planned for 19th November 2005 was fear of riots leading to destruction of shop windows, neon signs and street benches, and that closing the route of the march to pedestrians would infringe on the constitutional right of the citizens to move freely, not preventing the opponents of the march from making an irruption into the restricted area. The Committee appealed against this decision to the Governor of the Wielkopolskie Province who sustained the decision of the Mayor of Poznań. In turn, this decision was appealed against to the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań which, in its verdict of 14th December 2005, repealed the decision of the Governor.

In its appeal to the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań, the Organisational Committee of the Equality and Tolerance Days claimed that the appealed decision was in breach of Article 8.2 of the Assembly Act, Article 57 of the Constitution of Poland and Article 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as Articles 7 and 8 of the Administrative Proceedings Code. The substantiation of the appeal stated that apart from the misinterpretation of the law evident in the appealed decisions, extralegal issues influenced the decisions, such as pressure of individuals and organisations that did not accept the banners and values advocated by the participants of the march. The Governor of the Wielkopolskie Province motioned for the appeal to be dismissed.

On 29th November 2005 the Ombudsman intervened, filing a motion to lift the decisions of both authorities. In the substantiation of its decision, the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań stated that, among others, the freedom of assembly is protected by Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and Article 11 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Governor of the Wielkopolskie Province filed the final

appeal to the Main Administrative Court against the entire sentence of the court of first instance. On 25th May 2006 the Main Administrative Court dismissed the appeal. In its adjudication, the Main Administrative Court stated that in the context of the Constitutional freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 57 of the Constitution) it is not the role of public authorities or administrative courts to analyse slogans, ideas and values of an assembly that do not infringe the existing laws, looking at them through the prism of moral convictions of persons acting on behalf of an authority or the members of the bench, or through the prism of beliefs of a dominant part of the society. Such actions would thwart the constitutional freedom of peaceful assembly, and moreover, they would constitute a violation of Article 8.2 of the Assembly Act of 5th July 1990³⁷.

Following the events in Poznań, the Ombudsman filed a complaint to the Constitutional Tribunal on the inconsistency of the provisions of the Road Traffic Act with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. In its verdict issued on 18th January 2006, the Constitutional Tribunal stated that the said provisions of the Act are not consistent with Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. The Tribunal further stated that the lawmakers should not regulate the use of freedom in the form of permissions, but through imposing bans and regulations. With violation of that principle, the legislators decided to, as it became evident in the content of Article 65 of the Road Traffic Act, issue permissions for assemblies that take place on roads, which means tighter administrative control of assemblies. The Tribunal also stated that an assembly constitutes a specific form of presenting one's views, information and influencing other persons' opinions. It is an extremely important means of social communication, both in the public and private sphere, as well as a form of participation in a public debate, and, consequently, in exercising power in

a society. The aim of the freedom of assembly is not only to grant independence and self-fulfilment to an individual, but also to protect the social communication processes necessary for the proper functioning of a democratic society. Public interest is the underlying factor of this protection. The freedom of assembly, apart from its public-legal aspect, belongs to the basic, fundamental political rights of humans.

In 2005, the Mayor of the Capital City of Warsaw refused to authorise the Equality Parade - a peaceful demonstration organised under the banners of equality, tolerance and respect for diversities. The decision in question has been appealed against to the European Court of Human Rights.

On 10th May 2005 the Equality Foundation filed for authorisation of the Parade for Equality which was designed to be a demonstration for equality of discriminated communities, in particular sexual minorities. Lech Kaczyński, Mayor of Warsaw, in line with his former announcements, issued a decision that banned the use of a road lane (on the basis of the provisions of the Road Traffic Law). Consequently, the organisers of the Equality Parade filed for permissions to organise eight rallies along the route of the previously planned march. Each rally was to start within thirty minutes of one another. The Mayor of Warsaw refused to authorise six of the planned rallies.

On 11th June 2005 an illegal Parade for Equality was organised as an act of civil disobedience. The decisions of the Mayor of Warsaw have been repealed by the Local Court of Appeal and by the Governor of the Mazowieckie Province. On 16th December an appeal was filed to the Tribunal by the Equality Foundation and by the organisers of 5 rallies connected with the Parade for Equality: Tomasz Bączkowski, Robert Biedroń, Yga Kostrzewa, Krzysztof Kliszczyński and Tomasz Szypuła. The appellants have not sought compensation for damages, since eventually they managed

³⁷ Dz.U. no. 51, item 297 with later amend.

to organise the rallies, even though they were illegal. Through their appeals they wanted to stress the fact that no citizen in a democratic country should be forced by actions of politicians to resort to acts of civil disobedience.

On 20th December 2006 the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, an organisation supporting the appellants, received information that the European Court of Human Rights had decided to start the hearing in the suit *Tomasz Bączkowski and others vs. the Republic of Poland* (the decision of 5th December 2006). The verdict is expected in mid 2007.

The cases brought into court by private persons were meaningful in terms of including the perspective of protecting the rights of bi- and homosexual persons within the judiciary framework. One of the cases was the comparison of homosexuality to paedophilia, necrophilia and zoophilia, made on the 7th of November by the city councillors of Law and Justice party in Poznan, on the occasion of a public debate concerning the planned March of Equality. City councillors of Law and Justice, Przemyslaw Aleksandro-

wicz and Jacek Tomczak used the following statements: *this might concern we might be dealing with the promotion of such inclinations as paedophilia, zoophilia and necrophilia; promoting a lifestyle that promotes debauchery even independently of so called orientation is a blatant breach of the rules of social conduct, we do not know if soon paedophilia, necrophilia and zoophilia will start to be treated merely as orientations*. These formulations interpreted as insulting towards homosexual persons, which resulted in charging the politicians with libel, on the basis of art. 212 of the Penal Code. The charge was brought by a group of women: Yga Kostrzewa, Sandra Rutkiewicz, Agnieszka Kraska and Joanna Reniger. On 4th of September 2006, the last hearing of the Provincial Court in Poznan took place, during which a mutual agreement was reached. On the basis of this agreement, the defendants (who after the parliamentary elections in 2005 became members of parliament) expressed their regret that homosexual persons could feel offended by their words. They also assured that they did not intend to compare homosexuality to paedophilia, zoophilia and necrophilia.

Education

The Polish educational system and the promotion of homophobia

Robert Biedroń, Marta Abramowicz

The Polish education system treats homosexuality with a great deal of superstition and prejudice. The situation has worsened with the appointment of Roman Giertych, leader of the League of Polish Families, as the minister of education. In this section we would like to address three issues: firstly, the way homosexuality is addressed in school manuals, secondly changes in the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre - including the dismissal of its director for publishing a manual containing a short paragraph about the importance of counteracting discrimination based on sexual orientation, and finally the policy of distribution of EU subsidies by the Ministry of Education that is contrary to the European Commission's priorities pertaining to counteracting racism, xenophobia and homophobia.

HOMOPHOBIC SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

The curriculum basis of the subject "Family life education" addresses homosexual orientation only when discussing such issues as *disturbances and obstacles in achieving sexual identity or lack of approval of one's own sex*. Such curriculum principles determine what texts referring to the understanding of human sexuality should be included in school textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education.

The reading of the currently used school textbooks leaves no doubt: the Ministry of Education promotes textbooks that present homosexuality in the manner contrary to the standards determined by such international organizations as the World Health Organisation. The textbook "Before You Make a Choice. Introduction to Fam-

ily Life – rudiments of sexual education” (by M. and W. Grabowski, A. and M. Niemyski, M. and P. Wołochowicz) calls homosexuality *one of the best known disorders of experiencing one’s sexuality* and presents heterosexuality as the only natural orientation: *Generally, the homosexual attitude is a form of negation of one’s own sexuality, expression of the fear of the opposite sex partner, and auto-aggression. It is connected with a sexual identity disturbance in its formation stage caused by problems encountered during puberty.*

In her textbook “Marriage and Family in Light of the Legal System”, E. Tokarczuk writes that *homosexuality is a deviation in the sexual sphere of life*, and an individual, *by establishing homosexual relationships, violates not only the rules of social life, but also the correctness of the physiological mission of the human being - procreation.*

The most extreme approach is presented by Teresa Król, the author of the textbook “On the Road to Adulthood. Introduction to family life for higher grade students of primary schools”: *The desire to satisfy one’s sexual drive sometimes takes distorted forms. They include: homosexuality, bisexuality, exhibitionism, narcissism, paedophilia, incest, sadism, masochism, transsexualism.* For the author, homosexuality is a disorder, and it has its roots in *an incorrectly shaped personality, which can result from a dysfunctional family structure or hormonal disorders in the foetal period.*

Therefore, the textbooks fail to inform that homosexuality is a normal element in the wide range of sexuality, characteristic not only of humans but also of many animal species. Such claims are contradictory to the Classification of Diseases published by the World Health Organisation according to which homosexual or bisexual orientation is considered neither an illness nor a disorder. The WHO classification is the valid source of reference for doctors of medicine and psychologists in Poland.

POLITICAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION

In the summer of 2006 the Minister of National Education, Roman Giertych dismissed Miroslaw Sielatycki, the Director of the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre. The reason for the dismissal was Sielatycki’s approval for the publication of “Compass”, the Council of Europe’s official manual aimed at youth on human rights education including counteracting sexual orientation discrimination. “Compass” was published in this country in 2005 when Poland held the presidency of the Council of Europe. The publication was co-financed by the previous Minister of National Education, Michał Seweryński (PiS). Roman Giertych’s objections were raised in relation to just four verses of the 500-page textbook³⁸. Among others, he found the following information controversial: *Living as an LGBT person in Europe today varies from being very easy (in the larger towns in western Europe, with a well-developed subculture, bars, clubs and organisations), to being relatively difficult (in small-town western Europe, and large parts of central Europe where views about homosexuality are slowly changing).* The above statement is supplemented by a quotation from a research conducted in Poland: *22% of LGBT people stated that they have experienced physical abuse and 77% of them have never reported these incidents to the police for fear of the reactions of their families and the police.*

There is a suggestion on page 205 to *contact gay or lesbian organisations in your country and invite one of their representatives to address your group and find out which issues of equality and rights are the most pressing in your own country.*

Many Polish and international organisations protested against the dismissal of the director of the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre, (e.g. the Polish Section of Amnesty International, the Helsinki Com-

³⁸ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10.06.06, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75478,3407781.html>

mittee in Poland, the Polish Humanitarian Organisation, the Polish Teachers' Union, the Education International)³⁹. A lawsuit has been brought before a Warsaw court against the dismissal.

In October 2006 Teresa Łęcka, a religion teacher and Roman Giertych's close collaborator, was appointed the Director of National In-Service Teacher Training Center. Asked by the daily "Gazeta Wyborcza" about her views on homosexuality, director Łęcka stated: *Improper patterns must not be present at schools because the objective of school is to explain the difference between good and evil, beauty and ugliness (...) school has to prepare young people to discuss the problem of homosexuality, and explain that homosexual practices lead to drama, emptiness and degeneracy. Teenagers have no established patterns of the world, patterns of attitude, and for that reason a teacher should show them what is good. And the teacher should be a role model, since children are eager to follow role models and patterns. Such patterns must show the limits of freedom for young people. (...) Active homosexuality is contrary to human nature. Polish schools should prefer good patterns of behaviour that lead to family relationships*⁴⁰.

In January 2007 Paweł Zanin was appointed the deputy director of CODN. Paweł Zanin is a member of the All-Polish Youth, a youth organisation of the League of Polish Families. He said to "Gazeta Wyborcza": *Homosexuality is a medical condition and students should not be indoctrinated on the matter of tolerance for various deviations (...) and talked into something that is not morally good*⁴¹.

Therefore, the current educational policy promotes attitudes that exclude or marginalise gay and lesbian people, and deprives

young people of the possibility to discover their sexual orientation with the help of positive role models that both adolescents and adults need.

NO SUBSIDIES FOR GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE

During a press conference held on 19th May 2006, the Vice-minister of National Education Mirosław Orzechowski accused the Campaign Against Homophobia of *moral corruption of teenagers* in the "Do we need gender" project. The *moral corruption of teenagers* allegedly took place as a result of the discussions and workshops on gender stereotypes and prejudices connected with gender and sexual orientation. The Vice-Minister additionally accused the Campaign Against Homophobia of the following: *From the documents that I have seen, I learned that the school inspector that went to Rycerka to see the programme, found nobody there, and the report on the event was only based on the organiser's statements*⁴².

The issue has been raised by the activists of the League of Polish Families on several other occasions, including significantly on 21st June 2006 in the Polish parliament (Sejm):

Vice Prime Minister Roman Giertych: *There will be no more money spent on the organisation (...) – the Campaign Against Homophobia. (...) Camps have been organised for children and teenagers, where they were taught – by Mr Biedroń and the Campaign Against Homophobia, the organisation that, according to the manual published by the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre, Polish children and Polish teachers were encouraged to meet – that gender is just a matter of convention, that one can change it several times in his or her life, where teenagers were placed in mixed-sex bedrooms, only to validate the thesis that gender is meaningless, where boys were dressed as girls and girls were dressed as boys, where visits of German*

³⁹ Gazeta Wyborcza, 22.06.06, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75478,3433264.html>

⁴⁰ Gazeta Wyborcza, 09.10.06, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,69906,3672288.html>

⁴¹ Gazeta Wyborcza, 09.01.07, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/edukacja/1,51805,3837065.html>

⁴² Polish Press Agency, 19.05.2006.

transvestites to Polish kindergartens were organised⁴³.

On many occasions the Campaign Against Homophobia denied the Ministers' accusations and demanded the groundless accusations to be cleared. A special letter has been sent to the Ministry of National Education and to all members of the Polish Parliament. However, the letter has not been replied to.

In the letter sent to the Ministry and to MPs, the Campaign Against Homophobia addressed the accusations in the following way:

The 'Do we need gender' project was a youth exchange project financed by the European Commission's 'Youth' programme, with funding distributed by the National Agency for the 'Youth' Programme. It is the priority of the 'Youth' Programme to support the informal education of young people and to 'overcome prejudices and stereotypes rooted in young people's mentality and culture'. Our project meets all criteria required for such projects.

The aim of the project was to counteract sex and sexual orientation-based prejudices and stereotypes.

The 'Do we need gender' Project has been carried out and the Ministry had access to all documentation proving its execution. The inspector's report that the vice-minister has referred to, states clearly that the inspection had positive results, the project has been highly graded, and the participants were on location.

Only adult individuals took part in the project. As part of the exchange programme, there were no participants from Germany, and more so, no German transvestites. The Campaign Against Homophobia has never organised (and never would) a 'visit of transvestites' to Polish kindergartens, schools or any other institutions.

The project report has been made and accepted by the National Agency of the 'Youth'

Programme, both in the scope of its subject matter and the financial aspect, and, since the Vice-minister quoted from that report, we assume that he was fully aware of that fact.

It is difficult not to deem the words of Vice Prime Minister Giertych and Vice-minister Orzechowski as a lie.

The international exchange programme included, in the first place, the following events: gender discrimination and homophobia workshops run by Katarzyna Bojarska, Doctor of Psychology; social research (polls among the inhabitants of Krakow) concerning attitudes towards stereotypes concerning gender; a multicultural evening presenting cooking and traditions from each of the represented countries; 'gender competition' games; a soccer match; a cheerleaders' competition; go-kart races; a cooking competition, the Oxford debate "Do we need gender"; a visit to Krakow and Bielsko-Biala; a visit to the Auschwitz Museum.

In the course of the exchange programme we never encouraged the participants to change their gender, neither several times in their lifetimes, nor even once. The word 'gender' has no other counterpart in Polish language than 'sex', but in English it denotes not the biological sex, but the sexual role. Since the exchange programme was in English, and the participants discussed the 'Do we need gender' subject, in fact, they were discussing the problem whether we need sexual roles. The question whether 'the place of a woman is only in the kitchen and with children' is still discussed in Poland and we see nothing improper in the fact of discussing that problem.

We do not know how to address the accusation that the participants - and let it be stressed here again: adult participants - lived in mixed-sex rooms. Most of the participants were homosexuals. Had we placed them in rooms for men and women only, wouldn't we have been accused of 'moral corruption'?

Although the European Commission's priorities pertaining to the financing of the 'Youth' Programme are clear - and they stress the im-

⁴³ 5th Term, 20th Session, 1st Day (21st June 2006), stenographic record

portance of supporting all youth organisations regardless of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sex and sexual orientation, the Ministry claims that the priorities should be changed so that the projects run by the Campaign Against Homophobia are not financed.

According to the announcement of the Minister of National Education, the Campaign Against Homophobia has been excluded from receiving EU subsidies from the “Youth” Programme (the Ministry co-participates in deciding about the allocation of the subsidies). During another stage of the subsidies’ allocation, one project proposed by the Campaign Against Homophobia, namely a training of a volunteer in a Swedish NGO [Campaign 2 project - EVS - the European Voluntary Service] was rejected on 26th September 2006. The substantiation of that decision reads as follows:

The project submitted by the organisation is inconsistent with the Ministry of National Education’s policy in the scope of education of children and teenagers. The policy of the Ministry does not accept any support for actions promoting homosexual attitudes and behaviours among young people. Moreover, it is not the role of the Ministry to support homosexual organisations or to cooperate with them.

Therefore, the project has been rejected not because of its matter but because homosexual persons were to be the beneficiaries. This violates the constitutional principle of equality of all citizens before the law. At the same time the Ministry has violated the principles of granting European Commission subsidies, whose iron-clad principle is to counteract discrimination in every programme financed from EU funds. The Campaign Against Homophobia has re-

quested the European Commission to look into this problem. The European Commission has not found any faults in the Campaign Against Homophobia project and, in November 2006, asked the decision-makers, including the Ministry of National Education, to reconsider the application. The Polish side has not reconsidered the application, nor has it issued any answer to the European Commission [as of February 2007].

The promotion of homophobia in education goes on and is strengthened with every day that vice- Prime Minister Giertych remains in power. The latest project of the Ministry of Education, presented in February of 2007, concerns legal changes which would make the *promotion of homosexuality* impossible, a concept which remains rather vague and undefined. The project assumes, among other things, that the consequence of this promotion (for instance inviting representatives of gay and lesbian organizations to schools) would be not only dismissal from work but also fine or imprisonment. One can doubt if it will be possible to introduce the project in this form in our country – recent years have shown, however, that everything is possible – nevertheless, the authors of the project most probably have achieved their aim. The aim is the intimidation of not only homosexual or bisexual persons but also a whole spectrum of persons employed in education, including teachers and headmasters, so that they would only ever dare to touch upon the subject of homosexuality in a highly prejudiced way. It is easy to foresee the consequences of this politics/strategy for young people who, in most of the cases, realize during adolescence that they were born homosexual.

Media

Gays and lesbians on every newsstand: the explosion of the topic of homosexuality in the Polish press

Michał Miñałto

For the last few years Polish newspapers' attention on homosexual people, their aspirations and problems has increased considerably. Gay people are featured on first pages of daily newspapers or on the covers of magazines. Homosexuality has often been the highlight of "Polityka", "Przekrój", "Newsweek", "Wprost" or "Ozon" weeklies. One of the 2006 covers of "Ozon", a magazine claiming Catholic roots, showed a picture of a smiling boy and a girl proudly holding a poster saying *No faggotting*. The picture was the announcement of a series of articles entitled *We are homophobes*. The example of "Ozon", a weekly that has since ceased to exist, shows the extraordinary diversity of the Polish press, in which homophobic announcements hit magazine covers.

The following analysis, rather than to cover all aspects of the problem, is meant to be an invitation to further research. It is based on the analysis of over one thousand press publications published between 1st July 2004 and 30th June 2006. Three daily papers, name-



ly "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Nasz Dziennik" and "Rzeczpospolita" are the subject of a thorough analysis here due to their geographic coverage, circulation and the frequency of publishing articles on LGBT issues⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ The fourth and fifth newspapers in the ranking of the frequency of writing about homosexuality topic are *Życie Warszawy* and *Trybuna*.

EXAMPLE NUMBER ONE: GAZETA WYBORCZA: YES

“Gazeta Wyborcza” was established in 1989 as the first independent daily newspaper in Poland. Since its launch it has been run by Adam Michnik. “Gazeta Wyborcza” is considered to be the largest opinion-forming daily in Poland. The average circulation in 2005 was 445,000 copies and about 5.6 million people read it each week⁴⁵. The newspaper is published by Agora, a public company quoted on the Warsaw and London Stock Exchanges. The journalists are supposed to follow the ethical principles listed in the Charter of “Gazeta Wyborcza” that draws from the heritage of the “Solidarity” movement⁴⁶.

Until 2002, the issue of homosexuality and homosexual people had been tackled in “Gazeta Wyborcza” incidentally and with a neutral sympathy⁴⁷, through presenting arguments for and against, thus also quoting homophobic opinions – for the sake of balance. In summer 2002 the LGBT issue “exploded” in “Gazeta Wyborcza”, following Jacek Kochanowski’s article “Gay people will not pretend to be married”⁴⁸. The article triggered a debate on the place of homosexual people in society. The newspaper published, alternatively, the opinions presenting homosexual people as equally valuable as the rest of the society, and those that refused them full participation in the social life, showing them as ill people, unable to form relationships and suffering from different pathologies. The newspaper resumed the discussion of this issue in spring 2003, following the “Let Them See Us” social campaign organised by the Campaign Against Homophobia.

⁴⁵ Data and information provided by the publisher.

⁴⁶ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18.06.02, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75545,884126.html>

⁴⁷ Other events that were noticed include: the Rainbow Laurel Award, Kayah’s participation in an LGBT event and an event organised in 2000 in Warsaw by several individuals covering their faces for fear that they would be recognised.

⁴⁸ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 01.08.02, see: <http://kobiety-kobietom.com/queer/art.php?art=121>

Meanwhile, the parade organised in Warsaw in the same year did not draw any special attention from “Gazeta Wyborcza”, which only devoted a few lines to the ‘colourful parade’.

But the next year’s parade received publicity due to the ban issued by the President of Warsaw Lech Kaczyński. Since then, for the next two years, articles on homosexuality have appeared, statistically speaking, in every second issue of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, including its regional editions. Their subject matter is diverse. Most of them are current news – adoption of the bill on registered civil partnerships by the Senate in autumn 2004, ban on the Parades for Equality in Warsaw, the March for Tolerance in Krakow, the parade in Poznań, reactions of European politicians and press on manifestations of homophobia in Poland. Such events were usually commented upon by way of polemic articles. “Gazeta Wyborcza” publishes the results of public polls on the acceptance of homosexual people⁴⁹. Lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, renowned and respected journalists from all around the world have been invited to comment on homophobic opinions:

In its relations with the citizens, today’s states have a duty to be blind to their sexual orientation. The informal discrimination of people whose only ‘vice’ is not concealing their homosexual orientation by some bodies or individuals, is also reprehensible. Homosexuals feel offended by the view that, in the name of the traditional – in our society – requirement of ‘decency’, they should conceal their lifestyle, and to be grateful for the fact that, when they conform to that requirement, they will not be insulted, forced to undergo ‘therapies’, sent to prisons or stoned⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ See eg *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14.12.05, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,53600,3065761.html>

⁵⁰ Professor Helena Einstein, In accordance with nature, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/1,34591,2834956.html>

Within two years, in 2003 and 2004, a total shift occurred in the attitudes presented in the editorials. When on 3rd June 2005 in his column “Noah’s Ark” Jan Turnau published Father Dariusz Oko’s text⁵¹ full of prejudice against homosexual people [See the Church chapter], the reaction of other journalists was prompt. In the next issue of “Gazeta Wyborcza” they published their protest:

We believe that in its method of argumentation, the article by Father Oko resembles the meanest propaganda and should never have been published in ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’. The fact that such a text has been published in our newspaper without a word of comment causes our concern. ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ might as well have published the following statements: ‘it is common knowledge that Jewish people are responsible for all misfortunes of the Polish nation’. Or: ‘it is common knowledge that all priests have lovers, both male and female’⁵².

Adam Michnik had the final say in the discussion among the “Gazeta Wyborcza” journalists in summer 2005. Michnik’s reasoning presented in his article, which was a response to the homophobic statements by some Polish politicians, rather than to the demands of the gay and lesbian movement, triggered a debate on gay and lesbian people in the newspaper. The editor-in-chief of “Gazeta Wyborcza” dedicated his article to *Lech Kaczyński*, to take it into consideration and compared the situation of homosexual people in Poland to events in the history of Cuba:

I have never expressed my opinions on the rights of gay people and I have never taken a position on the legislative changes connected with the so called civil partnerships. I have never participated in manifestations or Parades for Equality. This was due both to my lack of competence and the conservative belief that such issues are of a personal, intimate nature and therefore should not be manifested in public. Moreover, a few years ago I saw a parade of that kind in Vienna, and I remember my embarrassment and an impression of a bad taste. (...) The Communism in Cuba has not only devised the notion of a healthy citizen, but also successfully implements that ideal in real life – one of the moral revolution’s aims is to heal gay people or to isolate them. When I listened to the screams of the henchmen from All-Polish Youth, when I was watching those not-saintly lads throwing stones, I came to the conclusion that someone is attempting to treat us with a moral revolution modelled on Fidel Castro’s ideas. Therefore, is it more just to defend the right of gay people and to march in the Parade for Equality, or to trample on laws together with strange allies like Fidel Castro in a moral revolution against gay people?⁵³

“Gazeta Wyborcza” reacts immediately to homophobic events or statements in newspapers and electronic mass media (e.g. in their “Seen on TV” column). Almost each week it comments on the “Worth Talking” show on public TV, which frequently presents issues connected with homosexuality in a homophobic manner.

As far as attitudes towards homosexuality are concerned, “Gazeta Wyborcza” publishes a range of views, including those presented by representatives of those religious denominations that do not share the prevailing opinion about the harmfulness

⁵¹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 03.06.05, see: <http://kobiety-kobietom.com/naszasprawa/art.php?art=2274>

⁵² The protest was signed by the following journalists of *Gazeta Wyborcza*: Katarzyna Bielas, Anna Bikont, Teresa Bogucka, Anna Fostakowska, Dorota Jarecka, Miłkołaj Lizut, Krystyna Naszkowska, Lidia Ostalowska, Ewa Siedlecka, Paweł Smoleński, Tadeusz Sobolewski, Joanna Szczęsna, Mariusz Szczygieł, Wojciech Tochman, Ewa Wiecezorek.

⁵³ Adam Michnik, *Geje i rewolucja moralna*. (Gays and the Moral Revolution) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.09.06, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75546,2900253.html>

of homosexual orientation or the activity of gays and lesbians in public. The neutral or positive statements expressed by clergymen are often astonishing:

Mikołaj Lizut: Was the Mayor of Warsaw right when he refused to authorise the Parade for Equality?

Father Tadeusz Bartoś: No, he was not. His decision worries me very much. The arguments he presented are inconsistent with the basic civil rights in a democratic country. (...)

Those words sound somewhat strange when said by a priest. Doesn't the Church consider homosexuality to be evil?

- It is only a simplification of the problem, a harmful one. The Church defends homosexual people; the Church is against all manifestations of discrimination. The Catechism is very clear on that. What is more, the Catechism does not call homosexuality an illness or a deviation. (...) It says nothing about the need to treat gay or lesbian people⁵⁴.

“Gazeta Wyborcza” is also open to homosexuals. Following the most brutal action of the authorities against LGBT people – the pacification of the March for Equality on the UNESCO Tolerance Day in November 2005 – “Gazeta Wyborcza” published a comprehensive report by Tomasz Szypuła, an activist from the Campaign Against Homophobia, arrested, among many others, during the demonstration⁵⁵. Moreover, “Gazeta Wyborcza” comments on more common aspects of the lives of LGBT people – cultural events, projects implemented by NGOs and other functions including even those organised in gay clubs:

A rainbow paper chain and purple glass ball ornaments (symbols of sexual minorities) appeared on Wednesday at 6:30pm on a small Christmas tree in front of the British Embassy – the Lesbian Alliance celebrated the introduction of the new British law on same-sex partnerships⁵⁶.

The inconspicuous club on the grounds of the SKRA stadium. One could hardly call it trendy. Some say it is a kitschy disco, for others, it is a place to go every weekend night. The Paradise Club – despite controversial anecdotes and legends that have surrounded it for the nine years of its existence (or perhaps thanks to them?) – continues to be a cult venue of the homosexual community of Warsaw⁵⁷.

Since the very beginning, “Gazeta Wyborcza” has been inquisitive, open for debates, differences and diversity⁵⁸. Currently, in winter 2006, it is apparently the daily newspaper that treats the issue of homosexuality in the most reliable way, consistently objecting to any discrimination, including discrimination of homosexual people. In my opinion it is the only daily paper in Poland aware of the fact that gay and lesbian people constitute a part of the readership and that it is worth reaching them.

EXAMPLE NUMBER TWO: NASZ DZIENNIK: ENTRENCHED IN PSEUDO-CATHOLIC FUNDAMENTALISM

“Nasz Dziennik” was founded in 1998 and it is published by Spes Sp. z o.o. (lim-

⁵⁴ Mikołaj Lizut, Dominikanin z Warszawy broni Parady Równości, (Dominican of Warsaw defends Equality Parade) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11.06.05 see: <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,53600,2761347.html?skad=rss&wv=0000>

⁵⁵ Tomasz Szypuła, Jak zostałem zatrzymany po Marszu Równości, (How I was arrested after the Equality Parade) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25.11.06.

⁵⁶ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25.12.05, see: <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34862,3079665.html>

⁵⁷ Magdalena Dąbrowska, Koniec klubu Paradise, (End of Paradise Club) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, see: <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34862,2886410.html> GW also wrote about the closing down of another Warsaw gay club “Wolny czas” and provided an extensive coverage of the controversies accompanying the closing down of the “Le Madame” club.

⁵⁸ The Warsaw metropolitan supplement to “GW”, included an insert in Vietnamese, responding to the growing wave of immigrants from this country.

ited company) in Warsaw. According to the publisher's own data its press-run is 150,000 copies, with average sales of 100,000 copies ("Nasz Dziennik" is the only daily newspaper which does not publish detailed circulation data). The present editor-in-chief is Ewa Sołowiej, who took over the position from Artur Górski. "Nasz Dziennik" is the voice of the circles connected with Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, a Redemptorist from Toruń, founder of the Radio Maryja radio station and Trwam TV. Currently he is considered to be a supporter of the ruling Law and Justice party. According to the publisher, one of the principles of "Nasz Dziennik" is to *propagate Christian values and the centuries-old Polish culture*⁵⁹.

In the period under discussion I have found over 150 articles on homosexuality published in "Nasz Dziennik", so, statistically speaking, the problem of homosexuality was tackled in every third issue. Clearly, the LGBT subject is one of the most significant social issues discussed in the paper.

The image of homosexual people and the definition of their place in society by "Nasz Dziennik" has not changed throughout this time and is extremely consistent. The paper is the clearest example of hate speech in a high-circulation paper reaching mass readers. Its view of the world is black-and-white. The *Good* is represented by a Catholic Pole, upholder of Christian values, in a nutshell – a reader of "Nasz Dziennik" (even the paper's title – "Our Daily" – highlights this division). The *Evil* is embodied by the *civilisation of death*, an alien element, aggressive, arrogant, pursuing its aim to destroy the *Polish Nation* and suppress the faith of Poles and their devotion to tradition – homosexual people, Jewish people, the European Union, etc.⁶⁰ The writers, and, through

their example, the readers of "Nasz Dziennik", form and maintain their identity by constantly reminding themselves about the *normal-abnormal* and *healthy society-perverted individuals* opposition, strengthening themselves in the conviction that homosexuality is almost a direct threat, while *combating the promotion of homosexuality* is the highest virtue. A homosexual person is one of the most dangerous aliens today:

The homosexual deviation is the most radical negation of that profound sense of civilisation. Through the expression of its underlying lie, homosexuality destroys and negates the entire sense of man's existence in this world. The deliberate and purposeful organisation of the homosexual movement in the form of a political and ideological movement is the most insidious and nasty plot against the human family and humanity understood as the family of the children of God⁶¹.

Homosexuality is presented by "Nasz Dziennik" as an element not only "alien", but also definitely non-Polish, strange, forcibly imposed by the foreign *West* or the *eulogists* of the West. Moreover, it is portrayed as an element that is inseparably linked with social problems. For "Nasz Dziennik" journalists, it is another proof of the thesis that only the worst comes from the outside world, from foreigners, from abroad.

Prostitution and the 'French disease' also came from the West, and now we are facing the advance of homosexuality and AIDS as a crucial, existential appendix to all forms of debauchery and pederasty⁶².

As far as the language is concerned, homosexuality seems to be unworthy of

⁵⁹ *Nasz Dziennik*, see: <http://www.naszdziennik.pl/redakcja.php?typ=ii&dat=20061113&id=main>

⁶⁰ Compare: Magdalena Tulli, Sergiusz Kowalski, *Zamiast procesu. Raport o mowie nienawiści (Instead of a Trial: A Report on Hate Speech)*, Warsaw, 2003

⁶¹ Rev. Jerzy Bajda, Kryzys Cywilizacji, (Crisis of Civilization) *Nasz Dziennik*, 21.06.05.

⁶² Rev. Jerzy Bajda, Atak na Polskę, (An Attack on Poland) *Nasz Dziennik*, 31.05.06.

being described in the Polish language. “Nasz Dziennik” consistently uses its own terminology for homosexuals and related subjects. Here are some samples of the terms sourced from the headlines, titles and captions: *plague, deviations, degeneration, disease, freaks, provocation, revolting business, a crime against humanity, lawlessness, destruction, terror inspired by minorities, scandal, legislative terror of atheists.*

In the event other arguments are not available, the significance of a word is negated by putting it in quotation marks. Therefore, the president of an LGBT organisation is a “*president*”, a rally is a “*rally*”, gay people are “*so called gays and lesbians*”, same-sex relationships are “*so called relationships*” or “*quasi-marriages*”, and of course, perverted. The rights of homosexual people are always “*so called*”, as is discrimination and homophobia.

Journalists of “Nasz Dziennik” take into consideration the position of the Catechism, but with a clear reservation:

(...) although people with homosexuality problems should be treated with respect, sympathy and kindness, their profoundly corrupt behaviours that conflict with the natural law should never be promoted, accepted or practiced⁶³.

The way homosexuality is viewed by “Nasz Dziennik” is influenced not only by faith, but also by science. Findings of some scientific research studies are eagerly published, although sources are rarely quoted. Sometimes authors stress the fact, that the studies are *American*:

Research shows that there are two basic underlying reasons for homosexual behaviours. The first one is a pathological family. (...) The other reason for such behaviours is a homo-

sexual initiation that upsets the personality of a male at the puberty stage. Research also shows that homosexuality leads to a low self-esteem, social non-adjustment, depression and even suicide, not to mention the fact that it is the cause of various disorders, diseases and premature deaths⁶⁴.

On the other hand, according to “Nasz Dziennik”, homosexuality should not be a subject of scientific research, workshops, analysis, meetings (understood as actions lacking the ideological context or the religious motivation). It is the duty of public authorities to prevent such forms of academic consideration of homosexuality.

Although university is not a place for promotion of deviant behaviour, the authorities of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń have not cancelled the pseudo-academic conference ‘Free, Equal, Different – the legal, social and cultural aspects of the situation of homosexual people’. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has not taken a position on this matter yet⁶⁵.

The third, extremely important source of knowledge about LGBT people is common sense, evident in such expressions as *it is a well-know fact that...*

For “Nasz Dziennik”, the only subjects worth its attention are the nation (often spelled with a capital N) and the family (less often the society). Moreover, it often refers to the *objective, legitimate arguments* (e.g. natural law, religious teachings) that prevent individuals or communities, notably homosexual ones, from expressing their needs or presenting their problems in public. However, when they do so, their actions are in bad faith, insidious, and always harmful to the Nation or Polish families:

⁶³ Sławomir Jagodziński, Wobec propagandy homoseksualizmu, (About Homosexual Propaganda) *Nasz Dziennik*, 30.11.05.

⁶⁴ Marian Piłka, Homoseksualne zagrożenia, (The Homosexual Threat) *Nasz Dziennik*, 24.04.06.

⁶⁵ *Nasz Dziennik*, 19.05.06.

The so called rights of homosexuals, forcedly promoted in the West, are meant to destroy the life patterns of some societies⁶⁶.

Who is a homosexual person and who are the organisations defending the rights of LGBT people? According to “Nasz Dziennik”, it is a conglomerate of shady characters that are degenerate and pitiful, but dangerous:

Just as alcoholics manipulate other people for the sake of their comfort of drinking, gay communities manipulate the general public in order to achieve the comfort of being homosexual and to extort privileges from the society⁶⁷.

The present-day problems of stigmatisation and discrimination of homosexual people have not escaped the notice of “Nasz Dziennik”. However, contrary to what has been written in the previous paragraph, the paper does not line up with the forces that harass the participants of marches or parades (e.g. it distances itself from All-Polish Youth, the most prominent homophobic organisation). “Nasz Dziennik” has an answer to the question about the roots of violence against homosexual people:

(...) this arrogant initiative of homosexuals provokes direct confrontation with the defenders of healthy morals⁶⁸.

Any public actions taken by homosexual people are only a *promotion of homosexuality* and *scandalous behaviour*. Particularly scandalous is the activity of homosexual people in places of historical or religious

significance, and on important dates in the Catholic calendar.

Does “Nasz Dziennik” have anything to offer to homosexual people and their close relatives? The only solution is *therapy* and return to the *correct side of society*:

The general public has the right to and should shield itself from the depravers and criminals. Some Catholic counselling services and the ‘Courage’ group associated with the ‘Light-Life’ movement offer pastoral and therapeutic support for those homosexuals who are seeking help. Catholics do not express any phobias against homosexuals, but a genuine concern. The principle of the pastoral actions towards persons of homosexual orientation is liberation through Jesus Christ⁶⁹.

The fight against the *deviation* is carried on different geographic battlefields and “Nasz Dziennik” is extremely systematic in the way it treats news from around the world. Often it is the only daily paper in Poland presenting news of events, even marginal, concerning homosexual people that have occurred abroad. It focuses on all news on *victories* over the *deviation*, even if their importance is doubtful and minute (e.g. comprehensive commentaries from... Peru concerning the situation in Europe). Such news from around the world magnify the sense of the besieged fortress, the last stronghold of defence against the *minority dictatorship* or *degeneration*.

Let us have a look at the current situation in Spain. On the one hand, it is a country of many fervent Catholics, on the other, the current situation in this country is absurd – despite countless protests and demonstrations, the Spanish Parliament has adopted the legalisation of an undisguised sin and allowed abomination unprecedented in

⁶⁶ Mariusz Bober, Homoseksualizm krzywdzi dzieci, (Homosexuality Harms Children) *Nasz Dziennik*, 25.02.06.

⁶⁷ Obrona równości czy promocja śmierci? (Defence of Equality or a Promotion of Death) – an interview with Rev. Marek Dziewiecki, a well-known priest, psychologist and author of many publications on education, by Sławomir Jagodziński, *Nasz Dziennik*, 27.11.05.

⁶⁸ Propagatorzy dewiacji nie szanują prawa, (Promoters of Deviance Don't Respect the Law) *Nasz Dziennik*, 29.05.06.

⁶⁹ Urszula Dudziak, Czy jesteśmy homofobami? (Are We Homophobes?) *Nasz Dziennik*, 12.06.06.

history – adoption of children by homosexual couples. The question arises as to who elected such a parliament⁷⁰.

“Nasz Dziennik” is up-to-date with other mass-media reports on issues connected with homosexuality. Whoever allows gay and lesbian people to express their opinions, is always accused of lack of credibility. Opinions, even neutral ones, evoke strong objections and outrage. Here is an account of the news presented by Wiadomości, the news programme on public TV:

An opinion of a German gay organisation member was presented. He demanded ‘more tolerance’ for gay people, listing Poland as one of the countries where there is ‘too little’ tolerance for the deviation. This statement, vilifying our country, has not been commented on by public TV journalists, financed by the Polish taxpayers⁷¹.

“Nasz Dziennik” also reacts to statements delivered by public figures on their attitude towards homosexual people and their place in the society. Right-wing politicians and artists are subject to particularly careful scrutiny. Reactions to the opinions expressed by Czesław Miłosz or Wisława Szymborska are the best example, but a more recent and less important event also deserves attention: in March 2006 Krzysztof Cugowski, one of the most popular Polish musicians (the frontman of the Budka Suflera group) and a Senator declared in a press interview that he supported the demands of homosexual people:

Perhaps [the electorate] is not familiar with the unmasking lyrics by the Senator’s colleague from the musical business, Kazik Staszewski who, years ago, promoted the

hit ‘All Artists are Prostitutes’. The message of that song turned out to be timeless and, as we can see now, perfectly fits the recent public statements by Senator Cugowski, the frontman of Budka Suflera⁷².

“Nasz Dziennik” notices with regret the presence of homosexual people in present-day (pop)culture. *Certainly* there is little doubt that the creation and popularity of the works that present emotional or erotic same-sex relationships is a case of the artist’s madness, mistake or the connivance of a lobby or a plot.

Regretfully, a film director as prominent as Ang Lee (who made *Sense and Sensibility*) allowed himself to be involved in the bizarre connections in the film industry and made such a scandalous movie as *Brokeback Mountain*⁷³.

Both the activities and the attitude of “Nasz Dziennik” do not require further comments. However, the great esteem that the newspaper enjoys among present-day political decision-makers, including members of the Cabinet, should be stressed here one more time. A disturbing question arises, whether the 100,000 to 150,000-strong readership of “Nasz Dziennik” share the opinions and comments presented in the newspaper.

EXAMPLE NUMBER THREE: *RZECZPOSPOLITA:* STANDING ASTRIDE

In its present-day form “Rzeczpospolita” was established in 1982 as the government title. In 1991 it became an independent daily published by the Presspublica company owned in 49% by the State Treasury.

⁷⁰ Maria K. Kominek, *Legalizacja grzechu*, (Legalizing Sin), *Nasz Dziennik*, 18.07.05.

⁷¹ Beata Falkowska, *Skandal w telewizji publicznej*, (Scandal In Public Television) *Nasz Dziennik*, 31.08.05.

⁷² Wojciech Wybranowski, *Co ma do powiedzenia senator Cugowski?*, (What does Senator Cugowski have to say?) *Nasz Dziennik*, 14.03.06.

⁷³ *Poprawność polityczna i tupet jurorów*, (Political Correctness and the Jurists Toupee) *Nasz Dziennik*, 07.03.06.

With the press-run of 253,000, it reaches 1.6 million readers on a weekly basis. It is considered as a “newspaper for the executive’s desk” – the most influential daily paper read by managers, particularly in the public administration (100,000 copies in subscription for institutions). In the discussed period Grzegorz Gauden⁷⁴ was the editor-in-chief. He was replaced in September 2006 by Paweł Lisicki.

Contrary to “Gazeta Wyborcza” or “Nasz Dziennik”, LGBT issues are not among subjects that are of major interest to the journalists of “Rzeczpospolita”. Throughout the discussed period (1st July 2004 – 30th June 2006), several dozen articles on gay and lesbian issues were published in the daily, statistically once a week.

According to its publisher, the mission of “Rzeczpospolita” is to deliver impartial information, so that readers can make decisions on their own⁷⁵.

As far as homosexuality is concerned, “Rzeczpospolita” indeed is guided by this principle. But its understanding of impartiality of information is peculiar: arguments *against* are mainly extremely homophobic, as in the debate concerning the bill on registered civil partnerships. The debate was published in the “Everyday Law” section, highly valued in lawyers’ circles. The most prominent opinion in the debate was that of Professor Nestorowicz, with a list of ten points questioning the legal basis of the bill. The author totally ignored the reality in which homosexual people live, incorrectly defined homophobia, and instead of being matter-of-fact, he resorted to irony. Although Nestorowicz’s article was published in the “Human Rights” column, it is difficult to find any reference to those rights in the text.

Polish gay and lesbian people, and in particular their organisations, claim that they want nothing more than the rights equal to those of heterosexual couples (with the

exception of the adoption right) – visiting rights in hospitals, rights to collect mail and salaries and to jointly purchase flats. They refer to any opinion negating the necessity of legal regulations as homophobia. Their statements imply that homosexual people are discriminated in Poland, and in comparison with many other countries Poland is presented as the land of bigotry. Let us see whether that is true⁷⁶.

In many of the texts published in “Rzeczpospolita” homosexual people are viewed as homoSEXuals, through the prism of their sexual activity, or rather through the writers’ imaginations about the sexuality of LGBT. For example, demonstrations of homosexual people, often called *homoparades*, are described in the following way:

Only a handful of homosexuals marched in the Parade – several couples holding hands. The majority of the participants were people who came to protest against Lech Kaczyński’s decision banning the demonstration⁷⁷.

Although it is difficult to verify such a claim, the above example shows something of a more general nature. The journalists of “Rzeczpospolita” almost expect homosexual people to follow the stereotype – they should ostentatiously demonstrate their sexuality. If they do not, most probably they are not homosexuals. Furthermore, “Rzeczpospolita” excels in creating neologisms, such as *homopartnerships* or *homolobby*. However, many of the important, international LGBT events, such as the denial of consultative status within the UN Economic and Social Council to ILGA by the coalition of the United States and some Islamic countries has been widely commented only in “Rzeczpospolita”:

⁷⁴ Since 13 September 2004.

⁷⁵ Data and information provided by the publisher.

⁷⁶ Professor Mirosław Nestorowicz, Czy ustawa o związkach partnerskich jest potrzebna? Dziesięć mitów prawnych gejów i lesbijek. (Is a law on registered partnership needed? Ten legal myths of gays and lesbians) *Rzeczpospolita*, 31.12.04.

⁷⁷ Izabela Kraj, Karolina Baca, Parada z przeszkodami, (Parade with obstacles), *Rzeczpospolita*, 13.06.05

LGBT organised a homocoalition consisting of 40 NGOs, including the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Colombian Lesbian and Gay Association, as well as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, notorious for their anti-Americanism. The coalition sent a protest to the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice⁷⁸.

The discussion about LGBT people in “Rzeczpospolita” is seen through the prism of the freedom of assembly or attitudes of political parties, or enforced by outside opinions about Poland (e.g. Resolution of the European Parliament). Here “Rzeczpospolita” allows homophobic declarations as well:

According to the MEP Wojciech Roszkowski (PiS), the critical statements of some Western politicians are groundless. ‘Homophobia in Poland is a phoney problem, magnified beyond reason. It is an ideological offensive launched by the homosexual communities’ – he said to “Rzeczpospolita”⁷⁹.

Wojciech Roszkowski, a PiS MEP and a well-known historian, has become the front-line voice of “Rzeczpospolita” in the debate on Polish homophobia in the EU. In January 2006, he published a long article with the significant title: ‘The Homosexual Lobby’s Attack’⁸⁰. However, “Rzeczpospolita” allows criticism of homophobic attitudes. The following example concerns professor Roszkowski as well. First, a letter by the sociologist Professor Ireneusz Krzemiński, followed by a letter sent by a reader:

“Wojciech Roszkowski’s text ‘The Homosexual Lobby’s Attack’ made me very sad, since I have a high regard for its author. The title of the article on the resolution of the European Parliament that has been adopted by the vast majority of vote (468 to 149, 79%

⁷⁸ *Rzeczpospolita*, 15.02.06.

⁷⁹ *Rzeczpospolita*, 14.06.06.

⁸⁰ *Rzeczpospolita*, 19.01.06.

of votes) is nonsense, and it comes straight from the speech of the obscurantist ideological centres living on hatred towards all minorities and diversities. The ‘homosexual lobby’ is yet another variant of the former ones: Jewish, Judeo-communist or Masonic. The absurdity of such judgements seems too obvious to polemicise with them, even if they come from Wojciech Roszkowski⁸¹.

The aim of all this is [to achieve a situation where] an MP keeps his reservations about gay and lesbian people to himself. Where MEP Wierzejski is not allowed to put paedophiles on par with gays. Where people do not think that it is normal when a heterosexual couple walks through a town holding hands, but when a homosexual couple does the same, then it is a case of an ostentatious manifestation of someone’s sexuality that should be left behind in their bedrooms. Where the Prime Minister of Poland doesn’t try to be wiser than scientists and scholars, telling nonsense about homosexuality being not natural⁸².

More favourable voices of approval for the aspirations of homosexual people presented in other mass-media find their reflection in “Rzeczpospolita” as well – in 2004, in the form of a string of short, mocking commentaries:

Midsummer, many of our readers are enjoying their holidays, it’s time for newspapers to forget about difficult subjects and think about entertainment. This refers in particular to colour magazines for women. However, the ‘Wysokie Obcasy’ colour supplement to ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ draws its sword against Polish homophobia.

⁸¹ Ireneusz Krzemiński, *Polski tradycjonalizm, europejskie społeczeństwa i homoseksualne lobby. Wbrew cywilizacji Zachodu.* (Polish traditionalism, European society and the homosexual lobby. Opposed to Western Civilization), *Rzeczpospolita*, 01.02.06.

⁸² *Rzeczpospolita*, 20.01.06.

'I forgive women more than men' – says Suzi looking at the readers from the cover of the last issue. She plays in the lesbian soccer team 'Little Beetles' and, like a stereotypical lesbian, she has short hair. (...) The letter of the week awarded with eau de toilette starts with the following words: 'Girls have fascinated me since I was very young'. (...) And the issue of 19th June: a Muslim, a lesbian, and a feminist – the heroine of the issue, pictured on the front page, Irshad Mansji. (...).

We hope that this is not all. What would happen if the journalists of 'Wysokie Obcasy' decided to terminate their fight against Polish obscurantism? – it is too scary to imagine...⁸³

"Rzeczpospolita", because of its lack of a clear programme and the incoherence of the presented opinions, is standing astride. Homophobia as presented on its pages seems to be the result of its writers' personal prejudices. However, taking into account the readers of "Rzeczpospolita", namely managers and decision-makers, smuggling in hate speech into its articles is alarming.

WHAT ELSE? – NON-POLITICAL ISSUES

As it is evident, the debate on homosexuality focuses mainly on the social and civil rights of homosexual people. However, this is not the full picture. In 2004-2006 many openly gay artists were present in mass-media. Five percent of the analysed articles were on arts and culture, from Michał Witkowski ("Lubiewo") to Bartosz Żurawiecki ("Trzech panów w łóżku, nie licząc kota" – "Three men in bed not counting the cat"), to Magdalena Okoniewska ("Dziennik Lesbijki" – "Lesbian Journal"), to the article on the new "Darkroom" performance at the Polonia Theatre in Warsaw. We lived to read comprehensive re-

views of homosexuality in films, drama and literature. Cultural supplements to newspapers (e.g. "Co jest grane" in "Gazeta Wyborcza") listed LGBT events in their repertoires. Moreover, celebrities of Polish (pop)culture eagerly commented on the problem of homosexuality, including the rock singer Kasia Nosowska⁸⁴, the actress Katarzyna Figura⁸⁵, and even the strongman Mariusz Pudzianowski⁸⁶.

The newspapers have noticed acts of homophobia, including crimes committed against lesbians and gays. Some dailies reported on the shooting of people leaving a gay club in Silesia or the criminal group blackmailing homosexual men in Greater Poland⁸⁷. On 5th June 2006, "Gazeta Wyborcza" wrote about the assault on the members of the Negatyw pop group who were attacked and called faggots.

The topic of homosexuality appears in tabloids, such as "Superexpress" or "Fakt" only incidentally and always in connection with some scandal.

The aim of this chapter was to familiarize the reader with the way that gay and lesbian issues are being discussed in the press. Even though a lot had changed within the past couple of years and the topic of homosexuality is presented in the media without prejudice, there still remains a lot to be done so that journalists do not continue to perpetuate stereotypes that are damaging for gays and lesbians. Therefore, the reaction of the media towards the words of the politicians is and will remain crucial in the nearest future, especially when it comes to expressions full of contempt or even hatred towards bi- and homosexual persons.

⁸⁴ Jestem zepsuta i brudna. (I'm ruined and dirty). Interview with Katarzyna Nosowska. *Tygodnik Przegląd*, 18.06.06, see: <http://www.przegląd-tygodnik.pl/index.php?site=kultura&name=188>

⁸⁵ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.06.06, see: <http://kobieta.gazeta.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,53581,3414144.html?as=3&ias=5>

⁸⁶ Tomasz Kwaśniewski, Mariusz Pudzianowski, the strongest man in the world, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15.05.06.

⁸⁷ See *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20.01.05, <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34317,2504878.html>.

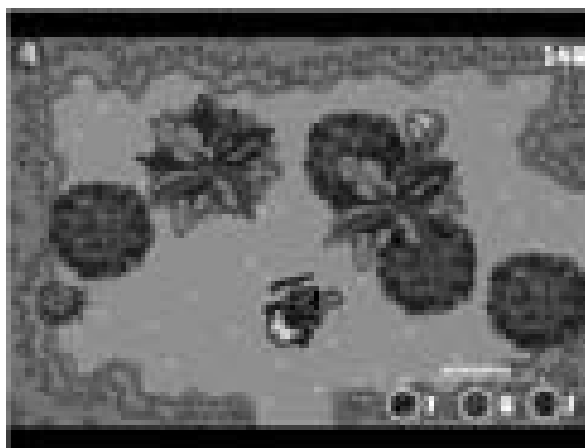
⁸³ Lesbijki na wysokich obcasach, (Lesbians in High Heels). *Rzeczpospolita*, 13.07.04.

Internet

The Hyde Park of Hatred

Robert Biedroń, Marta Abramowicz

The World Wide Web has become a forum for unhampered expression of hatred against homosexual persons on one hand, and a safe haven for gay and lesbian people on the other, since the Internet grants anonymity to both sides.



GAMES

The Hunt⁸⁸

The rules of the Hunt game are simple. The player assumes the role of a hunter and his prey is... a man, most probably gay. The hunter has to shoot him before the man attacks him and has anal intercourse with him, that is, rapes the hunter. The game is available in Poland as well, where it is distributed by internet surfers. The Hunt encourages aggression towards gay men, strengthening the unfair stereotypes that all homosexual men are focused on sex only and that they are potential rapists who should be annihilated before they have a chance to attack.

GAY AND LESBIAN JOKES

The Web is a source of many gay and lesbian jokes. In most cases homosexual men are referred to as *queers*, *queens*, *faggots* or *fairies*. The jokes almost always refer to the gay and lesbian persons' sexuality in an extremely vulgar way, to the extent that we have decided not to quote them in this publication. Here are some links to the jokes about gay and lesbian people:

- <http://www.nc.pl/blogi/dowcipy/opedalach.php>
- <http://www.damage.booo.pl/dowcipy/0/12.html>
- <http://www.satyr.pl/html/mp3/Pedal/51>

COMMENTS

The most frequent form of intolerance to gay and lesbian people on the Web are comments to articles and news referring to the homosexual minority. Since the Internet grants relative anonymity to the comments' authors, it has become a forum of hatred towards homosexuals. Practically every piece of news receives many comments that are full of hatred. It should be stressed here that the Internet has become such a common mass medium, enjoyed by so many particularly young people that what is happening in virtual reality is experienced

⁸⁸ From: www.humour.com ; www.oceanhousemusic.com/?show=210

by a great number of internet surfers in the same way as what is happening in the real world, or even more intensely. The comments on blogs – internet diaries – are particularly painful for young people. In this year’s research on psychological violence, for the first time, over a dozen respondents admitted that they had been subjected to such violence on the Internet – through comments to their entries on Web forums or comments to the content of their blogs.

WEBSITES

Neo-nazi Websites

Several sites of this kind are present on the Polish Internet. The most notorious one has recently been the Blood&Honour site of the international organisation RedWatch. Since the site is on an American server, there are no ways to close it. It contains photographs and information on individuals who, according to the site’s authors: *are involved in anti-nazi, anti-racist activity, and are colored immigrants, activists of extreme left-wing organisations, all supporters and activists of the broadly understood homosexual lobby, and paedophiles.*

On 16th May 2006 an anarchist movement activist whose name was listed on this website was attacked in the Powisle district of Warsaw. Supposedly, the attack was a part of the RedWatch campaign of *tracking the reds* carried out since January by members of the Polish chapter of RedWatch. The Warsaw list of *race enemies* includes many activists from gay and lesbian organisations, including Robert Biedroń, the President of the Campaign Against Homophobia and Yga Kostrzewa, the President of Lambda Warszawa and the spokesperson for the organisation.

The following comments referring to homosexuals can be easily found on other nationalist websites. In this particular



An image from the Polish Section of the RedWatch website. Currently (March 2007) the site has been removed from the Internet.

case they are connected with the “Equal rights to love” Festival, a Valentine’s Day event organised by the Campaign Against Homophobia:

In my opinion NOP should be present at that festival. Some form of action is advisable. Let the queers get the message.

As the highlight of the festival, I suggest to nail a faggot to a cross head down and set him on fire.

But that would be a desecration. So I suggest to pierce him through (we all know where) with the pole of the rainbow flag, skin him and force him to sing the ‘Ode to Joy’ under threat of putting salt on his wounds lol! And setting him on fire would come at the very end, because generally it is not that much fun :-/⁸⁹

Religious Websites

Religious groups whose activity focuses partly on issues connected with homosexuality are relatively active on the Polish Internet. They are mainly Catholic groups that create special websites⁹⁰ presenting methods to *treat* homosexuality. Misleading people

⁸⁹ From: <http://www.nacjonalista.pl/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1057&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=15>

⁹⁰ From: <http://www.homoseksualizm.org/>; <http://homoseksualizm.chrzescijanin.pl/>; <http://www.olsgt.republika.pl/>

that homosexuals lack full understanding of their sexual identity, they offer them a *cure for homosexuality*, while no single case of permanent change of sexual orientation is known to science. But what is known is the fact that creating and maintaining a lack of acceptance of one's own sexuality often leads to serious depression, including suicidal attempts.

SPORTS FAN WEBSITES

Many calls advocating hatred towards other teams can be found on websites for sports fans, particularly soccer fans. The most common names used for the competitors are *faggots*, *queers* and *fairies*.

Just before the demonstrations against the discrimination of gays and lesbians in Poznań, Warsaw and Krakow, the message boards of such websites were full of calls to participate in counterdemonstrations organised by the All-Polish Youth organisation. Those that were calling for participation in such counterdemonstrations were encouraging violence against the peaceful demonstrations.

The "Kick the faggot in his..." topic on the forum of the Cracovia soccer club's fans included the following comments⁹¹:

Anty pedał front: The deviants' march is tomorrow and not a word about it here... Are we going to tolerate the plague?

SaNtO w Pasy: I suggest to go there and give them the boot :)

Hamer: NO to faggots
YES to lesbians
:-))))))))))))))))))))))))))

The comments on the forum of Wisła Kraków fans were of similar nature:

Łysy: I suggest to make sort of small bombs with some paint inside... preferably printer

⁹¹ From: <http://www.cracovia.krakow.pl/forum/read.php?4,1139199,page=1>

ink (bloody difficult to wash out) and to bring them to that march so the faggots will no longer feel like protesting⁹².

The above quoted comments belong to the gentlest ones. The comments on both forums cover several pages. They are full of vulgarisms and are extremely offensive to homosexuals.

They also include descriptions of what it was like to take part in a counterdemonstration to the March for Tolerance.

Zubereg: I went there. It was interesting.... I managed to stop this embarrassing event... and then we met the queer that led the march (the one with the loudspeaker) we met him on Wislna street... the fucker fled to a shop... If it wasn't for the TV and the cops that had just come, he would organise a march for the disabled next year... faggot⁹³.

The mass-media gave broad coverage to the hooligan attacks⁹⁴.

Internet Music

There are many songs on the Polish Internet that ridicule gays and lesbians. Such music is easily available. Here is just one example – the lyrics of the song "Pedały" ("Faggots")⁹⁵:

*Tets take a different look at the priest
Perhaps the guy is a deviant
He chants that the word became flesh
And perhaps the guy is a faggot himself
Faggots...
After death the human body rots in the dirt
And perhaps the undertaker is a necrophile
The army has its dark sides just like a prison
Sometimes a young soldier is raped
Faggots...*

⁹² From: <http://www.wislakrakow.com/forum/showthread.php?t=524&page=3>

⁹³ From: <http://www.cracovia.krakow.pl/forum/read.php?4,1139199,page=2>

⁹⁴ Several thousand people participated in the rallies for equality, dispatch from PAP of 27th November 2005, available at: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/wyborcza/1,68586,3035551.html>

⁹⁵ From: <http://wykonawca.emuzyka.pl/butelka.html>

EMAILS

The Campaign Against Homophobia and other gay-lesbian organisations receive many emails. A significant amount of these emails are full of hatred towards homosexuals. Here are some examples (with the original spelling):

To the president of CAH, Robert Biedroń:

Posted by: Marek L.

Hi, Faggot
how is it going, do you have a husband and a little son? they should castrate you, you ass, fuck off, go to Holland, where you can fuck around as much as you can. each time when I see your duded up, faggot's face on tv my only wish is to spit on it. FUCK YOU AND FUCK OFF [the final sentence originally in English].

Posted by: mark20

you keep on bragging in your c.v. of what you are...
Do you know why I love this country?
Because here, you will always be only a faggot... :D
– Marek

Posted by: ania123pl

you stupid gay I will kill you, Ruski queer!!!!!!!
– pissed off skin.

To Campaign Against Homophobia:

Posted by: Jesus – your Lord

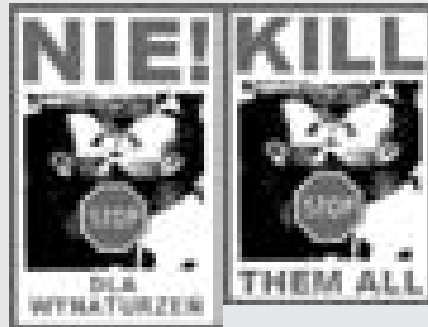
You should be ashamed of yourself. You are the most self-centered and intolerant social group. You do not respect the beliefs of the majority of this society who don't poke their noses into your private affairs and allow you to practice in peace what you like. Your parochial way of thinking and your egocentrism stirs confusion and upsets the social order. ORDER IN THE STREETS, NOT PORNOGRAPHY!!! Sexual matters should be discussed in one's bed, not in the streets!

The city of Poznań respects order, and its inhabitants do not want your brawls –
A CITIZEN OF POZNAŃ.

Posted by: Adam M.

I would like to express my sympathy for your stupidity I understand it is not your fault. I am homophobic and I will never tolerate this deviation. It is a SCANDAL that such organisations are allowed to exist. Such people should be forced to undergo therapy! I hate the extreme left-wing scum and animals that you are. SINCERELY ADAM M. ALL-POLISH YOUTH PS. I recommend a good psychiatric hospital.

Posted by: gegen8



Health Services

Can homosexual persons become blood donors?

Robert Biedroń

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, everyone has the right to medical services. Article 68 of the Constitution reads:

1. *Everyone shall have the right to have his health protected.*
4. *Public authorities shall combat epidemic illnesses and prevent the negative health consequences of degradation of the environment.*

Consequently, public authorities have the duty to protect the health of homosexual people as well, using effective methods adapted to the actual needs of this group of citizens.

For example, as far as the problem of HIV/AIDS is concerned, if the existing gay-lesbian NGOs cannot take actions of a sufficient scope aimed at the prevention of HIV infections, such actions should be the responsibility of the governmental or non-governmental organisations that are capable of addressing the problem in a proper manner.

Discrimination and intolerance of homosexual people in health service consists of, first of all, the refusal to provide information about the partner's health and to collect blood from blood donors of a homosexual orientation. A salient problem faced by homosexual women is the fear of visiting gynaecologists.

The Campaign Against Homophobia and Lambda Warsaw have received information about health services refusing to provide information about the health of a partner in a homosexual relationship. This also refers to the exclusion of partners in the decision making process as to the therapy, and refusal of visitation rights during partners' stay in hospitals or other closed medical institutions.

For many years, gay-lesbian organisations have received signals from all over Poland about the practices of blood donor centres that refuse to collect blood from both men and women who are openly homosexual.

Some blood donor centres distribute questionnaires in which they ask about the sexual orientation of the donor. Such a question negatively stereotypes homosexual people as belonging to a community that is more exposed to contracting the HIV virus. According to scientific research carried out by institutions specialising in HIV and AIDS, homosexual men are no longer recognised as a group of an increased risk of HIV contraction, while homosexual women were never included in this group.

However, in contemporary medicine the term *risk group* is not used anymore. Instead, the concept of risk behaviour regardless of sexual orientation is currently used.

Statistical data covering recent years shows distinctly a very high ratio of HIV in young heterosexual women.

The press described cases of refusal to accept blood from homosexual persons, in here we present one of the articles from “Dziennik Wschodni” [“Eastern Journal”] (22.07.06).

Gay is not OK

Despite the fact that Poland suffers from insufficient supplies of blood, The Institute of Haematology in Warsaw divided blood donors into superior and inferior groups. A man from the Lublin area has experienced this categorisation when he decided to respond to the public plea by a blood donor centre. ‘I am a healthy, 20+ man and I live in a monogamous relationship with my partner. But they turned me away, because I am gay’ – he says.

Anyone who wants to become a blood donor is required to fill in a detailed questionnaire. There are no questions about sexual orientation in it. Instead, there are questions about sexual contacts with many partners. A confirmative answer is disqualifying. Having filled in the questionnaire, the potential

donor is interviewed by a doctor. That is when the question about the sexual orientation may be asked. For a gay person it means the end to the dream of becoming a blood donor – even if his sexual contacts are limited to one partner only. ‘Such are the regulations’ – says Dorota Sławińska, MD, from the Regional Blood Donor’s Centre in Lublin. ‘Homosexual persons are not allowed to be blood donors. They belong to the increased risk group, being exposed to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV, hepatitis B or C or syphilis.’ Zygmunt Barszczewski, the chairman of the Regional Council of Blood Donors in Lublin explains: ‘This regulation is not directed against homosexuals. Its aim is to exclude the risk of exposing recipients. And homosexuals belong to the so-called high-risk group. They could give blood, if only it was possible to change the method of the preliminary examinations – more detailed and followed by an adequately long waiting period’⁹⁶.

Information about the ban on blood donating by homosexual men is present on the Polish Red Cross website and in the leaflets distributed by the organisation. Here is an excerpt from one of the leaflets:

Who is not allowed to be a blood donor?

Blood or blood plasma may not be donated by people who have suffered from hepatitis, AIDS, or who are HIV positive. For that reason blood is not collected from individuals engaged in the so called risky behaviours, including drug addicts, homosexuals and persons having sexual relations with many partners⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ *Dziennik Wschodni*, 22.07.06, see: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kph_pl/message/4598

⁹⁷ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 08.08.02, see: <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,966929.html>
<http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,966929.html>

The Campaign Against Homophobia has repeatedly asked the Ombudsman and the Minister of Health about this issue to no effect.

The European Commission has expressed its opinion in the issue of voluntary blood donors. In reply to the query of a group of MEPs, the Commission said that under the Directive

2002/98/EC of 27th January 2003, the deferral criteria for safe blood donation are based not on sexual orientation, but on sexual risk behaviour⁹⁸. Therefore any discrimination of homosexual men based on their sexual orientation only is unacceptable.

⁹⁸ The Answer by the European Commission No E-4492/06EN of 30th November 2006.

The Catholic Church

A new Pope – same old problems

Robert Biedroń

The death of Pope John Paul II and the election of the new head of the Catholic Church – Benedict XVI were certainly a foretoken of change in the Vatican policy as far as respect towards homosexual orientation and homosexual people is concerned. The former statements of Joseph Ratzinger suggested that, as Pope, he would not seek conciliation and dialogue, envenoming the debate on human sexuality.

Shortly after Ratzinger had been elected the new pope, the “New York Times” wrote that *liberal Catholics sharply criticise the decision of the conclave which means that the hard line of the Church on such issues as contraceptives, homosexuality and priesthood of women will be held.*

Commenting on the election of Ratzinger as a new pope, Polish Primate Józef Glemp found the *conservative* label given to the new pope completely inadequate. He said that the Church cannot make concessions that many people expect: *If someone, for example, promoted homosex-*

*uality in the Church, I would cancel my membership in the Church*⁹⁹.

The strong position of the Catholic Church in Polish society has remained unwavering. The Church continues to influence the country’s political and social life, at the same time trying to exert pressure on the shape of the legislation.

The Church in Poland has been strongly involved in actions condemning the demonstrations organised in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznań. Father Tadeusz Bartoś, a lecturer of philosophy at the College of Philosophy and Theology of the Dominican Order in Warsaw defended the demonstrations: *I am not very interested in the gay and lesbian parades as long as nobody is trying to ban them without reason. The Church is against any form of discrimination of homosexual people*¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20.04.05, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75248,2666109.html>

¹⁰⁰ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11.06.05, see: <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,55670,2761347.html>

In late May 2005, the weekend edition of “Gazeta Wyborcza” published an article by Father Dariusz Oko, a philosopher from the Pontifical Academy of Theology who used so-called *common knowledge* as his main arguments. He wrote, for example: *it is common knowledge that homosexuals more often than the rest of the society commit acts of paedophilia; it is common knowledge that homosexuals more often contract sexually transmitted diseases; it is common knowledge that more crimes are committed in the homosexual community, and their relationships are emotionally inferior, etc.* Father Oko also believes that *for a sane mind, acceptance of homosexuality is out of the question and homosexuals walk the path of death*¹⁰¹.

The information of 29th November 2005 about the Vatican finally closing the doors of seminars to homosexual men and its ban on ordaining them was of a precedential character. The instruction published by the Congregation for Catholic Education was the Holy See’s reaction to the wave of scandals in the Church¹⁰².

Some communities connected with the Church received the document with satisfaction. *Is it discrimination?* pondered Sławomir Jagodziński in “Nasz Dziennik” daily. *The Church has done exactly what it was supposed to. With all due respect to the affected persons, the Church stressed the fact that people who practice homosexuality, express deeply rooted homosexual tendencies or support the so-called gay culture cannot be priests, ministers or chaplains. In the midst of the overwhelming political correctness this is a very bold and valuable statement. Perhaps the Vatican Instruction inspires governments to devise similar criteria of determining the suitability of homosexual people to work in schools, universities, cultural centres and mass media, and of allowing them to work in such establishments... It would be a logical*

*thing to do, since the situation of such people seriously undermines their relations with men and women – such people lack psychosocial maturity. Is it discrimination? If so, then, for example, banning blind people from driving is discrimination as well*¹⁰³.

Interviewed by “Gazeta Wyborcza”, Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek commented on the Congregation’s document: *In Poland, gay people have always been expelled from seminars. Such people are not welcome there – the Church does not need such educators. Homosexuality is an aberration. I would not be surprised, if an edict formally banning ordaining homosexuals was eventually issued*¹⁰⁴.

The Catholic Church in Poland supports the so called Catholic support groups whose aim is to *help individuals of homosexual orientation to live in celibacy and to reject the homosexual lifestyle.* The best known is the “Courage Community” run by the Light-Life Movement in Lublin. The group *draws from the achievements of psychology and psychotherapy to help people of homosexual orientation on their way to recovery and maturity in all aspects of their lives. The actions of Courage are full of concern as to their opening to God’s grace.* The administered therapies consist of the three stages of *healing*: the transient stage in which both the counsellor and the patient try to identify the problem and *stop to over dramatise it through full recognition.* The next state is the process of *identification and implementation of thoughts and needs,* followed by the process of the *healing of homo-emotional wounds through establishment of healthy non-sexual relations full of love*¹⁰⁵.

Catholic organisations in Poland play an important role in the ideological struggle with the gay and lesbian movement. Referring to the alleged damnation of homosexuality in the Bible, they are becoming ever

¹⁰¹ Gazeta Wyborcza, 03.06.05, see: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kph_pl/message/1703

¹⁰² Gazeta Wyborcza, 29.11.05, see: <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kosciol/1,64807,3038893.html>

¹⁰³ Gazeta Wyborcza, 09.01.06, see: <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75480,3101050.html>

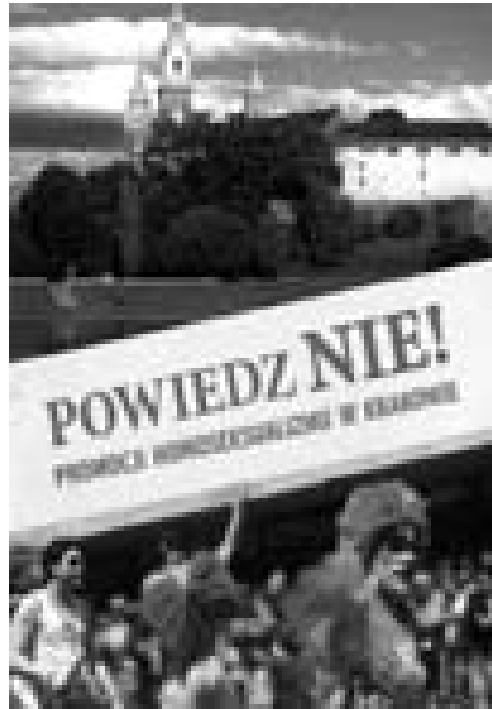
¹⁰⁴ Gazeta Wyborcza, 10.01.05, see: <http://www.homiki.pl/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=643>

¹⁰⁵ See: http://www.oaza.lublin.pl/html/grupa_odwaga.html

more active. The most active of them is the Father Piotr Skarga Association for Christian Culture in Krakow, established in 1999. When organisation of Tolerance Marches in Krakow, Warsaw and Poznań was the subject of public debate, the Association delivered leaflets directly to mailboxes, that read “Say NO! to promotion of homosexuality”, with pictures of men dressed as women and a copy of the protest petition – the recipients only had to cut it out and put in a mailbox to have it delivered to the authorities. The Association also sent letters to the registrars, requesting them to protest against the proposed bill on civil partnerships. Recently, it purchased advertising space on Krakow billboards for posters saying “Stop the moral corruption”. The Association is not trying to conceal its connection to the international organisation TFP (Tradition, Family and Property) that announces the *struggle with the civilisation revolution* and claims that homosexuality is a deviation. The Krakow Church has twice dissociated itself from TFP.

In the spring of 2006 the Association mailed to schools brochures with vivid descriptions of homosexual acts.

The 50-page booklet “The Concealed Problems of Homosexuality” not only presents *scientific research findings*, but also vulgar descriptions of homosexual behaviour. It includes such statements as: *homosexuals in principle almost consume human blood, eat faeces and even wallow in faeces. Moreover, homosexual teachers are more prone to sexually abuse children and the homosexual drive may be accompanied*



by sadistic and masochistic inclinations. The anonymous author of the brochure based it on the materials of the American organisation Family Research Institute. The booklet has been sent to school principals and directors throughout the country by post.

Representatives of the Catholic Church and Catholic organizations remain therefore very active in propagating views about homosexuality that are contrary to scientific research on the issue. They do not hesitate, either, to publicly express hurtful opinions about gays and lesbians or even to call for isolation of homosexual persons.

Sport

Total Taboo

Robert Biedroń

The presence of homosexual people in Polish sports continues to be a taboo. Certainly, many gays and lesbians are professional athletes in Poland but they conceal their homosexuality for fear of intolerance and discrimination.

In one of very few press articles touching upon this problem, Marcin Gadziński wrote in "Gazeta Wyborcza":

The subject of gay people in sports, particularly in team disciplines for men, is a taboo. Yet not entirely. Fans all over the world like to read in tabloids about who is gay, or rather, who is said to be gay. Someone mentions a name mockingly on the phone or in a sports talk-radio. A group of buddies sipping their pints of beer in a pub can go on forever arguing about whether the heavyweight boxing champion is a queer or not. And then there are the stadium stands and the playing fields. 'Faggot' is the heaviest-weight offence in the arsenal of vulgarisms spat out in the surge of hatred. In Poland, in the UK, in the US. The word is used not only by fans and hooligans but also by players, when they

want to offend their competitor, the umpire or supporters of the rival team¹⁰⁶.

The article stirred quite a heated discussion on the website forum of www.gazeta.pl. The comments were usually offensive to the article author. Some forum members claimed that the problem was of a minor importance. And there were comments posted by athletes. Here is one of them (the spelling is original):

I play on a volleyball team – 3rd league!!! and I cannot imagine that any of my buddies are gay!!! what a horror that would be!!! I understand that different things happen on the playing field, a guy patting someone else on the buttock, but only to encourage him to play better and it doesn't mean he is gay!!! and speaking of real gays, they should be isolated from the society!!!!¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Marcin Gadziński, Homoseksualizm w sporcie – tabu?, (Homosexuality in Sports, taboo?) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.01.06, see: <http://sport.gazeta.pl/sport/1,65026,3092098.html>

¹⁰⁷ See: <http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=761&w=34259054&a=34364885>

Football fans are the most vocal in expressing their attitude towards gays. In December 2005, during the Rally for Equality in Gdańsk, an act of solidarity with the participants of the Poznań march dispersed by police, Lechia Gdańsk hooligans and fans shouted to the participants of the peaceful march: *Free City free of fags!* Police clashed with the fans who threw eggs and bottles. When they started to pull out cobblestones, police used truncheons and tear gas¹⁰⁸.

The institution responsible for counteracting discrimination in sports is the Ministry of Sports established on 1st September 2005. As a central government body, the Ministry is involved in many European projects in this extent. One of them is the rolling agenda of the EU Sports Ministries, forming an agenda for the European Commission in the scope of sports. The current documents include the recommendation for the central government bodies to *use sports as a weapon to combat all types of discrimination*. So far the Ministry has failed to make any effort in this respect.

¹⁰⁸ Jak demonstrowała Polska. (How Poland demonstrated). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.11.05, see: <http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34317,3036629.html>

The Committee for the Development of Sports (CDDS) has been operating within the structures of the Council of Europe since 1977. The Committee has authored the European Sports Charter, a document adopted by the Council of Europe. The Charter promotes sports for everyone, regardless of social status, gender or disability. Sports that are fair, safe, healthy, through which the values of respect and tolerance to other human beings should be propagated. The party responsible for the promotion of the Charter's content is the Ministry of Sports that has made hardly any effort in this area¹⁰⁹.

Both in the Act on Qualified Sports of 29th July 2005 and in the Act on Physical Culture of 18th January 1996 – the most important legal acts referring to sports in Poland – there are no provisions banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, one clause in the Act on Physical Culture reads: *all citizens, regardless of age, gender, religion, degree or type of disability – enjoy equal rights to participate in different forms of physical culture*. The clause lists only some groups facing discrimination, omitting homosexuals¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ More at: <http://www.msport.gov.pl/index.php>

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, Section 1, Article 1 of the Physical Culture Act of 18th January 1996.