



European
Lesbian*
Conference

MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
RECOMMENDATION CM/REC (2010)5 OF THE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES
ON MEASURES TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION ON
GROUNDS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER
IDENTITY

SUBMITTED BY:
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Recommendation (2010)⁵ is a document of great importance for lesbian*¹ women. As one of the world's first international legal instrument dealing specifically with discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, the Recommendation recognized the centuries-old discrimination and emphasized the universality of the human rights, and pointed out that specific actions are required by states to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by LGBT people. However, even after eight years, most of the Member States fail to ensure societies free of discrimination.

In 2017, we organised the first, after many years, gathering of European lesbian* activists. One of the main outcomes of the Conference, stated by different participants during several panels, was the realization of the shrinking, or even growing disappearance of, lesbian spaces. Over the last 5 years, many national and historical European lesbian* NGOs have been reduced to a few activists. All over Europe, cultural events, bars and clubs are closing down. The reasons are deeply connected to gender and sexual orientation and intersectional oppression. Societies still actively promote patriarchal values and traditional gender identities and roles. The majority of the activists from Eastern Europe, Turkey and Central Asia stated that the conservative and nationalist rhetoric has a vast impact on the silencing of lesbian political voices, work and projects. In general, though, the rise in populist movements and nationalist politics was perceived as a common threat and challenge to lesbians* across Europe, including in Austria, Switzerland, France and Italy. Additionally, the economic pressure and the difficulty to access funding are threatening lesbian* spaces.

Lesbian* women across the Council of Europe Member States are still facing high level of **hate speech and hate crimes**, even in the so-called “developed countries”. Just recently, for example, a lesbian couple was attacked in a Parisian Metro in **France** due to their sexual orientation.² According to the *SOS Homophobie*, in France in 2017 alone, there were 212 registered hate crimes on the grounds of SOGI.³

The 2017 regional study conducted by the World Bank and ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey shows that high 52% of surveyed **have been personally harassed** by someone or a group for any reason; on average, 63% of lesbian women in the region (**Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro,**

¹ We use “lesbian*” with an asterisk to include anyone who identifies as lesbian, trans lesbian, intersex, feminist, bi or queer, and all others who identify themselves with lesbian* activism.

² https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/fait-divers/putains-de-lesbiennes-deux-jeunes-femmes-agressees-dans-le-rer_1983738.html

³ https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/les-actes-homophobes-et-transphobes-ont-augmente-de-presque-20-en-2016_1906740.html

Albania) avoid certain places or locations for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed because of their sexual orientation. The surveys show high level of discrimination in access to education and employment.

Another recent survey conducted among lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women in **Macedonia** shows that almost 34% of the LBQ women experience discrimination in **education**, and almost 30% during job interview or **employment**. The most worrisome aspect is that not a single respondent reported the case to any organization or institution (including the school or the workplace). The main reason listed in both situations was the distrust in the institution (disbelieve that they could help). The second reasons were: (a) the fear of judgment and prejudice by the respondents' environment (for educational sphere), and (b) the fear of exposing the respondents' sexual orientation by the officers (for the workplace discrimination). Some of the surveyed women provided their own statements explaining the reasons for not reporting the discrimination they have experienced. One of them stated, for example: *"Often we are not aware that we are experiencing discrimination and/or some form of violence and we treat those behaviors as normal. That is the reason why I did not report, but I used to live with that or I was trying to confront."* Another woman also added: *"...it is a state of an everyday functioning."*

The **bullying in schools** based on sexual orientation and gender identity is still very high and very present. In **Spain**, up to 80% of the LGB students hear their own sexual orientation as an insult in their schools.⁴ According to another survey, 35% of the general students expressed a complete repudiation against lesbians.⁵

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly remains as not guaranteed right across member states. Some of the states failed to provide protection and safe realization of lesbian* events. Recent survey shows that approximately one of three persons recognises they would feel uncomfortable with lesbian couples showing publicly their affection (34%).

Access to health for lesbian women is very limited. Only few countries allow access to assisted reproductive treatment for single women or those in same-sex partnerships. The situation is similar with anti-discriminatory provisions in the laws protecting the rights of the patients and access to health.

Respect to private and family life is not guaranteed in every state. In **Russia**, in accordance with art. 146(1) of the Family Code of the Russian Federation, custody of children cannot be awarded to individuals who are part of a same-sex union registered in accordance with the law of a country in which such a union is permitted. Many same-sex couples who live in Russia have entered into same-sex unions abroad. Many of these couples have children, and this law threatens these families. In addition in **Russia**, lesbian* women from the region are subjected to forced marriages and honour violence.⁶

⁴ <http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/1-lgbt-fobia-en-las-aulas-2015-informe-completo-web.pdf>

⁵ <https://somoslgbt.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/informe-lgtbfobia-en-las-aulas1.pdf>

⁶ E.g. <https://rus.postimees.ee/6435050/menya-otdali-kak-tovar-istorii-chechenskih-lesbinyanok>.

Regarding the issue of **asylum**, lesbians often find themselves in very precarious situations on top of having fled their country. Too often, instead of finding safety, lesbians encounter additional struggles along the way and in the country of arrival. Whether back home, en route, or in the country of destination, lesbians will experience specific struggles based on the conflation of their gender and sexuality.

All of the Member States have national human rights structures in place, but in practice, they fail to take sufficient and adequate measures to ensure the full access to rights and justice for lesbian* women.

II. INTRODUCTION

Background

On 31st of March 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CMCE) adopted its Recommendation to member states “on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity”. The Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 and the Appendix to the Recommendation offer a comprehensive approach in overcoming discrimination and social exclusion on the account of sexual orientation and gender identity by implementing the measures by the states members of Council of Europe.

This Recommendation is a document of crucial significance for lesbian* women. As the world’s first international legal instrument dealing specifically with discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, the Recommendation recognized the centuries-old discrimination and emphasized the universality of the human rights, and pointed out that specific actions are required by the states to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by LGBT people.

Purpose of this report

This report aims to provide information on the level of implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 and its Appendix in regard to discrimination experienced by lesbian* women in Council of Europe Member States. It is submitted to the second review of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Methodology

The data used to assess the progress in the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec2010(5) has been obtained from a number of sources, including:

- EL*C Brief Report on Lesbian* Lives in Europe. The EL*C Brief Report is meant to highlight recent empirical findings on lesbian* lives in Europe, as there is scarce public data and research on the diverse experiences in all areas of lesbian* lives (<https://europeanlesbianconference.org/elc-brief-report/>)
- Annual or monthly reports on the situation of human rights published by different lesbian*, LGBTI and other human rights organizations;
- Information available through mass media and internet;
- Information from conducted researches for the rights and needs of LBQ women by different organizations;
- Research reports published by different lesbian*, LGBTI and other human rights organizations;

- Reports on the situation of lesbian* or LBQ women submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by civil society organizations.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MEMBER STATES FOR PRIORITY ACTIONS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CMCE RECOMMENDATION

1. Recognize the ongoing discrimination and human rights violations taking place against lesbian* women and have its own patterns, modes and consequences, uniquely formed by intersections between gender and sexual orientation. Ensure that all existing and future measures, policies and activities related to women's rights, LGBTI rights and human rights in general, include lesbian* women as well, within the Council of Europe Member States.
2. Work on promoting and implementing progressive changes in policy that would result in significant cultural, economic and socio-political reforms, creating inclusive and safe environment of equal opportunities and empowerment for lesbian* women.
3. Strongly oppose and counteract worrying trends of deterioration of women's fundamental rights across Europe, including sexual and reproductive rights, freedom of choice and bodily integrity, freedom of assembly and expression.
4. Strengthen, support and increase visibility, participation and representation of lesbian* civil society groups in policies and policy making processes of the institutions in the Member States.
5. Provide adequate opportunities for lesbian* civil society groups and organizations to access financial resources of the Member States, in order to enable their equal participation in all policy areas.
6. Conduct regular and large scale public campaigns to end lesbophobia on the European level, and enhance visibility of lesbian* women and their experiences, needs and interests across Europe.
7. Initiate and execute comprehensive and regular research activities about levels of acceptance, status and needs of lesbian* women in relation to all issues, both in the public and private spheres, in all policy areas, as well as research about effectiveness of existing policies in relation to lesbian* human rights and fundamental freedoms.
8. Ensure that law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges and other professional groups are trained on issues related to discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech against lesbian* women; that those suffered from such treatment have access to professional and sensitive services; that all such incidents are properly and effectively recorded, investigated and punished, if relevant; and that disaggregated

statistics on hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination against lesbian* women is collected and analysed.

9. Ensure that lesbian* women are not subjected to discrimination, harassment or other unfair and/or degrading treatment in employment. Particularly, make sure that lesbian* women working with children (e.g. in education) are not discriminated against because of the harmful stereotypes about so-called “threat of homosexuality” to children.
10. Ensure that health care providers, especially gynecologists, reproductologists, psychiatrists, are trained to deal professionally and sensitively with lesbian* women and their specific health needs. Ensure that lesbian* women are aware about specific health risks and have information about where they can obtain professional and sensitive medical consultations and services.
11. Ensure that family relations, such as those between partners, parents and children, etc, formed by and with lesbian* women, including trans women, are fully recognised and protected in law and in practice in the Member States. Ensure that lesbian* women, both individual and couple, have access, including financial one, to the assisted reproductive technologies.
12. Ensure that lesbian* refugees facing persecution or being in risk of such persecution because of their sexual orientation in their country of origin, are granted asylum. Recognise increased vulnerability of women, and ensuring full safety in reception facilities, including, when relevant, providing individual solutions, such as alternative or individual housing. End deportation of lesbians* seeking asylum on the basis of their sexual orientation, including those with children, which endangers their lives in the country they have fled;

IV. COMPLIANCE REPORT

I. Right to life, security and protection from violence

- a. "Hate crimes" and other hate-motivated incidents
- b. "Hate speech"

France: Specific Lesbophobia numbers and report in 2015: 1 call from 5 on the French SOS homophobia hotline is from a lesbian. At the end of the analysis, 63% of 1793 respondents mentioned lesbophobic facts⁷

Lesbian couple was attacked in Parisian Metro based on their sexual orientation. Seven people were detained.⁸ According to the SOS Homophobie, in France only in 2017 alone there were 212 registered hate crimes on the grounds of SOGI.⁹

Russia: On October 20, 2014, in St. Petersburg, two unidentified men attacked a lesbian couple returning home on the last subway train. The men saw the women hugging on the escalator and followed them; on the street, one of the men attacked the women while shouting "shitty lesbians" and "no to LGBT," while the other one recorded the attack on his phone camera. Before running away, the attacker said he would kill the women if he ever sees them again.

On the next day, the women reported the attack to the police. However, the police took virtually no steps to check into the facts they reported in their complaint, failed to consider the bias motive, and refused twice to open a criminal investigation. Unable to get the police to take any effective steps in investigating the attack, in December 2014 the women reported the incident to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.¹⁰

Lesbophobia in the South Caucasus as a whole is prevalent. According to the ILGA-Europe index, **Armenia** has been ranked as one of the worst places to be LGBTI in Europe. One of the many hate crimes is the case of the attack of the LGBTI+ friendly bar DIY because it is owned by a lesbian and because she has participated in Istanbul Pride the year prior the attack¹¹. The stated failed to address the hate crime, the case is now in front of the ECHR.

⁷ https://www.sos-homophobie.org/sites/default/files/enquete_sur_la_visibilite_des_lesbiennes_et_la_lesbophobie_2015.pdf

⁸ https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/fait-divers/putains-de-lesbiennes-deux-jeunes-femmes-agressees-dans-le-rer_1983738.html

⁹ https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/les-actes-homophobes-et-transphobes-ont-augmente-de-presque-20-en-2016_1906740.html

¹⁰ Joint NGO Submission to CEDAW (2015), p. 7. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_RUS_19228_E.pdf.

¹¹ <http://www.ianyanmag.com/armenia-support-of-bar-bombing-by-officials-causes-outcry/>

Serbia: On 26 September 2015, a group of lesbian women were violently physically attacked by two men at a bar in the center of Belgrade, Serbia, on the basis of them being lesbian. While beating the women, the attackers were shouting “lesbians, lesbians!”. Ever since, perpetrators of this attack were not brought to justice.¹²

Western Balkans: According to the 2017 regional study conducted by the World Bank and ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, on average, 63% of lesbian women in the region of Western Balkans (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania) avoid certain places or locations for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed because of their sexual orientation. In addition, 72% of lesbians avoid holding hands with their partner in public, 78% of lesbians believe that discrimination against lesbians is fairly common or very common, 60% of lesbians have been discriminated against or harassed in the last 12 months, and 30% of lesbians have been victims of physical violence and/or sexual assaults in the last 5 years.¹³

In the 5 years prior to the survey,¹⁴ **52% were personally harassed** by someone or a group for any reason in a way that really annoyed, offended or upset them: In Croatia (69%), Austria (68%), and Romania (60%) the most lesbians were personally harassed. In Luxembourg (37%), Denmark (40%), and Spain (44%) the fewest lesbians were personally harassed. **23% were physically/sexually attacked or threatened with violence** at home or elsewhere (street, on public transport, at their workplace, etc.) for any reason. In Romania (42%), Finland and Croatia (both 34%), the most lesbians were physically/sexually attacked or threatened with violence. In the Netherlands and Spain (both 15%), and Cyprus (17%), the fewest lesbians were physically/sexually attacked or threatened with violence¹⁵.

Of those lesbians who experienced harassment in any form, **76% think that the most serious incident happened because they were perceived to be LGBT.**¹⁶ Only **5%** of lesbians who have been harassed **reported their most serious incident to the police. The three most frequent reasons for not reporting it were:** too minor / not serious enough / never occurred to me 53%; I did not think they would do anything 32%; I did not think they could do anything 27%.

¹² <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/an-interview-with-dragoslava-barzut-paula-gordon> and <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/tukao-nas-je-jednu-po-jednu-uzvikujuci-lezbijke-lezbijke/4qtlheg>

¹³ Final report is forthcoming. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/economic-benefits-lgbti-inclusion>

¹⁴ EL *C report: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Brief-Report-for-web.pdf>

¹⁵ EL *C report: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Brief-Report-for-web.pdf>

¹⁶ EL *C report: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Brief-Report-for-web.pdf>

The recent survey conducted by the *LGBTI Support Center* and *LezFem* among lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women in Macedonia shows that more than 45% of the LBQ women experience different forms of violence and almost 15% experience domestic violence. None of the surveyed women that stated they experienced violence, did report the case to any institution or organization. The main reasons for not reporting the cases of violence is the distrust in institutions (disbelieve that institutions would do something) and the fear of judgment and prejudice by their environment.

Two public events organized in Skopje, Macedonia, by the lesbian feminist group “LezFem,” were subject to chauvinistic and homophobic hate speech and even an attempt for physical violence. The first two events were **lectures on feminism** that took place in April 2015 in the LGBTI Support Centre¹⁷. The events were being promoted on Facebook when a stream of comments by a group of young men attacked the events. The comments consisted hate speech, offensive and misogynic comments, comments and photos promoting violence against women and threats, including rape threats towards the organizers of the events. The hate speech was reported in the Department for Computer Crime Investigations within the MOI by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, but there is still no response.

In 2016-2017, the monitoring programme of the *Russian LGBT Network* documented several cases of corrective rape whose survivors were usually lesbian, bisexual or trans women. However, none of the survivors wanted to share details or gave a consent to use their stories in public reports.¹⁸

Case study

Russia: On 19 September 2013, a member of St. Petersburg legislature Vitaly Milonov, the author of a local anti-propaganda law, came to the opening of the Queer Culture Festival and publicly insulted the festival's participants and volunteers by calling them “animals,” “AIDSy,” “fags,” etc. When K., a lawyer with “Coming Out” LGBT Group, concerned about impending fighting, called the police, Milonov verbally attacked her, calling her a snitch and then using the Russian derogatory term for “dyke” twice. The incident was captured on video, heard and witnessed by many people. After the incident, K. reported it to the prosecutor's office seeking administrative proceedings against the MP for the insult and discrimination, but her request was denied on the ground that Milonov's impunity as a member of parliament could not be waived. She tried to appeal the decision, but without success. K. also attempted to sue Milonov requesting a district court to find a violation of her right to privacy and non-discrimination and to award non-pecuniary damages. However, both the first instance and the appeal courts denied

¹⁷ Interview with the organizers from LezFem

¹⁸ Russian LGBT Network (2018), Monitoring of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia in 2016-2017, <https://lgbtnet.org/sites/default/files/discrimination.pdf>.

her claims.¹⁹ Being not able to access justice within the country, K. applied to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (case pending).

¹⁹ Joint NGO Submission to CEDAW (2015), p. 7. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_RUS_19228_E.pdf.

II. Freedom of association

Over the last 5 years, many national and historical European lesbian* NGOs have been reduced to a few activists (cf. EUROPEAN LESBIAN* CONFERENCE 2017 NARRATIVE REPORT (https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ELC-2017_Narrative_Report-1.pdf)). All over Europe, cultural events, bars, and clubs are closing down. The reasons are deeply connected to gender and sexual orientation and intersectional oppression. Societies still actively promote patriarchal values and traditional gender identities and roles. The majority of the activists from Eastern Europe stated that the conservative and nationalist rhetoric has a huge impact on the silencing of lesbian political voices, work and projects. In general, though, the rise in populist movements and nationalist politics was perceived as a common threat and challenge to lesbians across Europe, including Austria, Switzerland, France and Italy. Additionally, the economic pressure and the difficulty to access funding are threatening lesbian spaces because there is an important gap in funding for specific lesbian projects. The 2015/2016 Global Resources Report from GPP states that "Over the two-year period of 2015 and 2016, funding focused on Lesbian and Bisexual Women, and Queer Women totaled \$7.2 million, or 3 percent of LGBTI funding outside the US." In the previous report it was 5%.

Access to public funding available for non-governmental organisations with a specific focus on lesbians* and feminists issues should be secured without discrimination.

In those countries where there are significant impediments to functioning of NGOs and obtaining funds by them, lesbian* groups seem to be in a particularly vulnerable situation.

III. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly

According to the “Eurobarometer 83.4. Discrimination in the EU in 2015”, only a 51% of European population asked recognise that they would feel comfortable with lesbian couples showing publicly their affection. Approximately one of three persons recognises they would feel uncomfortable with lesbian couples showing publicly their affection (34%).

Case study

In June 2015, the lesbian event, “Lesbian Picnic”, within the Skopje Pride Week (Macedonia) that was planned to take place in the city park was targeted, first in the social media and after an attempt for physical attack followed²⁰. The intersection of being a woman and a sexual minority was a trigger for this lesbophobic and misogynic behaviour. The event was promoted on Facebook where immediately it was “bombed” with comments including hate speech, misogyny, calls for violence and threats. The organizers reported the hate speech to the Department for Computer Crime Investigations within MOI, and asked for increased police presence due to the threats and calls for violence. In response to the request, the police sent several teams to secure the perimeter around the event taking place in the city park. Thirty minutes into the event, a group of young individuals (7-10) started gathering in the vicinity and after a while they moved closer to the participants of the lesbian picnic after which the police prevented them from approaching completely and inspected their personal identification documents. The police notified the Picnic’s participants that it is not safe to continue with the event and suggested its closure in order to prevent possible incidents. The police prevented the violence only by ending the event an hour and a half earlier and asking the participants to leave the public space, instead of asking the potential attackers to do so. Moreover, the police did not press charges against the perpetrators for the attempt of the physical violence motivated by hate or for the hate speech on the social media.

²⁰ Coalition Margins, Annual Report 2015, p. 59

IV. Respect for private and family life

(a) Access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies

Czech Republic: In contrast to married women or women with heterosexual partners, a woman living in a registered partnership together with her partner cannot legally request artificial insemination. Restriction to access to artificial insemination for lesbians living in registered partnership is a direct discrimination against persons with non-heterosexual orientation.²¹

Cyprus: LBQ women had reported to ACCEPT that they underwent artificial inseminations either locally or overseas. Such inseminations locally have been performed in the private sector illegally due to the lengthy process a woman needs to go through as of course a 'single' applicant. Applications are reviewed by the Council of Medically Assisted Human Reproduction which has very strict guidelines in regards to the marital status of the applicants. Therefore, lesbians in civil partnerships cannot go through this medical procedure because of their marital status (civil union) ergo they perform such procedures in clinics at the private sector that have access to the local sperm bank or receive these services overseas.²²

France: In Vitro Insemination for lesbians and single women

Definition: Medically assisted procreation, also called medically assisted procreation, is a set of chemical and biological processes involved in the process of procreation to allow a couple to have a child outside the natural process. These practices include in vitro design, embryo transfer and artificial insemination. To qualify for this assistance, couples must fulfill various conditions set by law.

Legislation and conditions: The PMA is governed by the provisions of the Public Health Code (articles L2141-1 to L2141-12). The PMA is currently reserved for heterosexual couples. However, it is not accessible to all of them, but only to couples where one of the members is a victim of medically proven infertility. It is also open to couples whose man or woman has a serious illness that could be transmitted to the child. Applicants must be a married or cohabiting couple for at least 2 years. Separate couples are therefore not concerned. Both members must be alive (the PMA is impossible in case of death of one of them) and of childbearing age. According to a decision of the Versailles Court of Appeal rendered on March 5, 2018, a man can be considered as being of childbearing age until 59 years. The PMA is not accessible to homosexual couples and single women in France.

Sperm or oocyte donation:

In France, the donation of sperm or oocyte is legal. However, it must be done anonymously and free of charge.

Cost of an LDC and social security

²¹ [Czech Women's Lobby](#)

²²

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/CYP/INT_CEDAW_NGO_CYP_315_01_E.pdf

The costs related to the PMA are fully covered by Social Security. However, reimbursement is limited to 4 in-vitro fertilizations and 6 intrauterine inseminations. Beyond this, health supplements can nevertheless cover these costs under certain conditions.

Ongoing discussions in France

President Emmanuel Macron said he was in favor of opening the PMA to couples of homosexual women and single women. A law could thus be passed under his five-year term in order to broaden the conditions of access to the PMA. In a report released on June 27, 2017, the National Consultative Ethics Committee (CCNE) issued a majority opinion favoring the opening of the PMA to couples of women and single women. A minority part of the committee, however, voted in favor of the legal status quo, taking into account the "consequences for the child". CCNE, however, opposed the legalization of surrogacy (GPA). In a statement made on September 12, 2017, Secretary of State for Equality between Women and Men, Marlene Schiappa, announced that text legalizing the PMA for same-sex couples and single women would be forthcoming soon proposed to Parliament. This measure would be voted in the framework of the revision of the bioethics law. The text could be debated in 2018 for a vote at the beginning of 2019. Risks: The public reimbursement (by the Sécurité Sociale as for the heterosexuals) of the PMA for lesbians and single women has been questioned by several opponents. The adoption of the "partner child" should be clarified and simplified (currently, it is not as simple as for heterosexual).

(b) Parental Rights

Even when lesbian* women have access to ART, in many countries they still cannot obtain the proper recognition of their ties with children. This situation could be even deteriorated because of the women's other identities, such as gender identity for trans women in same-gender relations.

Case study - United Kingdom

2008 Human Embryology Act currently has three parenting designations: mother, father and parent. Parent is only assigned to a cisgender woman who is in a civil partnership with another cis woman but not a birth parent. Everyone else has to be designated as a 'mother' in case of giving birth, or 'father'. In case of Anna and Iani Kirey both parents wanted to be designated as gender neutral parents but were refused due to limitations of the Human Embryology Act. General Register Office asked highly intrusive inappropriate questions about their personal lives and Iani's transition, such as when she felt as a woman for the first time, whether she identified as a woman at the time of child's conception etc.

Lesbian women with children from prior heterosexual relationships and marriages are exposed to discrimination in many European countries, when guardianship over children is being decided or contested. There is reason to believe that in many European countries decisions about guardianship over a child are not made in a non-discriminatory manner regarding sexual orientation.

In some countries (Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, France) officials are able to dismiss a person if that person is found to be socially dysfunctional without a clear definition and criteria of what constitutes social dysfunction, and therefore this leaves a lot of room for biased interpretation based on prejudice and homophobia/transphobia. This is mostly affecting lesbian mothers. Even though guardianship is most often awarded to mothers, in cases of lesbian mothers, there are a number of cases of guardianship being denied or contested based on mother's sexual orientation. Due to this, lesbians often decide to hide their sexual orientation from officials, as well as from friends and family, in fear that they might lose their children.

Russia: In accordance with art. 146(1) of the Family Code of the Russian Federation, custody of children cannot be awarded to individuals who are part of a same-sex union registered in accordance with the law of a country in which such a union is permitted. Many same-sex couples who live in Russia have entered into same-sex unions abroad. Many of these couples have children, and this law threatens these families.

Case study

On 4 March 2015, the Sovietsky District Court of the city of Astrakhan deemed legal the removal of custody from a citizen of the Russian Federation on the basis of a single condition—the petitioner was part of a same-sex union. At the time, the woman had been her child's guardian for three years, and the custody authorities had no grievances with her regarding her fulfillment of guardianship duties. The motivation of the court for depriving the guardian of her right to custody was exclusively her participation in a same-sex union, not her sexual orientation. The decision relied on art. 146(1) of the Family Code of the Russian Federation.²³

(c) Forced marriages and honour violence

While persecution of gay men in **Chechnya, Russia**, has been reported widely and received international attention on the highest level, lesbian* women from the region subjected to forced marriages and honour violence,²⁴ remained invisible.

²³ Union of Independent LGBT Activists of Russia (2015), Written submission [to CEDAW] related to discrimination and violence against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in Russia, p. 10. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_RUS_22002_E.pdf

²⁴ E.g. <https://rus.postimees.ee/6435050/menya-otdali-kak-tovar-istorii-chechenskih-lesbiyanok>.

V. Employment

Lesbians at workplace are at the intersection of several discriminations based on their gender, sexual orientation, masculine appearance, motherhood, of course race and disabilities and many others. Even if it is rarely told, the #metoo movement concerns so many lesbians who has been sexually harassed by their male counterparts despite their sexual orientation. "Society has, for a long time, sexualized queer relationships. For the third year in a row, the most searched for term on PornHub in 2017 was lesbian. Queer people, specifically lesbians, have become synonymous with sexual fantasy. (...) According to the Centers for Disease Control's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 44 percent of lesbian women, 61 percent of bisexual women and 35 percent of straight women have experienced "rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner" in their lifetime." Dailyfreepress.com - What Grinds My Gears: Why isn't the #MeToo movement more gay? – Feb. 2018.

The workplace contributes to reinforce the belief that women should look and behave in specific ways. Masculine lesbians face discrimination during job interviews every day. "It comes in the form of comments that imply all lesbians are ugly and badly dressed, the "quips" from co-workers who use the word "lesbian" as if it were an insult, and the evil eye you get from men and women when you kiss your girlfriend in public. Yes, women too can be so invested in men and women dressing and behaving in line with heteronormative social codes that they cannot conceive of others living outside of this paradigm. (...) One lesbian who posted on Everyday Lesbophobia told of a female colleague who told her: "You know, sometimes I can't tell if you're a man or a woman, it would be nice if you wore a dress or a skirt sometimes."(the Guardian - Lesbophobia is homophobia with a side-order of sexism - 2013).

A gender-segregated labour market and lack of equal participation in professional life means there is a gender pay and pension gap in majority of European countries. Owing to the gender pay gap throughout their working lives – which leads to lower pensions also – lesbian women are at serious risk of poverty in old age. This lessens opportunities for self-determination and equal participation. Lesbian couples are potentially doubly affected by the gender pay gap and pension gap.

The 2017 regional study conducted by the World Bank and ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, on average, 61% of lesbian women in the region of Western Balkans (**Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania**) have hidden or disguised their sexual orientation at work, while 43% have experienced a general negative attitude at work against people because they are LGBTI.²⁵ In addition, a study that was conducted by organization Labris in **Serbia** in 2014, has revealed that a majority of physical attacks against lesbians happen at the workplace.²⁶

²⁵ Final report is forthcoming. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/economic-benefits-lgbti-inclusion>

²⁶ http://labris.org.rs/sites/default/files/Hate%20Crimes%20-%202013_2014.pdf

Based on the recent survey conducted among lesbian, bisexual and queer women in **Macedonia**, almost 30% of surveyed women experienced discrimination during their job interviews or at the workplace. None of them reported the case to the authorities or NGO's. Asked to provide the reasons why they did not report it, the majority of them (52,9%) stated that they do not trust the institutions might help them, they are afraid that their sexual orientation or gender identity might be revealed (29,4%), fear for their safety (23,5%), fear of judgement and prejudice by their environment (23,5%) or feeling uncomfortable to talk about their SOGI (23,5%).

The survey on visibility of lesbians and lesbophobia conducted in **France** in 2015²⁷ shows the following: "The share of lesbophobia at work accounts for 11% of lesbophobia testimonials with 447 cases reported. This is the third context cited. The first two are public spaces and family.

The acts lesbians have to face at work: Mockery (48%), misunderstanding (36%) and rejection (36%) are the most frequently reported manifestations of workplace lesbophobia.

Nearly 30% of the respondents had, as a result of this, difficulties to live openly their homosexuality: "I do not reveal so easily my homosexuality in the workplace." Living depressive episodes is the second most reported psychological consequence. It is more often reported (23% of cases) than for all lesbophobic acts (18% of cases). Angers (23% of cases), withdrawal (18% of cases), and psychological support (14% of cases) also result from lesbophobic acts at work."

Based on the experiences of the lesbian grass root workers in the countries of Western Balkan (**Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro**), the common problems in the LB communities are:

- The younger women have a lot of internalized lesbophobia and combined with the discrimination in the society, they face double obstacles in finishing their education or finding a job. Many of them leave the faculties, live in fear and isolation, guilt and self-punishment, shame and humiliation.
- Many of them do not have ambition to finish education and find a job because they cannot imagine to live safely in these countries.
- They avoid situation and placed that could out them as queers, so this is the main criteria when they pick jobs. They would pick less paid jobs, only to keep themselves safe.
- Also, there is huge exclusion on the looks. Many butch lesbians cannot access the jobs they aspire due to their looks, they are not wanted because they do not fit the norm.

Russia: In Russia, laws banning the so-called "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations to minors" provoked a wave of online harassment and persecutions against LGBT individuals and LGBT rights defenders working in schools and universities. As female teachers are still prevalent

²⁷ https://www.sos-homophobie.org/sites/default/files/enquete_sur_la_visibilite_des_lesbiennes_et_la_lesbophobie_2015.pdf

in the Russian educational system and especially schools, lesbian women seems to be particularly vulnerable to such attacks.

Case studies

A.K.'s case - Saint Petersburg

In December 2014, the Special School No. 565 (a school for children with special needs) in Saint Petersburg fired A.K., a music teacher, after the school director and the district administration received information about the woman's private life. Someone calling themselves Timur Isayev known for harassment of teachers who support LGBT community had collected this information in social media and disseminated it. After receiving information about the teacher from Timur Isayev, the administration notified the teacher that her sexual orientation was incompatible with working in the school - even though before the incident, the teacher had not been open at the workplace about her personal life. The school director gave her a choice between voluntary resignation and being fired with a negative record in her employment history. The woman refused to resign of her own accord, and the director fired her based on Article 81, para 8, of the Russian Labor Code (making it legal to dismiss "an employee performing educational functions if they commit an immoral act incompatible with continuing this type of work"). In firing the teacher, the director emphasized on many occasions that he had no problems with A.K.'s performance as a teacher, but that he was under strong pressure from the authorities and had to let her go.²⁸ After exhausting all the domestic remedies, A.K. and her attorney applied to the European Court of Human Rights (case communicated).²⁹

O's case

The principal of a school summoned a teacher (O.) and showed her the dossier that had been sent by Timur Isayev with information from various social media confirming O.'s being a lesbian. The director said that while she was not interested in O.'s sexual orientation because it was O.'s personal matter, if kids' parents happened to find out everyone would be in trouble. At the suggestion of the principal, O. wrote a letter of resignation voluntarily. After the dismissal, O. started receiving threats from Timur Isayev that if she were to accept a job in another school, he would get her fired from that position as well. O. enjoys working as a teacher and wants to get back to work but is afraid of harassment.

²⁸ Joint NGO Submission to CEDAW (2015), p. 8. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_RUS_19228_E.pdf.

²⁹ See *Krupnova v. Russia*, a case submitted to the European Court of Human Rights (communicated on 26 October 2017). Available at: <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-178827>.

At the school, none of the teachers or students knew about O.'s orientation. O.'s girlfriend, who's also a teacher, received threats from Timur Isayev too, but she had already resigned and it wasn't connected with Isayev.³⁰

Maria's case - Krasnoyarsk

Maria, a teacher of pop vocal, was fired from the city music school in Krasnoyarsk because of complaints of the same Timur Isayev. Isayev called the school after a thorough study of the woman's personal page on social media. Considering the date contained in the profile as "propaganda of homosexuality," Isayev handed all the collected materials to the staff of the music school, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and to the Krasnoyarsk Mayor's office. The director of the Centre for the Continuing Education called Maria and warned about the upcoming conversation, during which she would be asked to write a letter of resignation at her own request, and also said that the administration would force Maria to leave the school herself or be fired under the article. The next day, in the administration's office, Maria was under the pressure for six hours. The woman was blackmailed with all sorts of methods - from her and the whole centre's reputation to the fate of her parents. Maria refused to write a letter of resignation, so she was fired, indicating the reasons for "immoral behaviour."³¹

P.A.'s and S' case - Omsk

P.A. was interviewed for the post of teacher in the Foreign Languages center "ABC CLUB" on August 21, 2015. During the interview E.V. asked P.A. about her work-related experience and education. Then E.V. asked whether P.A. knew a certain woman – S. When P.A. told that S. was her best friend, E.V. started asking specific questions about their relationship: "And how close are you with your girlfriend? Very close?" P.A. replied that S. was her best friend and nothing more. E.V. noticed that P.A. had an "aggressive" profile in "VKon-takte" social media network: including a number of photos of P.A. embracing S. As a result, P.A. was rejected as a potential employee.

It is important to clarify that in December 2014, S. was interviewed as well, at that exact language center and E.V. rejected her for the job by saying: "You are suitable for the post according to all characteristics, however we can't allow you to work with us because of you being a lesbian." S. expressed a desire to get a written refusal explaining the reasons, but she was not given one.³²

³⁰ Russian LGBT Network (2016) Monitoring report of discrimination and violence based on SOGI in Russia in 2015, https://www.lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/monitoring_of_discrimination.pdf.

³¹ Russian LGBT Network (2018), Monitoring of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia in 2016-2017, <https://lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/discrimination.pdf>.

³² Russian LGBT Network (2016) Monitoring report of discrimination and violence based on SOGI in Russia in 2015, https://www.lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/monitoring_of_discrimination.pdf.

VI. Education

Spain

Changing school because of lesbophobic attacks or being attacked with lesbophobic comments made by teachers are some of the violences that lesbian students have to support during their academic life. According to a survey carried out in the **Aragonese Community**, the 35% of the general students express a complete repudiation against lesbians and only a 9% of the participants in said survey know some lesbian women, which is an evidence of the lesbians' invisibility. One of the result of this research is that lesbian women are rarely out in Aragonese countryside areas.³³

According to another **Spanish** survey called "Lgbt-fobia en las aulas 2015", the 70-80% of LGB students hear their own sexual orientation as an insult in their schools; LGB students in general think that teachers don't do enough to protect them; and the 80% of LGB students don't come out because of fear.³⁴

Based on the aforementioned recent survey in **Macedonia**, 33,9% of the lesbian, bisexual or queer women experienced discrimination in the last 5 years: by their peers (26,8%), teachers (12,5%) or administration in the schools (6,3%) on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Neither of them reported the case to the authorities or NGO's. The reasons for that were distrust in the institutions (42,1%), fear of judgement and prejudice by their environment (34,2%), fear about their safety (26,3%), fear of being exposed by the officers (15,8%) or feeling uncomfortable to talk about their SOGI (10,5%).

Russia: Parents of a 16-year-old girl read her messages on social media and found out that their daughter was dating another 16 year-old girl. Parents subjected the girl to physical violence, put under house arrest, forbade going to school, took away her phone. Parents refused to pay for the education of the girl in a private school resulting in her expulsion. Parents also carried out pagan rituals, took the girl to a sorcerer, and threw her into cold water. After being expelled from the private school, the girl herself applied to a public school and arranged with the principal to be accepted for education. However, the parents, after learning about this, talked with the principal of the school, and the girl was denied the right to education. She was unable to continue the education until reaching her majority.³⁵

In the fall of 2015, R. was subjected to public outing by her classroom teacher. She noticed that R. and her friends often sit close enough to each other, hugging and kissing on the cheek when meeting one another. In the rest place the teacher decided to call the girl's parents and told them that their daughter was a "lesbian" and "had developed wrong inclinations." Parents didn't react

³³ <https://somoslgtb.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/informe-lgtbifobia-en-las-aulas1.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/1-lgbt-fobia-en-las-aulas-2015-informe-completo-web.pdf>

³⁵ Russian LGBT Network (2018), Monitoring of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia in 2016-2017, <https://lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/discrimination.pdf>.

to the teacher's statement. At school the classroom teacher continues to treat such behavior of students with obvious disapproval.³⁶

³⁶ Russian LGBT Network (2016) Monitoring report of discrimination and violence based on SOGI in Russia in 2015, https://www.lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/monitoring_of_discrimination.pdf.

VII. Health

Albania: *Discrimination against women:* LBT Women face discrimination by medical staff because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and lack of confidentiality, which in turn excludes the LBT women from the access to information and health services³⁷.

Problems of regulatory framework in the field of health: Despite positive changes achieved in various aspects, legal and social, a lot remains to be done in terms of respecting the rights of LGBTI people in the country. According to the study, the regulatory framework in the field of health does not have any categorization for various population groups when referring to the protection of rights and the equal provision of health care. For transgender/intersex people there is not provision of specific assistance related to gender change or other treatments associated with their special needs. Moreover, Albanian surgical services do not perform the respective medical interventions. The law “On Reproductive Health” has a legal provision that guarantees the right of same-sex couples to have children through assisted medical reproduction techniques. According to the Alliance Against LGBT Discrimination representative, Article 17 of the Law stating: “Every individual has the right to defend his/her reproductive ability, by complaining against the actions, decisions and injuries by third parties, when the rights related to reproductive health are violated” should be further interpreted regarding medical interventions that include intersex people.

Health care for LBT women in the country does not exist: Current data³⁸ indicate that LBT women are invisible and their needs are not taken into account in the design of health policies, development of services and the provision of adequate health care. Health professionals have prejudices, which limits contact with patients and does not enable open communication between them. They do not have knowledge on the special needs of LBT people and cannot offer affordable and quality care. This makes the LBT people to have no faith in the health services and health professionals.

Russia: Lolita turned to a private clinic for preventive examination by a gynecologist. Initially, the woman doctor was nice and tactful in communication. However, after Lolita answered to “What kind of protection do you use?” that she lived with a girl and didn’t need protection, the doctor changed her attitudes towards her. She began to ask tactless questions and give comments: “You’re not just examining! I dare you slept with a guy?” Sometimes she turned to rudeness and directly ridiculed Lolita’s relationships with her girlfriend. Lolita left the appointment that she had paid for without having the examination completed and getting necessary information and consultation.³⁹

³⁷

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_23255_E.pdf

³⁸ Voko K (2013). Technical Report - Access to services and quality of health care for LGBT people in Albania. Alliance against LGBT discrimination, December 2013.

³⁹ Russian LGBT Network (2018), Monitoring of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia in 2016-2017, <https://lgbt.net.org/sites/default/files/discrimination.pdf>.

VIII. Housing

Recommendation from the UN SR on Housing referring to lesbians⁴⁰: “In order to ensure that housing is accessible to all groups of women, it is similarly important for housing law, policy and programmes to reflect the needs of women who may be especially disadvantaged and who encounter intersectional discrimination, including widows, elderly women, lesbians, homeless women, migrant women, women with disabilities, women who may be single mothers or single heads of households, women living with or otherwise affected by chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and mental health disorders, women belonging to racial/ethnic/linguistic minorities, domestic workers, sex workers, illiterate women and women who have been displaced.”

The Special Rapporteur reiterates that States should design, adopt and implement gender-sensitive and human rights-based law, policy and programming which: “.....Prioritizes the needs of particularly vulnerable and/or marginalized women, including widows, elderly women, lesbians, homeless women, migrant women, women with disabilities, women who may be single mothers or single heads of household, women living with or otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS, women belonging to minorities, domestic workers, sex workers, illiterate women and women who have been displaced...”

In the last 2 years, 31% of the people who have received assistance by the LGBTI+ Shelter Initiative in **Armenia** where lesbians, bisexual women or queer people. In most of the cases, people were kicked out of their homes after coming out to their families or after their families would discover their SOGI. Several of them reported threats and violence by the men in their families endangering their safety and security. In one case there was attempt by the family to send their daughter to Russia only to separate her from her partner.⁴¹

⁴⁰ https://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/housing/A-HRC-19-53_en.pdf

⁴¹ Interview with the coordinator of the LGBTI+ Shelter Initiative in Armenia

IX. Sports

From the late nineteenth century to the present, sexual discrimination in women's sport has been an issue of primary concern in a seemingly endless battle of the sexes. The devaluation and stigmatization that female athletes face has its roots in the early medical communities which warned against the "masculinizing effects" of athleticism. Fearing that women would adopt masculine mannerisms, deeper voices, and overdeveloped bodies, scientific experts, by way of medical studies, were determined to prove that women's participation in sport also impaired their reproductive capacity and jeopardized their sexual identity. Thus, talented sporting females were characterized as "muscular amazons" by the media, calling into question their femininity as well as their sexual preference. (The Sexual Politics of Women in Sport. A Survey on "Lesbophobia").

Today, while the access of women to public sport facilities is still a "in progress" issue, lesbians are submitted to wide lesbophobia inside the fields. Attacks on lesbian teams are a daily experience like the French football team Les Degommeuses (the coach of the boys team before them got angry when they asked him to leave the field and when Cécile, head of the Dégommeuses, asks him to lower a tone, he would have answered: "I'm going to make you eat my balls in your mouth!" Before addressing his young players: "Let's go guys, we applauds lesbians! "

(http://www.liberation.fr/sports/2015/02/21/des-footballeuses-insultees-sur-un-terrain-portent-plainte_1204384).

X. Right to seek asylum

Regarding the issue of asylum, lesbians often find themselves in very precarious situations on top of having fled their country. Too often, instead of finding safety, lesbians encounter additional struggles along the way and in the country of arrival. Whether back home, en route, or in the country of destination, lesbians will experience specific struggles based on the conflation of their gender and sexuality. They might be fleeing a forced marriage, with children and having to enter into sex work in order to get to the country where they wish to seek asylum. Often times, consent has little to do with the choices made along the way.

The communities which would have supported her often turns the back because of their opinions or religious views. Additionally, it might be that the country where asylum is being sought ends up being an intolerant place for sexual and gender minorities. Even when the country where asylum is being sought turns out to be tolerant, it is not a guarantee that the staff at the immigration authorities will be sensitive to LBQ women. This might lead to very intrusive questioning techniques where lesbians find themselves having to prove that they like women. In some cases, applicants requests were not taken seriously or were rejected based on the fact that the person did not 'look like a lesbian'. Expectations in terms of what it means to be a lesbian can go beyond appearances. In one case a barrister told his client that he felt it was strange that as a lesbian she had never taken part in groups in Zimbabwe.

(Ref.: [No Safe Refuge, Experiences of LGBT Asylum Seekers in Detention](#))

Furthermore, cases where lesbian applicants have children are also many times misunderstood by immigration officers. The same is true when a lesbian applicant is diagnosed HIV positive. In some cases, immigration officers might also present a patronizing tone; in one example an officer told a lesbian applicant: 'So if you knew you were a lesbian why would you go with your girlfriend into a bar and kiss her yet you know in Uganda it's not allowed.'

(Ref.: [No Safe Refuge, Experiences of LGBT Asylum Seekers in Detention](#))

In some instances claims are rejected not based on officers' prejudicial ideas of what lesbians look like or the like but simply because they might lack information or general knowledge on the topic. For example, in April 2016 in the UK, a lesbian was found 'inconsistent' because she had said she liked girls but also shared being embarrassed about this.

(Ref.: <https://uklgig.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Still-Falling-Short.pdf>)

In countries where asylum seekers are put into detention-like or detention facilities while their claim is being processed additional burdens can occur. Again the insecurity can come from different sources: other asylum seekers or the detention staff. In one case, in the UK, the officer approached a lesbian family and told them that they would have to respect all the religious beliefs in the detention center and that there were children in the facility, which one can understand as having been meant as a signal that no sign of affection between the two women would be tolerated by the officer(s). (Ref.: [No Safe Refuge, Experiences of LGBT Asylum Seekers in Detention](#))

V. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Recommendation (2010)5 is a document of great importance for lesbian* women. However, based on the findings of this report, most of the Member States still are failing to ensure societies free of discrimination. The lesbians* in Europe are still greatly experiencing discrimination, violence and exclusion. They still have limited access to health and social services and their overall rights are not guaranteed.

The European Lesbian Conference started from the realization that the “LGBTI label” has often left lesbians’ needs uncovered. Additionally, there is an important gap in funding for specific lesbian projects. This lack of funding and resources prevents the European Lesbian* Conference from doing a more comprehensive report on the level of implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 for lesbians*. This work is not only necessary, it is vital for the LGBTI community within the Council of Europe.

Annex 1 - Submitting organization

The European Lesbian* Conference (EL*C) is a collective of lesbian, queer, bi and trans women registered as an NGO, which aims to create a network of lesbians in Europe and Central Asia.

EL*C's Objectives are:

- To fight for full and equal rights for all lesbians* & eliminate discrimination and intersectional oppression;
- To increase visibility for underrepresented lesbians* and decrease stigma;
- To strive for an increase in overall well being of lesbians*;
- To increase available data and exchange knowledge on the lives of lesbians*;
- To increase funding for lesbian* led or centered projects;
- To build a strong network of lesbians* based in Europe and Central Asia.

EL*C's Activities include:

- Community and alliance building with NGOs and institutions;
- Advocacy and awareness raising work at European and international levels;
- Biennial conference organizing in a different location each time;
- Report writing & data analysis on lesbian* specific issues.

The aim of the EL*C is to work in an inclusive way. We insisted on calling it a “lesbian” conference and a lesbian* NGO although we recognize that, as with any category or label, it may be contested and insufficient to describe the diversity of our communities. We are aware that many previous lesbian gatherings faced challenges about inclusion and exclusion issues. However, using the word “lesbian” is part of the political struggle for visibility, empowerment and representation. Therefore, we used “lesbian*” with an asterisk in the title European Lesbian* Conference, so as to include anyone who identifies as lesbian, trans lesbian, intersex, feminist, bi or queer, and all others who identify with lesbian* activism.

The European Lesbian Conference started from the realization that the “LGBTI label” has often left lesbians’ needs uncovered. Additionally, there is an important gap in funding for lesbian-specific projects. The 2013/2014 and 2015/2016 Reports from GPP (http://www.lgbtfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2013-2014_Global_Resources_Report.pdf) state that funding focused on Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women are 3% percent of LGBTI funding outside the US. We want to underline that this lack of fundings prevents the European Lesbian Conference to do a

more comprehensive report on the level of implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 for lesbians*.