

ILGA-Europe's written submission to the European Commission's 2013 Progress Report on Montenegro¹

Brussels, May 17, 2013

Reporting period: October 2012-April 2013

A summary of key developments and trends

Homophobia and transphobia remains widespread as demonstrated by various cases of hateful expressions and attacks as well as opinion polls. Montenegrin authorities condemned violence against LGBTI people and adopted a national strategy against homophobia. However, the consultation process with the civil society and the final strategy against homophobia has been criticized by a key civil society actor working on LGBT issues.

Bias motivated violence and speech

- ILGA-Europe has collected information on 26 hate crimes perpetrated in 2012, including numerous cases of threats of violence and physical attacks.
- During the reporting period, the below listed cases of bias motivated violence and speech have been documented by LGBT Forum Progress:
 - The director of a video production promoting LGBTI rights, as well as one of the actors and a journalist were beaten by a group of football fans in Podgorica. The victims were on their way home from a concert, when a group of "Varvari" (Barbarians) attacked them. The government condemned the attack. The alleged perpetrators have been identified and arrested, and a court case was subsequently opened. Following the attack, the leader of a sports fan group gave a statement to the press expressing his support for the attack.
 - 12 threats of violence have been made against LGBTI community members on various social networks. Leader of the LGBT Forum Progress has been threatened to be kidnapped and mutilated. The cases have been reported to the police and are being investigated.
 - In February 2013, LGBT activists joint the protest for stopping violence against women. While marching with a rainbow flag they have been verbally attacked by a man who first demanded the flags be given to him and then tried to grab them from the hands of the activists by force. Police intervened and arrested the man.

Equality and non-discrimination

- The Ministry of Education and Sports published an article, based on the research data by Juventas, dealing with the problem of homophobia in Montenegrin society. The article, written by the senior advisor in the Ministry of Education and Sports and published in *Prosvjetni rad* magazine for culture, education and science professionals in Montenegro points out to the negative impact of homophobia and highlights the importance of building a society free of prejudice towards LGBT people. She further emphasized the important role of education professionals in this awareness raising actions.

- In April 2013, Montenegrin authorities adopted a *National Strategy of Fight against Homophobia*. While LGBT Forum Progress has been positive about the strategy, Juventas, another key civil society actor working on LGBT issues in Montenegro, has been critical of the consultation process with the civil society on the strategy as well as the final document itself.
- Montenegro has become one of the beneficiary countries of the Council of Europe's regional project *Combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*.

Police and law enforcement

- LGBT Forum Progress has conducted a number of activities to sensitize law enforcement authorities on LGBTI issues. This led to a more professional handling by the police of cases of violence and threats against LGBTI community members. The cooperation between liaison persons on LGBT at the police and LGBT organisations has improved.

Public opinion

- A research conducted by Juventas in 32 high schools around the country showed high levels of disapproval towards LGBT people. The survey found that 46% of students interviewed think that homosexuality is a disease and 45.9% of students do not agree with the claim that homosexuals have the right to express their sexual orientation.
- Juventas' research amongst police officers and medical personnel showed that: 51% of police officers and 48.1% of medical workers think that homosexuality is a disease, 68.6% of police officers and 59.7% of medical workers think that homosexuality is not natural and 66.7% of police officers and 48.1% of medical workers would feel as failed parents upon finding out that their child is gay.
- The survey by LGBT Forum Progress and Center for Civic Education in 2012 shows some decrease in level of homophobia among the general public over the previous two years. While in 2010, 68.5% of the respondents believed that homosexuality is a disease, in 2012, 59.9% were of that same opinion. The survey also showed decrease in public support of violence. Nonetheless, 11% of respondents justified violent behaviour directed towards LGBT people in 2012 survey.

¹ This submission gives a snapshot of human rights situation of LGBTI people in the country and follows a structure and approach similar to ILGA-Europe's Annual Review 2013. It is based on continuous monitoring of the country situation, collection and analysis of first-hand information from LGBTI human rights defenders and country experts.