Asylum

NGO Kyrgyz Indigo received several requests from community members this year, who planned to seek asylum in Europe due to discrimination on the basis of SOGIESC or economic violence by relatives. Some have left the country already.

Bias-motivated speech

In cooperation with NGO Labrys, British Article 19 published a five-country report on anti-LGBT hate speech in June, finding that hate speech in Kyrgyz media, online and used by influential public figures is alarmingly common. The report raised concerns about reporting, e.g. a local TV show “TV-Kaiguul” screening clips featuring police violence against trans women sex workers people in 2016.

LGBTQI people commonly face forced outing in media and online. In August, someone posted a photo of LGBT activists without their permission, asking the public to share it. The post received hateful comments and violent threats against the community. NGOs petitioned the State Committee for National Security.

On 17 October, “NewsTV” released a programme featuring trans women, which was later widely shared online, receiving transphobic comments and threats. One trans woman was severely affected. Police had also been harassing her.

In the fall, a video featuring a lesbian couple in a park was posted on Youtube and reached 700,000 views in two days. Due to pressure from LGBTQI groups, Youtube removed the video.

Bias-motivated violence

Hate crimes against LGBTQI people remain a severe issue and no SOGIESC-inclusive hate crimes laws are in place. Reporting is very low as victims fear further violence by the police. In the spring, six LGBTQI people were beaten and robbed by a group of people. Three perpetrators were arrested and fined. Supportive lawyers were indispensable in the case.

Bodily integrity

“Ala-kachuu”, i.e. bride kidnapping, is still common, especially in rural areas, despite the government having toughened punishment in 2013. In early 2018, a trans girl was kidnapped and taken to a remote region. After escaping thanks to her friends, she reported the case.

Diversity

The discourse on LGBTQI people is slowly shifting. This November, NGO Kyrgyz Indigo organised the exhibition “Еl emne deit?” (What will people say?) focusing on gender-based violence against women with intersectional identities, including LBT women, women living with HIV, and who use drugs.

Education

Any information regarding SOGIESC is still lacking in curricula, and training is only carried out by civil society. NGO Kyrgyz Indigo held trainings at the Kyrgyz Police Academy under Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kyrgyz State Institute of Retraining and Advanced Training under the Ministry of Health on sexual and gender diversity, and later on harm reduction.

Employment

Discrimination against LGB and particularly trans people, remains widespread in employment. For example, a trans man was bullied into quitting his job after his colleagues found out he was trans. They verbally harassed him every day, severely damaging his emotional well-being.

A gay man was asked to show a certificate of his HIV status by his employer. Following the intervention of Kyrgyz Indigo, the Anti-Monopoly Regulation Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic had this discriminative requirement removed. The Agency established that the company’s policy violated the Law about HIV/AIDS.

Equality and non-discrimination

In May, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended Kyrgyzstan to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. The civil society Coalition for Equality continued advocacy for such legislation in 2018.

Freedom of expression

The draft law on “prohibiting propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations” is currently pending second reading at the Zhogorku Kenesh (Parliament), aiming to outlaw any positive
presentation of the LGBT community. The law has stirred great public discussion, triggering a wave of hate crimes.

**Health**

The government has been cooperative on health issues, agreeing with civil society that everyone should have access to healthcare, including LGBTQI people. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the EECA region, where state programmes on HIV specifically target key populations (gay men and other MSM, bisexuals, and trans people).

Trans healthcare is regulated by the “Manual on provision of medical and social care for transgender, transsexual and gender nonconforming people for medical professionals of all levels of the Kyrgyz Republic healthcare system and other institutions”, approved in 2017. The Manual was prepared with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, trans activists, and NGOs, and also establishes the procedure of LGR (see under Legal gender recognition). It will be part of the curriculum for medical professionals.

**Human rights defenders**

Kyrgyz Indigo reported several attacks against LGBTQI activists this year. In September, an activist was detained by police and threatened with a fine of 5000USD unless they made a video of all LGBT people in the region.

In August, the leader of LGBT Initiative received anonymous hate calls and found dead cats by his house. The house was later attacked. In September, he had to leave the city for safety.

**Legal gender recognition**

Labrys continued advocacy with the Ministry of Health and the state registration service on LGR, which is regulated by the Manual on trans healthcare (see under Health). An outstanding issue is that even after the changing of legal gender and name, the personal identification number (PIN) remains gendered according to the person’s gender assigned at birth.

**Police and law enforcement**

Police violence, including arbitrary detention, extortion and blackmail, remain common. Few LGBT people have trust in the police, many considering them sources of physical and psychological violence. Kyrgyz LGBT people in Russia face similar abuse by police. Migrant trans women sex workers are routinely targeted by police raids, have been video recorded and abused emotionally and physically, or deported back home.

**Public opinion**

Public opinion about LGBTQI people continues to be negative. Young LGB people face pressure from their families to get married.

In June, the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM) released a five-country report on the attitudes of social services staff, including in Kyrgyzstan. Respondents from almost all professional groups held positive attitudes about LGBT people in all five countries, except for the Kyrgyz police.