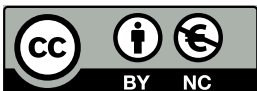




Under the radar

Documenting violence
against trans people



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Under the radar: documenting violence against trans people

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TGEU is a member-based organisation working to strengthen the rights and wellbeing of trans people in Europe and Central Asia.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trans people face bias-motivated discrimination in all spheres of life, including education, employment, healthcare, housing, and other services. While some countries in Western Europe have improved the legal situation of trans people in the past decade and implemented the principle of self-determination in legal gender recognition procedures, positive legal changes for trans communities in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA) have been marginal.

Transgender Europe (TGEU) has worked together with activists since 2008 on researching trans people's lived experiences of violence in its Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM).¹ In 2014, TGEU initiated the ProTrans project,² focusing on violence against trans individuals in the CEECA region. Ever since, the project documented evidence on trans victimisation and provided activists with resources to advocate for better policies to improve the living conditions of trans persons.

The present report summarises the key results of the ProTrans project between 2015-2020. In this period, project partners from 5 countries (Hungary, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and Turkey) collected incidents of violence from their contexts. The data paints a grim picture of state-sponsored and non-state violence against trans individuals, with the following key trends:

- Private individuals make up the majority of assailants in the cases collected. These can be passer-bys, owners of venues, clients of sex workers or people posing as clients, amongst other categories. An overwhelming part of documented incidents occur at public places, which signals the lack of safety for trans people and their need to hide;

¹ <https://transrespect.org>

² <https://tgeu.org/pro-trans>

- Violence committed by family members is common in all countries of the ProTrans partnership, especially with young trans people facing humiliation, harassment, and being kicked out of their family early on in their lives;
- Police and other law enforcement commit a significant amount of violence against trans people, especially in countries with a visible sex working trans population, such as Serbia and Turkey. This phenomenon leads to the lack of trust in police and low reporting of incidents. Partners reveal that trans people turn to the police when suffering a crime only as a last resort;
- In Kyrgyzstan (and other Central Asian countries), mainstream media also plays an important role in fuelling negative attitudes towards trans communities. They often accompany police actions and film trans people being approached by a frequently abusive police.

Fighting these forms of anti-trans violence in CEECA is challenging at best, as it will be shown later on in this publication. TGEU is grateful for the many ideas, strategies, and hard work of its key partners (Geten Serbia, GENDERDOC-M Moldova, Labrys Kyrgyzstan, Red Umbrella Turkey, and Transvanilla Hungary). Special thanks to project managers who have led the project over time, namely Boglarka Fedorko, Akram Kubanychbekov, and Sanjar Kurmanov. TGEU would like to furthermore express appreciation to its partners and members in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia for their engagement with the implementation of ProTrans at its different stages.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, TGEU has been working with community-based LGBT and trans organisations from Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA) on monitoring violence and human rights violations against trans people in this region. The project has also had an advocacy component, and data on anti-trans violence collected through the monitoring has been used to target stakeholders in order to better the human rights situation of trans people. Project partners have also offered community-based support services for survivors of violence and increased knowledge about possibilities for redress among the trans community.

The project in numbers (from October 2016 to October 2020):

- 2551 legal aid sessions provided
- 865 psycho-social counselling sessions provided
- 69 complaints filed
- 7 strategic litigation cases brought to court
- 10 advocacy materials produced
- 27 advocacy submissions produced
- 14 campaigns conducted
- 30 human rights defenders trained

In the second year of the project, TGEU launched a publication³ with the aim of showcasing its partners' work and providing systematic data in the CEECA region, where evidence on trans victimisation and anti-trans violence is scarce and anecdotal, in order to improve public policies to prevent and tackle discrimination and violence against trans people. The report contained detailed information on violence against trans communities, monitored by the following organisations:

- Geten, Serbia
- GENDERDOC-M, Moldova
- Labrys Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan
- Red Umbrella, Turkey
- Transvanilla, Hungary

³TGEU (2015). *For the record. Documenting violence against trans people. Experiences from the ProTrans "Protecting transgender people from violence" project*. Available: https://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/TGEU_protrans_publication_1_Nov.pdf



Cover of the report "For the Record: Documenting violence against trans people"

Since the report was published in 2015, the partnership grew and also incorporated organisations from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia⁴. Furthermore, partners conceptualised and implemented national and regional campaigns to draw attention to anti-trans violence on the occasion of the Trans Day of Remembrance, an annual commemoration held on 20 November to honour the lives of murdered trans people. The core of each campaign has been a video highlighting violence against trans people and a message to the community, accompanied by stories of trans people and activists, in-depth exploration of patterns of violence affecting sub-groups of the

trans community, namely trans sex workers or detainees, and visual materials to be used at community memorials and online actions.

With the present publication, we aim to reassess legal and policy developments - both pro-trans and anti-trans - in the region and beyond since our last published report in 2015. Additionally, we present the results of the monitoring component of the ProTrans project, drawing attention to trends of trans victimisation monitored by trans groups in the region. We also highlight the situation from the core partnership countries. Finally, we detail recommendations to policy makers to improve the safety and wellbeing of trans communities in CEECA.

⁴TGEU (2016). *Documenting violence against trans people Experiences from Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine*. Available: https://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FortheRecord_FINAL.pdf



Trans Day of Remembrance videos (2016-2020)⁵

⁵Trans Day of Remembrance: <https://tgeu.org/tdor/>

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS 2015-2020

Around the world, trans persons face criminalisation, discrimination, and extraordinary levels of gender-based violence. On the national level, there is limited attention to trans people's often devastating living circumstances, especially in the CEECA region. Nevertheless, the 2015-2020 period saw many international mechanisms address the needs of trans people. Several important and emerging international protection mechanisms can be leveraged to improve trans people's safety and challenge anti-trans policy-making in the region.

A key milestone in the global struggles of trans communities was the **adoption of the International Classification of Diseases - 11th Revision (ICD-11)** during the 72nd World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2019, where the World Health Organization (WHO) officially adopted ICD-11. In this standard-setting classification, trans-related categories were removed from the Chapter on Mental and Behavioral Disorders, which means that trans identities have been formally de-psycho-pathologised in the ICD-11.⁶ The road to full depathologisation, however, seems to be long in the CEECA region, where legal gender recognition procedures still carry the legacy of pathologisation.

⁶See more: <https://tgeu.org/icd-11-depathologizes-trans-and-gender-diverse-identities/>

⁷The Committee of the Social Charter found that legal requirement for transgender persons in the Czech Republic to undergo medical sterilisation in order to have their gender identity recognised seriously impacts a person's health, physical and psychological integrity, and dignity. Even in the face of a clear and direct international institutional decision on sterilisation, the Czech Republic has not changed its legal gender procedures ever since.

These legal processes require humiliating, invasive, and abusive procedures in order to change one's gender in official documents. In the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, and the Czech Republic⁷ require sterilisation as a prerequisite to legal gender recognition, while all of the countries in CEECA with legal gender recognition processes in place demand a mental health diagnosis.⁸

The **Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YP+10)** was adopted in 2017 to supplement the original Yogyakarta Principles, which were outlined as a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity by a group of international human rights experts. The YP+10 recommends states to cease any State-sponsored or State-condoned attacks on the lives of persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity and to implement measures to prevent and provide protection from all forms of violence and harassment related to sexual orientation and gender identity, amongst other recommendations.

In 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council created the mandate of the **Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity** for an initial period of three years, which was renewed in June 2019. The Independent Expert has created thematic reports for the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, including on legal recognition and depathologisation.⁹

⁸ More on the legal situation of trans people in Europe and Central Asia: <https://tgeu.org/trans-rights-europe-central-asia-index-maps-2020/>

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx>

The **European Union** has also addressed LGBT rights high on its agenda. While the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy of the European Commission¹⁰ emphasises “reinforcing legal protection for LGBTIQ people against hate crime, hate speech and violence” and “improving the recognition of trans and non-binary identities, and intersex people,” progress is slow on the ground. In the latter matter, only two states in Europe adopted new legal gender recognition procedures based on self-determination during 2019-2020 (Iceland in 2019 and Switzerland in 2020). In CEECA, even contradictory laws emerged: in 2020, the parliaments of Hungary and Kyrgyzstan eliminated legal gender recognition for trans people entirely.

Hungary and Kyrgyzstan have not been the only countries in the region to roll out anti-trans legislation and target trans communities with State-sponsored attacks. A dangerous rise of coordinated anti-trans narratives have been appearing throughout the region. These narratives, which frame trans persons as a dangerous “gender ideology” that seeks to displace dominant heteropatriarchal notions of “normalcy,” reinforce existing prejudices. This climate contributes to more systemic and severe discrimination and violence against trans people throughout the region. In 2020, during the COVID-19 crisis, the Parliament of Romania aimed to ban gender studies (which was later found unconstitutional); the age limit to access legal gender recognition in Kazakhstan was raised from 18 to 21 years of age; and in Russia, legislation was proposed (and later revoked) seeking to deny trans people’s access to rights such as legal gender recognition, marriage, and the right to raise children. Similar worrying developments of State violence, police brutality, and mass repression during peaceful (LGBT) protests were seen in Poland and Belarus.

¹⁰https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en

The massive attacks targeting trans people during the COVID-19 crisis are the result of concentrated efforts of conservative anti-gender forces originating from the USA, Western Europe (the Holy See, Spain, Portugal, UK), and, more recently, also from Central-Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland). Anti-LGBT campaigns have been taken up by State and non-State actors all across the region, targeting countries in CEECA partly because of a lack of protective legislative framework, and partly due to weak LGBT organising and low visibility of LGBT groups. This rise of anti-LGBT populism plays on cultural biases that stigmatise non-traditional gender identities, which is hard to counter due to a lack of accurate information about the real lives of trans people among the general public. Attitudes towards trans people are the most stereotypical in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. According to a 2016 opinion poll surveying 23 countries from all world regions on attitudes towards trans people, Russia, Hungary, and Poland ranked amongst the most transphobic countries. The pathologising attitude is very significant in the region: 44% of people in Serbia and 43% in Hungary think being trans is a mental disorder.¹¹

¹¹Ipsos (2018). *Global Attitudes Toward Transgender People*. Available: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/global-attitudes-toward-transgender-people>

MONITORING VIOLENCE IN THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter, we analyse incidents taking place after 1 October 2015, the publishing date of the first ProTrans report. Between 1 October 2015 and 15 February 2021,¹² a total of 953 discriminatory or (hate) crime incidents have been collected by organisations involved¹³ in data collection for the ProTrans project. The distribution of cases between core project countries is shown on Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Distribution of cases between core partner countries

The highest number of cases was collected by Red Umbrella, Turkey. This reflects the level of systemic anti-trans attitudes in Turkey as well as the organisation's reach: Red Umbrella reaches out to a very high number of trans individuals throughout the country, especially sex workers.

¹² Date when data was analysed to prepare the current publication.

¹³ Continually or temporarily depending on project duration

In other ProTrans countries – according to partners – the willingness to report anti-trans violence is lower than in Turkey due to various factors, including internalised transphobia, more common occurrence of microaggressions and incidents that do not exhaust criminal code categories, and potentially low awareness on rights and redress mechanisms.

Since 2014, ProTrans partners have used a common classification system to record crimes against trans community members, which is also in line with the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) standards.¹⁴ The ProTrans partners relied on various data sources when monitoring incidents (e.g., victims, witnesses, police, media, NGOs, etc.) Because the project attempted to produce credible data, it has been essential that the data collected are based on direct evidence as much as possible. Therefore, reports that came to partners’ attention have been verified to the greatest possible extent; for example, besides the victim’s reports or media articles, witnesses have been asked about their perceptions, if any. The main source of information was victims’ reports, shown on Fig. 2. (Note that some cases were verified through multiple sources of information.)

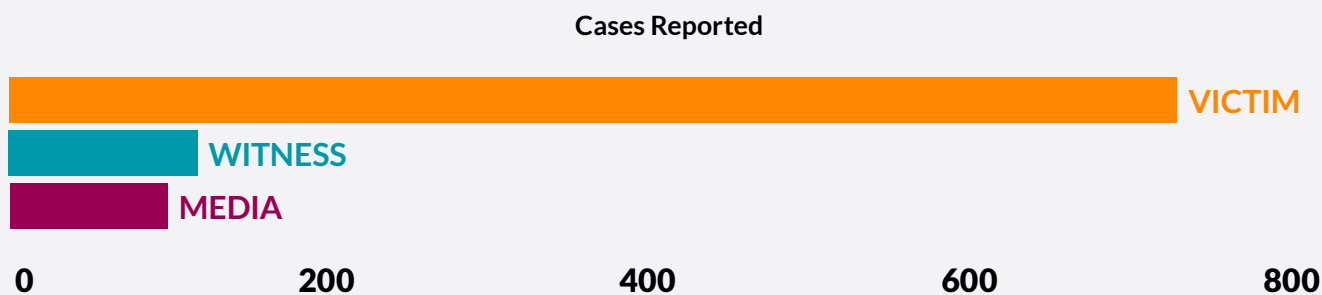


Fig. 2. Sources of information

¹⁴ OSCE-ODIHR (2009). *Preventing and responding to hate crimes A resource guide for NGOs in the OSCE region*. Available: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/a/39821.pdf>

The recorded incidents fall under the following categories (Fig. 3.)

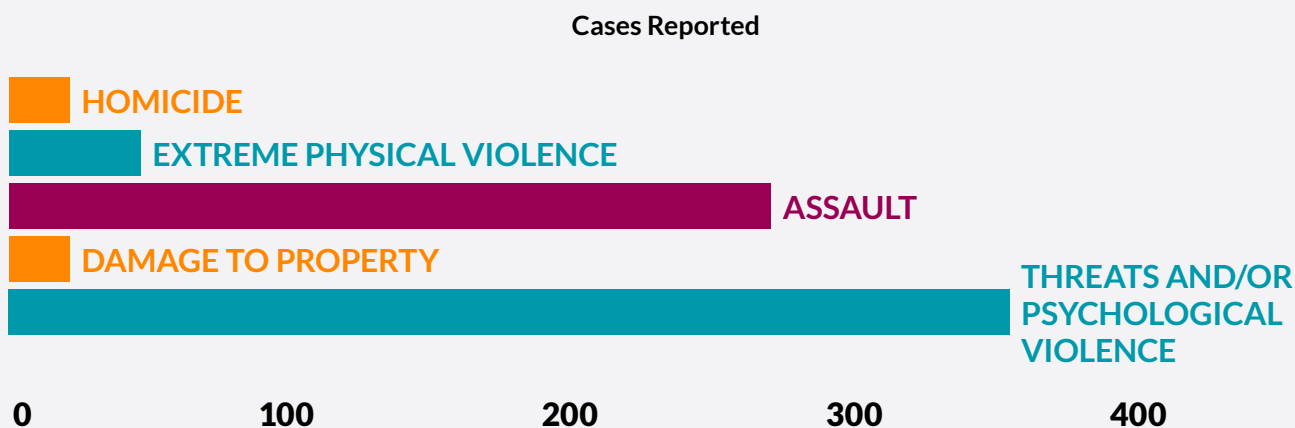


Fig. 3. Types of incidents recorded

MURDERS

In the reporting period, 27 murders were reported (2 from Moldova, 1 from Tajikistan, 1 from Uzbekistan, 1 from Georgia, 2 from Russia, and 20 from Turkey). Out of the murdered trans people in Turkey, all were sex workers. The circumstances of these murders vary: in some cases, there was a dispute over payment; in others, the assailant found out that the sex worker was trans when having sex in a hotel room. In most cases, the murder was committed with a knife. In one case, the shaving of the murdered sex worker's head is a clear indicator of anti-trans bias motivation.

The trans sex worker woman went to the hotel with the customer she had met while working on the streets in Turkey. The client killed her at the hotel when he learned she was trans.

In 2020 in Sochi, Russia, a man killed and then dismembered a neighbor after seeing them cross-dressed as a woman. The killer later went to the police and wrote a confession. “I killed him and cut him to pieces when I met him in the communal kitchen in a woman’s dress, a wig and with painted lips,” the man said during the interrogation. According to him, he grabbed a knife lying on the table and hit the victim with it, then went to his room to drink beer as if nothing had happened. Realising that the traces of the crime must be hidden, he took a hacksaw and sawed the corpse, then put some of the remains in a sports bag and took them to the forest, and the other part was buried in the courtyard of the guest house.

In 2018 in the village of Mereșeni, Moldova, three teenagers were killed, two of whom were described as boys dressed in girls’ clothes. The individual who confirmed that he had killed the three teenagers and burned the house where the victims were is a 23-year-old from the neighbouring village. The suspect’s lawyer claimed that he committed the crime because he had been the victim of a prank. The murderer told the lawyer that he had come to the victims at the invitation of a 15-year-old girl he had met on social networks. But he realised that his partner in that discussion was actually a “boy pretending to be a woman”. The second person present in the house was dressed as a woman, too, and this made him mad. This case was discussed in a TV show involving the victims’ parents and the alleged offender.

In 2018, local organisations from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reported trans murders for the first time, which might be attributed to a higher visibility of trans people and improved monitoring in these countries:

In Tajikistan, a trans woman was raped and murdered. Community members found out about the case from a video that was filmed and shared with another trans woman in order to intimidate her. The murder was not investigated neither by family members nor the government. Families in general are ashamed and support the murders as they deem the trans identity of their children to be a sin.

In Uzbekistan, a trans woman came out on Instagram. The next day she was found murdered. Community members informed TGEU that victim identified herself as a transgender person even though the mass media referred to her as a gay man.

EXTREME PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Extreme physical violence includes severe bodily harm and sexual assault. Out of the 47 incidents, 43 occurred in Turkey with perpetrators belonging to the following groups (Fig. 4.):

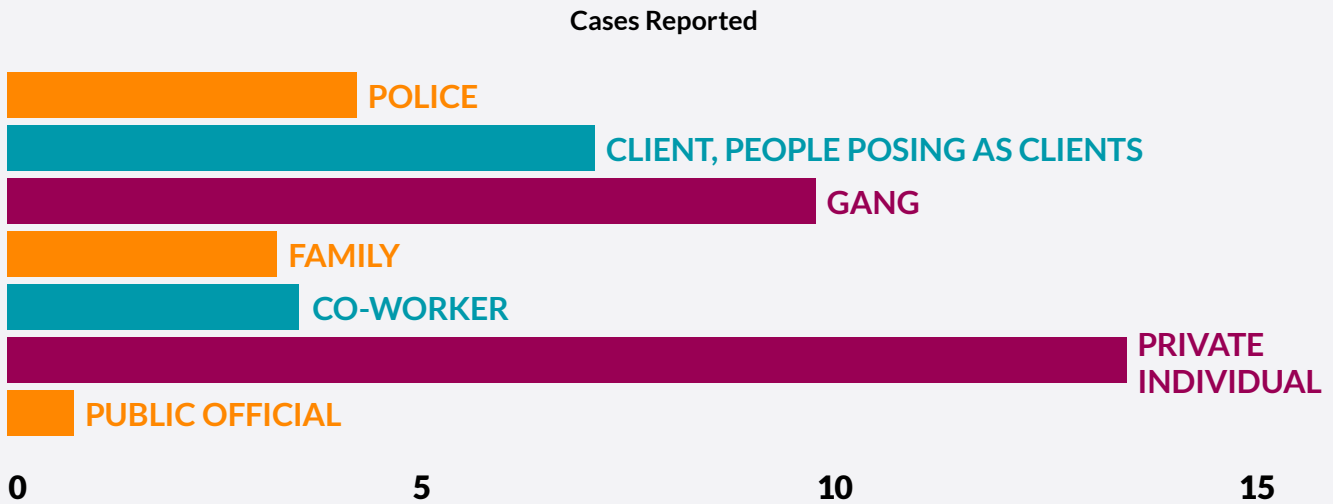


Fig. 4. Types of perpetrators of extreme physical violence in Turkey

While the majority of perpetrators are private individuals, such as neighbors, taxi drivers, people posing as sex worker's clients or passer-bys, there is a clear trend of organised hate groups, gangs targeting trans sex workers.

A trans woman in Turkey got in a taxi and was assaulted by the driver who stated that he had assumed her to be a cisgender woman. The driver hit her with the gun and the woman had to have an operation, which left permanent marks on her eye due to this assault.

A trans woman in Turkey was attacked on the street by a group of men including 10–15 persons. She was severely injured and hospitalised.

In Mersin, Turkey, while she was was waiting for clients, a sex worker trans woman was kidnapped by unidentified car where she was beaten and raped.

The cases furthermore show that trans sex workers can rarely rely on the police for help, since in many cases, law enforcement are the assailants themselves.

In Mersin, Turkey, a sex worker trans woman was subjected to extreme violence, pepper gas and arbitrary arrest at the hands of police.

In Izmir, Turkey, when a sex worker trans woman and her client were driving, they were stopped by the police. The client did not have a driving licence so the police asked for a bribe. The situation escalated into a fight and the woman was physically attacked and threatened by the police officers.

Cases outside of Turkey also show that trans victims are not treated with sufficient protection, such as these incidents from Georgia and Kazakhstan illustrate:

In 2017, a transgender woman who was visiting a friend in Telavi, saw that strangers were abusing her friend. Suddenly, one of them hit her in the head from behind. A criminal case was launched. The perpetrator paid 1200 Gel to the victim and the case was settled.

Two employees of a private security company attacked a trans woman at a gas station in Kazakhstan. They started insulting her, shouting that she was “gay,” “faggot”. They were telling her to get out of their city, otherwise they would kill her. They dragged her along the ground by her hair into the car. After that they beat her on the head and in the stomach. Bodyguards brought her to the police station complaining that she beat both of them. When police learned about her gender identity, they started mocking her, telling she’s a mutant. Police officers asked her to show her genitals. “It was a terrible attitude, these humiliations lasted for several hours. Everyone, probably, who worked there, came into the office and laughed at me, mocked me,” said the victim. Later, it was known that someone had recorded the incident and the video was distributed by social media. As a result, a trans woman was denied taxi service and her landlord nearly kicked her out of the rented apartment.



Image from the comic book T-World II, Kyrgyzstan.

ASSAULTS

Assaults are the second most reported types of incidents recorded by partners. Any physical attack against a person or people that does not pose a threat to their life qualifies as an assault. Also, attempted assaults that fail, due to self-defence or other reasons, fall under this category.

Assailants in this category include the following (Fig. 5.):

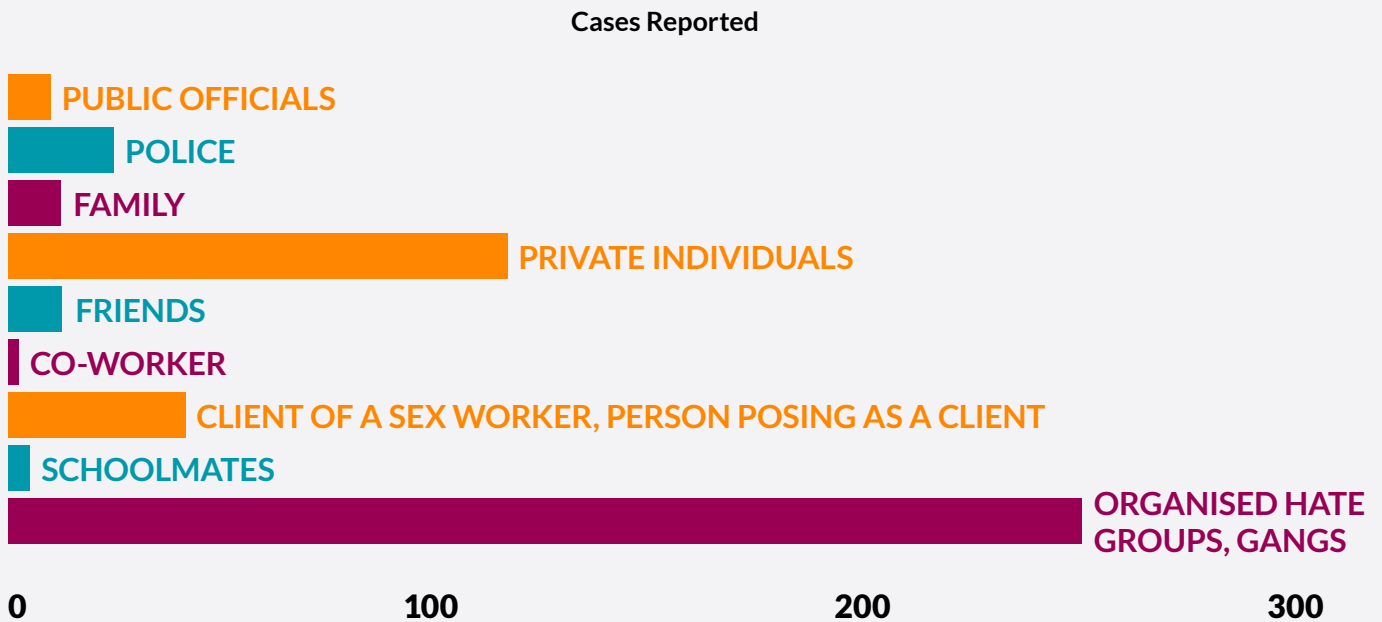


Fig. 5. Types of perpetrators of assault

Organised hate groups and gangs represent an extremely high share of perpetrators, especially in Turkey, suggesting these are pre-meditated attacks on trans (sex working) communities. In many cases, organised groups approach sex workers with their cars at working locations,

whether on the street or in apartments, and behave in a threatening way, followed by attacks, including chasing with baseball bats or throwing stones or objects at the women. Most of the attacks are accompanied by transphobic slurs or reference to religious morals. Clients of sex workers, or persons posing as clients, are also a significant group targeting trans sex workers for their money and belongings.

In other countries, the distribution of cases paints a picture of anti-trans violence occurring in all spheres of life. It is striking that violence perpetrated by friends and family is recorded in almost all countries, while violence at the workplace is only mentioned twice. This could be due to the low employment among the community or coping mechanisms that trans people apply at workplaces and consequently do not come forward with cases of violence outside of the criminalised sector of sex work.

In Mersin, Turkey, a trans woman was beaten by her brother demanding her to leave the town and accusing her of being a shame to the family.

In Hungary, a trans man came out to his best friend as trans and since then he has been bullying him. They have known each other for ten years and nothing like this has happened before. He was beaten by his friend on the street and pulled backwards by his bag. He could hardly breathe.

A transgender teenager from Bender, Transnistria, was living with her grandmother and older sister (her parents were deceased). Periodically her uncle, who lives in another country, came to visit her. One time a violent fight arose, after which the victim ran away from her home to Chişinău and stayed with one of her friends. She was supported by GENDERDOC-M in her relocation.

In Ankara, Turkey, a sex worker trans woman was physically assaulted by her partner and she was threatened by the same person not to go out and take clients.

Intra-community violence is also reported, especially from Turkey, where trans sex workers often compete with each other for clients and resources:

A sex worker trans woman was assaulted by another sex worker trans woman in Turkey, because she did not want her to work on the same street.

Violence at the workplace outside of the context of sex work is only reported in a couple of instances, thus its prevalence and forms should be further explored by community inquiries:

In Kyrgyzstan, the victim's colleagues did not know his gender identity. Once, when he arrived at work, cisgender men colleagues gathered and asked the victim to come out. They surrounded him and began to tell him that they knew about his identity and asked the trans man to show his genitals. The victim tried to justify himself, saying that it is not true to avoid physical violence. At this point came the director, who dispersed the crowd and led the victim out. Thus, the victim managed to escape possible physical and sexual abuse.

During a get-together with his university colleagues in Moldova, the victim got assaulted by one of them. The colleague in question was in an advanced state of intoxication and had an aggressive behavior with women within the group. The victim called him out on his behavior, which led to the colleague grabbing his hands and calling him a “faggot.”

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Threats and/or psychological violence is the most commonly reported category in the reporting period. They include clear and specific threats, whether verbal or written, stalking (including repeated undesired contact), blackmailing, or bullying.

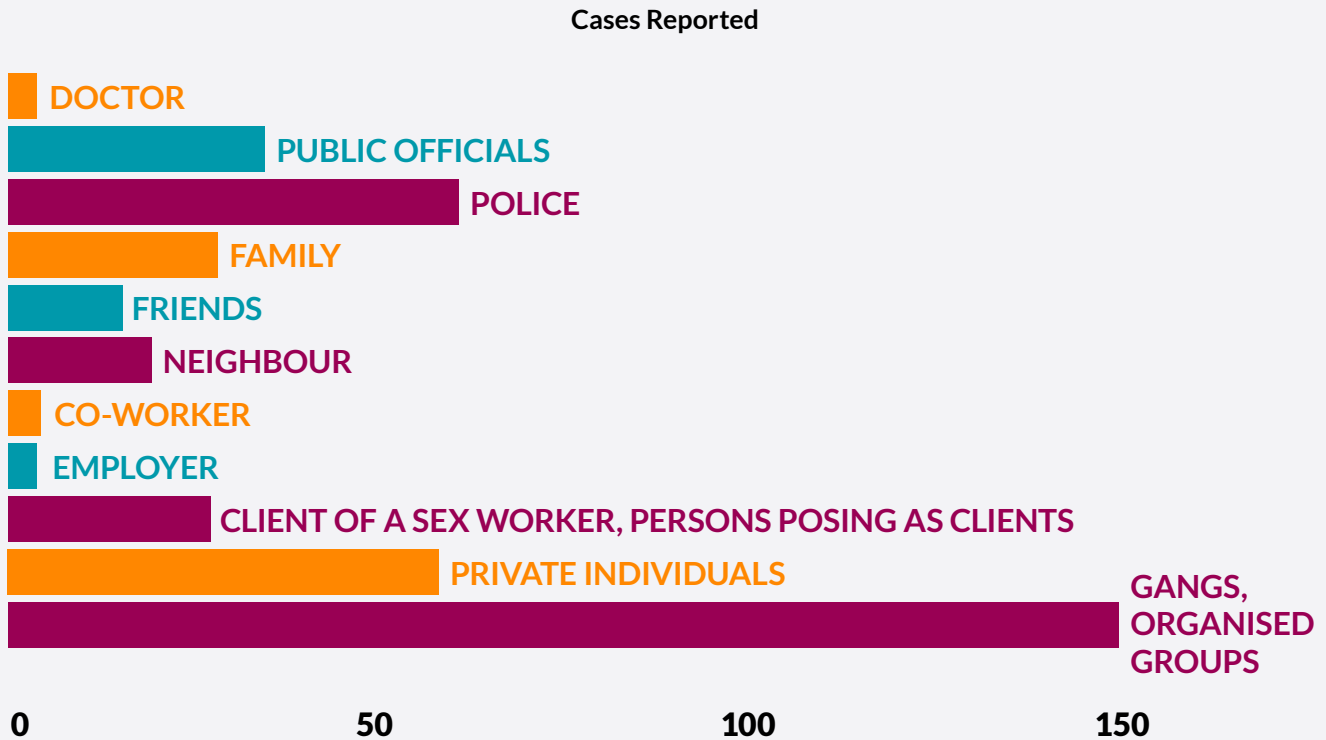


Fig. 6. Types of perpetrators of psychological violence

Amongst the perpetrators (Fig. 6.), we find a similar distribution to the one of assaults. Private individuals and organised groups make up the majority of assailants, which is due to the high number of cases from Turkey amongst the incidents. However, police and public officials are also significant amongst perpetrators and a pattern of abuse can be observed by these actors, whether targeting sex workers or bullying when a trans person's identity is revealed at identity checks.

In Kazakhstan, a trans woman moved from one city to another. She dated a man on the social media platform “VKontakte,” then invited him to her apartment. The man turned out to be an employee of the Department of Internal Affairs. He and three other police officers burst into her apartment with a camera, threatened her, and broke her phone so that she would not film them and or call for help. They said she engaged in sex work and that it was punishable. Also, police officers filled up a protocol about the absence of a residence permit. The victim did not have a chance to read it and was forced to sign the protocol. After one month, she was informed that her suspended sentence would be reviewed and replaced with serving her sentence in prison in connection with previous administrative violations (violation of her residence permit).

In a protest in Turkey, a trans man who is a LGBTI activist was arrested by the police. He was subjected to mistreatment, torture, beatings, assaults, and harrassment by the police. He was also psychologically bullied because of his pink ID card and he was maltreated during his medical examination.

The incident occurred in the border zone between the countries of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, when a trans man passed passport control. Staff at the station asked the victim to go to a separate room. Employees of customs control mockingly questioned the victim regarding his gender expression (clothes, hair). Then they showed photos of other trans people who have passed the customs control. The victim felt threatened by the staff of the customs control.

A trans woman sex worker worked in her apartment with her friend in Kyrgyzstan. In the area where the apartment was located there was always a responsible district police officer, who followed the order of the district. As soon as the responsible district police officer found out that there are sex workers in the apartment, he began to blackmail them and demand free of charge sexual services. The district police officer began to live with the sex workers, ate their food, took all their earned money, and assaulted them sexually every day. The victims were silent and could not write a report to the police, because the district police officer threatened them. They lived for about one month like this and only after the police officer left them for a couple of hours alone did they manage to run away.

In Ankara, Turkey, a sex worker trans woman was forced to have sex with a policeman at her house in order not to be fined.

Doctors also appear in these types of incidents as perpetrators. These cases showcase the abuse present for trans people in medical establishments, as described in detail by project partners later in this report.

In Serbia, a healthcare provider was blackmailing a trans person to take photos of her face, body, and breasts without clothes if she wanted to get the hormone prescription.

In Kyrgyzstan, the trans woman victim rented an apartment where she worked as a sex worker. At night, policemen came to target the venue with a raid, with clients being on the premises. The raid was filmed by journalists who accompanied the police. The victim was under the influence of psychotropics. The policemen forcibly tied her hands in handcuffs and drove the victim to a medical examination. The doctor at the narcological department of the hospital began to conduct a medical examination with witnesses, which was filmed on camera. According to the legislation of Kyrgyzstan, the doctor does not have the right to conduct an inspection with strangers and, moreover, to film everything on the camera. The video also showed how the victim was forced to sign documents on the content of which the victim was most likely not informed.

In Kyrgyzstan, a trans man turned to a private clinic for gynecological help. It was difficult for him to take such a step because of the fear of medical devices. When the victim was on a gynecological chair, the doctor left the medical mirror in the genitals of the person and left the room. While the victim was waiting for the doctor, other doctors came into the office and looked curiously at the victim and his genitals. The victim was in a vulnerable position and could not leave the clinic. He felt humiliated and after the incident he turned to a psychiatrist for antidepressants because it was difficult to survive this experience.

We have provided to you only those analysed incidents that have been documented by our partners. These are the daily realities of trans people's lives, which affect mental and physical health, and creates a traumatic experience for the whole life. We know it's hard to read these real-life examples.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Hungary



“The situation since 2015 has significantly worsened for trans and intersex people in Hungary. We have seen the far-right government constantly campaigning against the LGBT community, introducing a “foreign agent” law, and most recently in 2020, coming after trans and intersex people and same-sex couples. Being part of the ProTrans project allowed us in this difficult period to support trans people and also to legally defend the community.”

KRISZTINA KOLOS ORBAN,
TRANSVANILLA TRANSGENDER ASSOCIATION

Being a trans or a gender-nonconforming person in Hungary is very difficult. Society has very little knowledge on trans issues and discrimination and violence are persistent but often invisible despite both anti-discrimination and hate crime laws mentioning gender identity as a protective ground. Life is clearly more difficult for those being poor, uneducated, Roma, migrant, sex worker and/or living at the countryside.

Recent years have seen strengthening government attempts to curb trans rights, accompanied by heavy anti-LGB and anti-trans political messaging. The procedure for legal gender recognition has been suspended since May 2018. In March 2020 the government proposed amendments¹⁵ to the Act on Civil Registration Procedure to make the sex registered at birth an unchangeable piece of data in birth certificates. The Act entered into force in June 2020. According to Hungarian legislation, first names have to be chosen from closed male and female lists and they have to match the registered sex of the person. In practice it means that trans people seeking their gender to be recognised can obtain no documents reflecting their real gender and the first name they might wish to bear. In Hungary, all data in all documents a person has has to be the same as registered in the birth certificate of the person.



TGEU's social media post, 29 May 2020

¹⁵ <https://www.parlament.hu/irom41/09934/09934.pdf>

Consequently, the amendment has made legal gender recognition impossible in the country, resulting in trans people becoming desperate, hopeless and afraid of being pushed even more to the margins of society in the future.

“This new law ‘rammed me into the ground’. It is humiliating when, as a woman, I have to show my ID which says I am a man. I have to explain this at my workplace, at the post office, at the cashier, to the controller, and when visiting a doctor.”

BETTI, TRANS WOMAN

“I have a message for the lawmakers who say having IDs that do not reflect my gender is not a big deal. Yes, it is: picking up a parcel at the post, at the gym, at work, at school in the locker room, in a public toilet, or when I buy a beer and they ask me to show my ID. Or when police are checking me on the street, or when I want to open a bank account, or practically anywhere where I need to show my ID, or even have to say my name.”

ÁRON, TRANS MAN

There are no national level guidelines for trans specific health care and in practice no funding is available in the public health care system. These factors have contributed to a great extent to available care becoming more scarce and of lower quality. Furthermore, transition related care in the past years was mostly pushed to private clinics. Trans people thus have to rely on medical personnel's benevolence who are free to set up their own rules and requirements for access to

care. Mechanisms supporting patients facing discrimination and mistreatment in the health care system are not properly functioning and are not trans friendly.

“Simply, health care is completely precarious. In the public system they refused me because my gender was not recognised. But even if they treated me, nothing guarantees it will be like that for a long time. Private clinics are extremely expensive. I am not sure I could finance the cost of that all the time. I have been thinking about buying hormones from the black market, although I don’t want to risk my health. It is not working either way.”

ALEXA, TRANS WOMAN

Because of the discrimination and ignorance experienced by trans people there is a general distrust in institutions and service providers. Several tactics and techniques were developed internally by the community to build resilience. Transvanilla’s support services providing information, psychosocial, psychological and legal assistance are extremely overloaded. The support group run by the organisation and the facebook group operated are also channels used by community members to gain information and provide advice to others.

Since there is no publicly available official information on trans issues, individuals rely on sharing their experiences with each other and peer support provided by other members of the community can sometimes be life-saving.

Since the outright legal attacks, the invisibility of trans people further increased. Trans people are in hiding. According to the EU LGBTI survey II, 71% of trans respondents from Hungary said

they avoid certain places for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed because they are members of the LGBTI community.¹⁶ This is almost a 10% increase compared to 2014 research carried out by Transvanilla in which 62% stated the same.¹⁷ Places where openness is avoided are home, around family, at school and at the workplace, in cafes, restaurants, pubs, clubs, on the public transport and in the street.¹⁸ Given these trends of hiding, community spaces that allow getting together and sharing experience remain crucial in Hungary.

¹⁶ <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

¹⁷ <http://transvanilla.hu/infografikak/letoltesek/transcare-report>

¹⁸ <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2020/lgbti-survey-data-explorer>

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Kyrgyzstan



“One of the key areas where we built on the ProTrans partnership was the organisation of the 1st Regional Conference ‘Health and Quality of Life of Trans people in Central Asia’. The event was co-organised with the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic. The conference was held in such a way that all participants had the opportunity to get reliable information about the realities of trans people, to analyse the legal field of receiving medical and social assistance and changing documents, to learn modern standards of care and current trends...



*...in healthcare development,
and to get information about
the situation in other countries.
Thanks to ProTrans, Labrys
also designated a separate
position for trans advocacy in
its Advocacy and Education
program.”*

BAKHTIAR KIDRALIEV AND
DIAS DANIAROV,
LABRYS PUBLIC UNION

Kyrgyzstan does not have anti-discrimination legislation that would cover sexual orientation and/or gender identity, nor does it have provisions protecting trans people from hate-motivated violence. Emerging trans activism however achieved several improvements for the community in recent years, such as the adoption of clinical protocols that set standards for providing medical and social assistance to trans people and establish a more accessible, transparent, and effective procedure for legal gender recognition.¹⁹

Kyrgyzstan's political leadership has been influenced greatly by the Russian government since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both signature pieces of Russian legislation, the "foreign agent" and "propaganda" laws, have been tabled at the Parliament in the past years, enjoying support from nationalist and religious (Muslim and Orthodox Christian) groups. Nationalist groups like Kyrk-Choro ("Kyrgyz Knights") are thought to have committed several assaults on both the LGBT community and sex workers.

¹⁹ <https://sxpolitics.org/17591-2/17591>



1st Regional Conference 'Health and Quality of Life of Trans people in Central Asia,' Labrys

Kyrgyzstan police arrested and held about 70 activists, most of them cis women and trans people, for hours on 8 March 2020 without telling them the grounds for their detention or providing access to lawyers. The activists were attacked at their peaceful International Women's Day march in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital. At least three journalists were also detained.

A mob of men, many wearing medical masks or other face coverings, attacked the activists as they were beginning the march to call attention to the serious problem of violence against women in Kyrgyzstan. The masked men threw eggs at the marchers, dragged them to the ground, and destroyed their banners, activists and media reported. When police arrived, the mob dispersed, but rather than seeking out the attackers, police forced the activists to board a bus and took them to the police station. Some reported physical abuse by the police.

Kyrgyz society justifies and often even encourages gender-based violence by punishing those who do not conform to conventional gender norms. Families often refuse to understand and accept trans people, being ashamed of trans family members, and even restrict their freedom, suppress their desires, try to change them, and sometimes even disown them.

When trans people start school, they often find themselves in situations of bullying, experiencing discrimination and violence for the first time outside of their family. They are even unable to satisfy basic needs such as using the toilet. Trans people face the dilemma of two

gendered restroom doors: they reject one door but cannot go to the other one because of the unspoken rules or possible dangers. The only option left is to hold it in and risk developing health problems at a young age. The need to survive forces trans people to live a double life from their childhood onwards.

Due to discrimination starting early on, trans people are often unable to graduate from university because of obstacles that only increase with age. They frequently find themselves in a situation where the gender marker in their documents does not match their expression and appearance. The humiliation and social pressure coming from classmates and teachers is also a significant factor.

In work situations, trans people often face outing and job loss if their identity is disclosed. Many prefer to work in low-skilled jobs that do not require education and an identification card to minimise the risks of their identity being revealed and avoid disastrous consequences. As a result, trans people are not legally protected and do not have the privileges that people with official employment have.

Trans women sex workers are amongst the most excluded. They often say “I have nothing to lose” – they work to live another day, in fear for their lives. They are forced to tolerate violence from clients, people posing as clients and police officers. Transphobic assailants break into their homes under the guise of being clients, beat up and rob them, threatening to reveal their identity if they turn to law enforcement. Even when trans women sex workers turn to the police for protection they face humiliation or inaction on the part of law enforcement because of hostility, transphobia and stigma surrounding sex work.

The health system is also trans-exclusionary, not addressing the specific needs of trans people

and not including services that meet their needs. Therefore, trans people face denial of assistance, personal interrogations unrelated to their treatment and accusations of just following a fashion trend due to doctors' professional incompetence in trans issues. As a consequence, trans people avoid seeking help and often resort to self-treatment in fear of facing prejudice. In Kyrgyzstan, thanks to the work of NGOs, a network of friendly providers has been established. It includes friendly specialists who provide medical, social and legal assistance but trans people living outside the capital do not have access to it.

Mass media is another source of violence. It distorts reality, puts trans people in danger, and incites hatred against them. In the past couple of years, several media outlets have distributed videos containing humiliation of and violence against trans people filmed by transphobic members of society.



Image from the comic book T-World II, Kyrgyzstan

In February 2020, a national TV channel uploaded a video onto their YouTube channel under the name “SHOCK! MAN DRESSED AS A WOMAN!” The video was about a trans woman visiting a cafe. When the cafe’s administration called the police they reported the gender expression of the person. The police immediately arrived at the cafe followed by special journalists who work closely with police. The trans woman was filmed on camera and the video was distributed on social media. It is very clear that the cameraman was trying to film her face. The video has gained 683,763 views and 3582 hatred-filled comments.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Moldova



“With the spectrum of the organisation’s services evolving within the ProTrans project, the team has opened a peer-to-peer support group for trans and gender nonconforming beneficiaries. The group is led by a part-time coordinator, responsible for planning, organising and moderating events. The coordinator replies to every inquiry related to hormonal replacement therapy, redirects beneficiaries to psychological and legal counsellors, provides basic information on legal gender recognition in the country, as well as guarantees trans visibility in the organisation’s agenda.”

MAXIM CUCLEV, GENDERDOC-M

In Moldova, trans and gender non-conforming people remain the most vulnerable group of the LGBT community. They face multiple forms of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, while only a few cases of transphobic discrimination and incidents of violence are documented. Survivors often prefer not to report such incidents for various reasons, such as fear of being identified or lack of confidence in the possibility of a positive change. A lot of violence thus remains invisible, especially when it comes to psychological violence in the family.



Photo by Anastasiia Danilova

Many trans people in Moldova prefer to or are constrained to adapting their gender expression to their gender assigned at birth to avoid harassment or loss of work or family. Sometimes this is the reason why they refuse to start transitioning. Those trans people who decide to undergo a hormonal transition can access consultations with endocrinologists, taking the necessary tests and acquiring hormones at pharmacies with, or sometimes without a medical prescription. Gender identity is not mentioned at all in any national legislation, hence there is no legal leverage for trans people to operate with.

GENDERDOC-M provides free legal assistance to trans people who, within a relatively reasonable time within the existing reality, may receive a positive judgment. Yet there are no specific provisions in the Moldovan legislation that provide a fast, transparent, and accessible mechanism for the legal gender recognition of trans people. The only way to recognise gender identity by changing the name and gender indicator in identity documents remains a decision of the court.

Since 2019, transgender health issues are no longer considered as mental and behavioural disorders with the 11th edition of the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organization. The newly approved version instead places issues of gender incongruence under a chapter on sexual health. However, the Republic of Moldova has not yet taken any steps to change the system in accordance with this decision. Trans people are still required to provide a certificate with the diagnosis of “transsexualism”, also known as “gender identity disorder”, in order to be able to request the change of gender and name in the identity papers. So far, the change of documents is possible only through the decision of the courts, which takes about 6-12 months.

By the end of 2018, 12 people had changed their documents through this procedure. The situation has changed since the state is now represented in court by the Public Services Agency. In the last three litigations where the trans claimants contested the refusal of the Public Service Agency to rectify sex and surname according to their gender identity, the judicial practice was changed by dismissing these actions as unfounded. In some, these are rejected in the first instance, in others at the court of appeal. The reason is the following: there is no medical act confirming the change of biological sex. The argument that there is no access to such services in Moldova and that there is no clear procedure as to where and how to take such an “act” is not taken into consideration.

If a trans person does not look “cisgender-passing”, it is quite unsafe for them to be building a proper harmonious relationship with their body image and expression and be leading an average citizen life in the capital, let alone in the countryside. The general majority sees them as a threat and a form of “perversity”, so this transphobia serves as nourishing soil for hatred-driven violence and discrimination.

Regarding institutional violence, there was an incident when a photo of a transgender woman’s passport was widely distributed on local social media. The photo was accompanied by the comment “What a HANDSOME (using a masculine adjective) lady at Briceni Customs”. The photo was uploaded by a male officer of Moldovan Border Police service on duty. GENDERDOC-M filed a complaint to the Border Police and the Personal Data Protection Centre warning both institutions of the illegal personal data dissemination by some customs officers. The Border Police responded that they would only take action if the person concerned addressed them directly. GENDERDOC-M could not find that person to pursue the case.

In another case, a young Moldovan transgender woman was assaulted by a group of men, who had identified her as transgender. They started to yell at her *“It’s that boy!”*, *“Why are you walking in our neighbourhood? We’ve had enough of you!”* and chased her shouting *“Get him! We’ll beat him!”* The young woman managed to escape from them. Her parent called the police. Prior to the arrival of police, they managed to stop a police patrol car and together with police officers tried to find the assailants but failed. The local district police officers arrived only 40 minutes later to the scene and drew a record. There is no information about the measures taken and the result of the police investigation of this case.

Finding legal work and maintaining the position is still a challenge for trans citizens of Moldova. Cases of harassment among the workers or discriminatory decisions or remarks coming from the management occur abundantly. For instance, a volunteer of GENDERDOC-M called the number of a knitting store manager after they saw the announcement of employment of a shop assistant published online. The store manager told them that the company was only looking for women shop assistants. The volunteer said they were a transgender woman. The employer responded with the following: *“Are you a minority member? That’s a nightmare! No, our shops are normal, traditional. Sorry, but you have mistaken the place. This would look absurd in our store.”*

Another time, a trans man got employed by an IT company with a trial period of a week. The young man was invited by the manager of the company and was told that he would not be hired because of the reasons that: *“You will not fit into the group, because your colleagues see you as a woman, but you call yourself a man.”* The young man asked what made the manager think so since he had not noticed any problems with the team, and the manager replied: *“You dress in women’s clothes and wear women’s glasses, and when you’re not there, the colleagues make jokes about you.”* The young man said he did not want to file a discrimination complaint because he did not have sufficient mental resources to do so.

Relationships within families of trans individuals is another matter which also often happens to be very stressful. A trans teenager girl from Bender, Transnistria, was living with her grandmother and older sister (her parents are deceased). Periodically, her uncle, who lives in another country, came to visit. The girl wears a feminine haircut and clothes and is often harassed and assaulted by her sister. Once, a violent fight arose between her, her sister and her uncle, after which the girl ran away from home to Chişinău and stayed with one of her friends. She and her friend approached GENDERDOC-M for help. A partnership with the National Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse has been established to help resolve the issue. The girl was taken into custody of the Republic of Moldova.



Photo by Olga T and Nicolae Ionel

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Serbia

“The ProTrans project enabled us to involve more people from the community in our work, including young activists who became members of our team. Also, the project increased our capacity to monitor anti-trans discrimination and hate crimes and to focus more on monitoring and to further develop our work on improving situation of trans people in prison. We included monitoring of anti-trans violence in our regular activities and had additional focus and support for the organisation of our community events. Also, within the last five years we focused more on providing individual psychological support, counseling and psychotherapy to LGBTIQ people.”

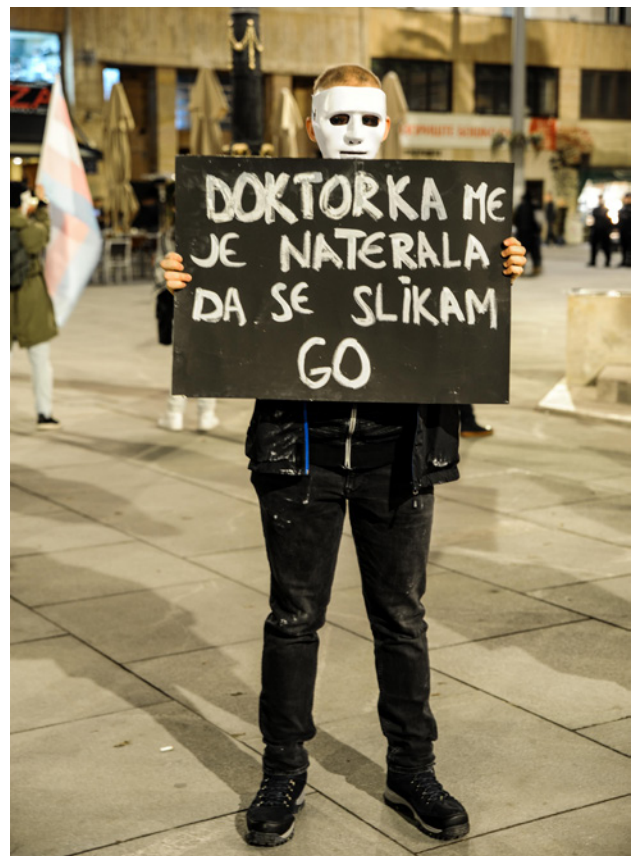


JELENA VIDIC AND SAŠA LAZIC, GETEN CENTRE FOR LGBTIQA PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Trans people in Serbia encounter violence and discrimination at every step: at home, at school, at work, on the streets, and most notably in healthcare. Such cases range from verbal insults, through refusal of services and abuse of power, to physical and sexual assaults. In a questionnaire about the needs of the trans community in Serbia that Geten conducted in 2019, 27% of respondents declared they do not feel safe in their homes and 50% said they do not feel safe in public spaces.

Though violence and discrimination are common, the victims seldom report to competent authorities due to lack of trust in institutions, as well as due to fear of additional abuse. This tendency is very pronounced in the context of health services, especially regarding trans-specific healthcare.

Trans-specific health services in Serbia are centralized in Belgrade and are provided only by members of the National Commission for Transgender Conditions. This creates a situation where people do not report problematic medical practices because they do not have the option of changing their doctor and are afraid of worse treatment if they file a complaint. Furthermore, trans people often feel “at the mercy” of medical experts who work with them because legal gender recognition fully depends on medical certificates that only these few doctors can issue. The process of legal gender recognition



Sign reads: “My doctor made me take pictures naked.” Photo by Aleksandar Crnogorac, TDoR 2019

in Serbia is entirely based on medical certificates issued by members of the National Commission for Transgender Conditions, the same few doctors that offer trans-specific health services within the national healthcare system; medical certificates from other doctors are not taken into account.

“Before admitting to myself I was trans, my mental health was in a very bad condition, which is why I was afraid that waiting too long for hormones would make me suicidal again. However, I wanted to preserve my physical health so I decided to put my trust into psychiatrists and usual health system procedures.

Sadly, the psychiatrist exposed me to unbearably stressful conversations with my parents, under the threat of not “allowing” me to start hormones if I don’t cooperate. Before I even finished my story, the psychiatrist told me her theory: that she noticed a dose of “autogynephilia” [the outdated idea about a male’s propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female] in my case, which is why the entire process will take longer. As I didn’t even mention anything sexual regarding me being trans, I concluded that the psychiatrist developed this theory because of my bisexuality. I was utterly disappointed and lost all my trust in psychiatrists. Not being able to bear my dysphoria as my body continued to masculinise, I started taking hormones without medical supervision.”

TRANS PERSON, BELGRADE

It is important to emphasise that many trans people in Serbia live in poverty, especially outside of Belgrade, due to multiple discrimination and violence, and that for many traveling and staying in Belgrade is a huge financial challenge, often impossible. Trans women and trans-feminine individuals especially suffer further institutionalised discrimination regarding access to hormones. While testosterone is cheap and locally produced in Serbia, medication used in feminising hormone therapy is imported, expensive and not covered by health insurance. Thus, trans men are able to receive their HRT in medical institutions for free, while trans women have to self-finance their therapies which puts many in a precarious financial situation.

It is therefore no surprise that the wellbeing of the activists is quite disregarded. Activists are overwhelmed with a high risk of developing burnout and re-traumatisation, working in an unstable context where progress is slow and uncertain, and where high level of poverty, discrimination and violence is part of the everyday life of both the trans community and the activists.

Due to lack of trust in institutions, trans people in Serbia often turn to each other for information and support (including legal matters), both online and at meetings of Geten's support group. Gatekeeping is a common problem in trans-specific healthcare in Serbia and the community copes with it by sharing with each other what psychiatrists "like and do not like to hear". This limits access to life saving hormones for a significant number of trans people who in many cases decide to start hormonal therapy without medical supervision.

Fearing unpleasant situations within the context of non-medical types of services as well, people in the community often ask about and share the locations and contact details of trans friendly places. Having in mind the difficult situation of trans people in Serbia, Geten has developed various psychosocial support services for trans and LGBTIQ people in general. Trans self-support group

and LGBTIQ helpline were founded in 2006 and are one of the main pillars of the organisation. Geten are also providing email and Facebook support and individual consultations, counselling and psychotherapy. In 2019, the organisation's psychotherapists provided 300 individual sessions. It is important to emphasise the importance of the SOS line and online services as the only form of support available to people living outside of Belgrade, in smaller towns and rural areas.

The efforts aimed at the wellbeing of both community members and activists seem unrealistic in a context where needs for support significantly exceed available resources. Therefore it is necessary to provide sustainability and further development of support services in the most important areas: psychosocial support, legal support and different activities aiming to improve Geten members' physical and mental wellbeing.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Turkey



“Since its establishment, the Red Umbrella Association carries out activities to strengthen sex workers’ right to access justice. Many stigmatised and isolated sex workers do not have the necessary motivation to seek redress, including access to a lawyer due to financial problems and fear of exclusion.

One of the biggest reasons for this is that law enforcement and other justice mechanisms, which are involved in the spiral of violence experienced by sex workers, act with a bias motivation against trans sex workers. With ProTrans support, sex workers can reach the association through the 24-hour telephone, lawyer support and field officer lines, and can take the first step in their quest for rights. With keeping data organised with the ProTrans monitoring tool, our effectiveness in advocacy has also significantly increased.”

TOLGA TUNELI, RED UMBRELLA SEXUAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

Sex work has been legal in Turkey for decades. The Public Health Law and the Regulation about Prostitution came into force in the year 1930, and the Law on Mitigation against Prostitution and Infections that Spread through Prostitution enacted in 1933 established the legal foundation of the formation of official brothels and legalised sex work in Turkey. Within this legal framework, the number of brothels and “documented” women were held under state control. In line with the libertarian spirit of the 1961 Constitution, comprehensive changes were made with the “Provisions to be Subject to General Women and Brothels and the Regulation on Combating Venereal Diseases Transmitted by Prostitution (No: 5/984)”. The amendments made in 1961 of the existing Regulations dated 1930 and 1933 constitutes the basis of the legal framework that is prevalent today on sex work.²⁰

Even if sex work is not defined as a crime in the Turkish Penal Code, several articles contain provisions that indirectly criminalise sex work. “Disgraceful Offense”, “Obscenity” and “Adultery”, under the “Offences Against General Morality” section of the Turkish Penal Code, are often associated with the daily life of sex workers, hence their work practices are completely criminalised. Therefore, although sex work per se is not a crime, all the deeds involved in this work are made criminal. In addition, it is known that the administrative fines are also imposed on the grounds of “Disobeying the Order”, “Causing Noise”, and “Causing Disturbance” in the Misdemeanor Law.

²⁰ Red Umbrella (2020): *Sexual and reproductive health of sex workers: problems and needs*.

Although “anti-gender” and “gender ideology” did not exist in the vocabulary of Turkish gender politics until very recently, anti-gender politics goes back to 2011 when the Islamic-nationalist authoritarian ruling party, AKP, started to bypass gender equality laws and go for pro-natalist policies promoting motherhood and traditional values. The government wanted to change the terminology by introducing the term “gender justice” instead of gender equality. By “gender justice”, they mean that the gender roles are God-given and naturally complementary. The campaign against non-heterosexual sex has intensified in almost every region of Turkey and trans sex workers are common victims of it, facing raids, administrative fines and closing down of sex work venues. As an association, Red Umbrella continues to campaign for trans people’s access to trans-specific and sexual and reproductive rights. Furthermore, Red Umbrella provides support to trans people whose transition process is interrupted, who cannot access hormones or who experience multiple postoperative complications and offers legal aid to those who are punished for selling sex or associated offenses.

The COVID-19 crisis further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of trans people, especially trans women sex workers. Many of them had to discontinue work due to government restrictions, decreasing purchasing power of clients and the risk of transmission. Due to the pandemic in Turkey, brothels were also closed. In the past years prior to COVID-19, the number of brothels had been reduced due to unlawful excuses and new brothels could not be opened. With these conditions, sex workers are also more exposed to state violence and gangs targeting them.

COVID-19 SURVEY²¹

Red Umbrella carried out a community survey with a total of 107 sex workers between July and October of 2020 on the impact of the pandemic. Key findings are the following:

- Considering the effects of the pandemic on the economic situation of sex workers; 64% of the participants stated that they were not financially prepared for the pandemic period, 19% were not prepared and 10% were partially prepared. Among the participants, 60% stated that they have a dependent (parent, child, spouse, partner, friend, etc.), while 40% stated that they had no dependents.
- The great majority of the sex workers had income loss during the pandemic. Close to half of the participants stated that they lost their income to a large extent (81% -100%) during the pandemic period. All of the trans women and non-binary sex workers stated that their income decreased by at least 61%.
- Sex workers have been subjected to one or more types of violence during the pandemic. Types of violence that trans women and non-binary sex workers have been subjected to during the pandemic, sorted in order of frequency are psychological violence (15 people), sexual violence (14 people), verbal violence (14 people), economic violence (13 people), gender-related violence (13 people), physical violence (8 people) and cyber violence (4 people).

²¹Red Umbrella (2020b). *The effects of COVID-19 pandemic on sex workers.*

As a result of the hate speech of public authorities, the rates of violence increased especially against trans sex workers. As a result of restrictions and quarantine, sex workers who could not work on the street had to work in their homes, however, this time, their homes were sealed and they faced the risk of becoming homeless in the pandemic. Their need for social support increased, although they conveyed these demands to the association, unfortunately the association could not support them because it did not have such a capacity.

The COVID-19 crisis also created a medical emergency. Trans people, especially those who experience more than one form of transphobia, had to turn to under-the-counter surgeons and the complications they experienced as a result of the surgery increased. In the pandemic, the hospitals did not provide transition-related services and a lot of trans people had to wait or surgeries were performed at very exorbitant prices in private clinics.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

TGEU calls upon governments / ministries of justice / mainstream civil society and human rights organisations to:

GENERAL MEASURES

- Train professionals (victim support providers, police officers, judicial officers, NGO staff, healthcare workers, teachers etc.) on preventing and responding to discrimination and violence against trans people, sex workers, including trans sex workers, and providing sensitive and appropriate support;
- Develop and implement public education programmes and school curricula to eliminate prejudices against trans people and other oppressed groups;
- Investigate hate crimes promptly and with seriousness and take appropriate measures to encourage victims to report hate crimes;
- Include gender identity to the hate crime legislation as bias motivation for hate crimes;
- Train law enforcement officers in methods of investigating hate crimes, methods of working with trans victims, and the specifics of conducting court cases;
- Collect trans-inclusive data on gender disparities, intersectional gender-based discrimination and violence, and initiate specific data collection among trans people regarding access to education, employment, health, housing, and justice, in cooperation with local trans groups and organisations.

POLICING AND IMPRISONMENT

- Ensure that victims/survivors of violence receive appropriate remedies and redress, including compensation and legal aid, and that self-organised trans and sex worker groups are involved in victim support and anti-violence strategies;
- Develop measures to enhance police accountability and transparency, and work with marginalised groups disproportionately policed to monitor their implementation;
- Create guidelines for treating trans people with dignity, covering the areas of police interactions, body searches, and interrogations.

DECRIMINALISATION

- Decriminalise all aspects of sex work, same-sex relationships, gender identity and/or expression, drug use, HIV exposure, non-disclosure, and transmission, and bodily modification procedures and treatments;
- Review vague public morality, nuisance, loitering, and decency laws, and take steps to eliminate their disproportionate and subjective application against trans people, including trans sex workers and other marginalised groups, e.g. racial/ethnic minorities;
- Erase prostitution, gender identity/expression, HIV status, and drug use related offences from criminal records.

FUNDERS

- Provide funding for trans and sex worker organisations to support community building, community-based research and services, training, advocacy, and campaigning activities.

