Input to the report on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity

**Commentary by LGBT-Initiative group “Coming Out”[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**For Independent Expert on protection against
violence and discrimination based on
sexual orientation and gender identity**

*Russian Ministry of the Justice added Coming Out to the list of so called “foreign agents”, and we must write about it in our reports – so it is.*

**Research: understanding the health care needs of LGTBI and GNC people**

The Russian government prefers not to identify LGBT\* people as a social group, thus, from the State’s point of view there cannot be any “extra” vulnerability, and the problems of LGBT\* people are almost invisible to the authorities. The State does not collect any information about the health condition of LGBT\* people, about their needs and vulnerabilities, because the State does not perceive LGBT\* as a social group with specific characteristics and needs. The only source of data about LGBT\* people are nongovernmental organizations, civil society associations and grassroots LGBT\* initiatives.

**Inclusion: LGTBI and GNC people in the decision-making process**

In June 2013, the “propaganda law” came into legal force; it was de jure aimed at preventing the propaganda of “non-traditional sexual relations” among minors, and de facto consolidated homo- and transphobia at the state level. And despite the fact that the laws and rhetoric of the authorities often seem to be distant and unrelated to real life, the general trend towards the approval and institutionalization of homophobia and transphobia affect the lives of ordinary people.

Also continuation of the pressure to the civil society affects to organizations providing support to the LGBT\* and LGBT\* rights legislation. In 2021 some of LGBT\*-organizations and initiatives were included to the list of so-called “foreign agents”. That makes more complicated to continue their working for them. And the reason why the State recognize these organizations as “foreign agents” is their activity which is perceived like a political activity, which in fact is just providing support.

So that means that any participation in the decision-making processes for LGBT\*-people and organizations is almost out of law.

One of positive moments was that ombudsman of Saint-Petersburg included data collected by Coming Out to his Annual review for a several years. However, the new ombudsman came in the end of 2021, and this institution is not ready to cover these issues anymore.

Another one positive moment is that in 2021 transgender woman became the head of one of regional political parties[[2]](#footnote-2). That shows that the level of transphobia in the society can be less then it seems and less then the government tries to present.

**Access: ensuring that LGTBI and GNC people have access to health care**

As it has already been told, the State prefers to ignore any vulnerability of LGBT\* and doesn’t highlight any of their specific needs. The only source of the support for them is nongovernmental organizations and initiatives.

Nongovernmental organizations have been taking actions to improve the situation of LGBT people especially during the pandemic. Here are some examples:

* [Rainbow World (Perm)](https://rainboworldperm.org/) has been providing food for LGBT people who lost their source of income;
* Trans\* Coalition On Postsoviet Space [started a special program](https://www.transcoalition.net/covid-19-2020-pandemic/) aimed to decrease vulnerability and to support transgender people. They provide psychological help and humanitarian aid;
* [T-Action initiative group](http://t-action-team.org/) has been providing free-of-charge endocrinologists’ consultations on hormonal therapy for transgender people online, after which they can get a prescription for hormonal medication by mail. This helped transgender people to connect with doctors especially in the pandemic period, when most of clinics were closed;
* Several other social initiatives for transgender people aimed to provide them food, medicine, health care and psychological consultations.

According to our research, in some cases, coming out in a medical institutions was the reason for the negative attitude of doctors. Every tenth of the respondents who sought treatment in 2020 faced inappropriate questions from doctors or other hospital staff. Dozens of LGBT\* people have faced taunts, attempts to “cure” their sexual orientation or transgender identity, and explaining any medical problems by their orientation or gender identity. Transgender people are in a particularly vulnerable position. They are often denied access to services, including medical care.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

Sustainable Development Goals is not the most popular conception among the Russian officials. We haven’t got any proofs that it is used as any kind of landmark on the governmental level. Some of nonprofit organizations use them as a guide, but not all. Honestly, lots of decisions and actions of the officials of different levels often contradict to them, causes lots of additional problems for LGBT\*-people: widespread discrimination in the health-care sphere which causes that some of LGBT\*-people try not to go to the doctor as long as it possible; a large stress, caused by the potential discrimination in the health-care sphere.

Also as all information concerning sexual orientation or gender identity can be interpreted as propaganda, any attempt to provide sexuality education may be prosecuted what makes it almost illegal.

For any additional information, please contact:

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1. “Coming Out” (<https://comingoutspb.com/eng/>) is a regional nonprofit initiative group founded in 2008 in St. Petersburg, Russia. We work for universal recognition of human dignity and equal rights of all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity by lobbying and advocacy, educational and cultural events, and providing psychological and legal services to LGBT\* people [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://meduza.io/feature/2021/11/17/yuliya-aleshina-iz-altayskogo-kraya-pervaya-v-rossii-transgendernaya-zhenschina-politik-my-s-ney-pogovorili [↑](#footnote-ref-2)