

Campaign Against Homophobia

Homophobia is a prejudice. It manifests itself in the contempt, hatred and aggression towards homosexuals and is born out of an irrational fear of those with a sexual orientation different than heterosexuality. The term was coined by George Weinberg in 1972.

Homosexuality is considered a psychological occurrence which is based on the sexual attraction towards those of the same sex. It is important to note that this 'sexual attraction' encompasses the desire for an intimate emotional relationship with those of the same sex as well as the desire for a physical elation. According to research, the percentage of people who are homosexual is similar in all societies. Although 5% (which equals 2 million people in Poland) of the population is homosexual much larger percent had experienced with homosexuality.

Homosexual and bisexual people in Poland are unfortunately ignored, disregarded, condemned, labelled 'deviants', 'sick', 'immoral', 'perverts' and so on. The World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from its list of diseases in 1991 therefore concluding that homosexuality must not be 'cured'. Nevertheless there are still some people in Poland, who insist that each and every homosexual person should be brought under treatment.

Homosexuals in Poland are very often the victims of psychical and physical violence. They are under constant pressure to hide their orientation so as not to demoralise the 'healthy' part of society. It is not however legal to discriminate homosexuals. It is prohibited by article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which is the highest enforceable legal document in the nation. Discrimination is also prohibited in several international agreements to which Poland is a signatory, for example the European Convention on Human Rights.

Due to the pervasive lack of knowledge about the subject, myths and stereotypes sanctioning homophobia are still alive. To change the existing situation there is a need to educate not only our society but also homosexuals themselves since it is generally understood that the unknown arouses fear. Therefore, we need effective organizations that will eliminate the myths and stereotypes functioning in our society. That is why **Campaign Against Homophobia** is needed.

Our organization was founded in 2001 and is a non-government organization operating throughout Poland. Only volunteers work for the Campaign and they focus their efforts on a broadly understood fight against homophobia.

Our main goals are as follows:

- Publicizing the discussion on the subject of sexual minorities' problems. Increase social representation for all sexual minorities.
- Shaping tolerant attitudes towards people of other than heterosexual orientation and removing prejudice and stereotypes concerning them.
- Shaping and raising positive self-esteem of bi-, homo-, and transsexual people.
- Promoting knowledge about safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS in particular.
- Abolishing in the Polish legal system regulations discriminating against sexual orientation, so that they are compliant with the requirements of the EEC.
- Introducing in the Civil Law the concept of legal partnership of people of the same sex.
- Acting against discrimination against bi-, homo-, and transsexual individuals and counteracting the signs of homophobia in the society.

- Promoting awareness of sexual and gender identification.
- Creating and introducing into the public circulation anti-homophobic discourse which would be sensitive to the procedures of exclusion and stigmatization.

To reach the goals we are taking several actions including political lobbying, education in schools, educating bi- and homosexual people, writing petitions, putting forward legislative propositions, publishing materials, promoting bi- and homosexual culture.

As a part of our activities we have, in cooperation with other organizations, published in February 2002 "The Report on Public Figures and Institutions Discriminating Against Sexual Minorities in Poland." The aim of the Report is to show society that in our country Human and Civil Rights are not respected. We make it a point to respond to the incidents of homophobia which occur in the media and amongst public figures. We also co-ordinate the Equality Parade, which takes place every year in Warsaw. We organized the well-publicized campaign 'Let Them See Us', the first campaign in Poland which aimed to combat discrimination towards homosexuals.

These are only our most important projects. Please contact us for more detailed information.

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