



‘LOOK AND LISTEN’ PROJECT REPORT

**Monitoring newspapers in Serbia for hate speech and
documenting cases of discrimination of LGBT people**

This publication was made with the support of ILGA-Europe within its Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund. The opinions expressed in the document do not necessarily reflect any official position of ILGA-Europe.



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INTRODUCTION

'They should go back where they came from and not walk with us on the street.'

'They are provoking us with their very existence. It is a perversion and illness, and they should go and have a treatment.'

'They don't have any rights. They are not people like the rest of us. They are not people at all, they are not natural. There is no life for them in Belgrade or anywhere in Serbia.'

'Kill, kill and kill the fag!'

The spectators and anti-gay protesters on the first and only Gay pride in Serbia, Belgrade 2001

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After the decriminalization of the homosexuality in the mid '90 in Serbia, and a change of regime in October 2000, Serbian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (further: LGBT) thought that times have changed and it is the right time to go public and fight for the right of equality. Unfortunately, people on the first and only Gay Pride parade organized in Belgrade in 2001, were brutally bashed by hordes of football fans, nationalists and religious fanatics. Since those times, LGBT organizations focused more on strengthening LGBT community, lobbying for equality and spreading Queer culture.

Serbia decriminalized homosexual acts between men in 1996., and ten years later (2006.) the age of consent for homosexual acts has been equalized with age of consent for heterosexual acts (lowered from 18 to 14 years). No political party has in it's agenda the antidiscrimination law for LGBT people (except for Liberal-democratic parti which supports LGBT rights to some extent), neither any sort of civil partnership or unregistered cohabitation legislation.

The position of LGBTTIQ community is not uniform throughout Serbia. In Belgrade, the capitol of Serbia, situation is somewhat better, due to the facts that majority of LGBT NGOs are located there and implement activities there and that 'gay scene' is relatively developed (comparing to the rest of the Serbia). In Vojvodina, the autonomous province in the north, the cultural patterns are different since it is a multiethnic environment, hence the position of LGBT people is better then in central Serbia.

So far, there are only two researches regarding LGBT discrimination in Serbia (Labris: 2006, Youth Initiative for Human Rights: 2005), only one media monitoring project (implemented by Labris) and there was no documentation of cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression in the region of central Serbia. This region is often regarded as 'the heart of Serbia' with strong traditional and patriarchal values, including strong feeling of intolerance towards LGBTTIQ people, which makes the documentation more difficult. In all documented cases, victims refused to report violence/discrimination to police/other services, afraid of being unwillingly outed or suffering further violence/discrimination.

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The purpose of this report is to show the position of LGBT people in central Serbia. The report is a result of a six month project (01.02.2007 – 01.08.2007) 'Look and listen', implemented by 'Taboo, group for affirmation of diversity', a non-government organization from Serbia, and supported by ILGA-Europe through it's Human Rights Violations documentation Fund. Project 'Look and listen' combined monitoring of three selected daily newspapers for hate speech, and documentation of cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression in central Serbia.

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Monitoring newspapers in Serbia for hate speech on LGBT people

The following data has been collected within 'Look and listen' project implemented by 'Taboo, group for affirmation of diversity' and supported by ILGA-Europe. The purpose of the project is to analyze the gathered data and to determine how the newspapers, which are one of the most important factors in forming the public opinion, view LGBT people and LGBT issues such as discrimination, legislation and prejudice.

Three daily newspapers have been selected for monitoring, each one from a different group.

'Politika' ('Politics') is a serious, responsible daily paper, the oldest daily paper in Serbia. 'Politika' does not print anything unless it is well documented and supported by facts; though it does not have a circulation as high as the other two papers, it remains much more influential in both public and government. It is considered as the 'papers for elite'.

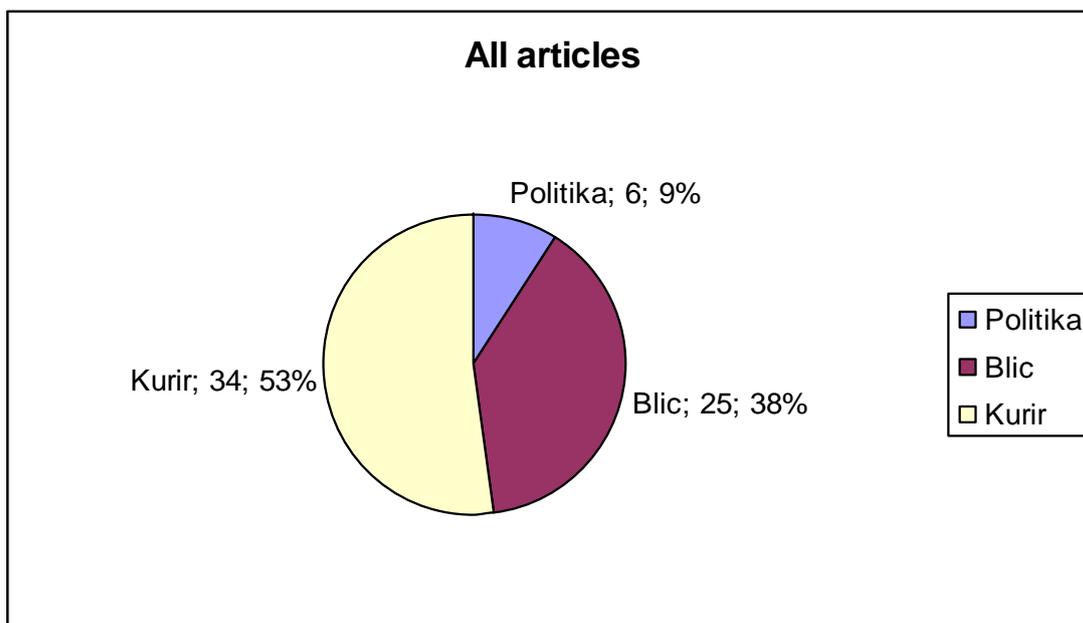
'Blic' ('Flashlight'), on the other side, is a semi-tabloid, evening daily paper, aimed at providing as much information as possible without comments and personal remarks. 'Blic' has a high circulation, is read throughout all categories of population equally, but maintains less influence than 'Politika' and 'Kurir'.

'Kurir' is a classical tabloid paper, marked by sensationalism. Though it is much less respected in public than the first two papers, it has, by far, the highest circulation and strongest impact on public opinion. In numerous occasions, 'Kurir' is the only paper that covered some LGBT event (Gay Pride in Croatia, for instance).

Gathered articles were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, with the latter focusing on the context of the articles rather than terminology used. Due to statistical reasons, all articles which mention LGBT people or LGBT issues were collected, and later were compared in various categories with articles which have negative context about LGBT people or LGBT issues. This allows determining in which sections such articles usually are placed, how much space is used for them, and what are the topics and terminology used.

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All articles which mention LGBT people or LGBT issues – representation by newspapers

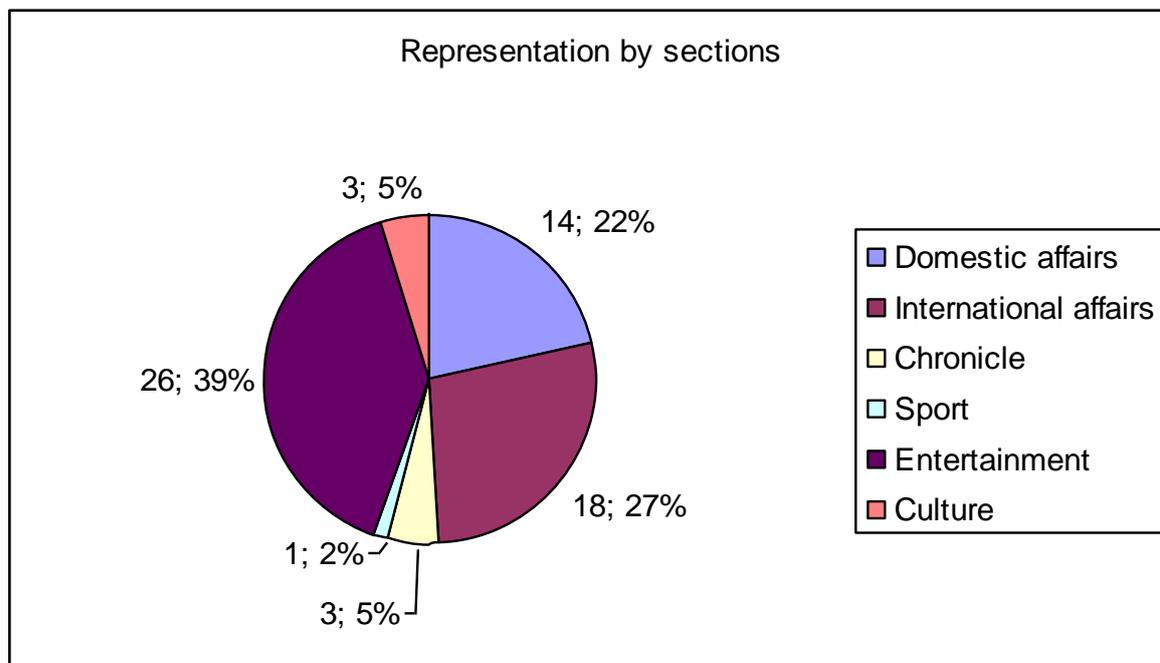


As one can see, there were 65 articles overall which mention LGBT people or focus on LGBT issues. 'Politika' had the least of those – only 6 in six months period, while 'Blic' had 25 articles and 'Kurir' 34 articles, by far the most of three monitored newspapers.

It can be said that semi-tabloid and tabloid newspapers pay more attention to LGBT people and LGBT issues.

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Representation by sections of all articles

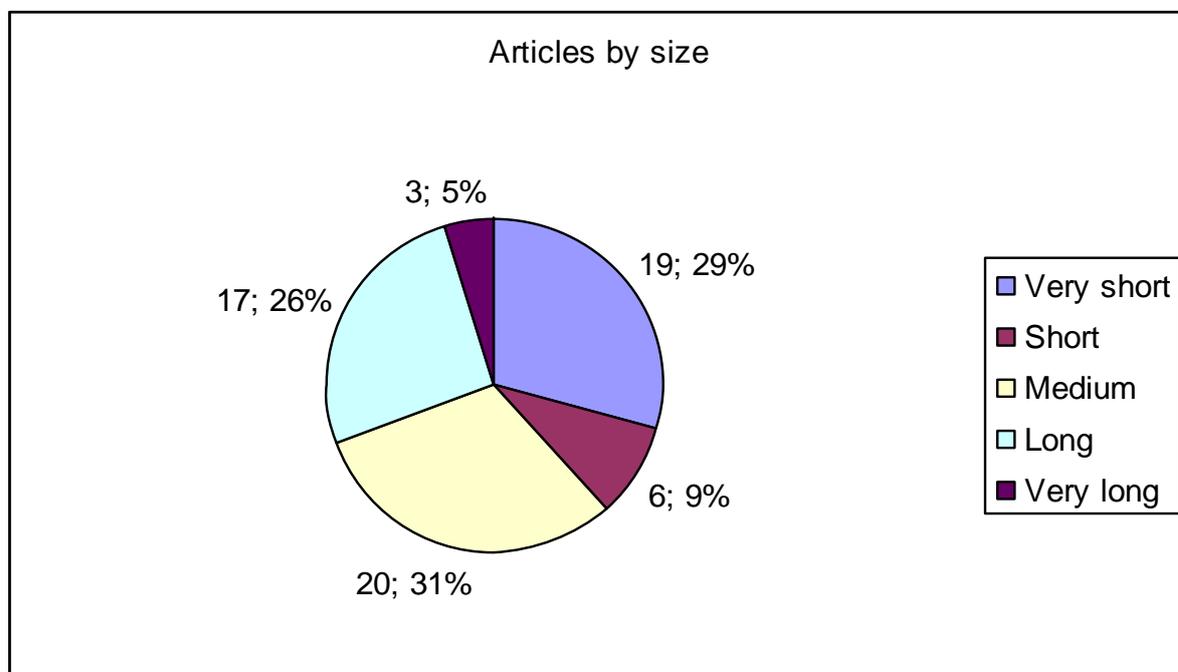


Majority of all published articles were published in the section 'Entertainment', followed by 'Foreign affairs' section and 'Domestic affairs' section. Surprisingly, small number of articles were published in section 'Culture', while very small numbers in 'Chronicle' and 'Sports' were expected. Only one article was published on the front page ('Who are the blackmailed homosexuals in the government', Kurir).

This shows that LGBT people and LGBT issues are still not treated as a 'serious' matter, given the fact that there were very few articles about legislation, discrimination etc, while most of them were focused on alleged homosexual orientation of celebrities and foreign news.

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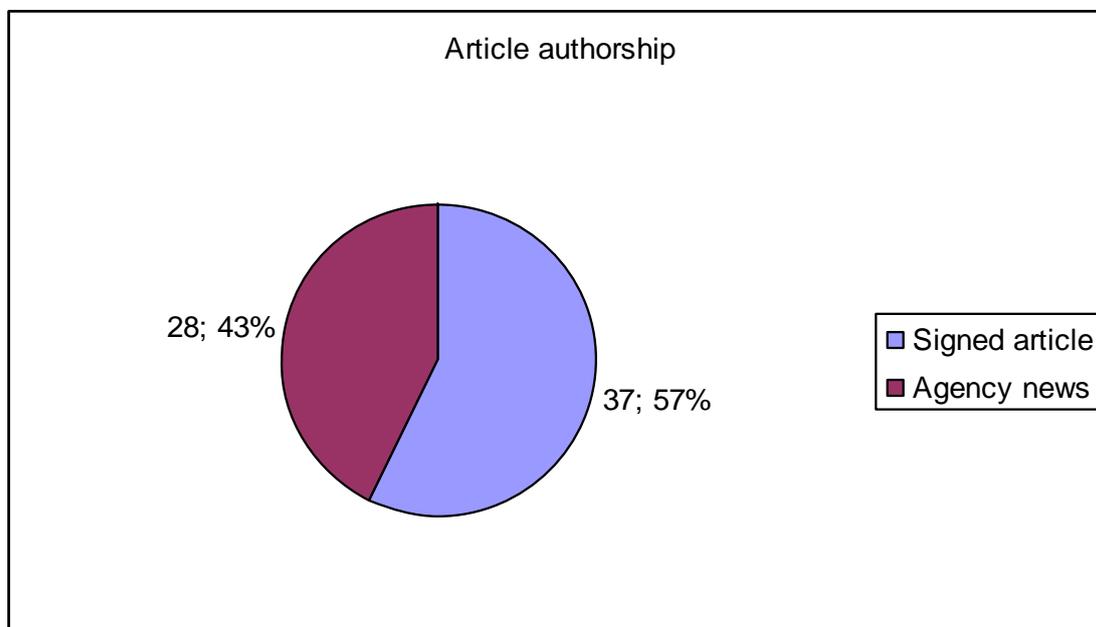
All articles by size



Leading categories in this section are 'long', 'medium' and 'very short'. This is an improvement compared to previous researches (Labris, 2006, a Research report) where short and very short articles were mostly represented.

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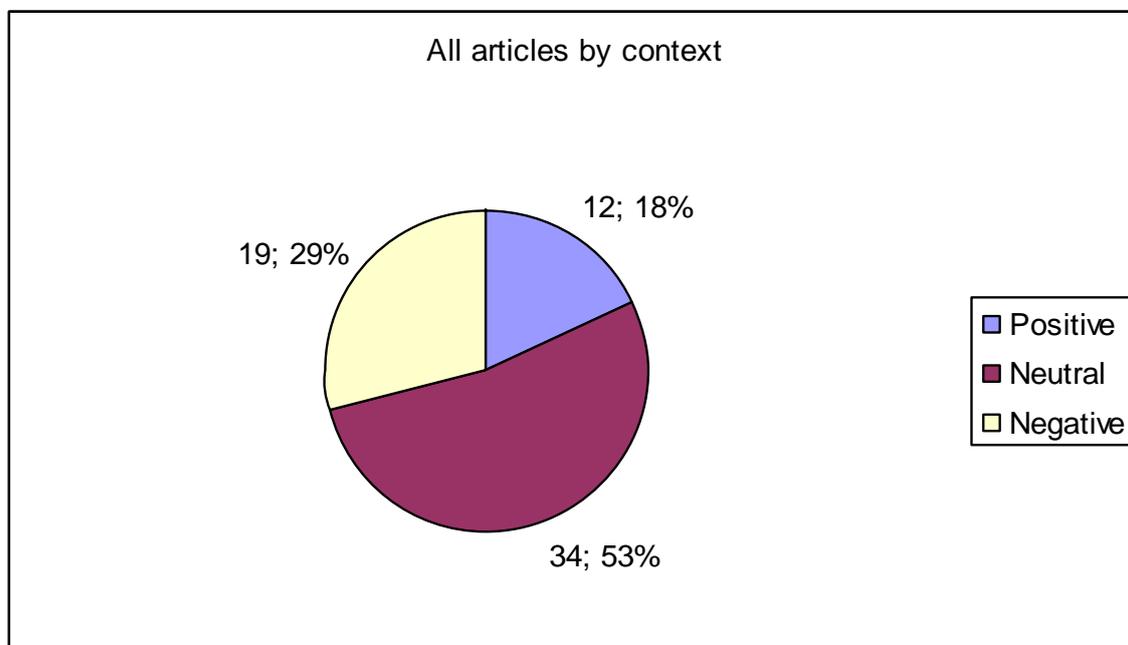
Origin and authorship of all articles



There were no unsigned articles, while distribution among other two categories (signed author; agency news) was almost equal.

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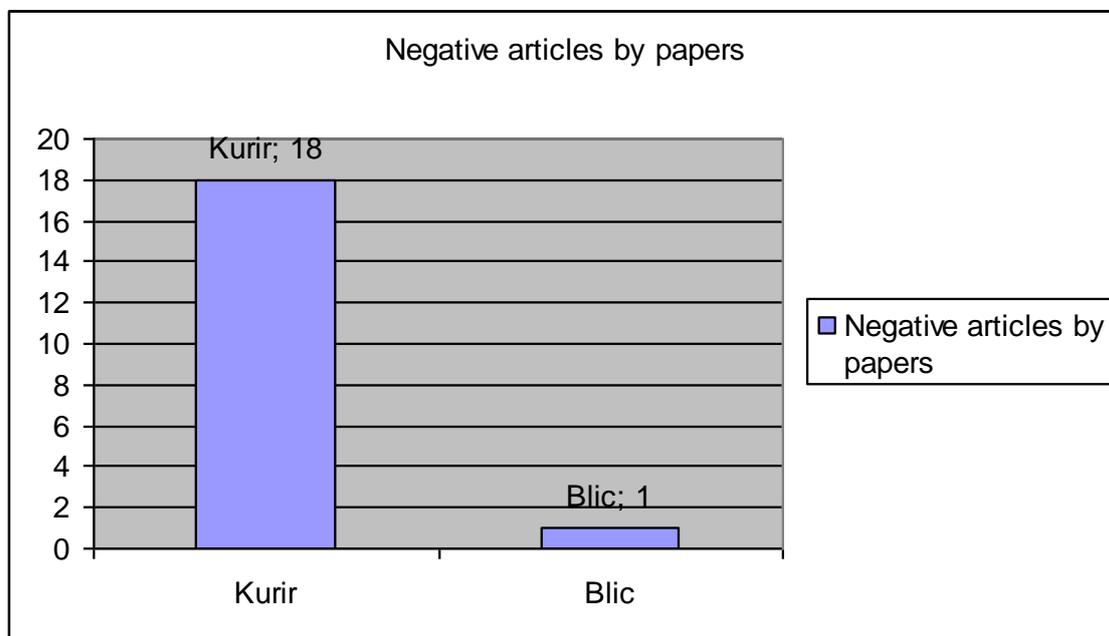
Context of all articles



A fairly high percentage of articles had a negative context – 29%. ‘Politika’ did not have negative articles, while ‘Blic’ had only one (for contextual reasons only). Vast majority of negative articles is published in ‘Kurir’. If one compares correlation positive: neutral: negative, it can be observed that ‘Blic’ has the best correlation, given the number of published articles – 6:18:1. While ‘Politika’ has the best correlation (3:3:0), the small number of published articles (only 6) shows poor coverage of LGBT issues. ‘Kurir’ has the worst correlation of 12:13:18.

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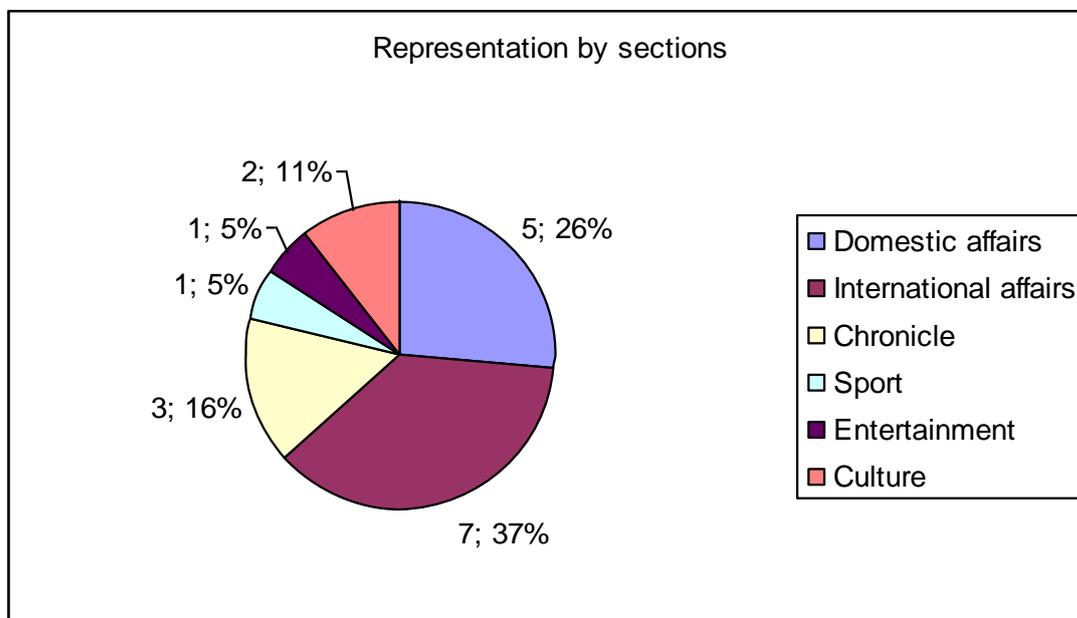
Negative articles – representation by newspapers



It is clear that huge majority of articles with negative context was published in 'Kurir', while only one article can be interpreted as negative in 'Blic' for contextual reasons. 'Politika' did not have negative articles.

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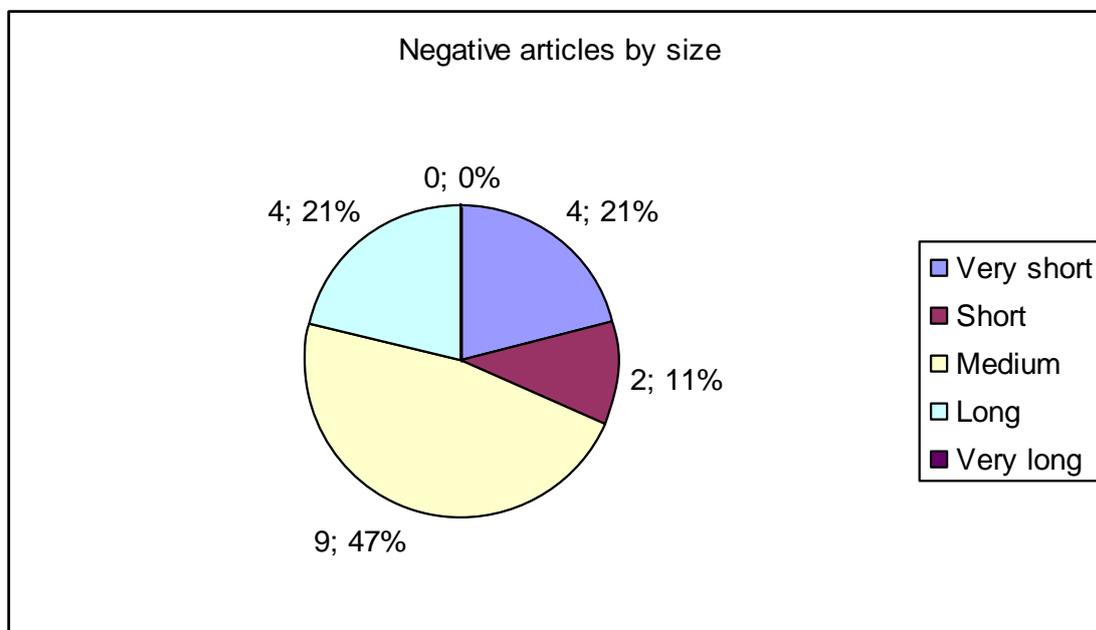
Negative articles – representation by sections



Comparing representation by section of all articles and negative articles, it is clear that majority of all articles is in the 'Entertainment' section while most of negative articles is published in 'Domestic affairs' and 'International affairs' sections. This implies that LGBT issues are treated negatively when it comes to discrimination, legislation and other 'serious' issues, and also when happening in Serbia, while treated more benevolent if happening worldwide and when areas like film, entertainment, actors are covered.

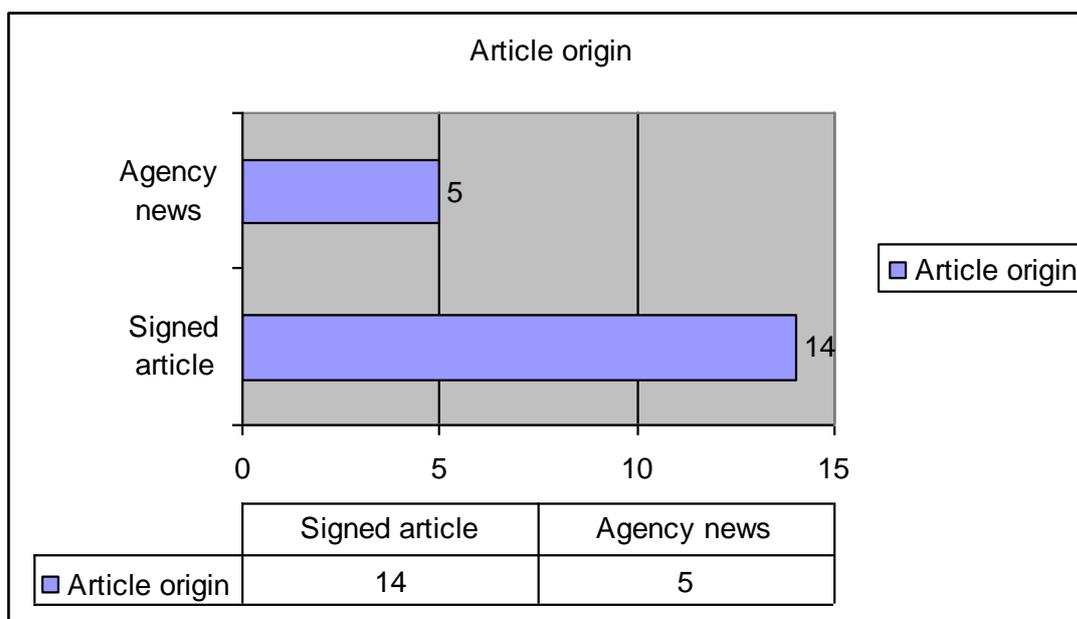
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Negative articles – representation by size



Size of negative articles corresponds with size of all articles – ‘medium’, ‘very short’ and ‘long’ are still top three categories.

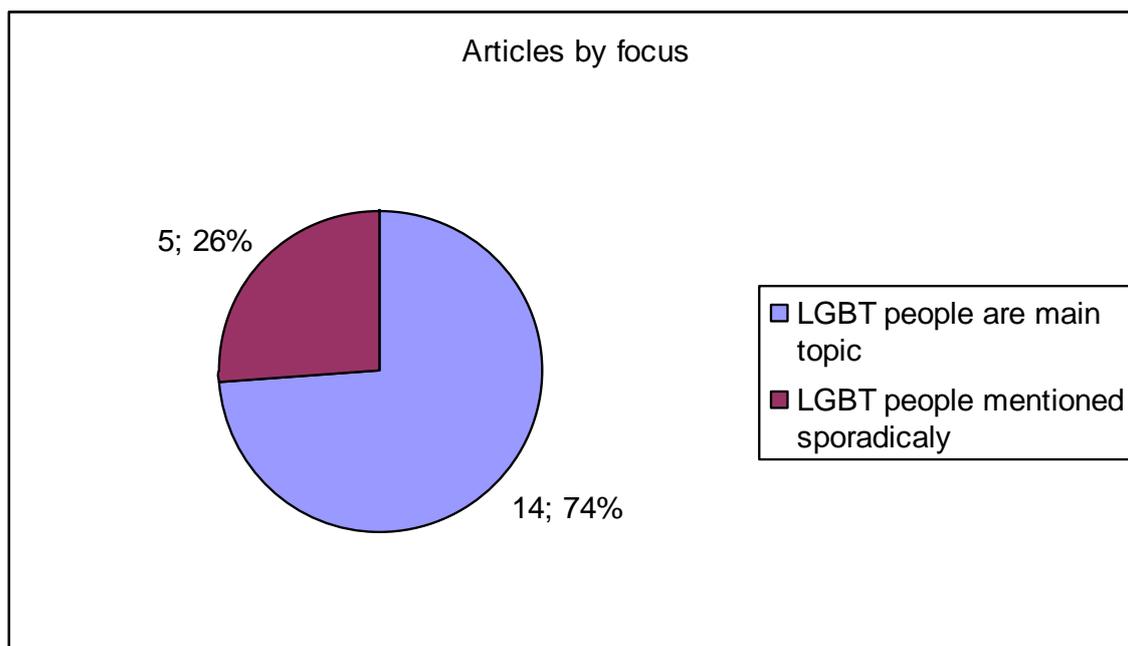
Negative articles – representation by authorship and origin



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Much more negative articles are signed (either by full name of author or by initials) then taken from agencies.

Negative articles – focus



Majority of negative articles (14) focuses mainly on LGBT issues, while only 5 articles mention sporadically LGBT issues.

Negative articles – illustrations and pictures

17 negative articles have pictures or illustrations which are suggestive, while 2 are without pictures or illustrations. This implies that negative attitude regarding LGBT issues has a greater impact on public opinion, since suggestive pictures combined with a sensationalist headline make the first impression about the article, regardless of the rests of the article

Negative articles – headlines and terminology

Suggestive headlines and negative terminology are the main reason why some articles have been categorized as negative. Although there are articles which are per se neutral and use right terminology (homosexual, lesbian, gay, same-sex marriage), combined with sensational headlines and suggestive illustrations and pictures, have the overall negative impact on reader. The terms mostly used are: fag, dyke, poof, and ass-lover.

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Here are some examples of the headlines:

‘SYSTEM BREAKDOWN’ – schools in London promote homosexuality as a life style – Tragic consequences! (Kurir, 16.03.2007, page 8)

RASPAD SISTEMA

Osnovne škole u Londonu promovišu homoseksualizam kao životni stil

LONDON - Nekoliko osnovnih škola u Velikoj Britaniji uvelo je kao školsku literaturu priče sa gej i lezbijskim likovima kako bi se najmlađi upoznali sa homoseksualizmom kao životnim stilom.

U školski program uvrštene su priče poput „Kralj i kralj“ o gej princu ili „Za tango je potrebno troje“ o gej pingvinima koji se zaljubljuju i podižu usvojeno dete

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STRAVIČNE POSLEDICE...
Biću i ja gej kad porastem

‘SICK’ – unknown necrophiliac publishes add asking people to give him their bodies after death for sexual purposes (Kurir, 20.02.2007, page 11) – with a very visible banner of GAY-SERBIA website, so that reader has the impression that homosexuals are the ones publishing the add

knjemo smit komelja ne bismo ti dosti do malo uzika i zabave?
Dok dizava ne regulise nasa prava, vi budite humani i humanitarni, jer to je jedini nacin da preživimo! Podarite vasu telesnu tjesku, duse ostobodjenu i bezvoltnu, namra na upotrebu!

BOLESNO

GAY SERBIA
serbian gay and lesbian community

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'SICK – GAY PRIDE FOR CHILDREN' (Kurir, 10.02.2007)

'DYKES IN ACTION' – Croatians shocked by a theatrical shows 'Not for those under 16' in which two girls kiss and cuddle, and then sexually assaults their friend! (Kurir, 24.04.2007)

'FLOODS BECAUSE OF THE FAGS' – Bishops of Anglican church judge that flood in Britain are the God's answer to homosexuality (Kurir, 02.07.2007)



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Documenting cases of discrimination of LGBT people in central Serbia

Within this project, seven (7) interviews were taken from victims of various forms of discrimination. The interviews and questionnaires used were created with help of ILGA-Europe.

In order to protect the privacy of victims, their real names and surnames were not used in this report or used materials.

In the first part, one can see general information gathered from the victims analyzed statistically, and 'model victim' created based on those findings.

In the second part information about cases are presented in statistical manner, followed by abstracts from some of the cases.

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General information statistics

The age range of victims varied – from 1976 to 1987, so mostly the younger population of LGBT people was covered by interviews.

The level of education of all victims was high school, however 42% of victims are students, 29% are unemployed while only 29% of victims were employed at the time of discrimination. This implies that target group for discrimination is a younger population, vulnerable for its economical and social dependence.

58% of victims identified themselves as of male sex, while 42% identified as of female sex. This implies that both sexes were well presented in this project.

In terms of gender, 58% defined themselves as male, 29% as female and 13% as transgender.

85% stated that they are homosexually oriented (both gay and lesbian), while 15% stated that they are bisexual.

Regarding openness about their sexual orientation, 60% of victims are only open to their friends. 30% are open to their family and friends, while only 10% are open to their family, friends and co-workers.

This allows us to create a model of a victim – it is a person in mid 20es, mostly studying or unemployed, open about its sexuality only to friends, still depending on its parents for support. Implications of this victim model are worrying – this depicts a vulnerable group of young people, without support of society, family or government institutions, which have to deal with various consequences of discrimination on their own, with possible support from their friends.

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Discrimination cases – information and statistics

Here we present the case information, giving the answers in numbers for each question from questionnaire. In all cases discrimination occurred during 2007th, though in some of them it started earlier.

Where discrimination happened?

Workplace	School, faculty, other educational facility	Public space	Other institution	Your house or apartment	Other place
12.5%	0%	25%	25%	12.5%	25%

Was it open or closed space?

Open space (street, lobby, amphitheatre, shop – where other people can see/hear the incident)	Closed space (where there are no chance of other people seeing/hearing incident)
43%	57%

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Who discriminated you?

Acquaintances, friends	29%
Unknown personas	14%
Family members	14%
Coworkers, colleagues	0%
Superiors (boss, professor)	14%
Members of clearly identifiable group (political party members, skinheads etc.)	0%
Persons not belonging in any of these categories	29%

Which sort of discrimination was it?

Verbal	43%
Physical	14%
Denial of services	8%
Preventing you from promotion in work	8%
Blackmail	7%
Existential (denial of living space etc.)	14%
Other	6%

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Abstracts:

- They were all just shocked and one of the girls told 'my god, all these years I was friend with you! And you're sick! Freak!' and others started telling me that I should get in a hospital, that I'm mentally ill and such things. Then other girls started crying yelling 'I don't wanna be near you, your kind is not natural, it's not right to be that way' and the third girl started hitting me. I was not defending myself and at one point I fell down and then all three girls started kicking me. -

- he returned drunk and took out his gun and began talking with himself, telling that he'll 'put us all out of our misery', since his son is a fag -

*- once in the hair salon I was working, there was a crowd (since it is a big salon) and owner asked me to help her with male customers, though I am a female stylist. I was preparing to service one of them when the customer said 'I don't want **that** to cut my hair, he's a freak, maybe I'll become like him'. -*

- Then he started shouting, but not very loud, 'The problem? The problem is that you're a f...ing dyke! I don't want you or you kind here ever again!'. -

How many times discrimination happened?

Once, by one person	29%
Once, by more persons	43%
More then once by one person	14%
More then once by more persons	14%

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Have you reported this to police or public defender or asked doctor for help?

YES	NO
14%	86%

- If I went to the police station and said 'Hello. I'm transgender, I like men, some people harass me because of that' their response would be bashing the hell out of me. -

- I didn't want to compromise myself even more. -

- I knew that police should react in such cases and I did call them. Seeing that their reaction is rather mild and slow, I decided not to address to them any more. -

Were the people who did this officials or private individuals?

Officials (persons have clearly used their job - prerogatives and power to discriminate you)	43%
Private individuals (people have discriminated you as private individuals)	57%

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Viewing the above data, one must notice a few patterns:

- places of discrimination are various
- verbal discrimination is most likely to occur, followed by physical and existential
- discrimination usually happens once, by one or more persons
- discrimination is usually not reported to the police

Cases also show that there is little or no progress regarding LGBT rights. Beside 'usual' forms of discrimination – such as denial of services, verbal or physical violence etc., the media monitoring team has noticed a dangerous trend: two interesting cases have been spotted in the newspapers (Kurir and Blic), and both have in common that the accused ones claim that they were sexually assaulted by the homosexual person (This act is known as 'gay panic defense' and was mostly used in the USA). First case involves young man (in his 20) who was allegedly assaulted by an elder family friend; the young man claims that he was only defending himself, though the elderly man is in a coma in Clinical Centre in Kragujevac. Other case is about the murder of a couple (man and woman), while the perpetrator stated that 'the man' (his neighbor) 'drugged me with another man, sexually assaulted me and I had to kill him to prevent him from doing it again. I don't know why I killed his wife'. The team, unfortunately, had no financial or human resources to further investigate these cases, but nonetheless the idea of using someone's alleged homosexual orientation as a defense in front of the court is worrying. In both cases the perpetrators are arrested and waiting for trials, so we can safely assume that the police have done their job right, and the rest is on the public prosecutor.

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CONCLUSION

The position of LGBT people in Serbia is like being between hammer and the anvil. On one side, there is the general population who perceives LGBT people as 'sick, unnatural, mistakes of nature, freaks' in large number of cases, and on the other is the state without any official policy regarding LGBT rights, unwilling to admit that there is a problem.

First problem is high level of homophobia of general population. LGBT people are still verbally and/or physically molested, lose their jobs and can not live normal and productive lives. Unlike other minority groups (for instance Roman minority), LGBT people do not have representatives in the parliament, there are no public figures openly supporting them, and non-government organizations that deal with such a problem are, as a rule, marginalized or ignored. More influential and stronger NGOs do not find the question of homophobia interesting, since it is not popular to talk about it (unlike women rights or children rights) and LGBT activism always carries a certain amount of physical danger for the activist. Hence, there is only a small number of NGOs that work on such issues, and even smaller number of them work directly with LGBT people and their empowerment.

Second problem is lack of governmental politics towards LGBT people. Though homosexuality is decriminalized, there is no antidiscriminative legislation (except certain articles in labor law, high education law and public information law) or mechanisms of protection when discrimination occurs. To make things worse, there is no political will to resolve such a sensitive issue, and even in government coalition there are parties which claim that LGBT people are 'unnatural and sick'

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