

Analytical report on the findings of the  
qualitative study on the situation of LGBTI  
people in Albania, Serbia and North  
Macedonia

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## Introduction

In Albania, LGBTI+ people and the Roma and Egyptian minorities, and in particular individuals belonging to both communities, are among the most vulnerable groups. On one side, we have an ethnic minority such as the Roma and on the other side people who have a certain sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite the different features of the two social groups, many institutional studies and reports point out some of the social problems that arise as a result of being different in the perception of the majority, and therefore often discriminated. This is even more evident in people who are both LGBTIQ+ and Roma or Egyptian.

The tendency of the contemporary society, founded on the essentialist principles of nation-state ideology, to orient itself towards the preservation of national purity in relation to ethnic minorities (Appadurai) as well as towards any social group that contradicts the dominant value system, is a phenomenon discussed by various scholars. Likewise, highly influential scholars in the theoretical studies of minorities, who have influenced the paradigm shift and the theoretical perspective in this area, suggest approaching the study of social boundaries and not ethnic boundaries, in the case of research on ethnic minorities (Barth). Although in this case we are discussing two social groups that are very different, the exploration vector in some aspects of the social interaction of the majority with the minority, whether the latter originates from different ethnicity or different sexual orientation and gender are likely to face a corpus of similar problems.

However, being aware of the complexity of this study, our intention is not to investigate all possible variables, nor is it to theoretically analyze them, but simply to identify some of the most common important problems. In short, this study is more of a starting point to investigate the most acute common problems, identified as such by members of both groups, as well as in

particular, by individuals who belong to both groups. These findings may serve (as well as in similar researches) to draft intervention policies and strategies with the aim of improving the livelihood of these groups and as potential points for further in-depth studies.

Another important element considered in the concept of this study is the heterogeneity of these groups: Firstly, by reading this characteristic as an inevitable social fact, as an attribute that potentially many social groups carry in terms of freedom. Secondly, as known, especially in relation to minorities, diversity is the fundamental principle, a prerequisite for worlds that enable the accommodation of “differences”. Consequently, any perspective that approaches these social groups as homogeneous communities poses a risk to annihilate not only the values of these groups but also an important principle for the very existence of these groups. Third, the recognition of heterogeneity implies the awareness of the complexity that the node of multi-layer problems and variations carry, that we cannot expect to be captured in one study. For instance, it depends on the social status or position of each of the individuals in society belonging to the three groups (Roma, LGBTIQ+, and individuals of both affiliations, which compromise a third group in this study), as the poorest or lowest class of them faces other problems compared to the middle or upper class. The same difficulty exists when comparing individuals belonging to the same social class from the three groups, as in many cases they may have different circumstances that favor or hinder their social mobility, relationship with the majority of the population or with the social environment in general.

However, as mentioned above, this study proceeds from the premise that the three groups face similar problems as a result of their relationship with the majority of the population and social structure. The main purpose of this study is to discover the common problems that arise as a result of the exclusion of the minority from the majority and from the social structure built on the relationship of power. Based on this reasoning, the assumption that power relations rely on the dominant value system, dominant culture, or other sources that forge this relationship, often lead

to the exclusion and subordination of certain groups due to race, skin color, gender and sexual orientation. As noted above, this is especially true for individuals that carry both affiliations.

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative study conducted in three countries, Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia. Focus groups and in-depth interviews are used for data collection. For both in-depth interviews and focus groups, a questionnaire guide was drafted, which can be found in the Annex of this report.

A focus-group and three in-depth interviews were conducted in each country. The focus groups consisted of civil society activists from the Roma minority (in the case of Albania and the Egyptian minority) as well as LGBTIQ+ activists. The focus group was structured in this manner for four reasons:

- 1) Based on their close relationship with individuals belonging to both minorities, a close recognition of the main problems the communities face was provided;
- 2) Based on their experience, a deeper understanding of the problems and consequently of the causes and consequences was provided;
- 3) Through analysis it was possible to identify the common problems of both minorities as well as discuss possible solutions
- 4) This method serves as a way to explore internal dynamics and understand what can be improved in the performance of important stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, to improve the minorities' living situation.

Interviews were conducted with individuals who are both Roma or Egyptian and LGBTIQ+ with the aim of understanding the extent and nature of the multiple problems that individuals belonging to both groups face.

### **Main findings**

According to a transgender person in Albania who is also a LGBTIQ+ community rights activist, the three main problems of this community ranked by importance are: housing, provision of services and employment.

*“As a transgender person, in order to develop my identity I had to separate from my family and I currently live in a rented house. This process has been extremely difficult because as soon as the landlords learned that I was transgender they refused to let me rent their premise, a few times I even paid and the money was not returned, even though I was evicted from the house” the person in question said.*

The reasoning clearly shows that in fact the problems of transgender people are a consequence, because the cause is discrimination.

According to a Romani activist from Albania, the main problems are: housing, employment, education, discrimination and underage marriages. Another Romani activist, referring to her personal experience, says: *“Discrimination made me drop out of school. In my school I was the only one from the Roma community. My classmates and teachers referred to me by different epithets.”*

In the focus group in North Macedonia, LGBTIQ+ people list as the main problem the lack of legal protection and state exclusion. Also, as in the case of Albania, the analysis of focus group participants shows that discrimination is main cause of all the problems this group is facing. Also, regarding the Roma, one of the participants in the focus group stated: *“The main problem Romani face is education, but discrimination is the cause. The same goes for LGBTIQ+”*.

In Serbia, the main problems listed by LGBTIQ+ are ignorance (as lack of information or knowledge about this group) stereotyping and discrimination. The main problems mentioned by the Romani were discrimination, deep-rooted prejudice, and general ignorance regarding this group.<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Differences and similarities between Romani and LGBTIQ+*

Discussing common problems, a LGBTIQ+ rights activist from Albania said: *“A huge common characteristic is discrimination that subsequently brings other problems such as denial of housing access, education and unemployment”*.

Also, a very significant finding filtered out by the focus group discussion in Albania is the gravity that poverty has as one of the main sources of many other problems that the three groups face. The participants’ reasoning and their direct experiences show that poverty is also the main cause of discrimination. This is reflected in the fact that differences are noticed in the relationship between individuals who are part of these groups and the majority of the population, conditioned by the economic situation of the individual. One Romani activist, relying on her childhood experience, during school years, emphasizes that: *“I consider poverty as one of the main causes of discrimination, and in my case, if I had better economic opportunities, I would have better clothes and not feel different from my classmates who often targeted me.”*

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<sup>1</sup> All data on the focus group developed in Serbia are based on the report prepared by the Serbian group.

While a transgender person asserts: *“There are conflicts within the community and stratification based on the economic situation. Life is easier for some people and the differences are incredibly big . This often results in discrimination even within community members.”*

Moreover, the feature highlighted during the focus group discussion, as an expression of the differences between Romani and LGBTIQ+ people in Albania, is the way they are treated by *others* who are not part of these groups. For example, one LGBTIQ+ human rights activist having a long experience in various non-profit organizations stated: *“I have noticed that the professionals’ approach towards the LGBTIQ+ and Roma/Egyptian communities is different. Usually in places where professionals are present and the Roma and Egyptian community is discussed, they try to be cautious, while regarding the LGBTIQ+ community this almost never happens.”*

Another distinctive feature in terms of problems these groups face is family relationship. For both groups, referring to activists, it turns out that families do not really support their children in terms of schooling. For example, in the case of Romani, as a consequence of the mentality, once the girls reach puberty age are forced by their parents to drop out of school. In the case of LGBTIQ+ persons, their situation is even worse during this age, with many consequences for the future, because apart from the fact that they are victims of bullying and often discriminated by teachers, they generally do not have even their parents’ support. This is clearly stated by one of the activists who said: *“Since most of the parents of LGBTIQ+ people are not supportive of their children, they do not help them with different problems they may have in the school environment. They just choose not to show up and their children’s problems deepen.”*

In North Macedonia, the common problems of the three groups are discrimination, lack of legal protection and self-discrimination or self-stigmatization by individuals who are part of these groups. Likewise, in this case activists distinguish as distinctive features of some types of

problems that both groups face. One Romani activist says: *“Although Romani are family-oriented, they do not want to try harder to solve their problems. There are services, but they do not want to get informed and receive these services.”*

In Serbia there is a difference in relation to the communist past of former-Yugoslavia. Romani state that they lived in better conditions during the communist systems because they were less discriminated, were given employment and enjoyed a better economic situation. Meanwhile the former-Yugoslavia community system prohibited homosexuality by law and considered it a crime. This law was in force until 1994, the year in which homosexuality was decriminalized. Meanwhile the similarity between these two groups, as in the other two countries, appears to be discrimination.

What was noticed in all three countries is that activists participating in focus groups found it easier to identify similarities than differences. Differences between groups as well as often within groups exist, but the trend displayed during discussions to quickly overcome differences manifests a phenomena to be highlighted – essentially the problems of discriminated and marginalized groups are similar.

In all three countries, it is clear that there are some factors that hamper the economic, social and psychological well-being of minorities in general, despite their differences. Due to object limitations of this text, a detailed analysis of these factors is not possible in this study. But, on the other hand, the findings of this study cannot disregard the list of these factors. This does not mean that we are going to discuss the causes that brought up these problems or many others not mentioned in this study. This goes beyond the modest claims of this study, considering the complexity of an analysis of these dimensions as well as the extent that the theoretical debate implicates. It is enough to bear in mind that as long as in the history of mankind and not only, in the countries included in this study, homosexuality is considered a disease, and even today in



many countries, people part of LGBTIQ+ are violently attacked and discriminated in different ways because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Also, many Romani have been deported from different countries for many years, many of them were killed during the Holocaust, or they have often been victims of violence and mass deportations in the region countries and beyond even in the recent years. (Liegeois 2007).

*Challenges, difficulties, obstacles and successful practices*

Thus, we only focus on distinguishing current factors that affect the problems faced in the three countries. Based on the findings of this study, the factors can be divided into two categories:

- 1) External factors or causes, such as: malfunction of the state reflected in the lack of appropriate laws or policies, as well as lack of their implementation. In practice, these would help in the reduction of the social, economic, political and psychological problems of these minorities.
- 2) Internal factors or causes, such as: a) at an individual level, as self-stigmatization, acceptance of the existing situation and unwillingness to change the situation; b) At a collective level, the inability, and in some cases unwillingness to organize and mobilize regarding common causes. Formal organizations such as NGOs, despite many positive efforts to change the situation, often fail to overcome internal organizational issues, problems with the methodology or instruments used as well as leadership and decision-making issues.

Apart from issues deriving from the state which are emphasized by all participating activists in focus groups as an important obstacle to change the reality these minorities live in, an important role in the actual or accumulated issues over time is played by the internal factors. Based on their life experience, many activists emphasize the importance of internal change within these groups

both in terms of community as well as organizations that are supposed to help change the situation of these minorities.

An activist of a LGBTIQ+ rights organization in Albania said that: *“Organizations are largely driven by donors’ insights, which fund capacity building, trainings and workshops, which are very positive tools but do not produce consistent results. In the meantime, there are community members in very difficult situations, their basic needs are not being met, they are not provided real help, because funding resources do not go directly to the community. If individuals do not enjoy basic rights and minimal living conditions we cannot claim their empowerment. Communities themselves must be aware and organized in order to demand their rights, putting pressure where appropriate”.*

One activist from North Macedonia stated that: *“There are Roma non-governmental organizations that have large budgets but are not focused on the right issues. I think that the insufficient involvement in the public sector is the main reason why these problems develop, therefore education is necessary to overcome these problems. “*

Activists from Serbia emphasize: *“First we must be proud of who we are ” because there is nothing wrong or any reason to feel ashamed if you are LGBTIQ+ or Romani”.*

Regarding non-profit or non-governmental organizations, they state that: *“A few years ago organizations engaged in the LGBTIQ+ case were not open and transparent to the community. Almost all of these organizations have shown reluctance to engage with the LGBTIQ+ youth.”*

While Roma community activists are very critical of the activity of non-governmental organizations and agree in many aspects such as: organizations are slow and bureaucratic, lack of organizations for the Romani youth, there are no youth volunteers, and some of the organizations are only active on the international day of the Roma.

One of the most serious problems identified by activists is the loss of trust of the respective communities in organizations and consequently the lack of involvement of the communities themselves. In this viewpoint, a Romani activist from Albania said: *“Now the community is starting to believe more, but it was difficult to communicate with them in the beginning. The first thing they used to say when they found out we were from an organization was that we had gone there to steal them”*.

One LGBTIQ+ activist from North Macedonia claimed: *“ The community is not involved in drafting the organizations’ plans and consequently the community lacks trust and commitment in the activity of these organizations.”*

A Romani activist in Serbia stated: *“The situation is so aggravated in the framework of trust between organizations and the community, that often activists engaged in organizations can't even enter Romani settlements because the community won't let them ”*.

Regardless of these conditions, activists have identified some successful initiatives which have produced positive results. These initiatives may improve over time or may become sustainable practices.

One LGBTIQ+ activist in Albania, identifies one of the most successful practices the so-called the association method, saying that: *“ The association method has worked. When service providers hear that you are from an organization that defends the rights of a particular community, they fear the abuse will be public and are obliged to provide the service.”*

Another Roma community rights activist identifies as one of the most positive developments the work done in order to improve housing for the Roma minority. She says: *“We have made a lot of progress on the housing issue. We have managed to provide sustainable housing for about 150 families in Tirana. We have lobbied to change the law on social housing and improve it.”*

An activist from North Macedonia, firstly assessing the barriers for solving different issues identified a success case by claiming that: *“Some of the problems have been fully resolved, others partially, depending on the problem and how it is addressed. For example, the lack of a gynecologist for the Roma community living in an area called Shuto Orizari has been partially resolved because of the doctor assigned does not speak Macedonian and patients cannot communicate with someone who does not speak the language. However, many of our problems have been resolved even though people have lost motivation to report their problems.”*

LGBTIQ+ activists in Serbia agree that the Pride Parade is the best means to shorten the social distance and the most visible LGBTIQ+ event in Serbia.

Whereas Roma activists in Serbia share the opinion that the most important tools to improve the position of the Romani community are employment of the Romani youth and identification of discrimination cases.

*What can and should be improved?*

In the discussions held by the focus groups, activists were invited to rationalize the possibilities of improving the situation in a realistic plan, through an objective assessment of the existing opportunities and conditions. Also, on an idealistic perspective as projections of a fairer society in which minorities do not face the current difficulties. With this line of reasoning and analysis, it was intended to gradually reach the review of opportunities for joint initiatives of both groups by assessing the implications of the vision for the present and future in improving the well-being of these groups.

The reasoning for the state-minority relationship, despite some formal improvements, shows that (nevertheless slight differences between the three countries) from the activists’ perspective in the three countries, the way the state functions poses many problems. In Albania there are significant

improvements in terms of the legal basis but these are only formal changes because there is a lack of commitment and willingness to implement them in practice.

In this regard, a LGBTIQ+ activist in Albania stated that: *“For the LGBTIQ+ community there are some very good results of legal initiatives, such as the anti-discrimination law or the national action plan for LGBTI people, which includes access to a range of services. However, I think that the focus of our state should be more practical and directed to the proper implementation and enforcement of these legal acts”*.

As one Romani activist said: *“It would be great if the people working in different institutions would direct us towards things that help us, the right institutions or people. Sometimes they do, but most of the time they don't”*.

Activists in North Macedonia state that there have been some improvements in legislation, but it is necessary to make changes in both the legal basis but also in the implementation.

A LGBTIQ+ activist said that: *“The government promised to accomplish something before the election, and the result is that we have two pending draft laws and apparently they were just empty promises”*.

One Romani activist said: *“International support has more impact on the development of the Roma community than the government. Perhaps foreign donors should encourage the government to be more engaged in this regard.”*

Most activists in Serbia, reflecting on aspects in which the state intervention may improve agree that: the whole and sustainable law enforcement, intervention to stop violence against LGBTIQ+, as well as the need for LGBTIQ+ people within the government to be more vocal about the cause of this group.

While Romani activists in Serbia were even more critical of the government as they all shared the same view that the state should do much more for the inclusion of Romani. According to them, the first problem that the state should solve is housing of Romani by providing real housing opportunities, as well as the appropriate laws and strategies. In this context, one of the Roma activists, sharing his experience as a public servant, expressed that: *“The former strategy on Roma inclusion in 2009-2015 failed to address many issues and some of the strategy’s objectives were not fulfilled, especially in the field of education and employment”*.

Activists in all three countries reflect on elements of NGOs activity that can be improved. In Albania, activists of both minorities agree that it is very important to change the organization’s approach in relation to donors and the community. More specifically, most activists argue that organizations should not be driven by the donors’ perspective and priorities but by the needs and interests of the community.

In North Macedonia, most activists from both groups share the same view that organizations need to be more advocate-oriented, and above all focus on increasing the participation of communities they work with.

In Serbia, activists of both groups emphasize the need to improve communication and increase inclusion of communities in order to reduce or eliminate the lack of trust in non-profit or non-governmental organizations.

#### *Joint projects and projections*

Through the analysis brought in the focus-groups’ discussion, activists not only reflected on the present and past, but also articulated their projections for the future. Particularly, by assessing the possibility of cooperation between activists and organizations of both minorities. Referring to activists, joint collaborative projects can help firstly to get to know each other better and increase

solidarity between the two minorities, thereby creating the conditions to work together in order to increase the weight of marginalized groups in the public space and to increase of pressure on decision-making bodies.

In this context, activists of both minorities in Albania discussed how the experience they gained from working with their respective communities can be transferred and integrated into their activity. Concretely, one Roma activist said :” *I think a joint project would be a very good opportunity of solidarity. Through the strategies we (Roma activists) use in order to enjoy public services, we can help LGBTIQ+ persons be more successful in front of service providers.*”

Another Roma activist said: “*I think the Roma community can help the LGBTIQ+ community regarding access to social housing. Since we have been working for a long time on strategies and they have been effective in this regard, we can forward them to the LGBTIQ+ community with the hope that they will be able to solve their housing problems as well.*”

Based on her experience, a LGBTIQ+ rights activist said that: “ At the organizations’ level, the work that the *LGBTIQ+ community has done with anti-discrimination campaigns is much greater and evident compared to the Roma/Egyptian community. The collaboration with women’s rights organizations has also been very good. I think the Roma/Egyptian community can use the experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community. Both communities have a lot to teach each other in terms of the courage to demand their respective rights.* “

Based on the activists’ attitudes in Serbia, the main problem remains access to education institutions to teach students about discrimination, as these issues are not included in the curricula. Collaboration with the media and journalists is also necessary. During the focus group in Serbia, LGBTIQ+ activists introduced to the Romani activists their experience in correcting textbooks with homophobic content by discussing concrete steps that Romani activists can take to correct textbooks with content that portrays Romani in a negative way.

### **Interviews with Romani/Egyptian and LGBTIQ+ people**

In all three countries, the main problem of people belonging to both affiliations is the extreme and multi-faceted discrimination.

Many have been discriminated by family members, relatives and acquaintances, by other school students, in the workplace, or while trying to find employment in a public institution or private enterprises. Although the life stories of the interviewees are different, due to the family environment they were raised at, context in which they have lived, personal education, personality, and response manner to personal attacks, all confessed to have been victims of discrimination, exclusion and in many cases physical violence.

Three interviews were conducted in Albania: a transgender Egyptian woman around 35 years of age and two other bisexual Egyptian women aged 19 and 23 years old. One of the interviewees terminated the interview during the first questions so only the findings based on two interviews will be reflected.

One of the interviewees is currently homeless, lives alone, and has no education. The only job she has been able to have (at a modest salary of 20.000 ALL per month) is near an organization taking care of LGBTIQ+ persons. Her family abandoned her when they became aware of her sexual orientation. She said that her gender identity has affected negatively all aspects of her life and that discrimination escalates being both a person of other ethnicity and homeless. The main difficulties for her are lack of health care, financial income and housing. In cases of discrimination or violence, she asks help from organizations because she has even been discriminated by the state police. She believes that the state should provide basic conditions such as housing and health. According to her, non-profit organizations have been her only lifelong support.



The second interviewee, has completed high school, lives alone, is currently unemployed and relies on her family. She understood her sexual orientation at an early age and felt euphoric and scared at the same time. Some of her relatives and acquaintances have accepted her sexual orientation while others have harassed and bullied her. While at school she claims that she did not feel well because other students differentiated her due to her origin and sexual orientation. Even at work she faced homophobia and bullying to the extent of being obliged to quit her job. The interviewee emphasizes that belonging to both affiliations is extremely negative, because when they learn that you are Romani and LGBTIQ+, they don't hire you or may find other ways to fire you. The biggest difficulties for her, especially due to her sexual orientation, are exclusion from a part of society, family conflicts and unemployment. According to her, the state should provide free health care for all regardless of sexual orientation or ethnicity and hospital health conditions should improve as they are in a terrible state. Regarding organizations, seen as the only hope, the interviewee said: *“Organizations should hire LGBT persons so that they can become economically independent and carry out as many awareness raising activities in society as possible regarding cases of LGBTIQ+ persons”*.

Three interviews were also conducted in North Macedonia. The first interviewee was a bisexual Romani girl almost 22 years old who lives alone and is employed in the private sector. She said that other people begun to question her sexual orientation when she was at the orphanage, even though she denied the fact at the time. Consequently, she faced many problems in the orphanage as others isolated her. In order to avoid possible consequences, she claimed that she was forced to deny her sexual orientation to her family, colleagues and acquaintances. The interviewee said that only a few close friends are aware and have accepted her the way she is. However, she points out that she has not managed to escape discrimination. At work she has been assaulted as a lesbian and told that she is ill and should be treated by doctors. She also claimed that she was forced to hide because it is difficult to live in a Roma settlement in North Macedonia if the

community knows you are lesbian. She also indicated that she was discriminated and harassed as a Romani and LGBTI person. According to her, these attacks are mostly conducted by the Albanians of North Macedonia. In order for the situation to improve, the interviewee said that the state should commit to improving the LGBTIQ+ and Roma people status so that they can be accepted by the society. As concerned to the civil society organizations, the interviewee said that they should intensify the relationship with the respective communities.

The second interviewee was a Romani lesbian woman, around 38 years of age, employed in the private sector and living alone. Her family was aware of her sexual orientation and had accepted it. While outside the family, she had hidden her sexual orientation and claims that she did not face any discriminatory situation or act, except in cases when people doubt her sexual orientation. This is especially the case among Romani, as she says she never had such problems with Macedonian acquaintances. She thinks the best thing the state and organizations can do is to open an office for LGBTIQ+ in Shuto Orizari (an area inhabited by the Roma minority).

The third interviewee in North Macedonia is a Romani boy, bisexual, about 29 years of age, employed in the public sector, currently living with his partner. Despite realizing his sexual orientation at a young age, he did not share this with his parents and relatives. In these circumstances, he stated that he has been forced to live with a girl, an experience through which he realized he was bisexual. He said: *“When I told my cousins about my sexual orientation, they suggested I do not tell to my parents because they do not deserve it and cannot reckon with it emotionally.”*

He felt bad in school because others saw him in a different way, possibly because of his body language. He says: *“Unfortunately I am not the “manly type”. Beside that I am Romani and the impression others got was that of Romani people being gay. However, I also had friends who*

*accepted me as I am and I am still in touch with them. Even though I was dressed like the other children, I was always seen in a different way”.*

He said that today he tries to escape discrimination by hiding and not telling others his sexual orientation.

*‘I have to transform every day of my life into a scene in which I behave as if I am not an LGBTIQ+ person. My life is like a movie script. It’s bad, but I am used to it. I am also discriminated by my parents because they would never accept me as I am. The idea and eagerness of “coming out” has eventually disappeared and it makes me feel like I am a coward’.* – said the interviewee.

As the role of the state is concerned, he thinks that LGBTIQ+ rights should be guaranteed in order to move forward with the European Union integration process. According to him, the state is doing nothing in this regard.

As of non-profit organizations, he said: *“I come from an NGO, and I know how they work. I think that NGOs leaders are working for their own pockets, their own projects, and unfortunately nothing has been done. I don’t know where the LGBTIQ+ organizations are and I don’t know which ones are still active. I may need to talk to someone but I don’t know where they are. I think there should be more transparency from non-governmental organizations working with LGBTIQ+ people. I know a lot of LGBTIQ+ people who are hiding and don’t know where to look for help.”*

Three interviews were conducted in Serbia. The first interview was with a Romani, gay boy, 20 years old, living alone. He had graduated high school and was working in the private sector. When his parents first learned about his sexual orientation, they were critical and suggested him to undergo medical treatment or live at the Orthodox Church. The reactions of other relatives

have been different. Some have responded well, while others have requested him to no longer have contact with them.

As regards to his school experience, the interviewee stated: *“I felt really strange and sad in many cases when I started to realize who I was. Especially when my colleagues started to cut their connections with me, I felt loneliness and social exclusion.”*

As a Romani, he claimed that he never felt discriminated due to his light skin color compared to other Romani. When he confessed his ethnicity to others, he was constantly intimidated by questions like *“How can you be so white?”*; *“You have graduated and you are working, so you cannot be Romani”*. He admits that he has been discriminated due to his sexual orientation and continues to be discriminated, but has learned to handle the situation. According to him, the state should simply enforce the law, while teachers and social workers in schools should work more with Roma and LGBTIQ+ youth.

The second interviewee was 24 years old, Romani, gay, lived alone, completed two years of high school and was working in the private sector. The moment his parents learned about his sexual orientation was very difficult. He stated: *“I was beaten almost every day. Other relatives reacted worse but thankfully we did not live close to them. Friends decided to leave with the exception of one who gradually accepted me”*.

During school, he said that he was distanced from others and had preferred to live alone. As a LGBTIQ+ person he claimed to be discriminated and continues to be discriminated when others find out his sexual orientation. Whereas, in relation to his Roma origin, as something that cannot be hidden, he claimed that it affects his employment situation. He is currently facing major difficulties in relation to social housing, as he is not able to fulfill his basic needs himself. Another problem is employment. He is convinced he is underpaid just because he is Romani. He said the state should intervene to protect LGBTI persons from ongoing violence and help them

solve the housing problem. As for organizations, he thinks they should be more present on the field, close to the Roma community to help solve their problems.

### **Conclusion**

This report, as emphasized in the introduction, reflects an overview of the findings rather than their interpretation or analysis. Considering the limitations of the study, in terms of the amount of data provided in the field, any claim for a more in-depth analysis would be objectively impossible. Consequently, this study only outlines some possible research that needs to be developed in other studies and some findings which may be addressed in the work of people working to improve the living situation of these groups.

For instance, as expected, from the findings of the study, discrimination turns out to be one of the main problems, but the magnitude, type and reasons for it are numerous. Not coincidentally, this study presents the differences between three states, between different social groups of the same group, between different groups within the same state in terms of type of discrimination, reasons, size, etc. However, it is clear that the people most vulnerable and most exposed to discrimination are those who carry both affiliations.

It results that the respective governments and responsible institutions of all countries are not doing enough to improve the rights of these groups and their well-being. As far as civil society organizations are concerned, even though in the point of view of the participants, some of them have done a good job, they need to change their approach in order to be closer to the communities they work with.

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## Annex I

### **Focus-group guiding questions**

1. What do you believe are the main problems of Roma and LGBTQI in your country? Why?
2. What do you think are the reasons that the problems you identified exist? How might they be changed? Can you provide examples from NGOs, your community, etc. that tried to make change?
3. To what extent have your problems been addressed? How have your problems been solved? If not, why haven't they been solved?
4. How would you describe individuals who are both Roma and LGBTQ? What is their life like?
5. How does your identity as Roma make you feel? How does your identity as LGBTQI make you feel? How does your identity as both Roma and LGBTQI make you feel?
6. How do you think your government has tried to help the situation you and your community are in? How have they not helped? Why do you think so?

7. How might organizations improve how they work with Roma and LGBTQI? How do you think the communities feel about you and the work your organization does?
8. How can we support these communities to elevate their voices, needs, and have them be a part of the change process

### Interview Questionnaire

#### I. General data

##### 1. Gender

Man	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Woman	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Transgender man	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Transgender woman	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Genderqueer	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Gender fluid	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

2. Age \_\_\_\_\_ (in years)

3. How many years of education have you completed? \_\_\_\_\_ (number of years completed)

4. What is your civil status?

Single	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Married	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Cohabiting	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other (Specify _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

**5. How many members are there in your family? \_\_\_\_\_(persons)**

**6. How much monthly income does your family have?**

No income	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Up to 160 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
161 Euro – 320 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
321 Euro- 480 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
More than 480 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**7. Who do you live at the moment with?**

Alone	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
With family	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
With partner	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
With friends	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (Specify _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**8. Are you employed at the moment?**

No, I have never been	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Not at the moment	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, I am employed in the private sector	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Yes, I am employed in the public sector	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Yes, I am self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Pensioner	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Other (Specify _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> 8

**9. What is the source of your income?**



Salary	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Contract-based fee	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Remittance from abroad / from the parents	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Welfare benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**10. How much individual monthly income do you have?**

Up to 160 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
161 Euro – 320 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
321 Euro- 480 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
More than 480 Euro	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**II. Relationship with identity**

**11. What is your ethnicity?**

Roma	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Egyptian	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Albanian	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other, specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**12. Please, describe briefly when and how did you understand you are Roma or Egyptian?**

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**13. What is your sexual orientation?**

Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Gay	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> 3



Pansexual	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**14.** Please, briefly describe when and how did you realize your sexual orientation and/or gender identity?

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**15.** How did you feel in those moments?

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**16.** Do others know about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity?

Yes  1

No  2

**17.** In which conditions, did others learn about this?

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**18.** How did your relatives and other people react when they realized or you told them about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity?

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**19.** How do you/did you feel at school in relation to others?

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20. Do you feel discriminated or excluded and how? Please tell us, in which way you are discriminated against by others?

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21. Please tell us, what do you do to cope with discrimination?

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### III. Everyday life and belonging

22. How much does being Roma/Egyptian and also LGBT affect your daily life?

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23. Please tell us concretely what difficulties or problems do you face actually?

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24. Do your ethnicity and your sexual orientation and/or gender identity affect the difficulties you actually face in your life? Please tell us concretely how this happens.

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**25.** How do you spend your free time?

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**26.** Please tell us concretely what difficulties do you face as a consequence of being Roma or Egyptian?

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**27.** What about the difficulties you face as a consequence of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity?

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**28.** What do you think the civil society organizations should do to improve your life?

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**29.** What do you think the state authorities should do to improve your life?

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**30.** What do you think you should and can do to improve your life and the life of others who are in similar situation as you?

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**Sl.**