

Lesbian and gay rights in comparative perspective: The case of Romania and Poland

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the contextual elements that have shaped the lesbian and gay rights movements in a comparative perspective, in Romania and Poland. First, some general assumptions are made in regard to the similarities and differences in the two countries. Second, the role of the Romanian Orthodox Church and Polish Roman Catholic Church, EU institutions and national governments and the role of the activists. Next, conclusions are drawn for future research and attention is drawn in placing sexual minorities at the core of future policies, practices and studies.*

Keywords: *civil society, lesbian and gay rights, LGBT, Polish Roman Catholic Church, Romanian Orthodox Church*

1. Introduction

It is no news that LGBTQI movements differ across states (Miriam 2015) or that gender and bisexual groups had a long history of struggle for inclusion within lesbian and gay communities, as well as lesbian and gay communities had with the heteronormative majority groups. It is no news that different temporalities lead to different outcomes, or that activists in the CEE countries adopted labels already used in the Western countries in regard to several sexual minority

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groups (Mizielinska 2015, 92) or that in former soviet countries gay and lesbian rights “happened all at once” (Mizielinska 2015, 102). What constitutes ‘news’ in this debate and what this article tries to underline is that in the clash between activists and the state, or activists and the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) and Polish Roman Catholic Church (PRCC) had one missing piece: the gay and lesbian subjects (Viski 2015, 43).

In this manner, I will try to point out the context in which gay and lesbian rights in Romania and Poland emerged after the fall of communism so that future researches could offer the voice to the people to which the European Union institutions, national governments, politicians, members of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches and citizens of Romania and Poland had an opinion about. Even though the two countries have had different post-communist political experiences, different combinations economic and cultural experiences and religious policies (Stan 2010, 39), several conclusions can be drawn. Thus, in the first part of the article, I make some general observations in regard to how

the lesbian and gay issues were addressed in the two countries. Then, I turn to the main focuses of the article: the role of the ROC and PRCC, EU institutions and national governments and the role of the activists in the construction and implementation of gay and lesbian rights in Romania and Poland.

In this sense, I argue that in both countries sexuality was linked with nationality and ethnicity, due to the strong presence of the ROC and PRCC. The religious structure in Romania was stated by 18,861.9 thousand persons out of total usual resident population and indicates that 86.5% of the persons who stated their religious belief are of orthodox religion; 4.6% stated themselves as belonging to roman-catholic religion, 3.2% reformed religion and 1.9% Pentecostal¹ and in Poland 87,6 % of the entire population belong to the Catholic Church, 0,4 % Orthodox and 0, 35% Jehowa’s Witnesses (Pedziwiatr 2015, 164. The table below illustrates the importance of religion in the two countries:

Figure 1.

Country	Importance of religion	Period	Period	Period	Period
Poland		1989–1993	1994–1998	2005–2009	2010–2014
	Very important	33 %	46%	47 %	46 %
	Rather important	23 %	36%	39 %	34 %
	Not very important	5 %	13%	10 %	15 %
Romania					
	Very important		38%	57 %	50 %
	Rather important		38%	32 %	33 %
	Not very important		18%	7 %	13 %

Source: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> in Tarta 2015, 34.

In this sense, the level of importance of religion has been more or less constant in Poland, while in Romania it has grown in the 2005-2009 period. As argued below, Romanian politicians have been using the religious rhetoric in order to gain popularity in elections, as well as some priests have been using their influence to push for candidates with similar values. Nevertheless, in regard to the abortion issue, gay and lesbian rights², family planning, artificial insemination and other reproductive technologies, or prostitution the two churches have had a strong voice. Also, in both Romania and Poland, communism repressed homosexuality and lesbianism. In Romania, as well as in Soviet Union, they were criminalized. In Poland, they weren’t formally criminalized, but due to discriminatory state practices, social taboos and the fact that Polish secret police allegedly used the threat of disclosing sexual orientation as a means of blackmailing and recruiting informant (O’Dwyer 13), discrimination was high. After the fall of communism and before the EU accession, lesbian and gay rights started to be articulated as human rights, through laws, mechanisms and international practices (Nachescu 2005 60). In different periods of time (1995 in Poland and in 2003 and 2013 in Romania) proposals to include prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation were addressed in the changing of the Constitution, but did not pass (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 126). Another important aspect to be highlighted is that the EU accession and the national actors “have interacted in a one-step-backward, two-steps-forward process. While the EU has pressured new

member-states to adopt legal protections that they would not have otherwise, these very successes provoked political backlashes that, at least temporarily, worsened the political situation of LGBT groups. Paradoxically, these very setbacks have, from the vantage point of the present, created stronger, better organized rights movements” (O’Dwyer 5). Considering that in both countries the difficulties of the lesbians and gay were identical with the other issues of the population such as poverty, exploitation, lack of representation and the lack of sexual education and poor access to medical healthcare and high levels of discrimination in the public and private spaces, the conditions for a ‘strong’ lesbian and gay movement seem harder to imagine (Viski 2015³).

Thus, the context in which lesbian and gay rights first emerged in the national Polish and Romanian agenda was in regard to the EU accession (Stan and Turcescu 2007), but other issues related to sexuality – such as abortion and prostitution – failed to take a similar stand mainly because its member states do not have a common policy regarding these latter domains (Stan 2010, 39). The EU principle of non-discrimination towards lesbians and gays applies to new member states, a natural consequence of their taking on the *acquis communautaire*. (Gerhards 2007, 6). And finally, according to some authors in both countries, in the lesbian and gay rights debate there was no official reference to ethnic minorities, no link between anti-racism or anti-sexism to fight for the LGBT rights diversity (Woodcock 2015, 73) or issues of intersectionality. For example, in Romania at the ‘Diversity March’ a festival intended to be inclusive to many minority groups, was transformed in an “all-gay event” because ACCEPT NGO was the only organization that had money from international donors (Viski 2015, 41), thus the politics of visibility were made in a top-down manner, only targeted to some minority groups.

In this manner, I have outlined several similarities between the contextual elements in Romania and Poland, when referring to the sexual minority rights movement. The many differences will be highlighted in the following pages, when I analyze the role of some institutions – Churches, states and EU actors – as well as civil society actors in the development of the movement. My aim is to highlight that neither the institutions, nor the activists (with few exception and generally after the EU accession) placed gays and lesbians as a starting point and important voice in this process.

2. The role of national and international institutions and organizations in framing the straight vs. gay discourse

In this section I present the development of the lesbian and gay rights debate by addressing how several institutions (Churches, states and EU actors) have emerged in Romania and Poland. In this manner, both Romanian and Catholic Churches were seen as carriers of the national identities, and gained support during the communist regime and in the transition period: the Catholic Church was seen as a supporter of the Polish identity and nationality in the communist regime, by performing traditional rituals and becoming a great supporter of the Solidarity Movement. In Romania, the Orthodox Church negotiated with the state so to be able to still perform such rituals and also get salaries for the priests. The two actors managed to maintain influence in the society, even if the perception of the communist regime in the two countries was ‘Godless’ (Tarta 2015, 34). To be a ‘true’ Romanian, one must be orthodox (Gillet 2001) and to be a ‘true’ Pole, one must be a catholic.

Moreover, PRCC was known for its opposition to communism and has commanded as much loyalty from the population as the Romanian Orthodox Church, known for its unholy collaboration with the atheistic regime, or the Russian Orthodox Church, which was almost completely obliterated by Stalinist antireligious policies (Norris & Inglehart, 2004, Stan 2010, 38). In Poland, the communist authorities tried to divide, control and humiliate the Church by introducing antireligious subjects in school curricula, forbidding the publication and distribution of religious periodicals, censoring religious publications, and adopting overt antireligious legislation (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 119) at the same time, asking the Church to show support during the anticommunist 1956, 1970, 1976, 1980 upheavals (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 119). Nevertheless, the Catholic Church became an alternative to the communist regime which many, including Marxist, came to admire” (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 121) and its role in the Solidarity Movement and future policy directions of post-communist Poland have not been disputed. In Romania, ROC maintained negotiations with the communists and managed to maintain an influential position within society, in the idea that it is best to cooperate for the sake of the nation, recognition for historical role in defending and preserving the nation in hard times (Tarta 2015, 35).

After 1989 both countries experienced more ideological debates and confusions between lustration versus reconciliation, welfare state versus market economy, secularism and liberalism versus Christian values (Wyrozumska 2007, 137). At the same time homosexuality, feminism and ecology (Miroiu and Popescu 2004, 309) were lumping together so as the confusion about them. During transition, there were no visible groups that had a green or gay agenda (Graff 2010, 599) and cultural wars that were rather rhetoric were happening in both countries because the obstacles and the debates caused by the clashes of the Church and the state created a symbolic civilizational frontier along sexual lines, which continues the reproduction of the old East-West ideological divide (Tarta 2015, 47).

Nevertheless, in the transition period the two Churches started to politicize their actions and thus became strong actors in the lesbian and gay debate. The politicization took form in taking a strong position against the gay parades, in which violet protests of right-wing nationalists groups (to name a few New Right – Noua Dreapta in Romania and League of Polish Families in Poland), mixed with harsh comments from the Clergy (Olteanu and de Nève 2013,32); the implications in the debate about the 200 article from the Penal Code in Romania – by asking President Emil Constantinescu to refuse to sign the abolition of the paragraph and the lobby against the abolition of paragraph 200 of the Romanian Criminal Code (Olteanu and de Nève 2013, 34), or the letter sent in June 2000 from the Patriarch to the deputies before voting in the Parliament asking them to make a referendum in regard to the LGBT rights (Nachescu 2005, 67) as well as to give pre-university students the right not to pursue religious instruction, and to relax registration requirements for new religions and religious movements (Stan and Turcescu 2010, 10).

Some authors (Olteanu and de Nève 2013 8; 2014) further argue that argue that the political and religious sphere are considered in social science as subsystems of society as a whole (de Nève 2011, 76), while their independence and autonomy are the products of social processes of differentiation, each sphere generating its own patterns of action and rules of behavior, geared to its own horizon of values and systems of norms. In this manner, they address the issue that in Romania, and as portrayed below, Poland, two systems of values and norms have conflicted when both countries had to renounce some of the values in order to gain others, belonging to the European Union.

On the other hand, while trying to appropriate some moral values, politicians also use the religious approach so to demonstrate their connection to Orthodoxy or Catholicism in campaigns, drawing media attention when they attend the services and make donations to the Church, as a form of legitimization (Stan and Turcescu 2008, 264). The tight between the Churches in the two countries could be seen in the allies to candidates, blessing electoral banners, praising some candidates, joining political parties, seats in parliament and cabinets, donations from politicians. In Romania, a series of benefits that the ROC has had was described in the 2009 Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Social and Demographic Risks in which it is depicted how clergy benefited from public funds through state-sponsored salaries, subsidies for buildings and church repairs, employment for the theology graduates (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 143). Other examples include the 1996 election when Christian Democrat Emil Constantinescu asked Ion Iliescu (a self-declared atheist) whether he believed in God or when Traian Basescu retracted support for homosexual marriages and the legalization of prostitution and changed his rhetoric as a mayor (2000-2004) attending masses and displaying last-minute religiousness (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 143), to name a few. Nevertheless, attitudes towards the rights of sexual minorities in regard to Polish and Romanian politicians were also based on changing the doctrine of the party in which they were enrolled, migration from one party or the other, political alliances, position in power or in opposition and the proximity of election (Nachescu 2005, 64).

In Poland, PRCC played a key role in the 90's presidential elections, supporting Walesa against Tyminski, in the 1991 parliamentary elections, supporting the Catholic Electoral Action and the National-Christian Union – a party which was responsible for passing the anti-abortion legislation, religion in public schools and the massive influence of Radio Maryja (Stan and Turcescu 2011, 126). Some authors also argue that Polish politicians and clergy members used sexual politics as a meaningful and manipulatory tool to control/focus social fears” (Mizielinska 2015, 88). In 1993 PRCC supported and lobbied for the ban on abortion, religious courses were installed in Polish schools in 1991, a mandate that the radio and television would respect ‘Christian values’ was adopted in 1992, and a Concordat with Rome signed by the government in 1997 (Ramet 2006, O’Dwyer 2012, 17).

Further in time, the issue of EU accession, although in different time periods and with different approaches, had similarities in regard to how the two Churches approached the issue of lesbian and gay rights. In Romania, there wasn't a serious public debate on EU accession or a referendum, as in Poland, rather the political class, trade union and civil society supported the accession informally. Given this unquestionable acceptance of EU accession, ROC “has been the most vocal contender of the pros and cons of „entering Europe,” but its relative prominence within the debate on accession was due not to its adamant opposition to the process or support for Romania's isolation, but to the pro-EU consensus reached by other state and society actors” (Stan and Turcescu 2010, 11). In this manner, Makrides (2009: 79) distinguishes three types of Orthodox perspective toward the EU: ambivalent approval, Euroskepticism, and axiomatic disaffirmation. “Ambivalent approval is shaped by pragmatic considerations and very often the official position of the Holy Synod, the other two are common among the Orthodox clergy and among believers irrespective of the state in which they are situate, showing that Orthodox Churches have differentiated approaches toward the state and society, and that diversity shapes the specific challenges of unity for the church in each country “(Olteanu, de Nève 2013, 21-22).

In both countries, EU values and attitudes have been perceived as “deviant” in issues such as sexual orientation. PRCC condemned Poland’s wish to join NATO and the EU as “a loss of traditional Christian values through contamination with the secular West”, while Cardinal Glemp accused the West of “advertising de-humanization by assuring easy work, good food, amusements and sex” (Stan and Turcescu 2010, 126). After John Paul II’s support for Poland accession and the 1997 visit of the Episcopate to Brussels, PRCC had changed its rhetoric. Even when accepting and supporting mildly the EU accession, the support that these churches are giving to the European Union is predicated on the preservation of it as a Christian European project (Philpott and Shah 2006, 55). Thus, as we have recently seen the reservation against non-Christian religions (Islam) and the desire for a greater role for Christianity in Europe is important in both countries (Olteanu, de Nève 2013, 39).

Interestingly, after the EU accession, both ROC and PRCC and some Protestant groups joined in demanding that the European Constitution mention Europe’s Christian heritage and Christian identity (Stan and Turcescu 2010, 10), even though some say that the issue of EU accession was also contested inside the ROC: “this discourse, emphasizing the positive consequences of integration, was promoted primarily by those who „benefited from direct knowledge of Western culture and civilization,” a group including ROC leaders who completed doctoral degrees at Western universities or carried out missionary work among the Romanian Diaspora communities in Western Europe. The second group includes „clerics, intellectuals and believers extremely reserved toward Romania’s belonging to the European super-power,” (Turcescu and Stan 2010, 10).

Next, I turn to how lesbian and gay rights activists have emerged in the two countries, since 1989 and until today, from a human rights perspective, to a more diverse and intersectional one. In the two countries, the lesbian and gay rights were firstly portrayed in the human rights rhetoric (Viski 2015, 30), in Romania this being a strategic step to “circumvent the existing legislation at that time (...) to use both the human rights argument and the ethnic model of activism (Long, 1999) while in Poland it became more and more part of the globalized discourse on human rights (Kollman and Waites, 2009, Stychin 2004, Franke 2012). Due to the changes in the legislation after the EU accession, this type of discourse created tensions in the Romanian community (Viski 2015, 30). According to some authors, (Carastocea 2006, 2) at the EU level, “interest groups defending LGBT rights became more and more defined and organized, succeeding to mobilize resources and support, and to exercise their influence in the policy process (...) Transition from communism towards democracy implies various and quick reforms, and the human rights sector has been one key area for reform. In this logic, we have to consider the support of international intermediaries not only in terms of external pressure and European conditionality, but also in terms of mobilizing resources from abroad”. Thus, it is important to highlight that in both countries international support was probably the only support that gay and lesbian NGOs had, either through ILGA Europe funds, or European Commission Funds, Open Society Foundation and Global Fund, EU social Funds and Norwegian and Swiss Funds. Moreover, as some author points out, the roles of NGOs in these countries was crucial and indispensable for the movement, especially since the two countries had homophobic politicians and conservative states: “as if the represented and marginalized groups had excluded themselves from the sudden new liberal state, the struggle for inclusion in policy and society feel on their shoulders rather than on government”(Woodcock 2015, 65).

In Romania, two lesbian and gay NGOs have been involved in the debates about the community rights: ACCEPT and PSI (Population Services International). ACCEPT started to be-

come vocal and push politicians and journalists into accepting that sexual minorities rights are an essential part of the EU integration, ultranationalist parties, such as *Partidul Romania Mare* (Great Romania Party), neo-Nazi groups such as *Noua Dreapta* (The New Right), as well as the Romanian Orthodox Church were strong players in opposing such changes both at the legislative level and at the level of public discourse, as one member of the Parliament stated “we want to join Europe, not Sodom and Gomorrah (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 174; Nastase 2004 in Tarta 2015, 320). Before these changes, ACCEPT, who was dealing with issues of the sexual minorities on informal basis, had registered in 1996 at the Ministry of Justice as a formal NGO, but without any reference to the idea of sexual minorities (Nachescu 2005, 66). After 2001, when the law changed, it started to function as a LGBT rights based NGO and today, the issues with state authorities are still going on: In 2005, with the support of embassies and other NGOs, the first LGBT festival took place in Bucharest, with the clear opposition from the mayor and the support by the Romanian President and Ministry of Justice (Tarta 2015, 42); a festival that has its continuity today and is highly supported by Embassies and international corporations. At the same time, the Romanian Church and the New Right group have their own parade, called ‘Normality March’.

In regard to media and to some of ACCEPT’s activities, the articles on the gay and lesbian issue were at first in the area of sensationalism, in relation to international stars, or in connection to rape, pedophilia and homophobia, then gradually having a reactive position and in connection to EU and accession (Nachescu 2005, 63-64). After ACCEPT had a stronger voice and was backed up by embassies and international actors, the media portrayed the issue of gay and lesbian rights in more nuanced manners. At the same time, the discourse of the Church was connected to diseases, sins and a threat to family values, with the mention that in Poland the Church managed some of HIV/AIDS care centers. Today, due to the Ordinance on Preventing and Punishing All Forms of Discrimination, issued as Ordinance 137/2000 in Romania, the new legal framework forbids any discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, social status, belief, sex or sexual orientation, denunciation to a disfavored category or any other criterion and through the independent body – National Council against Discrimination (CNCD) complaints and violations in regard to anti-discrimination are easier to combat in the Court of Law.

Also, it is important to note that ACCEPT worked top down through advocacy and lobby, by building a favorable legislation, but failing to build a community; while PSI emerged as a new type – bottom-up, grassroots, using HIV/AIDS prevention as a frame and building a community, surviving on funding (Viski 2015, i), while now new informal and formal associations have emerged (see MozaiQ and Hecate Publishing for example).

In Poland the situation was different in the stance that during the communist regime there was no law that would incriminate homosexuality and thus the identity formation of both formal and informal LGBT organizations had a different start. The LGBT informal and more formal groups were also springing in the 90s, when there were plenty of lesbian and gay local informal groups in most cities, and many LGBT groups were established and after ten years most of them disappeared due to lack of funding. Activism in regard to sexual minority rights were “low-density, uncoordinated, and self-consciously apolitical” (Kliszczynski 2001, 166; Owczarzak 2009) and “the network of groups working in what might broadly be defined as LGBT issues was very small and, to avoid public controversy, inconspicuous”, making the first legally registered group, The Association of Lambda Groups (Stowarzyszenie Grup Lambda)

in 1990 (O'Dwyer 2012, 33). The renewal of the movement, which is now very professional, started in 2001. The most 'vocal' NGO in regard to sexual minority rights is Campaign Against Homophobia KPH, which through its strategies and discourses used the queer mixture of ideas, aggressive, 'in-your-face' queer campaigns, celebrations of coming out and identity politics, as well as grassroots work and having links to international, especially EU-level, networks, notably that of ILGA-Europe but also the European Commission and European Parliament (O'Dwyer 2012, 25).

Also, alliances were made between these organizations and left-wing politicians and other "feminists, ecologists, anticlerical and anarchists movements joined and started to cooperate with international LGBT organizations", especially after the EU accession (Graff 2006; Chetaille 2013, 138; Tarta 2015, 42). The LGBT marches were more controversial in Poland, because it was 'double coming out', one of the sexual minorities and their enemies (Gruszczynska in Shibata 2009, 257 in Tarta 2015, 42). In 2004, the people who were marching in Krakow in celebration of the LGBT rights were attacked, while in Warsaw and Poznan these marches were banned (Graff 2006; Binnie 2014; Keinz 2011). The same year, national and international LGBT organizations managed to put an end to the bans that would not allow LGBT festivals or marches in Europe, by a decision taken at the European Court of Human Rights. Moreover, in 2010, National Museum in Warsaw hosted the exhibition 'Ars Homo Erotica', thus opening the space for sexual minorities in a place where typically celebrates the Polish nation (O'Dwyer 2012, 347). All these changes were abruptly met by the Catholic Church, ultra-Catholic Groups such as the League of Polish Families and other far-right groups and parties (Graff in Chetaille 2013, 134).

Next, I will present some of the most important actors in regard to the lesbian and gay rights movement were in Romania: Romanian Institute for Human Rights, the Association for Defending Human Rights in Romania-Helsinki Committee (APADOR-CH – who started to push for LGBT rights debates and actions in the early 90s when ACCEPT did not exist as an informal group), League for Defending Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Commission of the Homosexual and Lesbians International Federation and International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and then MozaiQ (2015) and Hecate Publishing in Romania; and International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), The International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network Polska (ILGCNP), Lambda Warszawa, MONAR (Youth Movement against Drug Addiction), Campaign Against Anti-Homophobia KPH, The Equality Foundation, Warszawa, Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law (Polskie Towarzystwo Prawa Antydyskryminacyjnego), Zieloni, Trans-Fuzja and the Initiative for Registered Partnerships (Grupa Inicjatywna ds. Związków Partnerskich – which combines representatives of the Green Party and three of Poland's largest LGBT groups, KPH, Lambda Warszawa, and InnaStrona) in Poland (Tarta 2015, 38, 42; O'Dwyer 2012). The importance of transnational human rights organizations, LGBT networks, international NGOs and European institutions in putting pressure on the Romanian and Polish states were tremendous in both countries. For instance, ILGCN Poland, Lambda Warszawa, and KPH formed the Equality Foundation (Fundacja Równości) went to trial at the European Court of Human Rights, establishing a binding legal precedent against future such bans of sexual minority parades in all of Europe (O'Dwyer 2012, 32).

3. Conclusions

In this article I have presented the contextual elements that outlined the lesbian and gay rights movements in Romania and Poland. Long (1999), Nachescu (2005) Carstocea (2010) analyzed the conditions under which homosexuality was decriminalized in Romania while O'Dwyer & Schwartz, 2010; O'Dwyer 2010, O'Dwyer 2012 wrote about the difficulties, discriminations and development of the LGBT activists in Poland. Having no community like places where they could meet, except for the treatment centers for drug addiction in some cases, the sexual rights activists had a general aversion to joining organizations, a lack of financial resources, and the internal contradictions of the Soviet conception of the family and women's role in society (O'Dwyer 2012, 12). At first being something of a personal issue in Poland and something of a penal issue in Romania, the discourse in which sexual minority rights appeared was that of a negative import from occidental societies, a negative effect of opening towards the West and generally a bad external influence (Carastocea 2006, 9). In Romania, in 1996 "a first intervention on the Article 200 operated a compromise, decriminalizing private homosexual acts, but bringing limitations on freedom of expression and association; the second step towards equal rights brought sanctioning discrimination based on same sex orientation and, shortly after, the abolition of all punitive provisions regarding homosexuals" (Carasticea 2006, 19). In Poland, homosexuality arose as a topic in the form of HIV/AIDS epidemic, which had claimed its first cases in Poland in the late 1980s (Owczarzak, 2009). The PRCC was the one who "provided the frame. Conspicuous in its absence from this framing of the issue – which was defined in terms of disease, not homosexuality – was any conception of LGBT as people with rights. The Church's appeals to minister to AIDS patients characterized them as sufferers deserving help while avoiding discussion about the mode of transmission" (Owczarzak 2009, 434; O'Dwyer 2012, 17). With the EU accession, lesbian and gay rights were seen as political rights, in regard to equal legal protection from discrimination in the market and the public sphere.

In the first part I have presented some general aspects in regard to the two movements and next I turned to describing and analyzing how institutions such as the Romanian Orthodox Church and Polish Roman Catholic Church, as well as governments, politicians and activists have impacted the ways in which today's NGOs function. Nevertheless, I have also stressed that both these institutions and organizations offered too little space for the voices of the sexual minorities to be heard, and focused too little on aspects in regard to intersectionality (of class, race and gender) in the community. In this manner, I argue that activists, as well as social scientists and policy-makers should approach the issue in a more qualitative perspective, focusing on how contextual factors impacted personal experiences.

Notes

¹ http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/RPL/RPL%20rezultate%20definitive_e.pdf.

² It is worth mentioning that the pronouncements of Church officials tend to refer to gays, and almost never to lesbians, "reflecting the weaker voice and inferior position of nuns in the Orthodox hierarchy. While lesbianism has been viewed more as a problem of the larger society, sexual relations between men have been considered a problem intrinsic to the life of the church, and thus in more urgent need for a solution. Suffice it to say that the official position of the Orthodox Churches toward homosexuality has remained conservative, similar to the stance adopted by the Roman Catholic Church, and more intolerant than the Orthodox pronouncements and practices toward abortion and contraception. Orthodox canon law condemns homosexuality in the

harsh terms, a view consonant with the position of the Orthodox theologians and married clergy (Stan & Turcescu, 2000, 2005, 2007, Stan 2010, 39).

³ <http://www.criticatac.ro/27929/zece-ani-de-parade-gay-la-bucureti-radiografia-unei-micri/>.

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