



**European Trans
Gender Network**
<http://tgeu.net>

Transphobia in Russia

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by Brian Dark, 04.11.2005

Unfortunately, there are few transgender specialists in Russia. They work only in big cities, such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Chelyabinsk. They say there are some transgender specialists in Rostov-Na-Donu, but anyway the situation is far from perfect.

Doctors (psychiatrists) often don't see the difference between transgender inclination and schizophrenia. They mix up self-identification with sexual orientation. There are few endocrinologists, who can find proper medication for therapy. That's especially important for MtF. The situation with the surgery is much better. There are different methods of operations and there's always a choice. However sometimes doctors show homophobia and transphobia, for example, they can say to MtF person: "You can't become a woman with such an ugly face!" or to FtM person: "Never tell me about yourself as a man! That insults me, because this is me who is a REAL man!"

Transgender people often face homophobia and transphobia, especially in small towns. Transgender people are often abused, insulted and raped. (That refers to MtF and FtM) However, victims seldom go to the police. There are cases, when transgender persons went to the police, but they were refused any help, because there is also great homophobia among policemen.

There were precedents when a transgender person lost his/her work because of the change of his/her sex. Now some transgenders try to go to the law, but they succeed rarely. That's why most transgenders think that the best way is to earn money for transition, to change sex and documents and only then – to try to find a new job. Many transgender people change their place of living, as a rule they move to big cities, for example Moscow and St. Petersburg, because relatives refuse to communicate with them anymore and are ashamed of them.

In the media this topic has scandalous and marginal trace, most „normal people“ think that transgenders are prostitutes or people, lost for the society. However, in recent years there have been people in Russia who try to do their best to give true information about transgender people. For example, in summer 2005 there were series of transmissions about transgender people on one of the main Russian TV-channels with a presenter Elena Malisheva. Unfortunately, there were great problems with this material, they even try to forbid it, so it was reduced and shown, but not in prime-time as it was promised to authors of the material.

Nowadays, transgender problem is considered to be completely medical one. That means that only doctors deal with transgenders, but there is no social support for them. There was a group of psychological help for transgenders in Moscow, in the winter of 2004/2005, but it has stopped its activity, because the price turned out to be too high for Russian transgenders - \$70 per months for 4 meetings a month. Few transgender people in Russia can be solvent enough.

Since 2004 there appeared new groups of psychological support, but they are not professional, as they are organised by transgender people themselves. These are simply meetings of transgenders and they are usually held at home of some friend of the community. So, they are rather scanty and not stable.

There are some internet resources about transgenders in Russia and that fills up the lack of information – for example www.transsexuals.ru with law and medical sources, forum, photos of participants etc. Transgender people can share their opinion and experience there.

There is no fixed document in Russian legislation, which lets a determine sequence of changing the documents simultaneously or before changing the sex. Few people can change documents before the operation. As a rule, a transgender person is observed in some medical centre during a year, and then a committee gives him/her a permission to change the sex. Only after first series of operations have been made, a transgender person can change documents.

In 1970 Professor A.I. Belkin became the first to study transsexuality in Russia. He created the Moscow Centre of Psycho-Endocrinology, which studies transgender problems.

We would like to find new friends among foreign transgender people, to learn their experience with homophobia and transphobia and their adaptation after the change of sex. We are interested in everything connected with the life of transgender people abroad.

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