

In good hands?

The status quo of psycho-social assistance for lesbian victims of violence and/or discrimination: a European comparison.

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/ TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE /

/ 1 BACKGROUND /

- / 1.1 Experiences of violence and psycho-social consequences of violence against lesbian women /
- / 1.2 The present situation of psycho-social care and assistance /
- / 1.3 A definition of violence /
- / 1.4 Consequences of the extended concept of violence /
 - / 1.4.1 Violence against lesbians as hate crime /
 - / 1.4.2 Heterosexism /
- / 1.5 Evaluation criteria for the situation of lesbians /
- / 1.6 Specific counselling for lesbians /
- / 1.7 Violence against lesbians - model of good practice /

/ 2 THE SURVEY /

- / 2.1 Objectives of the survey /
- / 2.2 Methodology /
 - / 2.2.1 Population/Sample /
 - / 2.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative analysis /

/ 3 ANALYSIS

- / 3.1 Attribution of the items
- / 3.2 Belgium /
 - / 3.2.1 Public relations / Evaluating the utilisation /
 - / 3.2.2 Professional competence /
 - / 3.2.3 Attitude of the staff /
 - / 3.2.4 Interpretation

/ PREFACE

Since 1999, the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Family support a European project on violence against lesbians that is carried out by the Lesbian Information and Counselling Centre LIBS e.V. Frankfurt/Main. The European cooperation partners are the Vienna anti-discrimination office for homosexual lifestyles, the Belgian association Garance asbl, the British group Sola, the Lesbian Counselling Centre Lesbenberatung e.V. Berlin and the Office for Women's Affairs of the city of Frankfurt/Main. The project focuses on lesbian women who experienced violence and/or discrimination.

Our objective is to make violence against lesbians visible, to promote its social perception and to integrate this phenomenon in the general discourses on violence and health.

At the beginning of the project, we developed a concept of prevention and intervention that puts the responsibility on non-governmental organisations as well as public institutions and is oriented towards a specific target group and social policy. In the following years, different aspects of this concept have been and will be implemented.

In 2001, a consciousness-raising campaign on violence against lesbians with the title "I don't mind lesbians BUT..." was carried out; it addressed prevalent prejudices against lesbians [www.lesben-gegen-gewalt.de/lesbians-against-violence.com].

In addition, the project initiated cooperation between the lesbian counselling centre and the police in Frankfurt and incorporated violence against lesbians in the concept of prevention. On the occasion of the International Day against Violence against Women, the project organised a symposium where the possibilities of networking with the police and the public prosecution office following the Dutch model was discussed as well as opportunities in the field of criminal and civil law to fight violence against lesbians (and gays).

Besides the discussion on the optimisation of the legal framework for combating violence against lesbians, the psycho-social assistance of lesbian victims was a main topic. In Belgium, Germany and Austria, a survey highlighted and evaluated the accessibility of potential contact points for lesbian victims of violence. This documentation presents the results of this survey.

The documentation is a joint product of the cooperation partners in Belgium, Germany and Austria. We would like to thank in particular the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Family that made it possible to carry out a lesbian-specific project of this dimension for the first time.

Constance Ohms / project coordinator

/ 1 BACKGROUND

/ 1.1 Prevalence of violence and psycho-social consequences of violence against lesbians

In Europe, there is still little research available on the prevalence of violence against lesbians; therefore, we will refer in the following to three studies published in Germany and one in Britain. According to these surveys, nearly all lesbians have already experienced violence or discrimination on the grounds of their being lesbian. 24% of the lesbians surveyed reported physical attacks, 44% sexualised assaults and 98% verbal aggressions. These studies show clearly that the verbal assaults in particular are part of lesbian women's everyday life. They do not necessarily have consequences immediately but, on the long term, can have effects on the psyche. Experiences of violence and/or discrimination, therefore, can have a negative impact on the quality of life and the health of lesbian women.

This has been shown in a study at the University of Utrecht in 2001. Theo Sandfort refers to measurable psychological effects, i.e. effects psychological dysfunctions classified in the DSM-III-R. He states that lesbian women, on the long term, show a significantly higher level of depression and mood disorders (e.g. eating disorders, schizophrenia) than heterosexual women. This is also the case for alcohol abuse, other forms of drug dependency and social phobias. According to Sandfort, these dysfunctions have to be attributed, among others, to the social stigmatisation and discrimination of lesbians. He did not examine psychological impacts that are not categorised as psychological dysfunctions, but can affect the well-being.

Not every experience of violence and/or discrimination necessarily has to lead to psychopathological symptoms, but - as shown in the Dutch study - it remains a possible consequence.

/ 1.2 The present situation of psycho-social care and assistance

The question arises how lesbian women deal with violence and where they expect - and look for - help and support. In Germany, there are a few counselling centres for lesbians. They are mostly located in cities, like Munich, Frankfurt/M, Berlin, Hamburg and Kiel. However, it cannot be assumed that these counselling centres are able and willing to offer help and support in the case of experiences with violence and/or discrimination. The same is true for the forty-something lesbian switchboards in Germany. A system of care and assistance covering the whole area of Germany is not available, due to the concentration in cities and the different task profiles of the organisations.

In Austria, lesbian women cannot count on the assistance of a lesbian counselling centre, either. The lesbian counselling service Lila Tipp was founded in Vienna only in 1998. There, lesbians can get - among others - counselling in respect to violent experiences. In the other federal provinces, there are gay and lesbian counselling services, which do not necessarily work on the issue of violence.

In Belgium, there is no lesbian-specific counselling service at all. There is no politically active lesbian movement, as we know it from the German-speaking countries. The association Tels Quels, active in the French-speaking part of the country, offers counselling on general gay and lesbian issues, but not specifically on violence. In the Flemish-speaking part of the country, the lesbian movement is much more visible; however, the lesbian-only organisations have no counselling services. The Flemish Federation Workgroups Homosexuality has an office where victims of discrimination can report their experiences, but it is not active in counselling. However, there is a switchboard for lesbians, gays and bisexuals where general information is available. Once a year, there is a Flemish meeting of lesbians where approximately 400 women participate.

Given the lack of psycho-social care and assistance by lesbian organisations, it remains a question where lesbian women with experiences of violence and/or discrimination go for help. For this reason, we carried out a survey in Belgium, Germany and Austria. Approximately 2000 questionnaires on the accessibility of services for lesbians were sent to different social institutions and the police. 529 answers could be analysed.

/ 1.3 A definition of violence

The theoretical and scientific discussion of the problem of violence began relatively late, in contrast to research on aggression. Research on violence started only in the 70's in connection with a boom in peace studies. Important representatives are Hannah Arendt, Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, Johan Galtung and James T. Tedeschi. Research on aggression is mostly based on psychology and addresses only personal violence, whereas research on violence is based on sociology and integrates the social and historic framework in its analysis of aggression. Tedeschi and Arendt stressed the necessity to incorporate - in addition to the social and societal conditions - the existing power relations and imbalances into the research on the origins of and conditions for violent behaviour. This broader perspective on violence strongly influenced the discussion in the framework of women's studies: Women's studies address, among others, violence against women in the private and public sphere. Here, violence not only means personal violence, but also the structural conditions that are expressed for example in normative institutions like heterosexuality, domestic work and child care as female tasks etc.

As a consequence, violence and its exertion have to be regarded in the context of social and historic relations. According to Hageman-White, violence means "the violation of the physical or psychological integrity of a human being by someone else"¹. This makes violence a collective or individual action "for which a person is responsible and which has a serious impact on concretely identifiable victims"². Neither the exertion nor the impact of violence have to be of exclusively physical nature. Violence can take place by taking advantage of structural power relations, for example social power inequality or relationships of dependency, e.g. heterosexism. The motivation for exerting violence is therefore to be found on the individual level,

¹ Hageman-White, Kavemann, Ohl: Parteilichkeit und Solidarität, Bielefeld 1997, S. 28

² ebenda, S. 27

for example insecurity of one's own identity or aggression, and on the other side on the societal level: A look on the structural level shows that violence against social minorities is, as a rule, not constituted of individual norm violations, but is a prolongation of norms that manifests and perpetuates power inequalities.

Accordingly, it would be shortsighted to characterise violence against lesbians and gays as individual acts of aggressive behaviour. In fact, it has to be analysed on different levels: The intricate entanglement of sexuality and gender, of sex and gender, represents an central, if not the most important, constituent of heterosexual power structures. Through sex, a sexo-political attribution and drill takes place, the core of which consists in compulsory heterosexuality (v. Adrienne Rich 1983). Compulsory heterosexuality guarantees that women are available for men. Therefore, violence against lesbian women is not only a "punishment" for the homosexual orientation, but also the intention to re-establish the sexo-political attribution of women to men (v. Schoppmann 1997). The exertion of violence against lesbians or gays also affirms the perpetrator's membership of a dominant group and confirms his/her invulnerability.

The necessary extension of the concept of violence with regard to structural violence (Galtung 1972) and its immaterialisation incorporate violence against lesbians in a "historically grown network of physical, verbal, psychological and structural disadvantages"³. It not only facilitates the perception of actions but also of the societal conditions legitimising these actions.

/ 1.4 Consequences of the extended concept of violence

The existing representative German studies on violence against lesbian women (Bielefeld 1999, Frankfurt 2000) and the survey of the Lesbenberatung e.V. Berlin (1997) are based on this extended concept of violence. It forms the basis of the analysis of violence against lesbians as regards their experience of violence and potential strategies of dealing with it. It also is the fundament to a more differentiated discussion of differences in the experience and dealing with violence of lesbians, gays and heterosexual women.

The extended concept of violence allows having a closer look on a certain behavioural pattern, the anticipation of potential experiences of violence (anticipative behaviour). The anticipation of violence does not only stem from a real experience of violence, but also from the knowledge that such an experience is possible. Lesbian women know of the omnipresence of assaults against lesbians, and they do not attribute it to a certain place or time. They want to avoid potential violence or at least reduce the risk of a possible experience of violence. Often, lesbians use behavioural patterns that they have learned in the framework of female socialisation and the omnipresence of sexist violence. As on the individual level one only controls one's own behaviour and appearance, the anticipation of violence can lead to abstaining from visible signs of a homosexual orientation - this includes symbols (for example

³ Faulseit, Müller, Ohms, Soine: Anregungen zur Entwicklung eines lesbisch-feministischen Gewaltbegriffs als Grundlage für politisches Handeln. In: beiträge zur feministischen theorie und praxis, 56/57, 2001, S. 14

the double-axe or the rainbow flag), the external appearance or the affection towards the partner in public as well as the self-identification as a lesbian.

Violence against lesbians is an attack on their psychosexual identity. This identity is generally developed in a lengthy and difficult process; we speak of an internal and an external coming out. Heterosexual women do not undergo a comparable process. This aspect of identity is fragile because it is not based on a societal support that might encourage and affirm it. The self-image as a "militant fighter" developed by lesbians is most probably a substitute and serves at the same time as protection against potential harm. Concrete experiences of violence throw lesbian women back on the acquired patterns of the woman/lesbian as victim and destroy the constructed protection against violations.

Heterosexual women, too, know of the anticipation of violence via so-called strategies of avoidance. It is the merit of the women's movement to have undertaken the first socio-political analysis of violence against women. It has created a conscience that the avoidance of certain places, certain behaviours or day/nighttimes does not solve the problem of violence against women. This avoidance rather leads to a responsibility of the victims, not of the perpetrators. The definition of violence as an act based on a decision placed the responsibility on the perpetrators. This decision-oriented approach demystified the often used explanation of a loss of control or even dissociation, "it was not me who hit you, but my hand".

The theoretical approaches of the women's movement show clearly that (lesbian) women can influence potential risks through their individual strategies of avoidance, but never can completely avoid violence in a socio-political perspective. Violence against lesbians is embodied structurally and represents an essential element of regulatory politics, it can happen at any time and at any place. Individual strategies of avoidance are therefore based on the erroneous belief that it is possible to influence reality through one's own behaviour. But it is the perpetrator who deserves our attention because his/her images and fantasies motivate him/her to exercise violence. In addition, s/he feels legitimised by social norms and knows that sanctions occur very rarely, if ever.

Gay men also show anticipative behaviour. On the contrary to lesbian women who are conscious of the potential omnipresence of violence, gay men attribute assaults to specific places and conditions. This attribution enables them to believe that they can avoid violence through a changed behaviour⁴. They avoid, for example, cruising areas. The gay anti-violence movement calls upon the police to enhance the protection of gays in these areas and to abstain at the same time from criminal prosecution of the gay men involved. The experience of violence is individualised and therefore becomes part of one's personal destiny. The trend towards individualisation also appears - with few exceptions (Bochow, Nachtwey) - in the analyses of violence against gays. Social structures and the element of regulatory politics of violence are excluded from analysis as a rule.

⁴ v. Ohms/Stehling: Violence against lesbians, violence against gays: theses on differences and common points. In: Documentation of the 1st European Symposium on Violence against Lesbians, Berlin 2001.

/ 1.4.1 Violence against lesbians as hate crime

Lesbians and other women experience violence against lesbians not because of their individual disposition or because they are "at the wrong time at the wrong place", but because they belong in fact or presumably to a certain social group - in this case to the group of lesbian women. Crimes that are committed due to the hostility towards a person on the bases of the victim being actually or presumably different are called hate crimes. The victim's role is to represent what is hated, the other. The hostility can be expressed in verbal assaults, the maintenance or reinforcement of prejudices and hate in others and even in actions relevant to criminal law.

As the origin of violence against lesbians often is to be found in the rejection of or even hatred towards a certain social group, the experience of violence is not only an individual experience, an individual destiny. Lesbophobia, hostility towards lesbians, has to be incorporated into the socio-historical context determining, if not legitimising it. As examples for so-called hate crimes we can cite the attack of Serbian nationalists on the lesbian and gay participants of the Gay Pride in 2001 in Belgrade, the attack on cars near the cinema of the lesbian and gay film festival in Brussels in 2000 or the partial destruction of posters of our "I don't mind lesbians BUT..." campaign in Frankfurt.

/ 1.4.2 Heterosexism

Heterosexism describes the entanglement of sexuality and gender. It contains not only a sexual duality, but also the attribution of sexuality to a partner of the other sex. Heterosexism guarantees, via the attribution of the woman to the man, the availability of women for men. Regulatory mechanisms are diverse and generally not limited to governmental and legislative measures.

The lack of negative governmental regulatory mechanisms is therefore not a sufficient sign for the acceptance of lesbian lifestyles and of lesbians in society. Lesbians often experience another form of violence that is expressed, among others, in their invisibility.

In Austria, the Supreme Court explained the differentiation between lesbians and gays concerning the age of sexual majority by ruling that it was not possible to distinguish between a sexual act and mutual hygienic assistance between women⁵. This adjudication shows clearly the stigmatisation of lesbians: As women are generally perceived as heterosexual, i.e. in their sexuality oriented towards men, this can lead to the conclusion that female sexuality without the male substitute is not sexuality. Male sexuality is associated with an activity that can be regulated by law, whereas female sexuality for some officials obviously is still connotated with passivity and conception and therefore does not need governmental regulation.

⁵ VIGH Österreich, Geschäftszahl G227/88, G2/89 of 1988 and 1989

/ 1.5 Evaluation criteria for the situation of lesbians

For the evaluation of the socio-political situation of lesbians - and therefore of their quality of life - in the national states, the following indices are often used:

- / legislative regulation (criminalisation);
- / the possibility to register homosexual partnerships;
- / the existence of an anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The results of the first phase of the European project on violence against lesbians in 1999/2000 demonstrate that these indices are not sufficient to characterise the socio-political situation of lesbians in a satisfactory way. Additional socio-political indices are needed, for example:

- / the societal attitude towards lesbians and lesbian lifestyles;
- / the extent of psycho-social care and assistance for lesbians;
- / access of lesbians to the socio-political life (e.g. the possibility of subsidies for lesbian associations, the creation of independent lesbian organisations and structures; making lesbian-specific topics visible in "mixed" social movements, for example the human rights movement);
- / access of lesbians to the labour market;
- / the perception of lesbians in the media (not the subsumption under male homosexuality);
- / the representation of lesbian lifestyles in schoolbooks, integration of the topic in the curricula;
- / a politics of lesbian-specific mainstreaming in combination with "politics of difference".

/ 1.6 Lesbian-specific counselling services

We have to start from the assumption that in reality, only a small proportion of lesbians being affected by violence and/or discrimination looks for assistance and support in a lesbian-specific counselling service. The reason for this lies, on the one hand, in the lack of area coverage with lesbian-specific counselling services, on the other hand in their presumably high threshold: an affected woman has to identify as a lesbian. It is also assumed that lesbian counselling services are close to the subculture, i.e. too close to the lesbian scene, and that personnel overlapping is probable. The assumed risk to meet a counsellor in the evening in a lesbian bar is estimated as rather high.

But lesbian counselling centres also represent a low-threshold service for women who identify as lesbians because lesbians think that no further discrimination and violation of limits on the grounds of their lesbian lifestyle will occur in this place.

Lesbian-specific counselling services exist only in very few Member States of the European Union; this means that the most existing services are affiliated to another organisation, for example women's counselling centres. A lesbian-specific organisation sees itself often confronted with the reproach of separatism, which

would counteract the European policy of mainstreaming. A specialisation in this case means rather a qualification that by no means is a contradiction to mainstreaming policies. Lesbian counselling services are, at this moment, the only services that address the problem of violence against lesbians and develop concepts for prevention and intervention. Many lesbian and gay organisations regard lesbians and gays as a homogenous group so that a differentiation of experiences and processing of violence does not take place. Women-specific organisations and support organisations for crime victims consider the problem of violence against lesbians as marginal or irrelevant. It is crucial to counter this ignorance and lack of knowledge. Lesbian services have a clear head start in this field of knowledge, and we must use it. The objective is not separation from, but qualification of other services.

Due to the relatively high threshold of lesbian counselling centres, we can assume that lesbians who are affected by violence and/or discrimination also will look for help and support with other organisations, or they will not accept external assistance and will rely on their closer social environment to deal with their experiences. Finally, we can even assume that the circle of friends and the partner carry most of the weight of psychological processing. They therefore receive a special position and responsibility within the lesbian social environment.

/ 1.7 Violence against lesbians - a model of good practice

As a starting point for the present survey, we developed a model of good practice that we refer to as evaluation standard of psycho-social services. Models of good practice have been developed to standardise crucial demands on services under in respect of their objectives. The idea of the model of good practice is based on the understanding that the quality of services often depends on the commitment of individuals and is not embodied in the structures of an organisation.

Deficits are often visible where topics relevant to lesbians are delegated to the lesbian staff member, and the organisation as a whole does not take up its responsibility. The similar is true when sexual orientation, in this case the homosexual one, is the only quality criterion for exercising a particular function/position.

The introduction of models of good practice should guarantee the structural embodiment of, for example, lesbian-specific aspects and should contribute to the de-personalisation. They are an important tool of quality management.

Model of good practice:

VISIBILITY

Lesbians affected by violence and discrimination who do not necessarily frequent the subculture, have to rely on popular information sources like the phone directory or the Internet to find addresses of potential contact points. Our model of a best-practice service starts from the assumption that this service has to do proactive public relations and to make lesbians visible in its communications. Other possibilities of pro-active public relations are ads in local newspapers, counselling guidebooks, lesbian-/gay-specific magazines etc. but also the naming of lesbians in the service's

mission statement. In the first contact of lesbian women with the service, it is necessary to make offers and their limits explicit, for example if it is possible to speak to a lesbian counsellor. A lesbian-friendly room gives positive signals, for example through pictures, posters, symbols, flyers, information material of lesbian organisations, magazines etc.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The topic of lesbian lifestyles and identity development should be part of the training for all pedagogical professions, humanities and social sciences, health professions, in police training, law schools etc. Counsellors should already have gained clarity on their psycho-sexual identity. In this way, a possible threat by the potential other of the lesbian identity can be resolved. Regular supervision is also a sign of professional competence.

Technical literature should be on the level of state-of-the-art and should be comprehensive. Professional knowledge is distinguished from everyday knowledge through its differentiation. Professional competence is above all necessary for the following topics: processes of coming out, character, extent and consequences of violence against and discrimination of lesbians, consequences of societal conditions on the close social environment (peer group) and the relationship(s).

NETWORKING AND REFERRAL

Networking with other organisations offering complementary services should be part of the standard as well as the cooperation with crisis intervention centres, hospitals, the police etc. In this way, the best coverage possible, given the existing resources, is guaranteed. The fundament for networking is a referral index containing organisations with their focus of work, approach and eventually contact persons. It should be updated continually and should contain specific services for the target group of lesbian women. If need be, the counselling service should accompany the referral of the client. Only 40% of persons who are referred to other organisations take up this opportunity. The risk of a misdirected referral should be kept to a minimum. The best coverage is achieved when a lesbian finds a qualified contact point within 50 - 60 km.

SOCIO-POLITICAL APPROACH

Violence against lesbians is a controversial issue between the levelling with violence against gay men on the one hand and individualisation on the other hand: "Rape is rape, no matter if I experience it as heterosexual or lesbian woman," is a frequent argument against lesbian-specific services. Violence always takes place in a social and historical context. The victims of violence against lesbians are not attacked as individuals, but because they represent a certain social minority that the perpetrator hates. They are attacked for their alleged membership of a social group. Different population groups show different social conditions. As a consequence, structural difference also applies to lesbians as a social minority.

A violent assault can lead to a reinforcement of the victim role. On the face of it, this seems comparable to heterosexual women, but it differs elementarily as regards the challenging of the victim's psychosexual identity - a process that takes only rarely place with heterosexual women. The rape of a heterosexual woman generally does not challenge her psychosexual identity. The rape is a cruel confirmation of the victim's womanhood and attributes her to a certain place in society. The rapist demonstrates omnipotence/power and demands submission. Raping a lesbian

woman with the underlying motivation of hostility towards lesbians is the punishment and the attempted destruction of the victim's psychosexual identity. It is the punishment of her deviation from the norm with the rapist representing the dominant culture. This socio-political context cannot be excluded in the counselling context. Training on differences between lesbians and gays as well as between lesbian and heterosexual women with regard to their experience of violence and discrimination should be a standard in order to maintain a differentiated knowledge.

STAFF ATTITUDE

The optimal attitude of the counselling staff equals to the acceptance of the lesbian lifestyle as one of many possible lifestyles. The objective cannot be to achieve an equal treatment by levelling the differences, but to appreciate differences equally. To this end, the differences between lifestyles first have to be named. To see and to assess differences, normality has to be scrutinised critically, i.e. a discussion of the construction of normality has to take place. A discussion with the heterosexual and lesbian or gay staff members has to take place in order to develop openness towards the person opposite.

/ 2 THE SURVEY

With the questionnaire developed in the framework of this survey, we wanted to examine the following questions:

- (1) Does area-coverage for the psycho-social care and assistance for lesbians exist in Belgium, Germany and Austria?
- (2) How are care and assistance delivered?
- (3) Which quality standards are applied?
 - a. Lesbians as target groups in public relations;
 - b. Training to lesbian-specific experiences of violence and discrimination;
 - c. Cooperation with other services (lesbian-specific and other) (referral and/or cooperation).
- (4) Which services are accessible and useful for lesbians?

/ 2.1 Research objective

The main accent of the inventory survey lies on the registration of services for lesbians having experienced violence and discrimination, in order to better assess and improve the degree of psycho-social care and assistance. Due to the stigmatisation of the lesbian lifestyle and lesbians as "social minority", lesbians find it difficult to assume their psychosexual identity in a self-confident manner and to approach counselling and assistance services proactively. These services, on the other hand, do not see the necessity to act, as long as nobody sets new challenges for them. This cycle can only be broken if both parties are motivated to act. Counselling and assistance services have to create explicitly services where the threshold for lesbian women is kept as low as possible. The questionnaire aims at bringing up this topic in the organisations and inspiring new initiatives in the form of targeted services and more proactive public relations.

/ 2.2 Methodology

/ 2.2.1 Population/Sample

The survey was carried out in all of Belgium and Austria. In Germany, countrywide surveys were combined with surveys in representative counties, i.e. Hessen, Saxony-Anhalt and Berlin, according to the sample. The questionnaire was accompanied with post-free, self-addressed envelopes to enhance the return. A period of four weeks was planned for filling in the questionnaires.

In Belgium, the following institutions were contacted:

The Belgian demographic situation made two questionnaires necessary, one in Dutch and one in French.

Organisations	Total Number	Number Dutch	Number French	Responses Dutch	Responses French
General social services	107	73	34	12	1
Telephone counselling	12	7	5	3	0
Assistance to crime victims	34	5	29	2	3
Family planning centres	127	30	97	8	20
Youth (counselling) centres	48	32	16	13	3
Centres for homeless women or youth, emergency accommodation facilities	42	41	1	3	1
Psychological services	2	0	2	0	0
Women's shelters	11	6	5	4	1
Women's centres, women's organisations, women and poverty	12	9	3	10	0
Migrant women organisations	3	1	2	0	0
Prostitute organisations	1	1	0	0	0
Trade unions	3	3	0	0	0
Prevention offices of the police	2		2	0	1
Lesbian/gay organisations	62	46	16	12	2
Transgender counselling	1	1		1	0
Human rights organisation	1	0	1	0	0
Perpetrator counselling	1	1	0	0	0
Total	469			68	32

In the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, we contacted social organisations that are recognized as CAWs (Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk) and their subsidiaries. This recognition does not exist in the French-speaking part. There, we contacted all family planning centres recognized by the French Community. In the end, answers of 28 family planning organisations, 57 organisations active in the field of youth work, one police service, four emergency accommodation facilities, five women's shelters, 10 women's centres and organisations, three telephone counselling services, 13 organisations in the field of general social services and five assistance services for crime victims could be analysed. One third of the answers came from the French-speaking part and two thirds from the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium; the return rate amounted to 21,5% in total.

In the following analysis, the lesbian, gay and transgender organisations are not taken into account, as they were not part of the primary target group. The return rate of the queer sector amounted to 23%.

The present results of the Belgian analysis are a useful complement to the 1999 survey on "accessibility of general social services for lesbians, gays and bisexuals", carried out in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium (Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk: Toegankelijkheid Algemeen Welzijnswerk voor Holebi's).

In Germany, the following organisations received questionnaires:

Organisation	Number	Responses
Family planning centres		78
Hesse	222	
Saxony-Anhalt	50	
Berlin	86	
Assistance and counselling for crime victims country-wide, Weisser Ring	19	17
General victim counselling services of the justice administration	39	
Police departments country-wide, contact officers for lesbians and	96	35

gays		
Women's counselling centres, country-wide	48	49
Rape crisis hotlines, country-wide	203	47
Women's shelters, country-wide	192	57
Total	955	283

The proportion of erroneous addresses amounted to 12 mailings, i.e. 1,25% in Germany. 283 organisations answered in this country, which makes the return rate 29,6%.

In Austria, the following organisations were contacted:

Organisation	Number	Responses
Family planning centres/counselling centres of the Church	396	46
Police/Ministry of Interior	11	9
Women's counselling centres	53	27
Health centres	15	8
Psycho-social services	76	45
Rape crisis hotlines, women's shelters, intervention services	20	14
Total	571	149

In total, 581 organisations received a questionnaire. The return rate amounted to 26% in Austria.

/ 2.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative analysis

The quantitative analysis was carried out according to the following criteria:

/ Demographic data

- Type of organisation

/ Statistical method

- The present analysis is based on a systematic sample and assumes that results are distributed along a normal curve.
- The question arises if the results found are representative or just a product of chance. This is answered with the calculation of the degree of incertitude that is a quality of the survey results. In the case of a normal distribution, the measure of incertitude is the standard deviation: the less values are distributed around the arithmetic mean, i.e. the more pronounced a distribution is, the smaller is the standard deviation. The incertitude is further quantifiable via the so-called confidence interval that is the distance between two standard deviations. The error margin is of 5%, which means that 95% of the data are inside the confidence interval.

The representativity is not continuously visible in the confidence interval. The remaining values are percentages that are able to clearly characterise the problems and general trends.

The qualitative analysis follows these criteria:

/ accessibility of the service

- visibility, i.e. addressing lesbians directly
 - focused public relations
 - lesbian-specific services, e.g. couple counselling for lesbians
 - want to be part of referral index

openly lesbian staff for potential clients to create a low-threshold service.

- professional competence

differentiation of lesbians and gays

desire of further training

sources of existing knowledge, respectively: Is there any knowledge in the first place?

degree of horizontal networking as regards interdisciplinarity (relying on others' professional competences)

degree of vertical networking as regards interdisciplinarity (networking with crisis services, hospitals, police etc.)

- staff attitude

openness, for example challenging normality, free choice of lifestyle

acceptance of differences (e.g. between lesbians and heterosexual women, among lesbians, between lesbians and men etc.)

lesbian staff (not sufficient quality criterion, neither over-identification)

/ assessment of accessibility

/ assessment of area-coverage in comparison to the developed concept of prevention and intervention

/ creation of an index.

/ 3. ANALYSIS

/ 3.1 Attribution of items

Visibility		Professional competence	Staff attitude
Organisation	Evaluation of utilisation		
2	3	6	2 (answers)
8	4	9	9
15	5	10	10
20	7	11	(eventually 15)
		12	16
		13	17
		14	18 (answers)
		16	
		17	
		(eventually 19)	

/ 3.2 Belgium

According to a survey by Theo Sandfort (1997), three quarters of Flemish gay and lesbians presume that "most heterosexuals don't consider homosexuality as of equal value", and more than half believe that "most heterosexuals don't understand a lot about homosexuality in general". These statements suggest that many lesbians and gays anticipate potential discrimination to a high degree, which results in distrust. Lesbians and gays considering their psychosexual identity an important characteristic will feel quickly rejected and discriminated by a counsellor not familiar with this lifestyle. Other lesbians and gays who do not assume their lifestyle in a positive way (internalised homophobia) will be affirmed in the counselling situation.

The Belgian organisation Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk carried out a survey in 1999 that illustrated the accessibility of general social services for lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Two criteria determined the term accessibility: usefulness and visibility. Usefulness refers to the quality of the counselling relation between client and counsellor. It contains a reflection of one's own psychosexual identity and of the heterosexual norm, professional knowledge and a positive attitude towards lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

With the criterion of visibility, the survey examined the external presentation of a service according to the extent to which it integrates lesbians, gays and bisexuals. According to this visibility, clients can judge which services they can use and where the risk of (further) discrimination is lower.

In Flanders, five general social service centres in the five provinces were surveyed. The methodology consisted in standardised interviews with management, middle management and counsellors.

RESULTS

- / None of the services has a target group-specific approach. Even centres where there is a sector for lesbians and gays did **not** announce this in their general public relations.
- / Several organisations hang up posters on homosexuality, but only one has target group-specific public relations.
- / Most clients are young people with questions about their identity or looking for contacts.
- / The persons surveyed thought to be tolerant and well meaning.
- / More than a third of the persons questioned had stereotype opinions on lesbians and gays. For example, as reason of homosexuality were cited a missing father figure, or traumatic experiences in childhood. One person even went so far to question if there is natural homosexuality and called for the subject "homosexuality as a consequence of traumatic experiences" in professional training curricula.
- / The assertion of (cultural) differences is seen as discrimination.**
- / There is no regular counselling contact with lesbians and/or gays.
- / Many interviewed persons were not willing to answer the question of differences in life and relation styles of lesbians and gays and equalled homosexual relationships with heterosexual partnerships: **Homosexuals are equal - therefore, they are the same - therefore, they are like heterosexuals.**
- / A cooperation with lesbian and/or gay organisations is not sought; if it takes place, it does so on the initiative of the homosexual organisations.
- / The problems that lesbians and gays bring into the counselling services are registered under the topics sexuality, sexual problems or relation problems.
- / The database for referral, if it exists, does mostly not include addresses of communal lesbian and/or gay groups, but national organisations that are known from the media. Some addresses are old and incomplete, and it is mostly information received by accident.

Our survey confirmed the results of the 1999 study in Belgium. In the following, we will first undertake a general analysis that will then be specified according to the kind of organisation.

/ 3.2.1 Public relations

/ 3.2.1.1 General analysis

In total, 14 out of 85 services address lesbian women in their public relations⁶. One service addresses lesbians in the framework of its sexual education programme.

23,5% did not answer this question. The remaining 82,3% did not refer to lesbians in their public relations work. As a rule, this is explained with the stance that all persons looking for help and assistance are treated equally and that a specific reference to lesbians would lead to a reinforcement of stigmatisation (46%). A further 42% did not think about this before or did not see the demand or necessity (6%). The remaining 6% did not want to address lesbians without any further explanation. In general, the

⁶ The confidence interval is 9% - 25%, N=85.

organisations do not adapt their services to lesbian women but lesbians are integrated in existing services. 6% of the organisations have a lesbian-specific service (group for lesbian migrant women, group for married lesbians or mixed gay, lesbian and bisexual groups)⁷. Most specific services are to be found in family planning centres.

13 out of 85 organisations (15%) have openly lesbian employees who can enrich the organisation with their specific competence⁸. A further 13% of organisations did not answer the question. In the remaining 72%, no open lesbians are employed there. 16% of these do not see the necessity, whereas the remaining 84% just state that they do not have openly lesbian colleagues.

The proportion of organisations wishing to be admitted into the list of contact points for lesbian women and those not wanting to be on this list is relatively balanced: 38 organisations (45%) want to be admitted, 35 (41%) don't want to. The negative answers are explained as follows:

- / lesbians are not a target group, a specialisation is not wanted (51%);
- / the organisations have no experience with lesbian clients (23%);
- / no further explanation (26%).

EVALUATING THE UTILISATION

53 out of 85 organisations presume that lesbian women use their services (62%).⁹ A further 18% negate this, and 1% does not know if openly lesbian women use their services. 8 organisations did not answer this question. Of the organisations suspecting that openly lesbian women frequent their services, only three have a regular (counselling) contact with them. Only two of the organisations characterise this as an everyday experience (4%). Most of the contacts are of individual nature (45%). Of those organisations presuming an utilisation by lesbians, many cannot evaluate the frequency because statistics are not kept on this issue (32%).

Nearly half of the organisations suspect that lesbian clients did not proclaim their psychosexual identity to the counsellor (40%). 19% do not believe that hidden lesbians came to their services, and 31% cannot evaluate if this was the case. A correlation between the questions of open and hidden lesbians can be seen in the following table:

Table 1

	Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but do not tell you?			
		Yes	No	Don't know
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women come use	Yes	26	10	17
	No	6	4	5

⁷ The confidence interval is 1% - 11%, N=85.

⁸ The confidence interval is 8% -23%, N=85.

⁹ The confidence interval is 52% - 73%, N=85.

your services?	Don't know	2	1	6
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This means that 26 out of 85 organisations believe that open as well as hidden lesbians use their services. 17 organisations know that open lesbians come, but cannot evaluate the utilisation by hidden lesbians. 10 organisations know that openly lesbian women come and cannot imagine that lesbian women might hide their psychosexual identity.

A further 6 organisations did not have any contact with openly lesbian women but presume that some might have used their services without proclaiming their identity. 5 cannot evaluate this, and 4 organisations assume that neither open nor hidden lesbians have ever used their services.

The reasons why lesbian women frequent the cited social services are divers:

Table 2

Reason	Number N=149	Percentage
Relationship problems	27	18.1%
Loneliness	23	15.4%
Violence in family of origin	19	12.8%
Coming out	17	11.4%
Violence in lesbian relationship	15	9.4%
Children	15	9.4%
Sexual violence (abuse)	10	6.7%
Legal advice	7	4.7%
Mobbing at work	6	4.0%
Violence in family of choice	3	2.0%
Violence in public space	3	2.0%
Violence in neighbourhood	3	2.0%
Exclusion from gay and lesbian movement	1	0.7%

3.2.1.2 Family planning centres

Of the 28 family planning centres, 6 address lesbians explicitly (21%). Of these six counselling centres, only two have specific services for lesbian women (a group for gays, lesbians and bisexuals and a group for married lesbians). The remaining four organisations integrate lesbians in their general services. One organisation addresses lesbians explicitly in its sexual education.

A further 12 organisations do not address lesbians explicitly; 7 of them have never thought about it and five do not want to discriminate by addressing lesbians explicitly. The remaining 9 counselling centres did not answer this question.

2 out of 28 centres can refer to the specific competences of an openly lesbian colleague. One family planning centre that addresses lesbians explicitly and offers specific services does not consider this competence necessary. Another does not regard lesbian colleagues as necessary, but does not address lesbians in its public relations nor offer lesbian-specific services. A large majority of family planning

centres (79%) cannot refer to such a competence. It is clear that where there are lesbian counsellors, there also are lesbian-specific services.

12 out of 28 organisations (43%) want to be cited in a list of possible contact points for lesbian women, 15 do not want to and one organisation did not specify their stance. Those organisations not wanting to be cited in such a list generally explain this by not wanting to specialise and by not having an emphasis on working with lesbians and gays (53%). In addition, they do not have the necessary experience (20%) The remaining 27% did not specify their reasons.

EVALUATING THE UTILISATION

Most family planning organisations think that lesbians also use their services (72%). The remaining 8 services do not know or do not think so (14%, respectively). In only 2 of the 20 organisations stating to be frequented by lesbians, the contact with lesbian women is an everyday experience, i.e. more than 50 contacts per year are registered (10%). Regular contacts, i.e. from 11 to 50 contacts per year, do not exist; the rest has sporadic contacts, i.e. from one to ten contacts per year (40%). The remaining half does not register the sexual orientation of their clients and therefore cannot say how many lesbians really use their services.

12 out of 28 organisations think that also hidden lesbians use their services (43%), 21% do not think so, and 36% cannot assess this.

Table 3

	Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but do not tell you?			
		Yes	No	Don't know
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women use your services?	Yes	10	3	7
	No	1	1	2
	Don't know	2	1	1

The reasons why lesbians come to a family planning centres are:

- / relationship problems (24%)
- / isolation/loneliness (21%)
- / children (16%)
- / violence in family of origin (10%)
- / violence in lesbian relationship (7%)
- / legal advice (7%)
- / coming out (6%)
- / sexual violence (6%)
- / mobbing at work (2%)
- / violence in public (1%)

Violence in lesbian relationships and relationship problems often are cited together: a quarter of relationship problems concern violence in lesbian relationships.

3.2.1.3 General social services

Of 13 organisations in the field of general social services, 4 address lesbians explicitly in their public relations. A further 3 did not want to do so because they did not want to address any group explicitly. The remaining 6 organisations do not address lesbians. One of the four services organises a group for lesbian migrant women. In nearly half of the organisations work lesbians who could make available their specific competency if need be (46%). It seems paradox at first sight that the organisation addressing lesbians in its public relations and offering lesbian-specific services does not consider lesbian counsellors as necessary. In fact, this could be a first indication for a structural embodiment of the subject in the organisation.

Lesbians come to 7 of the 13 organisations; two services stated that lesbians did not frequent them, and 4 organisations did not answer the question. However, only one of these 7 organisations has regular contacts with lesbians, 4 only have sporadic contact and two do not have statistics on the subject. 3 out of 13 organisations presume that hidden lesbians might use their services, four do not think so, and three cannot assess this. The remaining three organisations did not answer this question.

Table 4

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but do not tell you?		
		Yes	No	Don't know
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women use your services?	Yes	3	1	3
	No	0	2	0
	Don't know	0	0	0

It is remarkable that none of the general social services specified reasons for the utilisation by lesbians. This could mean that the contacts that occur are not based on the grounds of sexual orientation of the women concerned but on their general situation.

3.2.1.4 Women counselling centres

Under the term "women counselling centres", we subsumed 10 women's organisations, emergency shelters for homeless women and organisations working on women and poverty. One of these organisations addresses lesbians explicitly in its public relations. 5 out of 10 organisations did never think that this might be necessary. Three rejected specific public relations with the explanation that they are accessible for all women. None of the organisations offers lesbian-specific services, but all refer to their general services and to the fact that "counselling on sexuality" did not belong to the organisation's priorities.

In addition, only 3 of the women counselling centres can refer to the specific competences of lesbian colleagues, five do not have openly lesbian colleagues of which two do not see the necessity and three only stated that they do not have any.

Nevertheless, 8 out of 10 organisations think that lesbian women frequent them; the contact occurs sporadically in general. One organisation does not register this and, therefore, cannot answer the question. Half of the women counselling centres think

that also hidden lesbians might use their services, two do not think so, two do not know and one did not answer the question.

3.2.1.5 Women's shelters

One of the five women's shelters addresses lesbians in its public relations. The other four organisations do not see the necessity, firstly because they never thought about it, and secondly because they do not want to do so, treating all women equally and being accessible to all of them.

There are no lesbian counsellors working in any of the answering shelters. Four of the five women's shelters do not want to be put on the list of potential contact points for lesbian women because lesbian women are not part of the target group and the work with lesbian women is not considered a task of the shelters. One organisation would not like to be subsumed under a general reference to violence but to "violence in relationships".

EVALUATING THE UTILISATION

Only two of the five shelters believe that their services are frequented by openly lesbian women. The contact only occurs sporadically. Three of the organisations think to be frequented by hidden lesbians, one does not think so, and another one did not know.

Table 5

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but do not tell you?		
		Yes	No	Don't know
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women use your services?	Yes	1	0	1
	No	3	0	0
	Don't know	0	0	0

As reasons for lesbians using their services, the shelters cited violence in their partnerships, violence in the family of origin and in one case legal advice.

3.2.2 Professional competence

3.2.2.1 General analysis

Only 18% of the organisations show a regular experience in counselling lesbians¹⁰; lesbians tend to mostly frequent family planning organisations and women's counselling centres. The remaining 78% have no or little experience with counselling lesbians (no experience 19%, little experience 56%). Further training plays an inferior

¹⁰ The confidence interval is 10% - 26%, N=85.

role in acquiring professional competences (8%)¹¹, as well as vocational training (2%)¹². The professions most likely to be found in the organisations are social worker, psychologist and jurist.

The proportion of the presence of openly lesbian colleagues in organisations is 15%. In women's shelters, however, there were no openly lesbian colleagues; neither were there in emergency shelters for homeless women nor in the police. The highest proportion is to be found in family planning centres (30%), followed by youth work (25%) and the general social services (15%).

The knowledge on female and male homosexuality comes mostly from

- / lesbian and gay publications (19.9%)
- / general newspapers and magazines (17.7%)
- / conversations with colleagues (12.7%)
- / conversations with friends (10.4%)
- / professional literature (9.5%)
- / television (9.5%)

6.8% of respondents stated to have insufficient knowledge in this field.

The knowledge does not go further than everyday knowledge. For example, 22% of respondents do not see a difference between the experience of violence of lesbians and gays. However, 22% of respondents do not perceive a difference between the experience of violence of lesbian and heterosexual women, either.

28% of respondents could not answer the question on differences between lesbians and gays due to a lack of knowledge, as well as 25% could not answer the question on differences between lesbian and heterosexual women. 8% do not see a structural difference between lesbians and gays or lesbian and heterosexual women because of the individualisation of the violent experience.

20% know about the different experiences of violence of lesbians and gays. The cited differences go from the structural embedding of violence in gender relations to the physical dominance of men. Therefore, gay men are said to live physical violence more often, or, on the contrary, they are more prone to be victims of structural violence. On the one hand, respondents think men to be more probably victims of violence; on the other they think it is lesbians. On the one hand, lesbians are thought to be socially more accepted than gays; on the other hand they think lesbians are more probably victims of violence. The range and contradiction of responses indicates that there is no standardised knowledge on the subject.

Nevertheless, 22% of organisations are convinced to be competent to counsel lesbians. Another 16% as a principle do not make referrals, which is partially due to their organisational structure. For example, it is not necessary in the case of an emergency shelter for homeless women. Only 8% of services refer to lesbian and gay organisations; in general, referrals are made to organisations comparable to one's own (41%). 55% of organisations have a database for referrals. Just over one

¹¹ The confidence interval is 4% - 11%, N=218.

¹² The confidence interval is 0% - 4%, N=218.

third of organisations collaborate with lesbian and gay organisations (36.5%), the remaining 63.5% do not.

3.2.2.2 Family planning centres

5 of the 28 family planning centres say to have a regular experience in counselling lesbian women (18%). The knowledge on differences in experiencing violence between lesbians and gays on the one hand and between heterosexual and lesbian women on the other hand does not go further than everyday knowledge. This is particularly obvious in the broad range of answers: 9 out of 28 family planning centres did not know about differences between lesbians and gays, and 6 said that there weren't any. The remaining 13 family planning centres see a possible difference in gender relations, or in the supposition that lesbians are more accepted than gays, gays live more physical violence or on the other hand more structural violence. One organisation stated that experiences of violence are always individual. 5 organisations do not see a difference in experiencing violence between lesbian and heterosexual women, 9 do not know. The remaining 18 organisations see the difference above all in the lack of social acceptance of lesbian women and the related risk to live violence. Two family planning centres believe in the individuality of violent experiences, and another three see a difference without specifying it.

10 out of 28 organisations refer their clients to other organisations if necessary, but only 2 of them also refer them to lesbian and gay organisations. The remaining 18 organisations do not see the necessity to refer and therefore seek counselling in-house. After all, 8 out of 28 organisations would participate in further training, but the remaining 20 would not. Two of these family planning centres think that training is not necessary because they refer the client to another service anyway. 6 organisations think to be competent for the counselling of lesbians already, another 7 do not perceive the necessity, and three organisations do not think that it is their task to counsel lesbians. One organisation thinks that such further training is too specific, and another one already participates regularly in training and therefore does not deem additional training necessary.

Half of the family planning centres does not have a database for referral (50%). 43% have an interdisciplinary index, one only has addresses of other family planning centres and one did not answer the question. In general, referrals are not made to lesbian and gay organisations.

3.2.2.3 General social services

Only 2 of the 13 organisations of general social services have a regular experience in counselling lesbians. In one organisation, this even is part of everyday life. In general, this only presents a sporadic counselling contact, which is the case for 6 organisations. One organisation has not yet counselled a lesbian. The remaining 3 organisations have not answered the question.

6 out of 13 general social services do not know if there are differences in the experience of violence of lesbians and gays. Only two organisations see differences due to the gender relations. The remaining organisations did not answer this question. As concerns a possible difference in the experience of violence of lesbian and heterosexual women, 5 organisations did not answer, one does not see a difference, 5 do not know and the remaining two organisations see a difference in compulsory heterosexuality ("fuck to make you hetero") and the related alleged abnormality of lesbian women.

Only 4 out of 13 organisations would participate in further training, 3 did not answer this question. The refusal is explained with the statement that lesbians would not need other help than heterosexual people and that there is no demand. Two of the organisations already participate regularly in training and therefore do not deem it necessary.

8 out of 13 organisations have an interdisciplinary database for referral; in general, they do not refer to lesbian and gay organisations but to services comparable to themselves. Generally, there are no contacts to lesbian and gay organisations.

3.2.2.4 Women counselling centres

Under the term "women counselling centres", we subsumed women's organisations, emergency shelters for homeless women and organisations working on women and poverty. 3 of the ten organisations having answered the questionnaire have a regular experience in counselling lesbian women. The majority (6 organisations) only has sporadic contact; one even does not have any contact at all.

One of the organisations does not see a difference in the experience of violence of lesbians and gays, 5 do not know and two did not answer the question. The remaining two organisations see a difference in the question of committing violence and being a perpetrator: One organisation thinks that lesbians are mostly victims of psychological forms of violence, and another one believes that perpetrators are, above all, male ex-partners.

2 organisations do not think that there is a difference between lesbian and heterosexual women when experiencing violence, three did not know. Those women counselling centres that see a difference think that it lies above all in the taboo of lesbian lifestyles and in the larger extent of psychological violence against lesbians. One organisation did not answer the question. In spite of this lack of knowledge, only one organisation wants to participate in further training. Five organisations do not perceive the necessity, one thinks to be competent to counsel lesbian women, and three organisations refuse further training without explanation.

Two of the women counselling centres do always do the counselling themselves, 5 refer to other women counselling centres if necessary, and no one refers lesbian clients to lesbian and/or gay organisations. A database for referrals only exists in 6 out of 10 organisations; of these, only three have an interdisciplinary database, and three only have a database with addresses of comparable organisations.

3.2.3 Attitudes of counsellors

3.2.3.1 General analysis

In general, respondents reject a differentiated, target group-specific, i.e. lesbian-specific approach in counselling. The reasons given are that violence is an individual or subjective experience. A differentiation would reinforce sexist stereotypes and stigmatisation - a differentiation would be discriminatory. A significant difference between organisations is not visible.

Most of the organisations cannot rely on the competence of openly lesbian colleagues (85%). Of these organisations, 16% do not see the necessity. In 15% of organisations work lesbian counsellors with their specific competence, which is the case relatively more often in women-specific organisations. However, this does not correlate to the attitude towards the lesbian-specific approach.

Because of this approach, it is only consequent that in total only 15% of organisations would participate in further training on this topic¹³. 19% did not answer the question. The remaining 66% explain their negative answer as follows:

- / 48% do not perceive the necessity or demand;
- / 20% feel competent to counsel lesbian women;
- / 16% reject the approach because the experience of violence is individual and a differentiation would be discriminatory;
- / 5% do not have the necessary capacity;
- / one organisation has another focal point of work (2%);
- / 9% do not explain their stance.

The answers on professional competence also make obvious the ambiguity between on the one hand the "homogenisation of homosexuality" and on the other hand the "individualisation of violence".

In general, organisations refuse further training because of the lesbian-specific approach. Only in one case, there is a definitely negative attitude: this concerns a family planning organisation that thinks that homosexuality could lead to "aggressive impulses". Another family planning centre realizes societal relations, "sexual identity can lead to violent reactions", but does not integrate this in its approach. The existing knowledge in this organisation is closely linked to the presence of a lesbian counsellor.

3.2.3.2 Family planning centres

¹³ The confidence interval is 8% - 23%, N=85.

Of 28 family planning centres, 6 address lesbian women explicitly in their public relations. Those organisations that do not do so in general have not thought about it or don't want to address any social group explicitly. Two of the organisations state clearly that this differentiation would be discriminatory, and the organisation would only participate in further training if it concerned homosexuality in general. One organisation puts the responsibility indirectly on homosexuals by stating: "homosexuality leads to violent impulses". This exonerates the perpetrator because violence is a drive reaction and the homosexual is responsible for what happens. Another organisation levels violence by writing that "violence is always of discriminatory nature". Another family planning organisation sees a link between violent experiences as a child and the lesbian lifestyle. Socio-political aspects remain unnoticed.

3.2.3.3 General social services

4 of the 13 organisations of general social services address lesbians explicitly in their public relations. Those without this reference in general do not wish a specific approach to any social group. Four of the 13 organisations would participate in further training. Three did not answer, and the remaining 6 did not want to participate. Their refusal is explained with the stance that lesbians would not need different help from heterosexual people and therefore there was no need for training. Two of the organisations participate regularly in general further training and therefore do not see the necessity of specific training. Lesbian counsellors work only in two organisations, which does not translate in a better understanding of the specific situation of lesbian women.

3.2.3.4 Women counselling centres

One of the women counselling centres addresses lesbians explicitly in its public relations. Three refuse a specific public relations work with the reason that they are accessible for all women. None of the organisations offers lesbian-specific services, but they refer to their general services and to the fact that "counselling on sexuality" is not one of their priorities. Only one organisation would participate in further training, seven do not see the necessity and two feel competent to counsel lesbian women. One of the women counselling centres not wanting further training said that its priorities lie elsewhere.

3.2.4 Interpretation

The data allow the conclusion that, in general, social services and the police do not see the necessity to differentiate experiences of violence. In addition, counsellors in social services do not reflect their attitude possibly influenced by prejudices towards homosexuality and the lesbian lifestyle. For this reason, they do not see the necessity to work on these topics or to address their lesbian clients directly. A differentiation

concerning various social groups is rather perceived as discriminatory. At the same time, the social organisations do not have regular counselling contacts with openly lesbian women. In general, these contacts only are sporadic. Therefore, we can conclude that lesbian women do not look for help in these organisations or, if they do so, they address their sexual orientation only in consequence of the counselling situation. As lesbians remain invisible as clients, the organisations do not see the demand for further training or even the necessity to reflect their allegedly discrimination-free approach.

Furthermore, there is no obvious negative or positive correlation between the frequency of contacts and the explicit addressing lesbians in public relations. This might be due to the social position of lesbians and gays. In Belgium, the lesbian and gay movement is not very strong, there is a lack of a strong counterpart who would call for social changes and promote a broad sensitisation. These deficits are present on both linguistic sides. As a consequence, only few organisations refer to lesbian and gay organisations. This is due to the estimation that this is not necessary, and, on the other hand, to the lack of infrastructure in lesbian and gay organisations. Even inside the lesbian and gay subculture, a lesbian-specific approach is rather seen as separatism and as contradiction to the politics of mainstreaming. Most of the homosexual organisations are so-called "holebi" organisations that do not deem necessary any further differentiation.

For lesbian victims of violence, the structural deficit means that they cannot expect assistance in any organisation of which they could always be sure to receive competent advice and not to be discriminated. To reduce the risk of a further victimisation, lesbian victims have to examine the counselling organisation step by step on its trustworthiness and to hope to meet a hidden or openly lesbian counsellor who is capable to empathise. This can only be changed through the structural embodiment of the topic in the vocational training of counsellors in social services.

3.3 GERMANY

The data are analysed according to type of service and to the criteria public relations/assessment of utilisation, professional competence and staff attitude.

3.3.1 VICTIM ASSISTANCE OFFICES

58 victim assistance offices in Germany were contacted, 17 of them answered, which amounts to a participation of 29%.

3.3.1.1 VISIBILITY/ASSESSMENT OF USE

No victim assistance office addresses lesbian women explicitly in its public relations. The reason for this is in 65% of the answers that the victim assistance offices work with a crime-oriented approach, i.e. that they focus on the offence, and therefore, any differentiation of victims becomes unnecessary. The remaining 35% did not answer the question. As the focus is on intentional offences, the offices do not see any necessity to use the potential competences of a lesbian colleague. In most of the victim assistance offices, there are no lesbian employees who would be available as contact persons (69%). The remaining 31% did not answer this question.

However, the majority (59%) of victim assistance offices would like to be listed in the database of potential contact points. The reason indicated for this is mostly that victim assistance offices are open to all victims of intentional offences, i.e. that they do not specialise in any particular population groups. For the same reason, one office does **not** want to be mentioned as a target group-specific service.

In total, 41% of the offices do not want to be listed in the directory of possible contact points for affected lesbians, again for the reason of a lack of specialisation on particular target groups. The same argument therefore leads to different conclusions. Because of the dominant crime-oriented approach of the victim assistance offices, question 8 could not be taken into account for the identification of lesbian-specific services. Consequential to the argumentation of victim assistance offices, the existing services (e.g. psycho-social counselling, practical assistance, information transfer) are open to all persons looking for advice.

ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

Table 6:

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but did not say so?		
Question 3:		Yes	No	Don't know
Do openly lesbian women come to your office?	Yes	1	1	0
	No	2	2	0
	Don't know	1	2	7

Most of the victim assistance offices are unable to assess if openly or secretly lesbian women made use of their services. This assessment reflects the approach that the psychosexual identity of victims is irrelevant.

3.3.1.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Criteria for professional competence are, among others, specific professional knowledge, the readiness to further training, counselling experience, the existence of a referral database and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Two victim assistance offices did not answer the question where they acquired their knowledge on homosexuality. Another one states that knowledge on homosexuality is generally unnecessary for their work. The remaining offices indicate 38 possibilities, i.e. on average, they list two to three knowledge sources. Nearly half (46%) of the respondents obtain their knowledge from a media combination of newspapers, magazines and television. Half of this group say that homosexuality is a topic in their circle of friends.

Only three of the responding services received some further training in the form of special conferences or working groups, one colleague having personal motives (her own homosexuality). In one single case, homosexuality was a subject during professional training (social pedagogy).

The question of specific knowledge on violence against lesbians, concerning lesbians' and gays' different experiences of violence and discrimination, could not be answered by a quarter (24%) of respondents. A further quarter does not see any difference of violent and discrimination experiences of lesbians and gays. 52% see a difference, one half of them thinking that gays are more stigmatised and more

affected by physical violence than lesbians. One quarter also sees differences in relation to forms of violence, distress and contacts, without explaining this any further.

35% of respondents was unable to answer the question of specific knowledge concerning lesbian and heterosexual women's different experiences of violence and discrimination. Another 24% do not see any difference. 41% see a difference, mainly bringing forward that lesbians are more affected by violence and discrimination and become more often victims outside of their homes (57%). The remaining respondents did not give an explicit differentiation.

Only two out of 17 offices affirm the necessity of target group-specific further training. The reason for the preponderant rejection (88%) is the victim assistance offices' approach: Their focus is on having become victim of an intentional felony. As a principle, a differentiation of victims is rejected. Furthermore, there is no demand, and women seeking assistance can always introduce their point of view into the counselling situation.

Nearly a third (31%) of victim assistance offices have a referral database containing addresses of other organisations within 50 km. Only two of these offices include lesbian and gay organisations, whereas the others list other victim assistance offices or services. 66% of victim assistance offices do not have a referral database. One office has information material on violence against gays on display, but not on violence against lesbians.

The presence of a referral database does not allow conclusions on the actual referral practice: 59% do refer to other services if necessary, 41% do not. Of the offices having a referral database, 60% refer to other services, 40% do not. Of the offices without such a database, more than half (55%) refer to other services. Referrals take place on the explicit demand, mainly to other victim assistance offices. Of the 59% of offices practising referral, nearly a third (30%) also refers to women-specific services like women's shelters, hotlines or centres. Cooperation with lesbian services does not exist. However, two offices cooperate with gay and lesbian organisations, for instance with the assault hotline for gays in Berlin and the gay and lesbian assault hotlines in North Rhine Westphalia. This means that in 88% of the cases, there is no cooperation; one office did not answer the question.

3.3.1.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

In 71% of the victim assistance offices, there is strong rejection of a differentiated, victim-specific approach and of further training on violence and discrimination against lesbians and approaches to psycho-social care for lesbians. 12% of victim assistance offices are undecided, i.e. they behave ambivalently. 17% of victim assistance offices are open and express the wish for further training.

The rejection is justified with the victim assistance offices' approach that clients have to be victims of intentional offences. A differentiation or special treatment could lead to stigmatisation or could reinforce it.

3.3.1.4 INTERPRETATION

In Germany, there are different victim assistance organisations: on the one hand, victim and witness assistance on the level of the judiciary, and on the other hand free victim assistance offices. The best known and most common of them is Weisser Ring (White Ring). Other victim assistance offices work relatively on their own, some are organised in the work group of victim assistance of the Federal Republic (ado). ado exists since 1988; some organisations "assisting and counselling victims of anti-

homosexual violence”, like the gay assault hotline Mann-o-Meter e.V. in Berlin, are member.

The work of victim assistance offices is based on a penologic definition of violence and victim: The target group consists of the victims of criminal offences. Anyone being victim of an intentional offence is considered victim. In general, a differentiation of victims (by origin, sexual orientation etc.) is not considered necessary because the focus is on the criminal offence. A careful consideration of the questionnaires and the way in which they were answered suggested that the question of a target group-specific approach was understood as an attack on the victim assistance offices. Correspondingly, some questionnaires were barred as a whole, with large letters saying “We are a non-profit association that helps exclusively victims of criminal offences. (of course also lesbians if they are victims of intentional offences!)” In one conversation with the branch office of Weisser Ring in Mainz, it became clear as well that further training on the situations of different population groups are considered as unnecessary because appropriate behaviour was a question of the voluntary counsellors’ good manners.

Most of the victim assistance offices feel professionally competent and refer to other services only if the client expresses an explicit demand. Often, they claim an exclusivity of services without meeting the needs and necessities of the people concerned. In the worst case, this fatal self-assessment of victim assistance offices is to the detriment of their clients.

3.3.2 POLICE

The return rate of questionnaires sent to police head offices is difficult to record statistically, as in four provinces (Bundesländer), questionnaires were forwarded to and answered by superior institutions: the Ministries of the Interior of Schleswig-Holstein and of Thuringia, and the criminal investigation offices of the Land of Rhineland-Palatinate and of Hamburg. Three of the four provinces (with the exception of Hamburg) do not have contact officers for lesbians and gays in their police force. The responses were recorded one by one, even if they represent provinces. The return rate was 36.5%.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, there is no police contact person for lesbians and gays. The competent office in the case of violence against lesbians is K2 (violence against children and women) of the respective criminal investigation office within the police head offices of Mainz, Koblenz, Rheinpfalz, Westpfalz and Trier.

The Bavarian police does not have a contact officer for lesbians and gays either. The competent office is the bureau for behaviour-based prevention and victim protection. The State of Thuringia does not have contact officers either. According to a parliamentary inquiry by the PDS faction on the situation of lesbian and gay people in Thuringia, May 2001, the Land government does not see the necessity to “establish a contact partner for homosexual lifestyles at the Thuringian police”.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, there are no contact persons at the police head offices of Schleswig-Holstein South and North. The police parson, Susanne Hansen, has initiated a group for homosexual men and women in the police force that meets sporadically.

3.3.2.1 VISIBILITY/ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

According to the perceptions of police offices, only few openly lesbian women go to the police for counselling or other assistance services in relation to anti-lesbian violence and/or discrimination. In general, one cannot assess accurately if and how

many lesbians ask for police advice – the more so as there also is the possibility of anonymous counselling by phone. Only one police head office has regular experience with the counselling of lesbians. All others have very little or no experience at all. The police contact officers do not have experiences with secretly lesbian women because they consequently do not address these officers.

68% of police bureaus do not address lesbians in their public relations. The reason that they give is that when reporting something to the police, the personal lifestyle is irrelevant (35%). In the other cases, respondents cite as reason for a lack of public relations that the LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation Germany) has services for victims of anti-gay violence, that there is no lesbian colleague, that there are no such incidents known and that, after all, the private sphere has to be protected. 13% of respondents did not give a reason.

If lesbians are targeted by the police' public relations efforts, this is mainly done by establishing a so-called contact officer (64%). In several police head offices (Frankfurt/M, Wiesbaden, Hamburg, Cologne, Aachen, Rheinsberg), there are female contact officers. A further possibility is to put information material on display (36%).

In most cases, the police cannot rely on the professional and/or personal competence of lesbian colleagues (83%). This has to be ascribed mainly to the fact that the majority of lesbian police officers does not out their lifestyle at the workplace. In addition, some do not consider it necessary to rely on this competence (11%). There seems to be a correlation between the presence of a contact officer and the exchange of experiences with lesbian colleagues: more than half (57%) of contact officers can rely on the professional and personal competence of their lesbian colleagues. In general, they consider this as an enrichment of their personal experience. Furthermore, such an exchange contributes, under professional-organisational aspects, to an optimal cooperation between lesbians and the police.

One possibility for public relations is to be listed in a database of possible contact points for lesbians affected by violence: 32% of police head offices want to use this opportunity. Yet, there is no correlation visible between the presence of a contact officer and the wish to be listed, i.e. just a little more than half of the contact officers (57%) want to be listed, the remaining 43% do not. In addition, there is no correlation between provided public relations and the listing in the database: 55% of police head offices with lesbian-specific public relations want to use the opportunity of such a database. 17% of police head offices which do not (yet) address lesbians in their public relations want to make use of this possibility.

The reasons for not wanting to be listed in the database are numerous: 15% of respondents cite a lack of decision-making competence, 5% say they are contact points anyway, and 10% do not want or cannot be a specific contact point for lesbians or cannot provide appropriate service. The large majority, however, did not give any reasons (70%).

ASSESSMENT OF USE

Table 7

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but did not say so?		
Question 3:		Yes	No	Don't know
Do openly lesbian	Yes	8	4	4
	No	1	2	5

women come to your office?	Don't know	6	1	7
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It is clear that most of respondent police head offices have already had contact with lesbian women and suspect that not each one announces her psychosexual identity. Many cannot estimate if openly or secretly lesbian women reported violence or came to the police for other forms of support.

3.3.2.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

27 police head offices answered the question of their professional knowledge. As knowledge sources, they cite 3 possibilities on average: literature (21%), further training (21%) and publications by lesbian and gay organisations (16%). Other sources are magazine articles (15%), talks among friends and television broadcasts (9% each), exchange among colleagues (8%), personal experiences (5%), subject in vocational training (3%) and 2% through contact on the spot, i.e. with affected lesbians.

All respondents answered the question of specific knowledge on violent experiences of gays in comparison to gays. More than one third (37%) confirm their lack of knowledge (no experience, no idea, not known). As possible differences are cited that gays are more affected by physical violence than lesbians (26%). The reason they give for this assumption is that lesbians do not affirm their "being different" in public and gays are more often in public and do announce their being gay more often. In addition, criminal statistics indicate a higher violent potential in men. Gays are victims of violent offences by other gays and non-gays, whereas lesbians are more tolerated in society and therefore become less often victims of violent offences. A further 11% did not answer the question with arguments, but affirmed it. The remaining 14% do not see any difference between violent experiences of lesbians and gays.

34 out of 35 offices answered the question on different violent experiences of lesbian and heterosexual women. Nearly a third (32%) say to have a lack of knowledge (no awareness, not known, no experience). The assumed difference that is cited most often is that lesbians are considered so-called "normal deviants", their sexual identity is not socially accepted and therefore, in addition to misogynist violence, they experience assaults on their lesbian lifestyle (21%). A further 6% affirms the question without further explanations.

On the other hand, a considerable proportion thinks that lesbians are not as often victims of male violence as heterosexual women because they do not live with men (12%).

Nearly a fifth of respondents (18%) do not see a difference. The problem is practically the same on the level of police work; only on the individual level of coping are differences, not on the structural level. Another respondent says that this question cannot be answered globally. Three respondents (9%) refer only to violence in lesbian relationships: there, violence occurs less often because it is mainly men being violent, and in the case of lesbians, the perpetrator would be a woman.

A so-called referral database enables officers to refer individual persons to other competent services. Most police head offices do not have a referral database (78%). Those having such a database cite as examples AIDS organisations, a list of further contact persons within the police or general counselling services. As was ascertained in the case of the victim assistance offices, the referral behaviour does not relate to

the referral database. Even if most of police head offices do not have a database, nearly all of them refer victims to other organisations (92%). These can be grouped in six categories:

- / general victim assistance offices, e.g. Weisser Ring or Caritas (38%),
- / women-specific counselling centres (28%),
- / gay counselling centres (3%),
- / lesbian and gay counselling centres (9%),
- / lesbian counselling centres (19%) and
- / AIDS organisations (3%).

69% of respondents answered the question on the necessity of further training on this subject. 46% of them consider target group-specific training unnecessary. The reasons for the irrelevance of further training are:

- / no necessity (36%),
- / the existing training is sufficient (9%),
- / the existing knowledge is sufficient (9%),
- / sexual identity is irrelevant (9%) and
- / no further explanation (27%).

The affirmation of the remaining 54% has the following reasons:

- / further training leads to a better understanding (29%),
- / the police is also responsible for lesbians (14%),
- / further training facilitates networking (7%),
- / need for information (43%) and
- / no further explanation (17%).

All police head offices considering further training necessary also would participate in such a training. Among those offices which principally saw no need, 36% would participate anyway. The remaining 64% consequently would not participate in further training.

3.3.2.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

32 out of 35 police head offices provided sufficient information for measuring their attitude. 49% of police head offices do not dismiss a victim-specific approach and the need for specific psycho-social assistance for lesbians. As reasons for the rejection of this approach, respondents cite the lopsided view of the concept (“subject is considered very lopsided”), the responsibility of victims (“I myself live openly as a lesbian and have only made positive experiences professionally. Because if you do not have problems with it or make some out of it, then the other does not have them either!!”) and “the tendency of gays and lesbians to ascribe each negative experience to their homosexuality”. Further reasons for a negative attitude are too little call for action, the police’s sole competence and sufficient knowledge of the gay subculture (“I know how things work in the gay subculture and it won’t be that different among lesbians.”).

An indifferent attitude characterises 28% of police head offices. Evidence for this is a lack of professional knowledge with a simultaneous desire for further training. There is also some empathy when respondents express their wish to understand better. 21% of police head offices show a positive attitude to this subject. They express this in a target group-specific public relations work, the wish for better understanding, the reflection of their own sexual identity and, if necessary, the referral to specific organisations.

3.3.2.4 INTERPRETATION

One of the bigger problems was that the questionnaire was not specifically made for police bureaus but more for social services. Nevertheless, it was possible to examine the criteria of visibility, professional competence and attitude.

It seems that in Germany, the practice of establishing police contact officers for lesbians and gays is winning recognition. Most contact officers heed this task next to their regular police work. Often, the contact officers are not only contact persons for lesbian and gay victims of violence, but also for lesbian and gay colleagues. In few cases, the choice of officer is based on professional requirements, like e.g. a job description. In general, specific knowledge is not considered as relevant for the job. The little existing knowledge refers to the situation of gays. There is a strong tendency towards levelling and individualisation. The societal conditions for certain experiences of violence and discrimination are mainly ignored. Statements that would fit perfectly in the daily environment as slogans from the regulars' table have their place there ("I know how things work in the gay subculture and it won't be that different among lesbians."). A lack of knowledge and empathy lead to statements like "If you don't have a problem with it, then the other won't either!!" or "Both groups tend to ascribe each negative experience to their homosexuality". In the worst case, the cat is trusted to keep the cream: both statements came from contact officers, one of them even an open lesbian.

Still, the topic of "lesbian and gay lifestyles" has not yet achieved its fix place in vocational training. To acquire professional competence, one has to make use of further training. This requires personal engagement which is expressed in the attitude that more knowledge could lead to more empathy and, at the end of the day, to a better relation between lesbians and the police. The (repeated) participation in further training, however, is no guarantee that it makes participants understand the aspects of lesbian life. Many training modules seem to focus on the situation of male homosexuals under whom lesbians are subsumed if need be ("... it won't be that different with lesbians"). The statement that further training is not necessary because the police is responsible anyhow makes it clear that lesbians do not have much choice if they want to report and prosecute an assault. The threshold to actually report an incident is set very high because of police attitude and explains why the estimated number of unknown violent incidents against lesbians is at 90%.

The police approach of defining violence primarily as a felony according to criminal law is understandable. The enlargement of the concept of violence that lesbian experts call for is based on a social-psychological approach that societal conditions can promote individual behaviour and that a social deduction explaining why certain population groups are more often targets of violence and discrimination than others is possible. A penologic limitation of the concept of victim makes sense in the practical work as far as it concerns work with perpetrators, but not with victims. In relation to the police's victim-specific work it should go without saying that victims are referred to other organisations that can offer other forms of assistance, even if it is not a criminally relevant offence that occurred.

3.3.3 FAMILY PLANNING CENTRES

358 family planning centres in Germany were contacted, 222 in Hesse, 86 in Berlin and 50 in Saxony-Anhalt. 78 centres participated in the survey, which means a return rate of 21.8%, 20 from Berlin, 42 from Hesse, 12 from Saxony-Anhalt and four others.

3.3.3.1 VISIBILITY/ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

9 (12%) of family planning centres address lesbians explicitly in their public relations via folders, posters, e.g. with the description “open for people of all sexual orientations” and via their services like workshops in schools and sexual pedagogy. 66 (86%) of the centres do not explicitly address lesbians.¹⁴ The most frequent reason cited is that they never thought of this possibility (17; 22%). 13 organisations (17%) treat everybody equal and therefore do not address lesbians explicitly; 8 (10%) do not specialise, and for a further 8 (10%) of the centres, addressing lesbians is not part of the organisation’s tasks. 6 centres (8%) do not see the necessity.

“We are open for all adults, independently of their religion, nationality or sex. Orientation. I suppose, however, that our doorplate (organisation of the deaconry) puts the threshold for homosexuals to enter our centre rather high; therefore, we do not have many of those clients.” (additional remark)

8 organisations (10%)¹⁵ can rely on the specific capacities of openly lesbian employees. They cite the good empathy of employees, the integration of the topic into the social pedagogic work and the aspect of networking. 56 (72%) of family planning organisations do not have openly lesbian employees.

32 organisations (41%) would like to list their address in a database, partially with reservations (e.g. the clients are exclusively young people; parents; as first-line contact point). 40 organisations (51%) do not want to be listed. As reason, they cite that they are not specialised enough, that they do not have any services for lesbians, that they have other main focal points in their work and would only refer them further.

ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

Openly lesbian women frequent 45 (58%) organisations¹⁶. 7 (9%) of the centres do not take a stance on this question, 26 organisations (33%) do not have lesbian clients. 11 out of 45 family planning organisations say that they do not record the sexual orientation (24%). 18 (40%) of the centres were visited sporadically by lesbians during the last year, 11 organisations (24%) had regular contact, and only 2 centres attend to lesbians on a day-to-day basis. In addition, 36 organisations (46%) suspect that lesbian women call on them without announcing their sexual orientation, 16 (21%) do not know, and 21 (27%) are sure that there were no secretly lesbian women in their centre during the last year.

In counselling, lesbian women brought up the following topics most frequently: relation/separation problems (37; 47%), followed by coming out (20; 26%), desire to have children (16; 21%), violence (44 mentions), in particular in the family of origin (15; 19%), sexual violence (10; 13%), violence in lesbian relationships (5; 6%); but also educational problems (9; 12%). So lesbian women make use of the broad range of services in family planning centres, but they also come with specifically lesbian topics, like coming out.

3.3.3.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Only 7 (9%)¹⁷ family planning organisations have a regular experience with counselling for lesbian women. 66 organisations (85%) do not have any experiences, or it is more of an exception.

¹⁴ The confidence interval is 77%-93%, N=78

¹⁵ The confidence interval is 4%-17%, N=78

¹⁶ The confidence interval is 47%-69%, N=78

¹⁷ The confidence interval is 3%-15%, N=78

9 family planning centres (12%) indicate that they have hardly any information on lesbian lifestyles. Most of the others rely mainly on literature (49; 63%), newspaper articles (37; 47%) and television broadcasts (25; 32%) as information sources. Only in 13 organisations (17%), employees dealt with the subject of homosexuality during their vocational training; 37 (47%) can make use of the exchange of experiences between colleagues in the team, and 16 (21%) participated in specific symposiums and workshops as forms of further training.

29 centres (37%) have a referral database, 44 (56%) do not. However, referrals take place rather on the same level (psycho-social services); only 6 (8%) have an address list with lesbian/gay specific organisations.

Accordingly, 20 family planning organisations (13%) refer lesbian women with violent experiences to general counselling services and victim assistance offices; 8 centres (5%) refer them to lesbian organisations and two (1%) to lesbian and gay organisations. However, in the case of violence, 28 family planning centres (19%) refer lesbians to women-specific organisations, in particular in the field of anti-violence, e.g. rape crisis hotlines and women's shelters. Very often, lesbians are referred to Wildwasser. Only two organisations refer lesbians to legal counsels. The perspective of family planning organisations seems to be focussed more on the psychological consequences of violence than on legal aspects.

Only 15 family planning organisations (19%)¹⁸ cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, without explaining any further how this cooperation is put into practice. A cooperation can consist in professional exchange of experiences, in the joint participation in communal committees, the joint organisation of events or an (accompanied) referral.

Only 22 family planning centres (28%) consider further training on the situation of lesbian women necessary. They expect of further training: better understanding (5 mentions) and more knowledge on life situations (12 mentions). 47 family planning centres (60%) do not see any necessity for further training. As reasons, they cite a lack or too little demand by lesbians (30 mentions). Four centres are convinced that their existing knowledge is sufficient, and two organisations take the equity view according to which lesbians do not need special treatment.

33 respondents (42%) would participate in further training, 31 (39%) would not. The reason for this is, again, the too little demand by lesbian clients (21 mentions).

3.3.3.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

Only 8 (10%) out of 78 responding family planning centres address lesbian women. These 8 organisations consist of 2 centres in Berlin, 4 in Hesse, one in Saxony-Anhalt, and one could not be attributed. The geographical distribution leads to the conclusion that, independently of the Land (Eastern/Western Germany, city State/rural Land), about 10% of responding organisations address lesbians explicitly in their work. The same 8 organisations feature specific reference on lesbians, professional knowledge on violence against lesbians and a comprehensive referral database. Three of the 8 organisations cooperate with lesbian or lesbian and gay projects. Among the 8 organisations, three belong to Pro Familia, which take an open, sexual pedagogical approach including different sexual identities.

4 of the responding organisations (5%) expressed a clearly negative attitude:

"Please take us from your address list because there are no links. Thank you and regards."

¹⁸ The confidence interval is 11%-28%, N=78

“We are a classical counselling service for education, i.e. parents contact us for educational problems, and not as individuals without children to the end of lifestyle counselling.”

Both citations show clearly that in these organisations, there has been no reflection on the living situation of lesbian women. They do not know that there are many links and that, for instance, lesbians can also be mothers who would like to contact a counselling service for education. These organisations are not prepared to reflect on the status of lesbians, which is also indicated by their refusal to fill in the questionnaire.

Between affirmation and rejection, there is a large area in the middle. The organisations in this area do not address lesbians explicitly for diverse reasons, but express their openness for those who contact the organisation. In spite of the assumed openness, there is a relatively large ignorance, e.g. of difficulties with announcing publicly (or within an organisation) to be lesbian. The integration of lesbian or gay (probably also bisexual and transgender) identities is not tied to the concept of most family planning organisations. It rather depends on the engagement of individual employees if these topics are addressed, if qualification takes place and which networks are created.

3.3.3.4 INTERPRETATION

Many family planning centres think that lesbian women do not use their services and therefore they do not see the necessity to provide appropriate services. The “effort would not be worthwhile” to develop a specific service and to maintain quality standards (competences, further training etc.). Equally, the under-average return rate of 21.8% indicates that family planning centres do not consider lesbians as target group for their work.

In particular in psycho-social professions, vocational training shows a deficiency as regards lesbian lifestyles. Nevertheless, the development of a psychosexual identity, independently of being heterosexual or homosexual, plays an important part in therapy and counselling. In this area, there are substantial deficits.

3.3.4 WOMEN COUNSELLING SERVICES, WOMEN HOTLINES

For the analysis, it seemed useful to put together women counselling services and women hotlines because often, women hotlines are attached to women counselling services. 95 out of 251 organisations receiving our questionnaire responded, which amounts to a proportion of 37.8%.

3.3.4.1 VISIBILITY/ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

The majority of women counselling centres and hotlines (56%) explicitly address lesbians in their public relations.¹⁹ In general (98%), this is done through specific services, like partner counselling, self-help groups, events as well as an inclusive language use, for instance: “we are open for all women, independently of their sexual orientation”. In 2% of the counselling centres there are lesbian contact persons.

44% of organisations do not address lesbians in their public relations. In 56% of cases, the reason is to target “all women and girls affected by violence”, 21% did never think about it, 9% think it is not necessary, and 5% are afraid that explicitly addressing lesbians would provoke homophobic reactions. 7% of organisations do

¹⁹ The confidence interval is 46%-66%, N=95

not focus on lesbians, and one organisation in a rural area refers lesbians to the city nearby.

More than half of the organisations (59%) can rely on the competence of lesbian employees. Those organisations not doing this in general do not have any lesbian employees (92%) or do not consider it necessary (8%).

ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

Table 8

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but did not say so?			
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women come to your office?		Yes	No	Don't know	No answer
	Yes	39	15	19	1
	No	5	6	0	4
	Don't know	2	1	2	1
	No answer	0	0	0	0

41% of women counselling centres and hotlines assume that openly as well as secretly lesbian women make use of their organisation. 16% think that only openly lesbian women use the organisation, and 20% assume that there are lesbian clients, but cannot say if there are also secretly lesbian clients coming to their organisation. In 5 organisations (5%), there have not been any openly lesbian clients, but the organisations think that secretly lesbian women have already contacted the service. 6 organisations think that they had neither openly nor secretly lesbian clients. The large majority of women counselling centres and hotlines has lesbian clients (81%), 5% of organisations don't know, and only 14% seem not to be frequented by lesbians at all.

There appears to be a direct correlation between lesbian-specific public relations and the frequency of lesbian clients: all organisations attending to lesbian clients on a day-to-day basis (more than 50 contacts per year) address lesbians explicitly in their public relations. 81% of the organisations having regular contact with lesbians (11 – 50 times per year) equally have a target group-specific approach, as well as 69% of organisations having only sporadic contact with lesbians (1 – 10 contacts per year).

Lesbians contact women counselling centres and hotlines for the following reasons (incl. contacts by phone):

- / 15.9%, sexual violence
- / 9.9%, violence in the family of origin
- / 8.7%, relationship and separation problems
- / 8.6%, violence in the neighbourhood
- / 8.1%, coming out
- / 7.5%, violence at the workplace
- / 7.5%, other psychological problems
- / 7.1%, violence in lesbian relationships
- / 6.8%, violence in the public sphere
- / 6.5%, isolation and loneliness
- / 5.5%, information on legal problems
- / 4.1%, violence within the circle of friends
- / 1.2%, looking for contacts

/ 0.8%, desire for networking
/ 0.3%, drug abuse
/ 0.3%, transgender.

3.3.4.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

93 out of 95 women counselling centres and hotlines answer the question on the experience with counselling. 10% of organisations counsel lesbians on a day-to-day basis, 28% have regular contact with lesbians. Nearly half of the women counselling centres and hotlines has only sporadic contact (48%) or no contact at all (14%)

7.3% of organisations did not answer the question on differences between lesbians' and gays' experience of violence. Another 16.7% cannot answer the question due to a lack of knowledge, and 5.2% do not see any difference.

The majority of responding organisations (20.8%) thinks that lesbians are victims of discrimination due to their psychosexual identity and their gender. Relatively many organisations have the perception that lesbians are rather victims of structural violence (16.7%) and that the violence against them is more subtle (9.4%). 9.4% of organisations stress the different social conditions (different social status) and their consequences for coping with violence. One organisation thinks that gay men make more negative experiences than lesbian women. 13.5% of respondents think that there is a difference in the experience of violence without explaining this any further. 9% do not answer the question on heterosexual and lesbian women's different experiences with violence. 10% state a lack of knowledge, and 11% do not see a relevant difference in lesbian and heterosexual women's experience of violence. Another 9% see a difference regarding the psychosexual identity, but nothing else.

The differences are defined on the structural as well as on the individual level: 7% think that lesbian lifestyles still are discriminated, whereas heterosexual women are socially accepted. The stronger the stigmatisation, the fewer assistance services exist (4%). Stigmatisation leads to a tabooisation on the one hand of violence against lesbians and on the other hand of violence in lesbian relationships (24%). 2% of organisations think that lesbian women become more often men's victims ("getting into the fireline") due to their psychosexual identity, whereas 4% assume the exact opposite, i.e. that lesbian women run less risk because they do not live with men. Another 4% of respondents take a stance on possible coping strategies and see the violent experience as a fundamental shock to the psychosexual identity. At the same time, they assume that lesbians see the "fault" for the attack not so much in themselves but in the perpetrators, in comparison to heterosexual women. 2% of respondents see a possible difference dependent on the motive for the attack.

Vocational training (3.1%) and further training (11.2%) play a secondary role as sources of professional knowledge.

Most of the knowledge stems from reading (professional) literature (17.3%), lesbian and gay publications (15%), the exchange among friends (13.1%), diverse magazines (12.8%), and the exchange among colleagues (12%). The least frequently used medium is the television (4.7%). 1.6% of organisations complain about a lack of information.

More than half of the organisations (60%) has a referral database, which, as a rule, is interdisciplinary (82.5%). 37.9% of organisations does not have a referral database, whereas 2.1% did not answer the question.

35% of counselling centres in principle feel competent to counsel lesbians themselves, and 54.7% refer them to other organisations. In 4.3% of cases, an individual decision is taken if to counsel the lesbian client within the organisation or if

to refer her. 2.6% do not refer, and 3.4% did not answer the question. Of those organisations referring lesbians, 61% do so to lesbian and gay organisations. There is a clear differentiation between experiences of violence and discrimination: women counselling centres and hotlines feel competent for (sexual) violence, whereas discrimination cases are mainly referred to lesbian and gay organisations. 39% of organisations normally counselling lesbians in-house refer them to lesbian organisations in case of discrimination.

A continuous cooperation with lesbian or lesbian and gay organisations is not yet the rule: Only 48% of women counselling centres and hotlines cooperate continuously with these organisations.

There is a high preparedness to participate in specific further training (71.3%). The remaining 28.7% indicate the following reasons:

- / no or too little need (32%)
- / the existing knowledge is sufficient (28%)
- / is not a task/focal point of the organisation (28%)
- / lack of time (12%)
- / lack of money (4%)
- / there is a lesbian colleague (4%)
- / undecided if further training or not (4%).

Principal reasons for participating in further training are:

- / the own everyday knowledge is insufficient (37%)
- / the increase of knowledge is relevant for the work (37%)
- / no further reasons (16.7%)
- / it is an objective to live up to the diversity of women (9.3%).

3.3.4.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

More than half of the organisations address lesbians in their public relations. There is also a high preparedness to further training. The professional knowledge, however, is only average or bad.

A possible negative attitude is not as evident as in the case of victim assistance offices, the police or women shelters. It can also be found in sentences like "other topics are more pressing", "other things are more important". This is the case for 11.8% of organisations. This argument can be considered as a rejection of one's own responsibility. The refusal to follow further training with the argument to have sufficient knowledge cannot be considered as negative attitude, but, in the worst case, as overestimation of one's knowledge. The same is true for the argument of the own lesbian lifestyle (2%): Being a lesbian does not amount to a sufficient professional qualification. The remarks do not allow conclusions on negative reactions, they reflect rather affirmation and a critical reflection of the survey.

3.3.4.4 INTERPRETATION

The public relations efforts indicate a structural integration of lesbian lifestyles in the work of women counselling centres and hotlines. Even though the professional competence is average in general, there still are large deficiencies. Mostly, they only know the concept of double discrimination.

After an evaluation of detail and accuracy, i.e. a differentiated answer to the difference of lesbians' and gays' experiences of violence, only 5.4% of answers can be considered as "good". 37.6% are situated in the middle area of "satisfactory" knowledge, 22.6% could answer the question "sufficiently" or even only

“insufficiently”. The remaining 30.1% could not be evaluated due to unspecific answers, and 4.3% did not answer the question at all.

After an evaluation of detail and accuracy, i.e. a differentiated answer to the difference of lesbian and heterosexual women’s experiences of violence, 15% of answers can be considered as “good”. 27.9% are in the middle area of “satisfactory” knowledge, as much could answer the question only “sufficiently” or insufficiently”. 22.7% of answers could not be evaluated for being too unspecific, and 6.5% did not answer the question at all.

3.3.5 WOMEN’S SHELTERS

The return rate of women’s shelters surveyed amounts to 27%, 64% out of which came from Western Germany and 31% from Eastern Germany. It has to be taken note that there are relatively fewer women’s shelters in Eastern Germany. The remaining 5% could not be attributed due to a lack of data.

3.3.5.1 VISIBILITY

Very few women’s shelters address lesbians in their public relations (14%)²⁰. This is mainly done through the self-description or the events program. One shelter has a lesbian contact person available.

86% of women’s shelters do not address lesbians in their public relations. The most commonly cited reason is a lack of demand (19%). In addition, they do not want to address lesbians specifically (14%) and think that the organisation is “open to all women” (14%). Most of the organisations, however, have never thought about this possibility (33%). One shelter states that the organisation is catering exclusively to women being victims of male violence (2%), another organisation fears a potential rejection of the association if lesbians were included in public relations (2%), and the remaining 14% do not indicate their reasons.

The relation of those organisations which have already had contact with lesbians (44%) and those shelters who have not (40%) is relatively balanced. 16% cannot indicate if lesbians have ever sought assistance in their organisation. There seems to be no correlation between effective target group-specific public relations and the fact that lesbians come to an organisation. However, there seems to be a link between the user frequency and a target group-specific communications policy: those organisations having provided adequate public relations also are frequented more often by lesbians seeking help and/or assistance than those organisations without such public relations.

29% out of those organisations with target-group specific public relations have regular contact, 29% sporadic contact, and 29% no contact with lesbians. 14% cannot assess the situation because they do not have according statistics.

However, 57% of organisations without target group-specific public relations have no contact with lesbians, and 29% only sporadically. A further 14% cannot assess the situation due to a lack of statistics.

In relation to the total of shelters, the proportions are as follows: 52% do not have contact with lesbians, 21% do not have statistics, 23% have sporadic contact and only 4% have regular contact.

62% of lesbians looking for help and assistance at a women’s shelter focus on the lesbian lifestyle: they have coming out or relationship problems, they feel lonely and look for contacts or they have lived violence and/or discrimination in their relationship,

²⁰ The confidence interval is 5%-23%, N=57

circle of friends, neighbourhood or at the workplace. Due to the type of questionnaire, conclusions on lesbian aspects of other types of violence are impossible. This is the case for sexualised violence (11%), violence in the family of origin (12%), general physical problems (9%) and violence in the public space (4%) The remaining 2% needed legal advice, the reasons for which are irreproducible due to the questionnaire.

44% of women's shelters have had contacts with lesbians, whereby more than half of the lesbians looking for advice came for lesbian-specific reasons (62%). Only one quarter of women's shelters have openly lesbian employees, on the experience of whom their colleagues can rely if need be. The exchange of experiences in general is evaluated positively because, for instance, their background information facilitated a different approach to the clients. Three quarters of shelters, however, do not have openly lesbian employees and/or an exchange of experiences is considered unnecessary ("anyone can do that!").

3.3.5.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Professional competences can be acquired, among others through vocational and further training and regular practical experiences. Only 4% of women's shelters can rely on this. At the same time, further training (7.0%) and vocational training (2.5%) only present a secondary role in the acquisition of professional competence. In general, knowledge is limited to day-to-day knowledge that the employees extract from newspapers and magazines (17.6%) and general literature (17.6%). The exchange within the circle of friends ranks third (14.1%), followed by television (10.5%) and publications by lesbians and/or gays (9.0%). Personal experiences of potential lesbian employees play a marginal role (7.5%). 3% of the shelters surveyed assess a lack of knowledge.

Consequently, 17% of women's shelters state not to know if and how lesbians and gays can experience violence and discrimination differently. 30% think that there is no difference. Half of these think that there also is no difference between lesbian and heterosexual women's experience of violence and/or discrimination (56%).

19% did not answer the question on lesbians' and gays' violent experiences. Only 27% of shelters see a difference:

/ 44% out of which think that lesbians are relatively more often victims of psychological, structural or sexual violence;

/ 12.5% out of which think that gays are more visible in public and therefore more probably victims of violence;

/ 12.5% out of which think that gays are more often victims of physical violence;

/ 31% of which affirmed the question without further specifications.

The remaining 7% answered the question without referring to the subject (frequency during childhood, questioning of normality, discrimination in the workplace, rejection by family of origin). The tendency to see lesbians and gays as a homogenous group is remarkable. This has found its expression in one respondent's question from which group lesbians' and gays' experiences of violence should differ.

11% respondents did not answer the question of lesbian and heterosexual women's different experiences of violence. 15% don't have information and/or experiences on this topic and therefore cannot answer the question. 26% of respondents do not see a difference, 65% out of which do not see a difference in lesbians' and gays' experiences of violence, neither. The remaining 35% see no difference between lesbian and heterosexual women, but do so between lesbians and gays.

Nearly half of the shelters responding sees a difference in lesbian and heterosexual women's experience of violence (48%):

/ 63% think that lesbians are at least doubly discriminated (as a woman and as a lesbian) and are more often victim of discrimination in their daily life;

/ 11% think that violence among lesbians is a very strong taboo and that there are hardly any possibilities for assistance;

/ 8% think that lesbians have less of a risk to experience violence because they have less contact with men;

/ 4% affirmed that there is a difference without specifying any reasons.

The vast majority of women's shelters does not have an address list of specialised organisations (65%). Nevertheless, 62% of shelters refer if need be, to a large extent including lesbian and gay organisations (85%). 29% of the organisations do not refer further because they think that they are able to provide sufficient assistance. The remaining 10% did not answer the question.

The vast majority of women's shelters does not consider any further training on this issue necessary (62%). The reasons are:

/ a lack of demand (69%),

/ no free capacities (16%),

/ the possibility to refer to other competent organisations (6%),

/ being able to recognise the differences between lesbian and heterosexual women and being open to all women (6%),

/ finally the individual experience of violence (3%).

3.3.5.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

In principle, women and their children who are affected by violence can make use of a women's shelter. The focus is on violence ("The focus is on experiences of sexual violence. It is irrelevant if women are lesbians or heterosexuals. Anything else remains to be seen."). In general, shelters do not consider the differentiation between lesbian and heterosexual women necessary ("lesbians can make use of our regular services, like any other woman"). The vast majority of women's shelters is principally oriented towards heterosexual women ("it is mainly women affected by male violence who come to the shelter" and "we are not an organisation for lesbian women, this is not our counselling focus"). Some (15%) explicitly consider the problem of lesbian victims of violence marginal: "we do not need further training because other issues are more urgent", "that is not our counselling focus", "other issues are more urgent", "I do not see the necessity", and the topic is "not specific for violence against women". The most common reason, however, is that there is no demand and that capacities are already exhausted. This is the case for public relations and networking as well as for further training.

At the same time, the knowledge on violence and/or discrimination against lesbian women is limited to day-to-day knowledge in most cases. A target group-specific communication policy signals an opening towards potential clients. This opening is the case in few women's shelters (14%). Recapitulating, we can pinpoint that 71% of women's shelters have a negative attitude to the problem of lesbian victims of violence and discrimination, 17% are indifferent and only 12% are open for this topic.

3.3.5.4 INTERPRETATION

The women's shelters' below-average return rate confirms the assumption that many shelters do not feel concerned by this topic and do not assume their responsibility. The arguments of women's shelters do not differ much from those of police or victim

assistance offices: The focus is on the victim of violence; the psychosexual identity is not relevant. As victim assistance offices think that good manners will arrange everything, some employees in women's shelters think that the little that they know will suffice for the few lesbians that might need it. For the concerned lesbians, this is far from an optimal situation, the more so as most of them look for help and protection for lesbian-specific issues – to which belongs violence in relationships.

The working situation of lesbians in women's shelters is equally depressing. Some of them have filled in the questionnaire. The answers make it quite clear to which extent they have to do the splits in their workplace on a daily basis. They know about potential violence and the harm that this causes for lesbian victims. But most of them work in an environment that excludes lesbian victims of violence and partially does not even recognise a relation to violence against women. Many seem to have already discussed this with their colleagues, and still they state "I don't need further training, only my colleagues do so. But they don't see their need."

It has to be assumed that violence in lesbian relationships matches the extent of violence in heterosexual relations. Model projects in terms of refuge apartments do not yet exist in Germany. As a consequence, women's shelters are currently one of the few possibilities where lesbians could go in case of need. Apparently they don't do it.

Two reasons appear plausible: the demand is low, i.e. lesbians find refuge elsewhere (e.g. with friends). Another possibility is that they don't consider women's shelters as contact point. The experiences in other countries have shown that, correspondingly to heterosexual relationships, it is mostly the victim of violence who is leaving in lesbian relationships. If they don't find shelter, they might easily end among the homeless.

The interdependency between lesbians not affirming their demand and women's shelters not engaging in target group-specific public relations becomes clear in all its tragedy. A further problem adds to this: Employees in women's shelters can be sensitised for this problem through further training. That this is necessary shows the following comment to the questionnaire: "I don't like the survey, probably because we have little contact with lesbian women". Regular sensitisation training for residents in a shelter is hardly feasible due to the high turnover in women's shelters. As a consequence, lesbians risk again to be put into a situation where they do not feel safe and comfortable, this time because of employees and roommates. On the one hand, employees in women's shelters are overtaxed if they should sensitise their clients every two to three months. On the other hand, they cannot organise "spontaneous" training when it already is too late.

3.4 AUSTRIA

571 social services which could be contact points for lesbian women were contacted in Austria. 149 responded, which amounts to a return rate of 26%. In the following, the results will be represented firstly for all services together, and then specifically by type of organisation.

3.4.1 GENERAL ANALYSIS

3.4.1.1 PUBLIC RELATIONS / ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

Only 16 out of 149 organisations (11%) address lesbian women directly through their public relations and services, i.e. in information material (10), groups and workshops (6) and special counselling (3).

16 (14%) of the organisations not addressing lesbians, cite as reason that they treat every person equally. A typical answer is e.g. "we focus on people with psychological problems, independently of their type, emphasising one group would constitute a form of positive discrimination".

10 (19%) organisations state that they do not have a special offer and therefore do not have target group-specific communication. For 13 (11%), it is not part of the organisation's objectives, and a further 7 (6%) don't consider lesbians as their primary target group. Two organisations argue that they are working in a rural area with a small patch; lesbians are a taboo subject and cannot be discussed publicly.

In most organisations (107; 72%) there are currently no openly lesbian employees. 15% (22) of organisations make use of the specific knowledge of their lesbian colleagues as a competence and resource.

Nearly half of organisations (71; 48%) would like to be listed in the directory of possible contact points for lesbian women, partially with limitations concerning the services: for instance, one organisation wants to be listed as a contact point for family violence only, and another only if the target group is clearly defined (e.g. if it is mainly the child who needs assistance). The commonly cited reason for this is that they are open for everyone, thus also for lesbian women. Those not wanting to be listed in the directory say that they have a lack of experience and competence, or that they are not responsible for this subject.

ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION

The questions concerning the assessment of utilisation do not allow a conclusion on the actual number of lesbian clients in the organisations. In many organisations, there are no statistics kept that would include the psychosexual identity of clients. Often, the psychosexual identity is not in the focus of the counselling activities, or lesbian women do not dare to announce their identity. The survey rather allows conclusions on the extent to which organisations are sensitised as concerns the use of their organisation by openly or secretly lesbian clients, independent of counselling lesbians on a daily basis or only sporadically.

64 organisations (43%) indicate that openly lesbian women come to them. 58 surveyed organisations (39%) do not have lesbian clients, 24 (16%) do not know. One of the 64 organisations attended to lesbian clients on a daily basis during the last year, 10 were frequented regularly by lesbians, 42 sporadically. 5 say that they did not have openly lesbian clients during the last year, 7 do not have statistics.

63 (42%) of organisations think that lesbian women come to them without announcing their identity. 34 (23%) do not think that they have lesbian clients who did not announce their lesbian lifestyle. 47 (32%) do not know.

38 (59%) out of the 64 organisations having openly lesbian clients assume that lesbian women who do not make their identity public also frequent them. On the other hand, 13 do not believe that, in addition, secretly lesbian women come to them.

Only 13 (22%) out of the 58 organisations not having lesbian clients think that lesbian women frequented their organisation without announcing their identity. 17 (29%) are convinced that no secretly lesbian woman came to their organisation. A further 25 (43%) state that they do not know. These statistics portend – particularly in the case of organisations without openly lesbian clients – on a lack of sensitisation regarding

the possibilities of secretly lesbian clients in their organisation. It has to be assumed that a reflection of the difficulties of the coming out process has not (yet) taken place.

Table 9

		Question 5: Do you suspect that some of your clients are lesbians but did not say so?			
Question 3: Do openly lesbian women come to your office?		Yes	No	Don't know	
	Yes	38	13	13	
	No	13	17	25	
	Don't know	12	3	9	

The comparison between the indications on public relations (question 2) and the assessment of utilisation by lesbian women leads to the conclusion that 8 out of the 16 organisations addressing lesbians explicitly also have lesbian clients on a daily or regular basis, 4 do not answer the question or do not have statistics, and three organisations are visited occasionally by lesbians. The contrary is the case at the other 133 organisations: 6 organisations do not have any lesbian clients, 40 only have occasional clients, and only three organisations are regularly visited by lesbian women. These numbers suggest a correlation between a targeted approach to lesbian women and the same group's utilisation of the organisation.

3.4.1.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The least of the surveyed organisations (10%) have a regular experience of attending to lesbian clients, thus being able to rely on experience-based competence. Four women's health centres, 6 women counselling centres, 2 faith-based counselling centres and women's hotlines respectively and one psycho-social service report a regular counselling experience.

For 61 (41%), counselling is rather the exception than the rule, and 63 (43%) indicate that this happens practically never.

Most of the organisations acquire information on lesbian lifestyles through literature (95; 64%), newspapers (82; 55%) or friends (62; 42%). Other information sources are colleagues (58; 39%), lesbian and gay organisations (60; 40%) and the TV (41; 28%). 24 (16%) organisations hardly have any information on female homosexuality. After all, 24 (16%) indicate to have own experiences. Workshops and vocational training provide 32 (21%), respectively 31 (21%) organisations with information on lesbians.

Table 10:

Most common information sources on female homosexuality

	Hardly no information	Literature	Newspapers	TV	Lesbian/gay organisations	Colleagues, friends	Vocation training
Family planning centres	4	21	18		16	27	6
Psycho-social services	12	26	25	16	7	28	8
Health	0	5	5	2	4	7	2

centres							
Women's hotlines etc.	0	11	6	2	8	16	6
Women counselling centres	0	22	16	4	18	33	6
Police	2	4	3	1	2	5	0
Faith-based counselling centres	5	6	9	5	5	6	3

Family planning organisations, psycho-social services and faith-based counselling centres acquire their knowledge mainly from literature, newspapers and TV. Another important information source are colleagues and friends. Nearly a third of the psycho-social services indicates to hardly not have any information on lesbians. Equally, a third of faith-based counselling centres has only little information. Female homosexuality was a subject in a few vocational training courses only. In the case of police, this has been subject neither during vocational training nor in further workshops.

However, the numbers do not say anything about the quality of existing information. This was to be elicited on the example of the differences between lesbians' and gays' experiences of violence (question 9) and between lesbian and heterosexual women's experiences of violence (question 10).

27 organisations (18%) did not answer the question on different violent experiences of lesbians and gays. 24 organisations (16%) state a lack of knowledge, and 26 organisations (17%) think that there is no difference between lesbians' and gays' experience of violence.

73 (49%) think that there are differences, but 25 of them do not specify these differences. The most often cited differences were the forms of violence and the coping strategies (24 mentions). Another 14 organisations think that lesbians, as women, are more often victims of violence than gay men, whereas three organisations wrote that gays are more often victims of physical violence and that violent dispositions are more frequent in gay relationships than in lesbian ones. Two organisations think that violence against lesbians is more of a taboo and that lesbians are less visible in public than gays. Equally, there are two mentions of lesbians being more often victims of sexualised violence or psychological violence.

A even smaller preparedness to answer the question on differences between lesbian and heterosexual women's experiences of violence has to be noted. 33 organisations (22%) did not answer the question. Another 27 organisations (18%) indicate a lack of knowledge. In addition, 21 organisations (14%) think that there is no difference between lesbian and heterosexual women as concerns their experiencing violence.

68 organisations (46%) think that there are differences between lesbian and heterosexual women, but 29 (19%) do not specify this any further. The most common cited difference is the double discrimination of lesbian women as women and as lesbians (13; 9%), followed by social-societal factors (lesbians as minority, lesbian women eluding men etc.). Three organisations respectively see differences in the consequences: according to them, anti-lesbian violence has an impact on lesbian

identity, on self-esteem and can lead to isolation. A further difference lies in the lack of assistance services for lesbians. Two organisations respectively see differences between lesbian and heterosexual women in the social taboo concerning violence against lesbians. Violence in lesbian relationships poses other questions than violence in heterosexual relationships because the perpetrator is a woman (three mentions).

A further indicator for professional competence is the degree and form of networking. The question arises if, in case of need, organisations refer their clients to other or specialised services.

87 organisations say that they don't have a referral database including, e.g. lesbian and gay organisations within 50 km where they could refer their clients. 52 organisations have an address list, 27 of which include lesbian and gay-specific services, 13 leisure organisations; in addition, they refer to women's centres (12), AIDS organisations (2) and psycho-social services (13). 8 organisations say that there are not or that they do not know any lesbian and gay-specific organisations or services within 50 km.

More than two thirds of organisations do not cooperate with lesbian or lesbian and gay organisations or did not answer the question. 28 organisations (19%) cooperate with lesbian or lesbian and gay organisations like Rosa Lila Villa or HOSI, 14 (9%) with the women/lesbian's centres, 3 with AIDS organisations and two with men's counselling centres.

Lesbian women with violent experiences are most often (58; 39%) referred to women-specific services (without anti-violence organisations). 41 (28%) organisations refer to lesbian/lesbian and gay organisations, and 23 (15%) to women-specific anti-violence organisations like hotlines or women shelters. 23 organisations (15%) do in-house counselling, 18 organisations (12%) refer to intervention organisations, 9 (6%) to the equal opportunities commissioner or the anti-discrimination office in Vienna, and 7 organisations (5%) to general counselling services.

Given the frequent lack of knowledge on lesbian lifestyles and lesbian-specific violence, in addition to the relatively low degree of networking, the question on attitudes to the necessity of further training and the own preparedness to further training arises.

60 (40%) organisations consider further training to lesbian-specific subjects necessary, whereas 78 (52%) don't. 13 (9%) did not answer this question. Two organisations remain ambivalent.

The reason for the necessity of further training is the lack of knowledge (21; 14%), the de-tabooisation of lesbian lifestyles (5; 3%) and the development of a better understanding (13; 9%). Organisations considering further training on lesbians unnecessary think that there is no or little demand (34; 23%). In addition, this is not a focal topic nor their target group (15;10%), or sexual identity is a marginal subject (7;5%).

84 organisations (56%) would participate in further training. It is remarkable that more organisations would participate in further training than there are thinking that it is necessary. 43 organisations (29%) would not participate, 22 (15%) did not answer. 19 out of these 43 organisations say that there is no or too little demand, a further 7 organisations do not have free capacities or have other priorities. For 7 organisations, lesbians are not a focal point, and 4 organisations say they are sufficiently competent.

3.4.1.3 STAFF ATTITUDE

A clear attribution of organisations to certain attitudes concerning the work with lesbian women is not possible on the basis of the answers. In each group of organisations, there are singular positive examples, where lesbians are made visible through public relations or specific services for lesbians are offered. Employees of certain organisations show engagement and have reflected the topic of lesbian lifestyles in different ways.

A large part of the organisations is indifferent towards the topic of lesbian women. They do not have lesbian clients or have very few, they do not see the need for targeted public relations or further training. Other organisations, like the police, do not have a target group-specific approach: everyone is treated equal. The priority for these organisations would be to first raise awareness on different needs of different target groups.

The remarks on the questionnaires contained mainly positive feedback. The survey “raised awareness on the target group of lesbians and gays”.

3.4.2 ANALYSIS BY ORGANISATION TYPE

3.4.2.1 PUBLIC RELATIONS/ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION FAMILY PLANNING CENTRES

Only one organisation has a lesbian-specific counselling service; half of the family planning centres (15) do not give a reason for their negative answer, five do have another work objective, three do not consider lesbians their primary target group and a further three do not differentiate their public relations by target groups. Only one family planning centre makes use of the competences of an openly lesbian employee. This facilitates “the learning of tolerance and other perspectives”. 26 centres do not have openly lesbian employees. One organisation stated, for instance: “we do not discuss this openly”.

11 centres want to be listed in the directory of special contact points, two with the restraint that their target group would be young people. 17 do not want to appear on this list. They do not consider themselves competent enough, do only refer to other organisations or focus on other subjects.

Openly lesbian women go to nearly half (14) of the 31 family planning centres. 12 centres have no openly lesbian clients, and 5 organisations do not know. Only one family planning centre had regular contact with lesbians during the last year, another 11 had occasional contact.

14 centres assume that lesbian women seek their assistance without announcing their identity. Five do not think that secretly lesbian women use their services, and 12 centres do not know. Lesbian women seek most often assistance in family planning centres for relationship problems (13 mentions), followed by problems like violence/discrimination in the family of origin (7) and isolation/loneliness (7). Coming out was a topic in four organisations. The other forms of violence appeared only marginally (1 – 2 mentions).

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SERVICES

Again, only one out of 45 organisations addresses lesbians explicitly. The reason for not addressing lesbians differ from those given by family planning centres. In the first place (with 9 mentions) comes the equal treatment approach, followed by six

organisations not seeing a demand by lesbian women and six organisations not specialising in particular target groups.

40 organisations do not have openly lesbian employees, four organisations did not answer the question, and an employee of one organisation privately knows lesbian couples. She uses this experience in her work.

17 organisations want to be included in the directory of contact points, 24 don't. Similar to the family planning centres, these organisations seem to have taken into account the assessment of their own competences for the decision.

The majority of psycho-social services (27 out of 45) does not have openly lesbian clients. Only a third (13) report lesbian clients, 5 cannot answer the question. Similarly, only one service had regular contact with lesbian clients during the last year, whereas 10 had sporadic contact.

10 organisations think that some of their clients might be lesbians without saying so. 13 do not think that secretly lesbian women use their services, 20 don't know.

The most common topic for counselling was again relationship problems (15), followed by violence/discrimination in the family of origin (6), coming out (6), isolation and loneliness (6). Other forms of violence were present with two mentions each, as well as violence in lesbian relationships.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRES

It appears that some women's health centres consider themselves an important contact point for lesbian women. Four out of 8 health centres address explicitly lesbian women, two through information material and two through lesbian-specific events. In addition, nearly half of the centres (3) have openly lesbian employees. They enhance the knowledge and experiences of their colleagues with their lifestyle and the exchange of information. Five of the health centres want to be listed in the directory of contact points.

Lesbian women go to women's health centres: five say to have lesbian clients, 2 don't. 1 centre cannot answer this question. Two health centres attend regularly to lesbian women.

6 health centres think that lesbian women come to them without announcing their identity, two don't know.

Frequent topics were coming out (4 mentions), violence/discrimination in the family of origin (2) and two mentions of health, HIV and AIDS.

WOMEN'S HOTLINES, WOMEN'S SHELTERS, INTERVENTION OFFICES

None of these 14 organisations addresses lesbians explicitly, although, according to the task description of these organisations, they could be a contact point for lesbian victims of violence, in particular in the family sphere. Two organisations say that it is not part of their objectives, that lesbians are not the primary target group and that a direct reference to lesbians could lead to exclusion: "The feeling of exclusion lurks in relation to the topic of sexual violence anyway and could be linked "in a bad way" to lesbians". One organisation does not see the need.

On the other hand, 6 of the 14 women's hotlines, shelters and intervention offices have openly lesbian employees. Some of the answers show that there is awareness on the relevance of the psychosexual identity of the employee in the counselling process: "auto-determined sexuality" is always a subject in counselling. The lesbian counsellor (open or not) represents the lesbian existence.

Though none of the surveyed organisations addresses lesbians in their public relations, 11 of them want to be listed in the directory of contact points, four of them with the restriction to family violence.

7 of the 14 organisations have openly lesbian clients, however, during the last year only sporadically, four didn't have lesbian clients, and three don't know.

Four organisations think that lesbian women visit them without announcing their identity. 9 do not think so, one does not know. According to the task description of these organisations, lesbian women come because of violence/discrimination in the family of origin or violence in lesbian relationships (5 mentions each).

WOMEN COUNSELLING CENTRES

Nearly a third (8) of 27 women counselling centres addresses lesbian women explicitly, doing so with information material (5), lesbian-specific groups and workshops (4). For two organisations in rural areas, mentioning lesbians explicitly is out of question because it is a taboo. This could be detrimental for potential lesbian clients. Exactly because lesbians are a taboo and there are so few contact points in rural areas, an explicit mention would facilitate access for lesbian women to the counselling centre and prevent isolation. Another two centres have other organisation objectives, two treat everyone equal, and one cannot offer lesbian-specific services because there are too little resources. 11 of the 27 centres use the knowledge of lesbian employees. The answers suggest a feminist counselling approach which considers concernment ("because in our work against discrimination, the knowledge on the basis of one's own discrimination experiences is usable, useful and indispensable") and "comprehension for and knowledge of clients' life situations as conditions for good counselling". 19 women counselling centres want to be included in the directory of contact points, 5 do not.

Women counselling centres also seem to be a contact point for lesbian women. 20 out of 27 centres have openly lesbian clients, 5 do not and two do not know. Lesbian women come regularly to 5 centres, one sees lesbian clients on a day-to-day basis. Eight centres report occasional contacts with lesbian clients during the last year.

13 women counselling centres think that some of their clients might be lesbians without saying so. 3 do not know.

Lesbians seem to come with problems of all aspects of life to women's counselling centres: relatively equally, centres cite coming out (10 mentions), relationship problems (9), isolation/loneliness (9), violence/discrimination in the family of origin (9), in the neighbourhood (9), other aspects of violence (7) and violence in lesbian relationships (5 mentions).

POLICE / MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

The surveyed police offices do not address lesbian women explicitly. 5 out of 11 offices did not answer this question, 4 answer with no, two say that they treat everyone equal. The response is equally reticent as regards openly lesbian employees. 5 offices state not to have lesbian employees. It can be assumed that this is similar in other offices. Two offices want to be listed in the directory of contact points for lesbians, two do not.

None of the surveyed police offices indicated that openly lesbian women come to them. One office clearly said no, five do not know if openly lesbian women come to them.

Three police offices think that secretly lesbian women come to them. One does not think so, and two do not know. As regards the problems with which lesbians go to the

police, the offices cited, with two mentions each, violence in the public sphere and sexualised violence; with one mention each: violence in the neighbourhood, in the family of origin and in the workplace.

FAITH-BASED COUNSELLING CENTRES

Two out of 15 counselling centres address lesbians with folders and target group-specific counselling. Most (8) do not give reasons for their negative decision, two have other organisation goals. One organisation decided not to address lesbians because it is a faith-based organisation.

Similar to the police, faith-based counselling centres do not have openly lesbian employees. Most of the faith-based centres (9) do not want to be included in the directory of contact points. They cite their lack of experience as the reason.

5 out of 15 counselling centres have openly lesbian clients, one of them regularly during the last year, the other four occasionally. 7 faith-based centres do not have openly lesbian clients, three do not know.

4 centres think that lesbian women seek their assistance without announcing their identity, whereas four centres do not think so, and another 7 organisations do not know.

If lesbian women come to faith-based counselling centres, they do so rather for problems like relationship problems (4), coming out (4), isolation (3) or problems with the family of origin (3) than for experiences of violence and discrimination.

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

Lesbian women use women's counselling centres, psycho-social services, women's health centres, women hotlines, women's shelters, intervention offices, family planning and faith-based counselling centres and the police. Counselling centres see more lesbians with rather general topics, whereas women's hotlines and the police have clients with specific experiences of violence.

Lesbian women go to these organisations although only a small proportion (11%) addresses them explicitly. However, there is a positive correlation between target group-specific public relations and the use by lesbian women.

3.4.2.2 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

FAMILY PLANNING CENTRES

16 family planning centres assume differences between lesbians and gays as concerns their experience with violence. The most often mentioned differences are gender-specific ones (4 mentions) and that lesbians can additionally become victims because of being women (3 mentions). 6 centres do not see differences between gays and lesbians, three state to lack knowledge.

Regarding the differences between lesbian and heterosexual women, 5 centres say to have a lack of knowledge. 5 centres do not see any differences, 13 centres think that there are differences. For example, one centre answered: "The more public they live their sexuality/sexual orientation, the more violence they experience." Two centres speak of the double discrimination of lesbian women, two of other social factors.

Two thirds (21) of family planning centres do not have a referral database. 10 centres have a database, 7 of which include lesbian -/lesbian and gay-specific services. Only

five family planning centres cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, 3 of which with women and lesbian centres.

14 family planning centres refer lesbians with experiences of violence to women-specific services, 8 to lesbian and gay organisations, three centres counsel them in-house. 5 family planning centres refer to women-specific anti-violence projects.

9 family planning centres consider further training on lesbian women's situation necessary, 21 do not. If there was further training, 14 centres would participate, 14 would not.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SERVICES

10 out of 45 organisations state a lack of knowledge concerning the differences between violence against lesbians and against gays. 9 services did not answer the question, 9 think that there are no differences. 16 services see differences in violence against lesbians and gays without specifying this any further. 3 organisations think that lesbians, as women, become more often victims of violence, and 2 organisations cite gender-specific differences in the form of and coping with violence.

When asked about the differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, 13 psycho-social services did not answer, and as many say to lack knowledge. 5 organisations see no differences. 14 services think that there are differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, but only 5 organisations give further specifications. Lesbians' double discrimination is mentioned three times. Individual coping strategies and lesbians' lower risk for violence because they do not live in relationships with men get one mention each.

According to these answers it becomes clear that there is little knowledge on differences between lesbians and gays in psycho-social service organisations. The image of lesbian and heterosexual women's experiences of violence lacks differentiation in a similar way.

One third (32) out of 45 psycho-social services does not have a referral database. 10 organisations have an address list, 5 of which refer to lesbian and gay organisations, 5 to women's centres. Two psycho-social organisations indicate that the nearest lesbian and gay organisation is more than 50 km away.

39 out of 45 psycho-social services do not cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, and if so, then if necessary (1), with lesbian and gay organisations (2), gay organisations (1) and AIDS organisations (1).

21 psycho-social services refer lesbian women with experiences of violence to women-specific services, and 10 to women-specific anti-violence organisations. 6 refer to lesbian and gay organisations, 4 to general counselling centres, 6 counsel in-house, and 11 did not answer the question.

Approximately one third (16 out of 45) of psycho-social services sees the necessity of further training on lesbian lifestyles. 23 services would participate in such further training.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRES

2 out of 8 women's health centres state to have a lack of knowledge concerning the difference between violence against lesbians and gays. 5 think that there are differences, mentioning each one time: violence against lesbians is more taboo, lesbians experience more often psychological violence, lesbians become victims additionally for being women, and finally, general gender-specific differences "in experiencing and coping with violence".

Two women's health centres did not answer the question on differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, one organisation does not see a difference. 5 women's health centres state differences, with two mentions of lesbian women's double discrimination and social factors each. As an example, they cite additional discrimination "by counselling services or the health care system". According to them, the lesbian lifestyle is not accepted and rather "treated" as illness or perversion. One women's health centre answers that lesbians experience more subtle forms of violence than heterosexual women.

4 out of 8 women's health centres do not have a referral database or did not answer this question. Three of the other half have addresses of lesbian and gay organisations, and the fourth is linked to the Internet.

6 out of 8 women's health centres cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations or women's and lesbians' centres.

4 health centres refer lesbians with experiences of violence to women-specific services, two to the anti-discrimination office of the City of Vienna, and two to lesbian and gay organisations. Two centres did not answer this question, one centre has a service available in case of violence.

5 women's health centres think that further training on lesbian lifestyles is necessary, but only four would participate in such further training.

WOMEN HOTLINES, SHELTERS, INTERVENTION OFFICES

4 out of 14 organisations do not see differences between violence against lesbians and gays. A further 7 organisations see differences, citing "societal gender differences" (2 mentions), "because lesbians are considered socially more threatening than lesbians" and because lesbians, as women, become more often victims of violence than gays.

One organisation answers: "I think that heterosexual women experience violence more often within their relationship and lesbian women more in public." 8 more see differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women. They mention, for instance, consequences of violence on lesbian identity and the dimension of structural violence. Three organisations do not see differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, and two say to lack knowledge.

8 out of 14 women-specific anti-violence organisations have a referral database, 4 of which including lesbian and gay organisations.

8 organisations cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, one of them only in case of need. A further organisation cooperates with an AIDS organisation.

4 of the anti-violence organisations counsel lesbian women with experiences of violence in-house, 8 refer them to women-specific organisations, three to the anti-discrimination office of the City of Vienna.

9 out of 14 organisations do not consider necessary further training on the specific situation of lesbian women, but 11 would participate in such further training.

WOMEN COUNSELLING CENTRES

The women counselling centres' answers on the question on differences between violence against lesbians and gays shows clearly that there has been reflection on the socio-cultural conditions of violence. One centre writes, for example: "women-specific violence: power relations in society are reflected here as well". 21 out of 27 women counselling centres see differences. The most frequent mentions achieve gender-specific differences (15 mentions), and that lesbians, as women, become

more often victims of violence than gay men (5 mentions). Two women counselling centres do not see differences, and three say to lack knowledge.

Concerning violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, 20 women counselling centres see differences. They mention most often lesbian women's double discrimination (5 mentions), followed by social factors (3 mentions). Two centres, respectively, answer that violence against lesbians leads to more shame for the victim, that it is more taboo and that there are less help services for lesbian victims of violence. Four centres do not see differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women, and two state their lack of knowledge.

The women counselling centres' answers mark clearly the reflection of women-specific violence, and they cite social influences and double discrimination.

15 out of 27 women counselling centres have a referral database, 6 of which with lesbian and gay organisations, 5 with general counselling services and 13 with lesbian and gay leisure activities. Two women counselling centres deplore that the nearest lesbian and gay organisation is more than 50 km away.

8 women counselling centres do not cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, 4 did not answer the question. The remaining 15 centres cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations or women and lesbian centres.

7 women counselling centres counsel lesbians with experiences of violence in-house. Depending on the problem, 11 centres refer them to lesbian and gay organisations, 8 to women-specific services, 3 to women-specific anti-violence projects, 3 to the equal opportunities or anti-discrimination office, and three to intervention offices.

16 out of 27 women counselling centres consider further training on lesbian lifestyles, 19 would participate in further training.

POLICE/MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

4 of the surveyed police offices did not answer the question on differences between violence against lesbians and gays, 4 offices do not see differences. Only one office mentions differences, e.g. "that [lesbians] report it less often to the police for fear of ridicule etc."

The answering behaviour is comparable to that relating to the question on differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women. Again, only one office mentions differences, e.g. "because when reporting violence, one has to overcome the social ostracism (in addition to the actual events)".

It is clear that police offices work with a crime-oriented, individualising approach that does not include a differentiation of groups of victims or social factors for the origin and persistence of violence.

None of the responding police offices has a referral database (5) or answers the relating question (4).

One police office cooperates with Rosa Lila Villa in Vienna if need be, one with an AIDS organisation. None answers the question where they refer lesbian victims of violence.

4 of the 9 surveyed police offices did not answer the question on the necessity of further training on lesbian lifestyles. 2 think it necessary, and 3 would participate in further training.

FAITH-BASED COUNSELLING CENTRES

One third of the 15 faith-based counselling centres state their lack of knowledge on the questions of differences between violence against lesbians and gays, and between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women.

6 counselling centres see differences in violence between lesbians and gays, but only two specify this further. They refer to differences concerning violence in relationships and that the inclination to use violence is bigger in gay than in lesbian relationships. One answer indicates an individual blaming minority groups for violent experiences: “a lack of self-esteem makes minorities potential victims”.

Differences between violence against lesbian and heterosexual women seem probable to 5 centres. Only 2 centres specify these differences, citing lesbians' double discrimination and that in the case of lesbians, other issues arise than in the case of heterosexual women.

It can be noted that most faith-based counselling centres have not reflected the specific forms of violence against lesbians, its consequences e.g. as concerns differences towards violence against gays and heterosexual women.

Two thirds of faith-based counselling centres (10) do not have a referral database. 2 among the remaining 5 centres have only two addresses of lesbian and gay organisations. Only three faith-based counselling centres cooperate with lesbian and gay organisations, one of them with HuK (Homosexuals and Church).

Two organisations counsel lesbian victims of violence in-house, the others refer them, in two to three cases respectively, to women-specific services, lesbian and gay organisations, crisis services, women-specific anti-violence projects or intervention offices.

10 faith-based counselling services would participate in further training on the specific situation of lesbian women, but only 6 consider it necessary.

3.4.3 INTERPRETATION

The answers on networking between organisations point out that this is not very developed. On the one hand, there are very few lesbian-specific organisations in Austria, in particular in rural areas; on the other hand, the answers indicate that there is only little information on possible services for lesbians. The horizontal networking between organisations is equally little developed. Under certain circumstances, a lesbian can cover a long odyssey across diverse services until she arrives at last at a service that meets her specific needs. This demands a strong perseverance and tenacity on part of the lesbian woman, which, in situation of crises, can be too much to ask for. A global referral to anti-violence projects or women-specific services seems problematic due to the lack of knowledge on lesbian lifestyles. Finally, referral is only possible to singular organisations that are specialised on the subject of anti-lesbian violence. According to their answers, the police work relatively isolated and does not make referrals. However, it would be helpful for lesbian women to get information on lesbian-specific or lesbian-friendly services after reporting a crime to provide them with psycho-social assistance.

The results found in this survey show the necessity for developing a targeted, user-friendly networking and a better information exchange both between lesbian-specific and other organisations.

An encouraging 40% of responding organisations consider further training on the specific situation of lesbian women necessary, and even more than half of them would participate in further training. This could be a starting point to improve the psycho-social assistance to lesbian women in Austria.

The results confirm the assumption that there is a vicious circle: A lack of visibility/openness for lesbian women in an organisation leads to low utilisation by lesbians. This makes it difficult to gain work experience and to increase competences. A potential need for further training does not become visible. To

improve the psycho-social care for lesbian women, this circle has to be broken. The results show opportunities, e.g. organisations could be reached via further training. Networking and the information exchange among services and with lesbian and gay organisations show a potential for improvement.

In addition, it becomes clear that there is no singular institutional responsibility for lesbian women. It depends on the engagement of employees and the institutional assistance if lesbian women are in good hands in an organisation.

/ 4 SUMMARY

STRUCTURAL DEFICITS

Lesbian women are only sporadically in good hands at the moment.

A structural integration of a differentiated, target group-specific approach does not exist in the organisations of all three countries included in this survey. In principle, they accept a target group-specific approach; for instance, women and young people are considered as target groups. Nevertheless, there is no sensibility or sufficient knowledge in how far a differentiation of social groups, i.e. social minorities, is necessary to create an optimal service. Homosexuals are considered, as a rule, as a homogenous social minority that differs, above all, by their sexual orientation from the rest of society. The fact that homosexuality does not only consist in the preference for homosexual sexuality but represents a lifestyle is not very common. The general "homogenisation of homosexuality" levels potential differences in experiences of lesbians and gays and leads to the belief that (gender-)specific counselling or other services are not necessary.

Positive examples excelling in the survey are based on the efforts of certain dedicated persons. If they leave an organisation, the openness towards homosexuals and homosexuality is no longer guaranteed.

Structural deficits also show in the tendency to attribute and assign the subject in general to openly lesbian employees. On the one hand, lesbian women have specific competences that organisations can use for their work with lesbian women. On the other hand, this is not supposed to mean that a reflection with one's own psychosexual identity does not take place and personal prejudices are not reflected. The delegation of the subject to the openly lesbian employee often includes at the same time to pass on the responsibility. The lesbian lifestyle cannot be the sole criterion for professional competence, just as little as heterosexuality.

The strongest indicator for structural deficits is the complete absence of this subject during professional training. On average, only 2 to 3% of respondents report that homosexuality was an issue during their training. In contrast to professional training, further training is based on voluntary participation. There seems to be little awareness for the need of reflection on this subject because 10% of respondents at the most participated in further training.

A further expression of structural deficits is the dilemma of lesbian women to be either equated with male homosexuals or with heterosexual women. The levelling of lesbians, on the one hand as women, on the other hand as gay, is a form of oppression through non-perception.

INDIVIDUALISATION OF THE VIOLENT EXPERIENCE

Lesbian women are in an area of conflict between on the one hand the levelling, and on the other hand the individualisation of the violent experience: This approach which is most common in psychology, assumes that violence principally is experienced individually. Social relations are masked and considered irrelevant for counselling. Even though one has to experience and cope with violence individually, the social background has to be taken into account in counselling, in particular when dealing with violence against social minorities like migrants or lesbian women, because in the case of racist or anti-lesbian crimes, the victim has a representative role. The victim is not assaulted because s/he was "at the wrong time at the wrong place" but because the perpetrator thinks that s/he belongs to the hated minority. This social

background has particular relevance for counselling because it enables the victim to understand the perpetrator's motive and to cope better with this experience. Many victims look for the cause of the violent experience within themselves. Learning that one has been attacked representatively for a group can be a relieve.

VIOLENCE IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

A "by-product" of our analysis is the indication of an urgent need for qualified counselling and care for lesbian women experiencing violence in their relationship. It has been confirmed that it is mainly the victims fleeing from the shared domicile. The results from Belgium show that a lacking assistance structure often forces lesbian women into homelessness. Women shelters have to take on their responsibility.

The Austrian law to protect victims of violence applies to cohabiting persons independent from their sexual relationship. In Brussels, a campaign against domestic violence is planned for 2002, but there is no law for the protection of victims of violence comparable to the Austrian one. In Germany, the law for the protection of victims of violence will enter into force at the beginning of 2002; it will be applicable to married and unmarried couples and cohabiting persons. The law for the protection of victims of violence ensures that in the future, it will be the perpetrator who has to leave the domicile. It is urgently recommended to include lesbian and gay relationships and to sensitise field officers for the situation of lesbians and gays. The law for the protection of victims of violence provides an opportunity to finally introduce the subject of violence in lesbian relationships within the lesbian subculture and to break the existing taboo.

MAINSTREAMING

In a similar way, the politics of mainstreaming also hold the risk of levelling and the related non-perception of specific experiences of violence. In general, mainstreaming politics describe the perception and advocacy of the interests and needs of certain social minorities in all aspects of society. Mainstreaming, therefore, is a politics of cross sections. The only remedy for the risk of levelling is an explicit "politics of difference", i.e. the visibility and acceptance of differences.

In particular in times of mainstreaming, a lesbian-specific approach is exposed to the criticism of continued or re-animated separatism. Especially the German lesbian movement was strongly influenced by North American currents and in the past was strongly inclined to separatism. This was not only due to the idea of a "lesbian island" but to real ruptures on the one hand between lesbians and heterosexual feminists, and on the other between lesbians and gays. Today, queer theory prevails and is often misunderstood as calling for the homogenisation of the homosexual under the pretext of "anything goes". In many European countries, the homosexual movement is weak and seldom as established as in the Netherlands. There, lesbians and gays fight jointly against external state and/or institutional discrimination. But even in the Netherlands, no separation between lesbians and gays seems to have happened. This also leads to the fact that lesbian-specific aspects are often levelled and that (lesbian) counsellors have difficulties to address possible differences within their organisation without having to face the reproach of separatism.

Instead of searching the common through the difference, many lesbian organisations are forced to claim differences against the assumed commonness. The perception of differences between women, but also between lesbians and gays, is indispensable for social acceptance and sensitivity for specific living conditions. The recognition of

differences paves the way for lesbians from non-perception towards an optimisation of (counselling) services for lesbian women.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

A structural integration of the subject of lesbian and gay lifestyles is urgently necessary. To achieve this, the following conditions have to be met:

- (1) Resources have to be made available for the development and improvement of psycho-social assistance structures.
- (2) Equally, financial resources have to be made available for accompanying this process scientifically.
- (3) Models of good practice and common standards have to be established.
- (4) The subject of lesbians and gays has to be included in professional training curricula.
- (5) The reflection of one's own psychosexual identity should be part of vocational training for social professions.
- (6) There has to be created a coordination office that develops and continues the interdisciplinary network.
- (7) The provision of further training has to be differentiated and enlarged.
- (8) A kind of "homo-mainstreaming" has to be established and the politics of differences have to be carried into all aspects of society.