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Ukraine: Organizations, publications and social establishments open to the homosexual population in Ukraine (February 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Organizations

The non-governmental organization (NGO) Nash Mir (Our World), which is "working toward achieving comprehensive equality and social comfort for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people" in Ukraine, has been active since 1997 (Nash Mir 11 July 2005). Nash Mir has offices in Kiev, Lugansk (ibid. 26 Jan. 2006; ibid. n.d.a), Dnepropetrovsk and Donetsk (ibid. n.d.a). This organization offers counselling services on sexual orientation and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) issues, as well as psychological support and information on the lesbian community (ibid n.d.c).

In its undated "Gay-guide," Nash Mir lists other organizations in Kiev such as Tvoye Zhittya (Your Life), Zhenskaya Set' (Women's Network) and Chas Zhittya (Time of Life) that work on issues of sexual orientation (ibid. n.d.a.). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the director of the Lugansk office of Nash Mir mentioned that the organization Tvoye Zhittya was inactive during 2005 for unknown reasons (ibid. 26 Jan. 2006). Although the existence of Chas Zhittya could not be corroborated, in 2003 representatives of the Kievskaya Laboratoriya Gendera (Kiev Gender Laboratory) wrote that Women's Network was the sole lesbian organization in Ukraine (KLG 2003, 10). Women's Network registered in April 2000 (Women's Network n.d.a), operates out of Kiev (ibid. n.d.b), and is the first and "the only ... women's organization ... or ... project in Ukraine that focus[es] on lesbian women's problems from the position of human rights equality" (ibid. n.d.a). Its main objectives are

to promote abundance by women's human rights, to promote gender equality in Ukraine, to raise [the] status of lesbian women in ... society, to help lesbian women satisfy their social, economic, and cultural needs and interests; to contribute in [the] development of [a] socially and politically active GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender] community; [and] to bring an end to discrimination, stigmatization and inequality of GLBT people in Ukrainian society (ibid.).

Another organization working [translation] "to protect the rights, demands and general interests of Ukrainian homosexuals" is Gay Forum Ukraine, which was registered in 2004 and operates out of Kiev, though it could not be

determined whether it has an office for members of the homosexual community to visit (Gay Forum n.d.).

Outside of Kiev, Nash Mir stated organizations that are open to the homosexual community include Chance in Vinnitsa, Gek in Lutsk, League in Nikolaev, and Adreon in Donetsk, as well as the Ukrainian Gay and Lesbian Association (UGLA) and Zhyzn+ (Life+) in Odessa (Nash Mir n.d.a). The Kiev Gender Laboratory also listed UGLA as a "gay-lesbian association" in Odessa (KLG 2003, 10).

Publications

Odin z Nas (One of Us) is a [translation] "Ukrainian magazine for gays [and contains] information, erotic photographs, personal advertisements" (Nash Mir n.d.b), and is available at newspaper kiosks (GayUA.com n.d.a). This publication is issued in Kiev (Nash Mir 26 Jan. 2006).

According to the director of Nash Mir in Lugansk, the monthly online newspaper *Gay.UA* (ibid. n.d.b) was last issued in December 2005 and, due to the low number of subscribers, will no longer be published (ibid. 26 Jan. 2006). This newspaper was the [translation] "first all-Ukraine newspaper for men who love men, and women who love women ... [with] interesting and useful information [and] more than 50 personal advertisements" (ibid. n.d.b).

Gay Forum Ukraine lists the following publications that issue personal advertisements for homosexuals in Donetsk: *Allo* (Hello), *Vasha Sud'ba* (Your Destiny), *Vstrecha* (Meeting), *Salon Dona I Basa* (Salon Dona and Basa), *Simona* and *Flirt* (Gay Forum 26 Jan. 2006). According to Together, a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender centre in Russia, "new issues of a gay magazine distributed nationwide appear regularly" in Ukraine, though the name of this magazine is not given (Gay.ru n.d.b).

Social Establishments

The director of the Lugansk branch office of Nash Mir, the director of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group for Human Rights (UHGHR) and the Programs Director for Eastern Europe at the International Gay and Lesbian Association in Europe all responded that Kiev has the highest number of clubs and cafes amenable to the homosexual community in Ukraine (Nash Mir 26 Jan. 2006; UHGHR 31 Jan. 2006; ILGA 2 Feb. 2006). The names of some of these venues are Androgin (Androgen), Matrosskaya Tishina, M Club, (GayUA.com n.d.b; Nash Mir n.d.a; ibid. 26 Jan. 2006) and Kiber (Cyber) (ibid.; GayUA.com n.d.b). In its undated "Gay-guide," Nash Mir also lists the following night clubs and cafes in Kiev: Sov OK, Perlina (Pearl) and Robinzon (Robinson) (Nash Mir n.d.a). The guide also lists two gay beaches, located at Gidropark (Hydropark) and Trukhanovy island (ibid.). The GayUA.com Website adds that Pomada (Lipstick) and Roga are also establishments that cater particularly to the homosexual community in Kiev, though gives no indication as to whether these venues are currently in operation (GayUA.com n.d.b). The same Website lists other venues that are open to receiving homosexual clients in Kiev, including 111, Domashnyaya Kukhnya (Home Cooking), Stena (Wall) and Erik's (ibid.). According to the Website of the Russian gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender centre Together, there are "several gay clubs" in Kiev, including Kletka (Cage), Big Boys Club, Heaven Club, Brodyachaya Sobaka (Stray Dog) and Stary Kiev (Old Kiev) (Gay.ru n.d.b). In May 2005, Patipa Club in Kiev hosted a "Freezone"

party, which was listed on the Nash Mir Website, though the advertisement did not specify whether the event was specifically for the gay and lesbian community (19 May 2005).

Together stated on its Website that they "were unable to detect any traces of the lesbian scene in Kiev, although it [was] rumoured to exist" (Gay.ru n.d.b). Further information on social venues particularly catering to the lesbian community in Ukraine could not be found among the sources consulted.

According to the director of UHGHR, the areas with social establishments most open to homosexual clientele outside of Kiev are the main district cities, though this source did not name these cities (UHGHR 31 Jan. 2006). The director of the Lugansk Nash Mir office also stated that permanent establishments catering to the homosexual community are located mainly in large cities, and events for homosexuals are only occasionally organized in smaller towns (Nash Mir 26 Jan. 2006).

The following information contains the names of social establishments open to the homosexual community in some of the main Ukrainian cities outside of Kiev:

Odessa

In Odessa such venues include the nightclubs 69 (formerly Chernomorets), Domino Disco Club (GayUA.com n.d.d; Nash Mir n.d.a), Palladium Gay Party Club and a gay beach (ibid.).

Kharkov

According to Together, "the gay life of Kharkov ... is centered around cruising areas in parks, railway stations and public [washrooms], and limited to specific time slots in public cafes and saunas" (Gay.ru n.d.a). Social establishments amicable to the homosexual community in Kharkov include the Hobo club, Zolotoye Runo (Golden Fleece), Zdorovye Sauna (Healthy Sauna) (ibid.) and Drive (Nash Mir n.d.a).

Donetsk

According to Gay Forum, there are no establishments that cater particularly cater to gays and lesbians in Donetsk, though the following is a list of cafes and clubs that gays and lesbians reportedly frequent: Gung Yu Bazz, im. Khanzhenkova (named after Khanzhenkova), Virus, NLO and Garage (Gay Forum 26 Jan. 2006).

Lvov

Although it is not a gay establishment, homosexuals [translation] "often" meet at "Bukva Punkt" (Letter Point) (ibid. 25 Jan. 2006).

Simiyiz

Simiyiz has been known since Soviet times as the homosexual capital of

Ukraine (Nash Mir 26 Jan. 2006; Gay.ru n.d.c), and a "gay beach" is located there (Nash Mir n.d.a).

Zaporyzhzhya

Parizh (Paris) café caters to a "mix[ed] crowd" in Zaporyzhzhya (ibid.).

Simferopol

The Utopia Club and Dva Kapitana Club (Two Captains Club) are two venues listed for Simferopol in Nash Mir's undated "Gay guide" for Ukraine (ibid.).

Kryvyi Rig

Two establishments listed in the Nash Mir "Gay guide" are the GL Club and Nash Klub (Our Club) (ibid.).

Chernovtsy

According to Nash Mir, Café Miteteyna is a "public mix" (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Oral sources: Several unsuccessful attempts were made to contact the Gender Laboratory in Kiev and the Ukrainian Gay and Lesbian Association in Odessa.

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