

# “Let them see us!”

With close to 39 million inhabitants, Poland is by far the largest of the accession countries to join the EU in May 2004. Over 90% of the Polish population are Roman-Catholic, and the church continues to be a very influential institution. This is clearly reflected in social perceptions of homo-  
It comes as little surprise in this context, that – despite some improvement – the general public continue to perceive homosexuality in a negative light. This is reflected in the high percentage (57%)

of Polish citizens that expressed an adverse attitude to gays and lesbians in a public opinion poll in July 2000.<sup>1</sup> Many continue to link homosexuality to paedophilia and condemn it either from a moral and/or a medical perspective.

To live one's homosexuality openly in such a context is difficult. Still, the Polish LGBT environment is thriving and, despite justified fear of discrimination, increasingly acts in the open. The Equality Parade, Poland's first gay pride parade, that took place in Warsaw on 1 May 2003 and attracted over 3000 participants, is one

case in point. Another example that received much media attention in Poland and beyond was the “Let them see us” poster campaign. Amidst public controversy,

There are differences in the way one is perceived, treated, and looked upon as a homosexual in different countries. Those differences are most visible

## **The church continues to react to homosexuality in a hostile manner, often depicting homosexuality either as morally deviant or a curable medical condition.**

it still continues, sending a strong message to Polish society: “Look at us! We are here and we are a part of this country just like anyone else. Like it or not, you cannot ignore us forever!”

and striking when moving from one country to another. Karolina Bregula, a photographer, moved from Stockholm to Warsaw and decided to challenge the common perception of gays and lesbians that she encountered.

<sup>1</sup> OBOP (2000): *Social perception of homosexuality*, Warsaw.