

CVS-BULGARIA PRESENTS:



BUNTact

1st Edition

Presentation

We, the long-term volunteers in the project 'Volunteering Circles' of CVS-Bulgaria*, have gathered to work on this magazine where we share thoughts, concerns, experiences and opinions. The aim of this magazine is to express ourselves in relation to subjects of our interest that we conceive as present in everyone's lives nowadays. Hopefully, we will also generate some discussions and opinions within these topics and even further, that you can share with us through the social media of the organization, as a message or in the form of an article. Volunteering and activism are the two sides of a coin, especially in the field of Human Rights. We believe in the importance of a constructive discussion and thus this is the activism that we are thrilled to start and navigate further.

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ELDER CARE

The current times are definitely being challenging for everyone and are fostering many reflections, discussions and changes. Some groups are suffering more than others, not only for being vulnerable targets for the Covid19 but for background situations that hinder survival not only in terms of staying alive or not. Going through this experience with certain levels of dignity and calm is certainly not being easy in many homes. All of them deserve to be spoken about but in this case, we bring a focus on the elderly. Not only for being the population at risk, therefore being the ones who must take the most strict measures of isolation, but for the previous isolation and dependency that many of them were already experiencing.

Sadly, as everybody knows, the change in dynamics in Western cultures is modifying family structures in a direction that reverts the hierarchy, placing the elderly in the bottom, who become the 'forgotten ones', whereas before they were the head, even the glue, of the family. One might blame a system that summons individual value in the production, whatever that production means -either academic recognition, money, property, heritage- and sees those whose work years are over like unimportant. For some countries with welfare systems, they might even become a burden to an administration that has to support them. Again, only those who have proven their value, i.e. have been productive, get to receive a pension that will facilitate their journey through the old age.

But the loosening of family values might be also related to the loosening of moral values in general, propelled by a society that promotes a race with the others and individualism, in which other people are seen as tools or means to reach our goals and achievements.

The truth is that old age usually carries with it different physical and mental problems due to a body that doesn't have the strength and resistance from before and most people have to decide on different types of elder care depending on needs and difficulties. The main alternatives are home care and elderly residences.

Home care is common when the level of dependency of the old person is yet not so high. When the person is still capable of performing basic daily activities like feeding or cleaning him or herself, only occasional support might be needed for some household chores and relatives can address that themselves. Including safety measures like bars or adapted seats is also a plus to continue "aging in place". If the old person needs assistance in feeding, moving, taking meds or keeping hygiene, a professional caregiver would be the best supporter. A live-in carer could also be an option for attention 24/7.

However, relatives must remain present and willing to help, since staying at home carries the risk of isolation, and even the interruption of the treatments recommended by the geriatrician. A good solution is to attend a day center where to socialize and participate in different activities to improve the general status of the person or slow down deterioration.

On the other hand, senior residences are the alternative when the old person is not capable of living on his/her own anymore and the relatives do not want or cannot have them at their home. From assisted living facilities to nursing homes depending on the level of assistance that the person requires, needs are covered both in the medical and social ways. Again, it is desirable for the relatives to keep connected and involved, with frequent visits to the old person, who

might otherwise feel abandoned in the hands of strangers.

The options and elder care system vary among countries, as well as the support by the government. It is worth mentioning the system of countries like U.S., known as sheltered housing, by which the elderly person buys or rents an apartment in a dedicated block with a warden available when necessary, communal lounges or gardens for residents to socialize. There are also retirement communities/senior housing where they are provided, while living independently, amenities and services oriented toward older adults, as well as Continuing Care Retirement Communities, which provide a continuum of care as residents age. They include independent living, assisted living and nursing home care in one location, so seniors live in the same place as their needs change over time, a perfect solution for couples with different levels of care needs. This alternative sounds like a perfect combination of independent living -desired to be preserved by many people-, professional assistance and company.

All these options, however, share one thing in common: they all require to have economical means for their support. No matter if the elderly person needs to have a professional at their home, if they move to a residence or if they live in one of these wholly adapted communities, it all goes through money. The alternatives then for low-income families get limited mainly to homecare in a relative's home, often turning into a huge burden for the family in terms of money and time or effort. How fair is this? And how often is the alternative chosen in accordance to the best interest of the person in need instead of the families'? Even though I do not have the answers to these questions, I honestly believe that all services should be accessible for everyone, and should guarantee an aging with dignity. It is a scourge that in many countries, the elderly are left homeless because they cannot benefit from elder care services.

Another question that rises is the ownership of these facilities by private companies. As stated earlier in this article, the aim of this system is to maximize production. In this regard, the control of residences to not be overcrowded or understaffed in order to make more benefit becomes a priority, like it is in some prisons managed by private companies.



Image Source: www.griswoldhomecare.com

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the gender bias in the field of elder care, presenting a vast majority of women professionals. This prolongs the traditional gender roles of women as caregivers, always willing to serve a third person with patience, disposition and sweetness. Further, in some countries like mine (Spain), these women are usually migrant women who get access to the labor market that other people do not want anymore. I can only perceive as bleeding the idea of having to take care of the members of a foreign family instead of her own, often left behind in the country of origin.

//Beatriz Cintas Cantarero

The road to love is long, baby

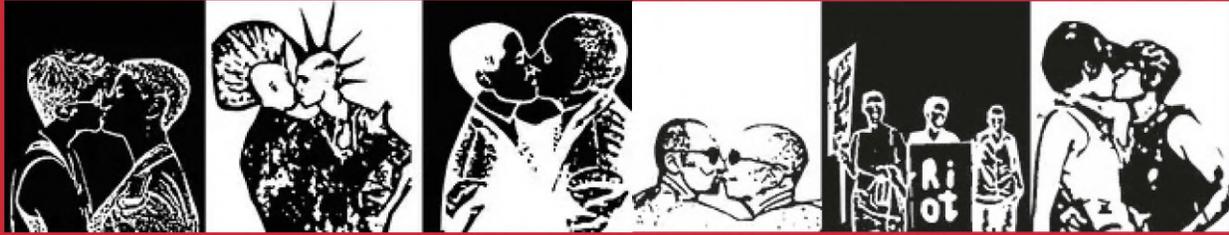


Image Source: www.gayinthecl.com

With a month to go to reach June, the Pride month, it is always good to remember the long road to get here even though we can never forget what remains to be done.

Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Trans, Inter and all those who see themselves in the rainbow flag are not only looking for recognition within the law, but in all fields of life: in schools, in health, in justice, in jobs, in the media and on the streets.

Despite notable legislative and civilizational advances, inequalities and discrimination persist. It is necessary to organize ourselves in order to counter this sad reality, promoting a freer society and valuing all types of freedoms.

We realize that the fight is universal. This struggle does not end with borders. We don't want an unstable world with unstable perceptions. It is an equal and full democracy what we aspire to in the world.

What is left to be done?

The definition of public policies to promote equality and non-discrimination regarding people that are non-normative in terms of sexuality is an extremely important step that we must make happen as an active society.

Starting with Trans health, it is necessary to create health strategies for LGBTIQ+ people and to prepare health professionals to respond to the needs of Trans and Intersex people. It is necessary to influence countries' state budgets to take these issues into account as well as to monitor the implementation of changes and their means.

We cannot forget the very important role that NGOs and LGBTIQ activists have played and still play. I dare to say that many of the advances made in recent years were also because of them.

However, the work of NGOs does not take governments' responsibility away. On the contrary, Governments must take an active role in promoting and defending effective equality, namely by supporting associations that often replace the State in these matters. This process shouldn't be a complication of endless bureaucracies, which only very few can access.

In addition, we must not forget the training programs for teachers and other professionals in the areas of health, justice and security forces on non-discrimination and LGBTIQ rights.

There is still much more to do. There are European countries where even marriage and adoption for individuals of the same sex are not legal or where the process of sex change is not recognized.

Countries where LGBTIQ+ people are still murdered, where justice does nothing because of lack of efficiency or interest, still exist.

No matter the circumstances, we must keep activism alive. We can never be content with the few rights that are offered to us with a tone of great social progress. Equal rights cannot be a privilege, they need to be a reality.

The road that has been traveled is long, so long, but it is still far from ending. Let's go through it together, baby.

//Bianca de Almeida



Photo credit: Alex Jackman

PRIVACY IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

One of the bigger threats this pandemic opposes is the violation of our privacy and the misuse of population data that could be carried out in the name of fighting the virus and that, in some cases, could tag along for more time than necessary.

Technology is a marvelous tool that can enable us to spread messages about public health, monitor the spreading of cases or improve the management of humanitarian and sanitary resources.

A good example of the power of using technology and data to fight the pandemic is the case of South Korea. "One of the reasons why everything worked out so well here is that they have a lot of surveillance cameras, so it is easy to track the places where the patient was and disinfect" says L, who is temporarily living in the country.

Likewise, most governments are starting to use data from our phones to track coronavirus cases. Some of them are doing so anonymously, without revealing the identity of the patients, but some of them are not, raising some concern due to the risk of stigmatization of infected people.

Although using data to track the virus can be a great idea, according to Amnesty International governments have to be able to carry this monitoring ensuring that these measures are contained in the law, necessary, proportionate, limited in time and applied with transparency and adequate supervision.

Moreover, some nations have begun to employ wristbands instead of phones to perform this tracking. In fact, there is a trial ready to start in Sofia (Bulgaria), which will test this type of devices within a small group of people. The main function of these wristbands is to monitor the infected and to inform if someone is breaking quarantine. These devices, though, can also monitor other kind of information such as the wearer's heart rate.

Therefore, the collected data is not only whether you are infected or not, or your



Image Source: www.inteligencia.rockcontent.com

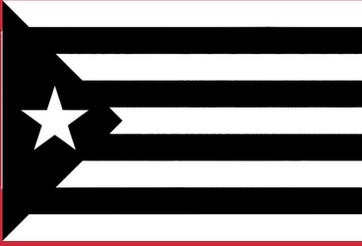
location, but also your own biometric measures. This should not be belittled as, in words of the philosopher Yuval Harari, this epidemic can mark a "transition from over the skin to under the skin surveillance".

One of the proposals to avoid the invasion of our privacy from third parties is to allow the voluntary access to our own personal data which is stored temporarily by the phone companies. In this way, there could be an automated process by which the confirmed cases could have a clear map of all the activities they did the previous days and be able to contact all the people involved in them.

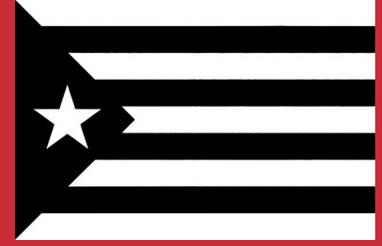
Recently, Apple and Google have announced a collaboration to develop an asset for mobile phones who enables, via Bluetooth to warn those who have been in contact with an infected, without revealing their identity. Although this can be a great tool and would be developed according to international laws, we are not talking of governments anymore, we are talking of giant corporations who already have an enormous power over the world and our data. Therefore, we have to think really carefully if it is wise to grant this type of information to private companies over which, in case anything went wrong, none could put a stop to.

All of this can remind us of a dystopian novel and make us refuse any app or tracking device at all costs. Nonetheless, the accent here is not whether we should use data or not, but to pay attention on how we do it and to whom we are giving it to.

//Sara Coll Lopez



Answers to the 'WHYs' about Catalan independence



Catalonia is one of the Autonomous Communities of Spain. Its capital city is Barcelona. This Autonomy has its own government, police, language, and its own distinct culture.

Why does Catalonia want independence? Catalonia is one of the richest parts of Spain and pays about 10 billion euros per year more in taxes than it receives in money spent in the region. But there is more than that, Catalans take great pride of their culture, language, and heritage. There is a strong sense of nationalism among many Catalans and they view themselves as distinct from the rest of Spain.

How did Catalonia become part of Spain and why are they calling now for independence?

There are several historical things to tell, starting from the year 1162. However, the most recent and important doings could be:

-During the 20th century, Catalan institutions were abolished and Catalan culture and language were suppressed by two dictators. During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco thousands of people were executed, one of them was the president of Catalonia, at the time, Lluís Companys.

-In 2006, a new Statute of Autonomy was passed by referendum in Catalonia, which would give more powers to the region. However, the Statute was challenged and taken to the Spanish Constitutional Court.

This caused outrage for many and fueled Catalan nationalism. The Court, in 2010, ruled several of the Statute's articles to be unconstitutional.

-In 2017, Catalonia had pledged to hold a legally binding referendum on independence. The Constitutional Court of Spain declared the referendum illegal. However, the Catalan government shared their intention to go ahead with the vote regardless of those declarations. On September 20th, the Catalan Parliament was raided by Spanish police, and 14 government officials were arrested for their involvement in the separatist movement. On the 1st of October, the referendum went ahead as planned. Spanish police were deployed to Catalonia and forcibly prevented people from voting, with over 800 being injured. Despite the police presence, 90% of people voted in favor of Catalonia becoming an independent republic. Since then, the president Carles Puigdemont fled to Brussels to ask for political asylum, the Spanish general attorney filed charges of rebellion, sedition, and misuse of public funds against Puigdemont. Also, 9 Catalan leaders were arrested and nowadays are serving between 9 and 13 years in prison for their involvement in the independence movement.

Some anonymous pro-independence people have given their opinion:

"I would like Catalonia to be independent so that the rest of Spain does not take advantage of us and we can decide our future. I think that at first, we would have to adapt, but then it would work well, and in this way, we Catalans would live better". C.C.

"I want independence because every nation in the world has a right to self-determination. To have independence for me is to achieve the maximum freedom that people can achieve." T.G

"I want independence because I believe that Catalans are not listened to by Spaniards neither economically, nor politically. I also think that Catalonia has its own language and culture and is self-sufficient, it does not need to depend on the collective of Spain and the monarchy, I have no sense of belonging to the Spanish state and for me, it would mean liberation and respect for our territory." M.M

"For me, independence means the freedom to decide what is important (such as education or health) in a concrete way, without having to go through the standardization of all regions. May we be able to meet the needs of our country the way it deserves, without having to pay more ". J.M.

"I want the independence of Catalonia because I do not feel represented by the political values of the Spanish state. I think that the Spanish system is too ingrained in the "Franco" ideology. It acts from a unionist perspective without applying appropriate policies to today's society. I think that fighting for a new country can give a lot of new opportunities to operate and leave Spain." SB

// Anna Farriol

Living abroad through the eyes of a Russian citizen

Being Russian means to be surprised by almost everything in European countries. Bulgaria is not an exception, even though we had really close connections in the past.

This is my first experience of long-term living abroad. I can't say that I was prepared for it since I have been living with my parents all my life, which means that you think that the fridge is always full, the flat is always clean and that in case something goes wrong, there are people behind you who will support you. Here in Bulgaria I had to learn how to live without parents. It is said that one obstacle that foreigners face here is a language barrier. As a Russian and English speaker I didn't feel it, because the younger generation speaks English and their parents speak Russian.

Taking Bulgarian lessons has also helped me to be able to make an order or buy food. So this part was super easy for me.

Currency difference is what I suffered a lot with during the first month in Bulgaria. I tried to convert Bulgarian leva to Russian rubles to understand the price and value of products.

Eventually I realized that in every country I should use

their own currency when thinking about the value of money. When I changed my mind in this way, my suffering ended.

Food is also a topic that you have to think about in advance. You might not find products that you are used to in your country or these products will be more expensive and the desire to spend money on them will fade away. On the other hand, you will find local dishes that you will not only like but become addicted, eating them every day. That happened to me: I used to eat banitsa

every day, even more than once, but somehow this addiction is gone now.

Another issue of coming to a foreign country is not knowing anything about places. This fear appears when you are still in your home country. You don't know where you can walk, where you can eat or where you can buy clothes. Everything can be discovered with time, but at the time of landing to a new place you feel completely lost. It is good to not be scared of asking people, what I actually did on the first days.

Another thing that is important to mention is that you know nobody. I was lucky having three roommates with me in the beginning because we came through all challenges together. When you start to visit events, you get acquainted with locals that usually provide enormous amounts of information about their country, which helps you to feel safe.

The freedom that is so common in other European countries also exists in Bulgaria. No one will judge you by your religion, skin color, food preferences, your appearance or life position. Everybody understands that each

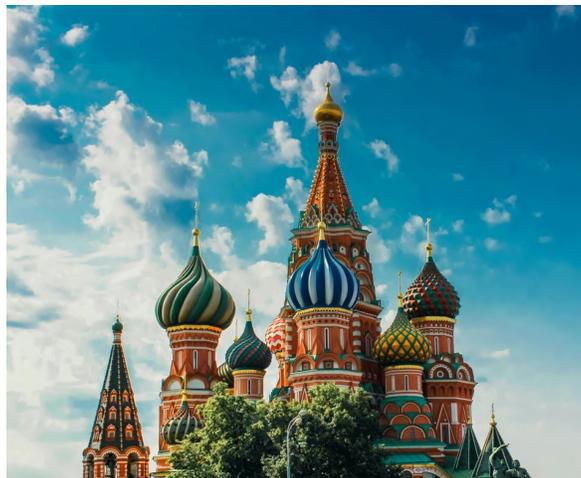
huge difference for me compared to Russia. I felt like I had come out from the cage, that my hands were not tied anymore and that I could fly.

One of the steps of becoming a local is culture and traditions. Even a small gesture like nodding your head can have an absolutely different meaning like it happens in Bulgaria. The way locals wear

wear clothes, the way they speak, the way they have a meeting or a call... it's something you get used to in a short time.

Step by step you make your place cozy, you meet people, you learn customs and this place becomes yours. And you love this city, you love how people act or don't act, and you feel HOME.

//Gyuzel Gaffanova



Dangerous times for freedom of speech

Since this crazy pandemic atmosphere has been spreading all over the world, huge numbers of fake news have appeared in diverse resources. Misunderstand and unverified information leads to an increase of panic among the population. Some countries are taking legal measures against those who spread fake news about COVID-19 because they consider that fake news are extra viruses in need of containment. Let's see how governments are fighting disinformation.

For Bulgaria, the punishment for spreading false information is 3 years in prison and 10 000 leva fine that equals 5000 euros. In particularly serious cases, penalties could be increased to 5 years of imprisonment and fines of up to 50,000 leva (25,000 Euros). The president emphasized that the rule will be kept even after the crisis. Similar rules are being applied in Russia - the public spreading disinformation about circumstances posing a threat to the life and safety of citizens, or about accepting measures for providing safety of population and territories will be punished by fines from 300 000 to 700 000 rubles (from 3 700 to 8 700 euros) or the detention of up to 3 years. In case that fake news lead to accidental health harm, the amount of fine grows to 1 500 000 (18 600 euros) or 3 years in a prison. If it becomes a cause of someone's death or another hard health injures, the fine is up to 2 000 000 (approx. 25 000 euros) or 5 years' imprisonment.

The most draconian fake news legislation is accepted by Singapore's government. They have introduced the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (Pofma), that includes 10 years' imprisonment or a \$1 million (640,000 euros) fine.



Image Source: www.cmjornal.pt

Other States that wouldn't be considered examples of democracy and freedom are putting into practice similar strategies, including the harassment of journalists or the adoption of laws to suppress fake news, as well as to target content on social media that is categorized as undesirable via exiting fake news.

Many journalists count that such emergency measures violate freedom of speech and that in the worst-case scenario countries' authorities can use the law and measures as a tool of suppression of free speech and also extend it to other parts of life as academic researches.

Nowadays there are a lot of journalists and common people all over the world who have been arrested after complaining in social networks about a lack of preventative measures in their territories. In Cambodia, 17 people have been arrested on fake news charges for comments they made about the coronavirus, in Turkey 19 from 93 suspects also were blocked after their comments in social media were labeled as "unfounded and provocative", by the government.

Considering all mentioned above, we would like to warn you to use trustful sources and to be careful with your social impressions, posting and reposting.

//Dasha Chernyshova



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