

# The **fear** of holding hands

In Germany being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) is not a big deal anymore. This does not apply for every country in the world though. We asked students from Poland, Brazil and Russia to share their experiences.

Protokolle **Tamara Vogel**

Filip – Poland



## Do a therapy...

I am glad to study at a university that doesn't allow animosity against LGBT people. All the students and professors I know are open-minded. However, Poland in general is not a tolerant country. A public outing isn't safe at all. We're oppressed every day. Our government doesn't follow the European values and discriminates gay people. In addition, there's a tremendous difference between the older and younger generation and between urban and rural areas. Many elder citizens believe that LGBT people could destroy our society. I come originally from a small village where people have many prejudices. Once someone from there told me that people like me should do a therapy because we would suffer from an illness. People in bigger cities just don't care if you're gay, straight, bi or whatever. For them it's just important who you are. Fortunately, the younger generation gives hope for a brighter future.

Filip, mathematics student  
from Wrocław, Poland

Marcos – Brazil



## My university, my bubble

My university is a place where difference is accepted. However, I didn't always live free from discrimination in the academic context. When I was about 16, I was teased by insensitive classmates due to my homosexuality. I cried every day. The situation for LGBT people in Brazil in general is really bad. Therefore, I don't think that my university really reflects these precarious conditions because it feels like being in a bubble. The moment I get out of the university gate, I'm not in a safe place anymore. Outside I have a constant feeling of fear and I am afraid of holding hands with my boyfriend. Brazil has the world's highest LGBT murder rate. The fear increased a lot during and after the presidential elections. With every homophobic or racist statement that the right-wing candidate – and now President – Jair Bolsonaro makes, I am more and more filled with insecurity.

Marcos, psychology student  
from São Paulo, Brazil

Alexej – Russia\*

## Hiding for fair grades

Russia is a country of traditionalism and rigid masculinity. There is a lot of hatred against LGBT people. Especially gays have to constantly expect aggression or even violence. I have the impression that many students at my university judge gays and lesbians and think that they are not "normal". I only have a few friends whom I can trust. The most difficult thing for me is to work in small groups. When you spend so much time together, it is really hard pretending to be hetero. Once, I even invented a girlfriend. I also do not want my professors to know and give me worse grades or do not let me pass an exam. Discrimination in the working sphere is also a big issue. When I did internships or sideline jobs, I never told anyone about my sexual orientation. Many LGBT people here are not successful and can not compete with other colleagues. There were times in which I did not want to accept that I'm gay. But now I know: It is part of my personality. I hope that our society will get more open-minded and many brave LGBT people will stand up for their rights.

\*Alexej (name changed by the editors) is studying Dental Technology in Russia.