

# MANEO +



MANEO's victim support work

**HELP FOR GAY AND**

**BISEXUAL MEN WHO ARE**

**VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

**AND CRIMINAL OFFENCES**

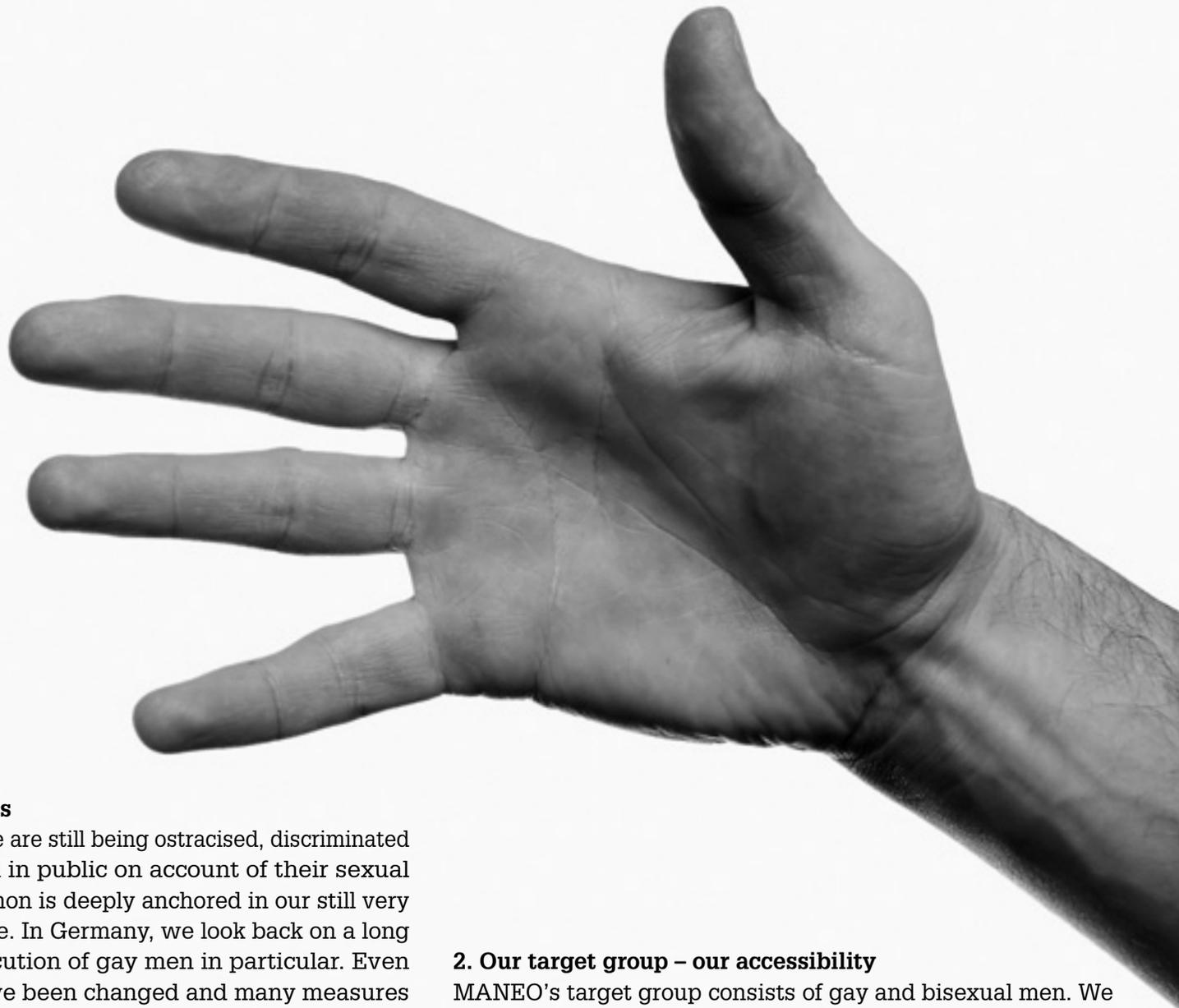


**M**ANEO – THE GAY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT IN BERLIN is independently funded and therefore an autonomous centre of competence. The project works against a backdrop of social diversity, and on a target group-specific and interdisciplinary basis. This is particularly visible in MANEO's professional victim support work. This approach distinguishes the project from general victim support centres and psychosocial and psychological counselling centres in the work with LGBT\* people.

Victim support work is conducted in the context of persistent social discrimination and homophobia against gay and LGBT\*<sup>1</sup> people generally. Thanks to many years' experience, the project is aware of the impact on victims. Work with victims confronts social reality with an approach that combines solidarity

and empowerment, and values cultural and sexual diversity positively. MANEO's professional victim support work also brings together relevant specialist knowledge from all disciplines and debates that touch on this field of work, such as victimology and criminology, criminalistics and the gathering of evidence, criminal and criminal procedure law, witness support without the risk of influence, social law and compensation rights, psycho-traumatology and psychotherapy.

Our professional victim support work requires regular further training and topic-related work in specialist networking circles, as well as membership of professional associations and contributions to their work. Quality management is conducted regularly at MANEO. Quality standards are maintained and developed on an on-going basis.



## 1. Social circumstances

In today's society, people are still being ostracised, discriminated against and assaulted in public on account of their sexual identity. The phenomenon is deeply anchored in our still very male-dominated culture. In Germany, we look back on a long history of state persecution of gay men in particular. Even though many laws have been changed and many measures adopted in a bid to promote equality and end discrimination against LGBT\*<sup>1</sup> people, homophobia still persists in all sub-sections of society. People coming to Germany as tourists, students, jobseekers or refugees often come from one of the many countries in which LGBT\* people are still being persecuted and threatened with death.

We know what these social circumstances mean, which is why we've developed a target group-specific service for gay and bisexual men who are victims of discrimination, exclusion and violence. We help them and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them.

1) The term 'LGBT\*' stands for lesbians, gay men, bi- and trans\* people. The asterisk (\*) also takes into account intersexual and queer people who are not represented by additional letters in the 'LGBT' acronym.

## 2. Our target group – our accessibility

MANEO's target group consists of gay and bisexual men. We are aware that the LGBT\* group includes many people with different concepts of sexual identity. Although MANEO is a Berlin-based project, our reputation is such that LGBT\* people from across Germany turn to us for support. MANEO has its own offices in the Mann-O-Meter advice and information centre that are protected and cannot be seen into from outside. Counselling sessions are also conducted here. The specialist unit is located directly at Nollendorfplatz in the heart of Berlin's rainbow neighbourhood. MANEO can be reached by phone every day from 5–7pm and also in person on weekdays during these times, at Mann-O-Meter.



### 3. Our offer: psychosocial victim support

Our psychosocial victim support service provides victims with information and advice, and help with clarification. We not only address the needs of victims but also those of witnesses, partners and relatives.

Our counselling service encompasses 26 years' experience of victim support. We know that the search for clarity often needs time. An assault or criminal offence that has injured or disturbed the victim gives rise to many pressing questions and uncertainties. We offer time for discussion.

Our resource-oriented approach strengthens the self-confidence and autonomy of gay and bisexual men. We support them in their wish to find a way out of feeling powerless to lead a self-determined life<sup>2</sup>.

#### 3.1. Stabilisation through acceptance and solidarity

MANEO takes victims and their concerns seriously. We question neither the existence of homophobia, trans\*phobia and bias-motivated violence and crime in our society, nor do we question the pressure arising from social expectations to live up to male role models and gender stereotypes. We know that LGBT\* people don't always receive the respect and attention they need and that they often feel misunderstood and not 'credible'. We also know about the formative impact previous experiences can have on many gay men in the current socio-cultural conditions and which have impacted the development and discovery of their own identity<sup>3</sup>.

Bias-motivated crimes always have 'the nature of a message', i.e. the offence is not only intended to harm the victim but also aims to send a signal to an entire group of people with the same characteristics; a single homophobic offence against one gay man is therefore intended, symbolically, as an offence against every gay man. For this reason, specialist victim support work for LGBT\* people is always linked with a clear socio-political counter-signal, namely that victims continue to be a

part of our diverse society and that, rather than abandoning them, the majority society is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with them. This socio-political statement is made credible via MANEO's existence. It can be seen in the fact that MANEO can become more professional and specialised, can network with the various LGBT\* scenes and respond to changes with new offers, and above all can break through the cycle of sequential traumatisation with targeted offers to stabilise victims.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.2. Initial counselling session and psychosocial victim support

Profession and specialist staff are part of MANEO's work. Qualified workers are trained for this activity and undertake regular further training.

These include voluntary workers who have been trained to handle the initial counselling session and receive continuous support in this work, e.g. via regular team meetings, tests and further training offers. They have undergone a period of training and work shadowing, they know the rules and standards of counselling work, and they can understand situations, stabilise victims and pass on initial information to them.

These workers then refer victims to qualified, full-time employees who continue the counselling work as part of our psychosocial victim support service, which further stabilises victims, promotes clarity and provides information and contacts. Psychosocial victim support involves 'case management', i.e. support that is tailored to victims' individual needs and concerns. It covers planning and researching further information, contacts and support, and is integrated into on-going counselling. It is predominantly carried out by a full-time employee who is qualified for this specialist work and who fulfils the requirements for professional psychosocial victim support<sup>5</sup>.

A second full-time employee plays a support role. Both workers are familiar with LGBT\* scenes and structures while at the same time taking the sexual, cultural and social diversity of this target group into account.

2) Bastian Finke, "Prejudice-motivated hate crime and diversity-oriented counselling". In: Hartmann Jutta / ado e.V. (ed.). Perspectives on Professional Victim Support. Wiesbaden 2010.

3) "Recurrent and atmospherically constant - and thereby formative - micro-traumatisation, i.e. problematic attitudes (e.g. of the parent or person responsible for socialisation) towards a person over a long period of time during the psychological development and maturing of this individual, are considerably more formative - and in the worst case scenario more damaging - than one-off events, which are far easier to recognise as traumas." Dr Christian Messer, "Victimisation of people with a homosexual identity in the event of bias-motivated violence". In: Points of view. Texts on Homophobia. MANEO (ed.), Berlin 2009.

4) Cf. Berlin State Commission Against Violence (ed.) (2007): Violence by Boys, Male Youths and Young Men with a Migration Background in Berlin. Report and Recommendations by a Working Group appointed by the Berlin State Commission Against Violence. Berlin Forum on Violence Prevention. No. 28. Berlin. Director of MANEO Bastian Finke contributed to this working group.

5) Cf. Hartmann Jutta / ado e.V. (ed.). Perspectives on Professional Victim Support. Wiesbaden 2010.

### **3.3. Taking homophobic, bias-motivated crimes seriously and recognising them**

Victims aren't always clear about the boundaries between discrimination, hate-crime and non-bias motivated criminal offences. Homophobic, bias-motivated offences aren't always immediately recognisable as such.

For victims, long-term exclusion at school, at work or in the family, or even hiding themselves out of fear of social harm, sometimes become 'completely normal conditions' to which people prefer to adjust even if doing so means compromising their own health. Offenders are sometimes strangers and can no longer be investigated after an offence. Sometimes even the purpose of the offence remains unclear or there is insufficient evidence, e.g. if two gay men walking down the street hand in hand are suddenly hit by people without a word being said, or if the victims who have arranged a blind date are suddenly attacked and robbed, or if a car carrying a rainbow sticker is damaged. Even the fear of having to re-experience the particular episode of homophobic discrimination or violence (e.g. when reporting a criminal offence), which can trigger stressful early memories of discovering one's own sexual identity, can lead to victims preferring to say nothing.

When working with bias-motivated crime, awareness of victims' worries and fears as well as the knowledge that basically every offence can be bias-motivated<sup>6</sup> are important and require particular attention. It is for this reason that our work also covers a whole range of other topics: we not only deal with explicitly homophobic assaults but also with robberies, sexual assaults, knock-out drops, domestic violence, forced marriage and violence against children by family members.

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6) "Hate crimes are criminal actions motivated by bias. It is this bias that distinguishes hate crimes from other crimes. ... The first element of a hate crime is the execution of an action that is considered an offence under criminal law. ... The second element of a hate crime is the particular motivation for carrying out the criminal act...." From: "Hate Crime Laws - A Practical Guide", published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Warsaw 2009, p.16 et seq.

### **3.4. Networking**

MANEO works closely with experts, medical specialists, psychotherapists and lawyers, and is also networked with other counselling centres and institutions. The project is a member of the Arbeitskreis der Opferhilfen in Deutschland (a coalition of victim support institutions) and is active on the association's management committee where it makes a concrete contribution to improving professional victim support work and legal reform in Germany. MANEO protects the anonymity of victims, including from the press and media.

We are also in regular contact with the LGBT\* contact persons at Berlin Police, the German federal police force and the Berlin Public Prosecution Office in order to support victims who wish to file a criminal complaint. In dealing with homophobic, bias-motivated criminal offences, MANEO regularly feeds insights from its work into the dialogue it maintains with police and the Berlin Public Prosecution Office. The aim is to recognise and prosecute bias-motivated crimes better, and to develop more targeted and effective prevention strategies.

#### **4. MANEO – The Gay Anti-violence Project in Berlin**

The name MANEO comes from Latin and means 'I live on'. Our work aims to encourage people who have been subjected to violence to look confidently to the future. MANEO – The Gay Anti-violence Project in Berlin – is an independent Mann-O-Meter project launched 26 years ago. It is the oldest and most well known gay anti-violence project in Germany. MANEO is financed by the Senate Administration of the City of Berlin, which makes it possible for the project to continue and in particular pays for two full-time members of staff, office space, technical equipment and volunteer workers and helpers. Some 400 victims turn directly to MANEO every year.

Our project work covers four core areas: professional victim support work, recording bias-motivated violence against LGBT\* people, violence and crime prevention, and voluntary engagement and empowerment.

MANEO collects donations for a Victim Fund set up in 2014. The aim is to offer small amounts of emergency aid to people who have landed in financial difficulties after being subjected to violent crime.

MANEO has a 20-strong advisory council that supports the project across a wide range of issues.



# MANEO'S OFFER FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME



MANEO's counselling service covers **initial counselling** as well as follow-on **psychosocial victim support**.

In the **initial counselling** session, the incident and its consequences are recorded, early issues are clarified, information about emergency help is given out and, if requested, a date for psychosocial victim support is arranged.

**Psychosocial victim support** includes additional information, support and mediation offers, particularly in relation to the following aspects:



**1. Unsettled by the experience?** Injury not only includes external wounds but also psychological consequences resulting from the incident, e.g. shock, sleep problems, persistent anxiety, major restlessness and deep sadness. We can talk about these things and provide information about medical specialists and therapy offers for psychological trauma

**2. Why are good friends there?** Good friends are there to turn to in a crisis. Contact them, call them, arrange to meet them, invite them over or go and visit them.

**3. Is evidence available?** Please keep all evidence, which can be used to detect traces. This includes e-mails, text messages or contact information for witnesses. Take photos of injuries.

**4. Have you seen a doctor?** All injuries should be recorded by a doctor, as well as any resulting health consequences and the recuperation process. This is why we co-operate with the Outpatient Clinic for Protection against Violence at the Charité teaching hospital in Berlin, as evidence-relevant examinations can also be carried out in our advice centre.

**5. Do you want to lodge a criminal complaint?** You can file a complaint at every police station – but also online at <http://www.berlin.de/polizei/>. There are time limits for some crimes (e.g. insults). Issues often need to be clarified, and concern and anxiety overcome. We offer advice on how to file a criminal complaint and help you through the process. We also provide information about the LGBT\* contact persons at Berlin Police and the Berlin Public Prosecution Office.

**6. Do you need legal advice?** We tell you how you can contact lawyers quickly. A free legal advice service is offered in Mann-O-Meter once a week. Experienced lawyers provide information about costs and help with costs (e.g. via legal aid).

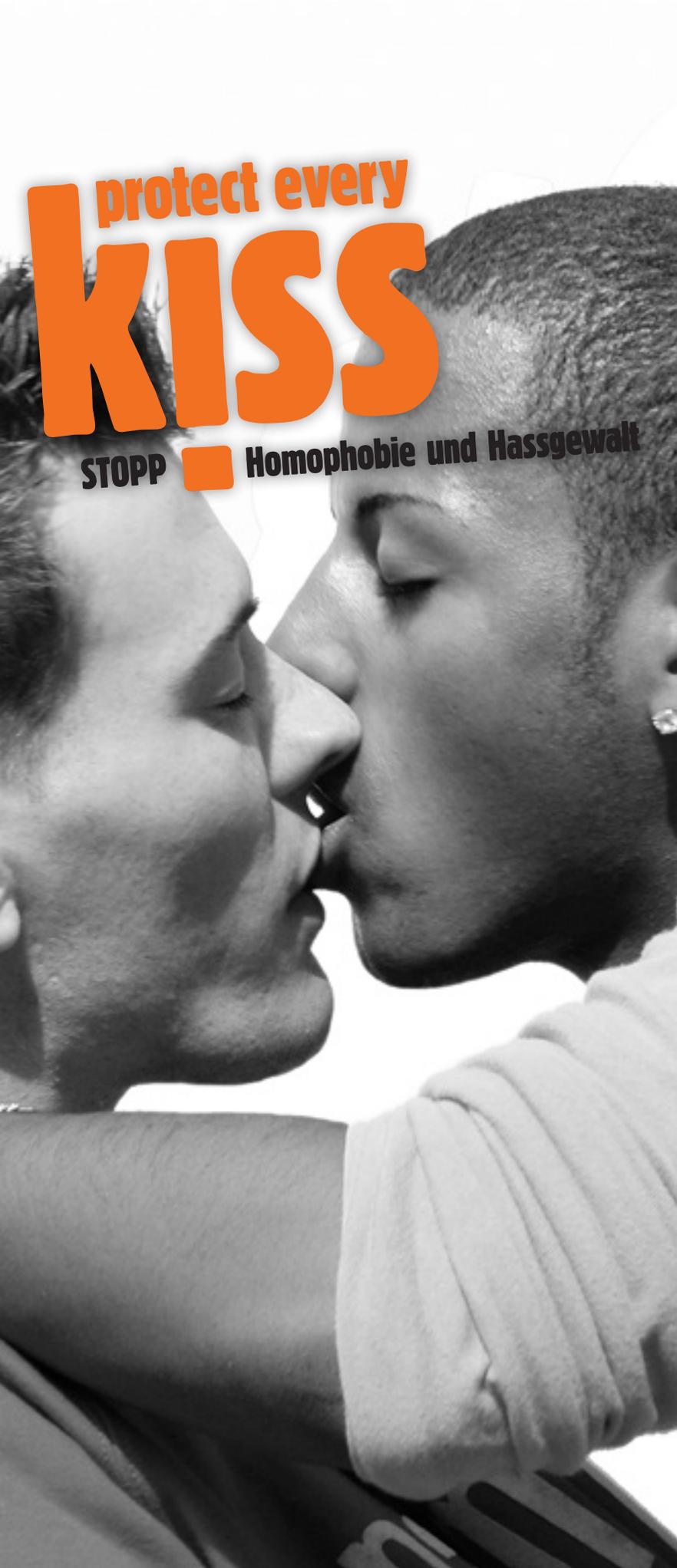
**7. Have you given evidence in court before?** When summoned to a court hearing, you're obliged to turn up and give evidence. Everyone has lots of questions ahead of a court appearance, but people are also afraid, e.g. at the prospect of seeing the perpetrator again. We offer advice and support, and accompany you through the process.

**8. Have you contacted your insurance companies?** You can claim insurance in many cases of damage, provided insurance policies have been taken out. Claims should be clarified.

**9. Do you need information about applying for support?** People whose health has been impaired as a result of violent crime can apply for treatment as well as pension and welfare benefits under the Crime Victims Compensation Act (OEG). We can also provide you with information about the government's hardship fund for victims of extremist attacks as well as other funds.

**10. Do you need additional information, advice and support?** We provide you with information about other support options.





protect every  
**KISS**

**STOPP** ■ **Homophobie und Hassgewalt**

Protect every Kiss – motive of our crime-prevention-campaign for the International Day against Homophobia and Trans\*phobia.

## **EXPERT DISCUSSION**

*Dr Christian Messer, a specialist in psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy/psychoanalysis, and Dr Thomas Marte, a specialist in internal and psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy/psychoanalysis in discussion with Bastian Finke and Moritz Konradi from MANEO*

**MANEO: Homophobic insults are part of everyday life. “Fucking queer!” is one of the most popular expletives in German school playgrounds. What impact can this ‘everyday reality’ have on people exposed to these insults and what consequences are there for homosexual or bisexual people? What is the significance of the role of adults who provide guidance, support and supervision (teachers, trainers, group leaders, etc.)?**

Dr Messer/Dr Marte: It first has to be said that, based on classical development psychology, the foundation stone for personality is laid in the first 6–7 years. As far as homosexuality is concerned, it generally pushes its way into consciousness during puberty. This is in any case a critical age in a person’s life, a vulnerable phase, so being different to most of the others is doubly difficult. If, during this period, when people are finding their identity, they hear a disconcerting insult, it can be enormously unsettling. And if, in this situation, there is a lack of parental care or no other person of trust, it can have a destabilising affect on self-esteem. It is important to stress here, however, that a stable feeling about oneself and one’s suchness is essentially developed in the first years of life. How seriously homophobic insults can cause a personality to waver in adolescence or adulthood is ultimately based on this.

**Are there individual approaches that homosexual men can adopt in order to forearm themselves against homophobic hostility and assaults? Can resilience be improved or strengthened in order to deal with such attacks better should they occur?**

We grow, mature and gain inner stability by learning that there's nothing wrong with us. This is how we develop resilience or, in the opposite case, vulnerability. The attitude shown by the family towards homosexuality and the comments made are crucial. Children have extremely sensitive antennae and perceive an open, comfortable atmosphere as strongly as a dismissive, homophobic one. This doesn't mean, however, that if the earlier situation in the family didn't work that other helpful relationships, for example a supportive circle of friends, can't compensate for a few things later on. An environment that accepts people for who they are is crucial, as it forearms. Support centres such as MANEO are also enormously valuable. And if hostilities or assaults lead to massive psychological destabilisation, people also turn to us as doctors.

**Is early education via children's and teenage literature helpful? Can that act as a counterweight in a dismissive home environment?**

That's actually a difficult question. Parental comments on sexuality, particularly the right to be you, just as you are, are probably more suitable in terms of generating a 'right and wrong' classification in the child. Literature can be helpful, but sometimes also problematic: you can't go wrong with respectful parents but with homophobic parents it may strengthen their resistance and lead to homophobic comments.

**What role does society's condemnation of homophobic insults as a criminal offence play?**

Insults are a criminal offence. That's the reality of it. If we remember that we're all equipped with resilience and vulnerabilities from our development, the key question is: Can I maintain a stable feeling of self-esteem in spite of experiencing insults? Knowledge of the prosecution of an offence under criminal law doesn't always lead to a feeling of satisfaction if that offence has touched the fragile psychological core.

**There is still a problem of frequent trivialisation of insults and their homophobic nature. Even victims play down the importance of homophobic hostilities. Where does this tendency come from?**

We shouldn't forget that the word 'gay' was originally an insult. It was an extremely clever move to appropriate the insult as an identity label. Today, the words 'homosexual' and 'gay' are used synonymously. In his in many respects brilliant phrase, Klaus Wowereit said: "I'm gay – and that's a good thing." The former insult became a value-neutral adjective. And in " – and that's a good thing" is the conviction that it's OK to be this way, that being gay is an integral part of one's own identity in one's overall personality. This phrase is in fact an expression of a successful coming-out process.

The topic of trivialisation is complex. Trivialisation can be a defence but also a healthy feeling of self-esteem. Ultimately, the knowledge that a homophobic insult actually says more about the perpetrator than the victim can also be a relief. At this point, it's worth taking a closer look at the perpetrator. How does homophobia arise? Everyone has parts of themselves that they like and see as good and proper, but there are also parts that are seen as alien and threatening. It is a psychological mechanism to distance oneself from such threatening parts, for example homosexual parts, and to project them onto others; a person's own homosexual parts are then for the moment imperceptible within that person. It's a defence mechanism. It makes it possible to fight something that someone doesn't want or want to be in another person. It saves them having to look at themselves. So homophobia says more about the perpetrator than the victim!

**The police advise people not to risk any escalation or confrontation with perpetrators – in line with the motto “the clever person yields”. Many victims see this withdrawal as long-term humiliation and a burden later on – as if the perpetrator has won. What advice can they be given on how to deal with these experiences?**

Confrontation doesn't do anything to help. On the contrary, it can lead to escalation. As if that wasn't already dramatic enough, courageous helpers have often paid the price for assisting with their own lives. The victim is always fully unprepared for the massive potential for aggression on the part of the perpetrator and therefore has no real chance of emerging from the situation as the winner, and maybe strengthened in his or her own life, even if such an impulse may arise as a reflex action. So you can only attempt to withdraw from the danger situation as quickly as possible. If we remember the mechanism of how homophobia occurs, it becomes clear just how much the perpetrator is unconsciously fighting his own inner world. That can't be resolved in any heated confrontation. Here, you need the police and supporters such as MANEO. These then also form a key 'auxiliary I' for the victim to help him heal the resulting internal damage.

**It is said that early experiences of homophobia and homophobic violence – including insults, exclusion, discrimination and humiliation – increase the willingness of gay men to put themselves in dangerous situations. Studies link previous homophobic experiences with risky sexual behaviour and drug use. How could this cycle be broken**

You have to be very careful not to draw simple cause-and-effect relationships from these studies. Ultimately, we're talking about patterns here and you have to be very precise when explaining what motivates a person to engage in risk-taking behaviour. There's a wide spectrum between people who consciously expose themselves to risks, and are aware of all the dangers, and those who are driven to do so unconsciously. It is also possible that a complex inner conflict extending to a mental disorder plays a role. In our practice, we regularly see how self-care can suffer massively in patients who in the past have experienced abuse or relationships with boundary violations. So risk-taking behaviour is a highly complex phenomenon. The crux of the matter is again childhood and the question of how stably an inner image of oneself with all one's parts has been able to develop free from fear, shame and guilt feelings. If this has been successful, then it forearms for life and also against homophobia. If people are suffering from their suchness, who they are, then medical psychotherapeutic help is often necessary.

*Dr Christian Messer is President of the German Association of Psychosomatic Medicine and Medical Psychotherapy (BDPM). Dr Thomas Marte is a Member of the BDPM's Executive Committee*

Picture taken from MANEOs social spot  
"Love Hurts" (2006), produced by DFFB  
(the German Film- and TV-Academy Berlin)  
in cooperation with Miami Ad School.

## DR. CHRISTIAN MESSER

**MANEO has had a voluntary advisory council since 2005. Its members include 20 women and men, gays, lesbians and heterosexuals, including Klaus Wowereit, the former Governing Mayor of Berlin, Lala Süsskind, the former Chair of the Jewish Community in Berlin, Seyran Ate , a lawyer and women's rights campaigner, André Schmitz, Berlin's former State Secretary for Cultural Affairs, and Werner Gegenbauer, President of Hertha BSC Berlin.**



Dr Christian Messer has been a member of the advisory council since 2007. The 52-year-old is a specialist in psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy with his own practice in Berlin since 2005. He is a lecturer at the Academy for Psychosomatic Medicine (APM). As President of the German Association of Psychosomatic Medicine and Medical Psychotherapy (BDPM), he represents the field and psychotherapy at the German Association of Medical Specialists (Spitzenverband der Fachärzte Deutschlands) and chairs the Psychotherapy Committee in the specialist fields. He is the District Vice-Chairman for Berlin-Brandenburg at the German Society for Psychosomatic Medicine and Medical Psychotherapy (DGPM) and is active as a representative of medical self-governance in numerous bodies and on other executive committees.

“MANEO's support is important because, from my point of view as a medical specialist, a quickly achievable, low-threshold and competent contact point for victims plays a critical role in the form and course of physical, psychosomatic and somatic effects. Victims of homophobic violence in particular are often exposed to stigmatisation by first-aiders who can intensify the impact of a traumatic event dramatically. MANEO intervenes preventively and has a modulating impact. It frequently prevents chronic courses of illness and thereby protracted, costly treatments within the social security system.

“I maintain short, straightforward and neighbourly lines of communication with Bastian Finke for medical issues, and offer victims diagnostic and therapeutic support if necessary.”“

