

Adopted December 2009, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Policy paper on education

The Strategic Plan 2008-2010 mentions the adoption of policy papers as a positive strategy to help IGLYO in its advocacy work. This document is the first of a series of policy papers on the core focuses of the 2008-2010 Strategic Plan.

This document builds on the work that IGLYO has been doing since 2006 in the field of education. It provides an overview of previous efforts and scopes out future actions, in order to develop a cohesive policy for IGLYO's work in the field of education.

A policy paper should not be a place to voice exhaustive opinions on matters as complex as curricula, teacher training or LGBT mainstreaming in education—issues that constantly evolve, are highly dependent on regional and national contexts, and should be the object of strong political action rather than internal documents. Rather, this policy paper was drafted to outline the types of actions that should be pursued in the field of education to help achieve IGLYO's vision.

The paper consists of three parts: a background to IGLYO's work around education; information on recent activities and good practice in the field of education; and focus points for future advocacy in this area.

As part of its process of development in recent years, this is the first time that IGLYO attempts to create a policy paper. In the long term this progression will enable IGLYO's actions to be better recognised and enable it to carry out stronger advocacy work. This present policy paper was adopted by IGLYO's Members at the General Assembly of December 2009.

1. Background to IGLYO's work around education

IGLYO's vision is a world where we, young people in all our diversity, are able to express and define our own sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, and are able to participate fully in all aspects of life, achieve to our full potential, and enjoy respect and positive recognition.¹

It is crucial that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) young people are included, respected and recognised in the field of education. Our educational systems are the obligatory passage for young people who are today's and tomorrow's citizens; so a very important way to make sure our societies are inclusive of LGBTQ people is to ensure that our schools and universities are.

¹ Strategic Plan 2008-2010, adopted by the General Meeting of Members in Málaga, Spain, December 2007.

Sadly, this is far from the case. Our societies, thus our schools and universities, are governed by norms. These norms, particularly the heteronorm², privilege some and exclude others. Thereby creating discrimination, inequality, and homo-, lesbo-, bi-, trans-, and queer-phobia, and other xenophobic behaviours. In 2006, the joint IGLYO-ILGA-Europe *Social Exclusion Report*³ found that as many as 61% of the young LGBT respondents reported negative personal experiences in schools: social exclusion, bullying, harassment, verbal and physical aggressions, and curriculum-based discrimination on the basis of their perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation. This was the highest percentage of experienced discrimination, above family, circles of friends or communities.

IGLYO believes that the entire educational system should be a safe environment for the LGBTQ people.

Achieving our vision requires strong advocacy and capacity-building work in the field of education not only in primary and secondary education, but in higher education as well.

2. Recent activities and good practice around education

Throughout the past four years, IGLYO has initiated or taken part in eight projects on or strongly relating to education. These projects constitute IGLYO's most recent work in the field of education, and are the basis for work in this domain in the near future.

2006 Joint *Social Exclusion* report with ILGA-Europe, presented at the European Parliament in September 2006 (and at various occasions thereafter, including at IGLYO events, to the Council of Europe's All Different All Equal campaign team, to Norwegian government workers and policy-makers, etc.)

Drafting and lobbying for the European Parliament declaration 11/2007 against homophobic bullying in schools with the European Parliament LGBT Intergroup.

2007 Joint study session with OBESSU⁴: *Understanding, Developing and Implementing LGBT-inclusive Policies in Schools across Europe* (Strasbourg, France) with 28 participants.

Research and publication of the Education report.

Joint submission with ILGA-Europe as part of the European Commission consultation on schools for the 21st century.

² Heteronorm describes an environment where it is taken for granted that societies, systems, institutes and processes are constructed with the assumption that the people in them are heterosexual.

³ Takács, J. (2006) *The social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Europe*. Brussels: ILGA-Europe and IGLYO.

⁴ Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

2008 *Enlightenment I* training course (Oslo, Norway) with 26 participants who went into Norwegian secondary schools to deliver training on LGBT rights.

Start of the informal following of the horizontal anti-discrimination directive.

Meeting of the Education Steering Team (London, UK) to discuss partnerships and past and future actions in the field of education with Members and partner organisations.

2009 Publication of the *Guidelines for an LGBTQ-inclusive education*, outcome of a two-year project starting with the 2007 study session.

Several strands of activities emerge from these projects:

- **Build the capacity** of our Member through international events.
- Carry out and disseminate **research**, especially independent youth-initiated research, in order to highlight youth-specific issues.
- **Monitor** developments around education in the pan-European region. Member Organisations are encouraged to feed back on their activities to IGLYO as part of this monitoring.
- **Raise awareness** about LGBTQ youth and student issues within wider education policy debates not only in primary and secondary education, but in higher education as well with the intention to mainstream these issues.
- Work against heteronormativity and for intersectional⁵ approaches through norm-critical methods.

These strands are the basis for the focus points outlined below.

3. Focus point for future advocacy in the field of education

Based on the background and recent activities undertaken in the field of education, IGLYO should focus its future activities in this field around the following focus points:

- Actively **lobby for the EU horizontal anti-discrimination directive**, both independently to represent the interests of LGBTQ youth, in accordance with IGLYO's vision and in partnership with organisations such as the European Youth Forum and ILGA-Europe.

⁵ Intersectionality is a sociological theory that describes communities and individuals who identify/or are identified as fitting into various social/culturally created categories of discrimination e.g. LGBTQ, disabled, ethnicity. These categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality.

- Actively **advocate against negative legal developments** in national and international law, and closely follow these developments in partnership with relevant Member Organisations.
- **Co-convene a pan-European conference on LGBTQ youth and education** in partnership with interested organisations, including but not limited to OBESSU⁴, ESU⁶, ILGA-Europe, and potentially other organisations such as Education International, the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and others.
- **Continue organising focused capacity-building events** for Member Organisations, particularly in the field of schooling and formal education. This includes organising events to train Member Organisations to work with staff that come into contact with LGBTQ youth and students, such as but not limited to teachers, staff in schools, and social workers.
- Carry out independent youth-initiated research, and further **produce and disseminate publications** in the field of education, both ad-hoc (project reports, research, guidelines...) and periodically (as part of the *IGLYO On...* quarterly series).
- Target gender and transgender issues, especially to work against the widespread transphobia and gender discrimination at all levels of the educational system. This work could include but is not limited to events, publication, etc.
- Actively **mainstream LGBT youth issues** into wider education policy debates at the international level, for instance by attending events and responding to consultations in the field of education. This should be considered in particular, but not exclusively, for policy debates around teacher training, primary and secondary curricula, university policies, and anti-bullying work.

⁶ European Student Union