



LGBTQI Inclusive Education

Follow-up meeting to evaluate the education sector responses to violence based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics

Tuesday 23 January 2018

European Parliament

1. Background

The event intends to provide a platform for national government, European institutions, and civil society representatives to review the current situation on LGBTQI inclusion within schools, share experiences and good practices, and plan concrete actions for further improvements.

2. Aim

This European follow up meeting to UNESCO's *International Ministerial Meeting on the education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression* will provide an important opportunity to review the commitments made by Member States who signed the call and update on their progress.

IGLYO –The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth & Student Organisation– will also present a preview of the first LGBTQI Inclusive Education Index and Report. This new research provides detailed information about the concrete measures that all Members States have taken to ensure inclusive education and to tackle discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics. It has been created in partnership with civil society organisations and education experts and is intended to be a resource for governments to evaluate the current levels of inclusion within their own country and build international commitment.

Additionally, the event is intended to provide an opportunity for discussion on current progress and future actions that can be achieved at national level through policy making and legislative initiatives. Civil society organisations and governmental representatives will present relevant work in the field of LGBTQI inclusive education to encourage greater dialogue and co-operation between Member States on this important issue. Finally, Member States' representatives and European parliamentarians will have the chance to provide their initial responses to the LGBTQI Inclusive Education Index and Report.

The format of the conference will be intended to foster dialogue and generate discussion. A summary will follow the meeting.

3. Agenda

09.00 – 10.00

Registration

Participants are expected at 9:15 am in front of the "Event Participants and Guests" desk (former *Info Point*), next to the ASP SIMONE VEIL entrance in the promenade – Place Lux side.

10.00 – 10.30

Opening [[Room ASP 5 E1](#)]

Welcome speeches

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, MEP, Co-Chair of the Child Rights Intergroup in the EP

Terry Reinkte, MEP, Co-Chair of the EP Intergroup on LGBTI Rights

Yongfeng Liu, UNESCO Programme Specialist

Euan Platt, IGLYO Executive Co-ordinator

10.30 – 10.45

UNESCO Call for Action by Ministers to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from discrimination and violence [[Room ASP 5 E1](#)]

UNESCO will present the Ministerial Call for Action to underline the commitments already made by member states and provide a framework for next steps

Yongfeng Liu, UNESCO Programme Specialist

Eunice den Hoedt, UNESCO Project Officer

10.45 – 11.00

Coffee break

11.00 – 11.45

Presentation of previous research and work on inclusive education [[Room ASP 5 E1](#)]

Presentations of existing measurement tools and research, followed by plans for European surveys on LGBTQI learners' experiences. This will include a discussion on how such surveys can be used for accelerating the implementation of inclusive and equitable education for all learners.

Eleni Tsetsekou, Council of Europe Head of SOGI Unit

Eliza Byard, GLSEN Executive Director

Peter Dankmeijer, GALE Executive Director

Sophie Aujean, ILGA Europe Senior Education Officer

Rubén Ávila, IGLYO Education Officer

11.45 – 12.30

Reaction Panel [[Room ASP 5 E1](#)]

MEPs, European Commission and Member State representatives to give brief responses to the research

Julie Ward, MEP (S&D)

Hilde Vautmans, MEP (ALDE)

Caroline Sundberg, European Students' Union

Ferre Windey, OBESSU



12.30 – 13.30

Lunch

13.30 – 14.45

Good practices and reporting by Member States' representatives [\[Library, Room 6D 128\]](#)

Reporting by Member States' representatives and civil society organisations on good practices and progress in relation to LGBTQI inclusion in education

Joe Kosciw, GLSEN – European School Climate Survey

Bruno Selun, Kumquat Consult – CoE Education sector responses to SOGIE-based violence research

Tove Mogstad Slinde, Ministry of Education and Research (Norway)

Krista Nuutinen, Ministry of Justice (Finland) [TBC]

Ben Baks, LGBTI & Gender Equality (the Netherlands)

14.45 – 15.45

Inclusive education report review & action planning [\[Library, Room 6D 128\]](#)

Member States' representatives to review the preview report, provide initial feedback and plan next steps

15.45 – 16.00

Conclusions [\[Library, Room 6D 128\]](#)

Closing speeches by IGLYO, the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights, and the LGBTI Intergroup

4. Orientation paper

Everyone has the fundamental right to quality education. All forms of discrimination or violence in schools are an obstacle to this fundamental right. School violence and bullying is one of the most important problems taking place inside educational institutions. According to UNESCO, it is estimated that 246 million children and adolescents experience school violence and bullying in some form every year (UNESCO, 2017). Although this form of violence is motivated by many different factors (gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.), research shows that learners who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or intersex still face a more difficult situation in schools (Council of Europe, 2016; FRA, 2014; IGLYO, 2013). Specifically, the prevalence of violence is between three and five times higher among LGBTQI students than among their non-LGBTQI peers (UNESCO, 2017).

According to the latest Fundamental Rights Agency survey (2014), at least 68% of LGBT learners report experiences of homophobic or transphobic bullying, while more than 8 in 10 of all respondents have witnessed negative comments or conduct during their time at school because a someone was perceived to be LGBT. Discrimination that students face at schools usually leads to hiding or disguising who they are. For instance, the same survey shows that 2 out of 3 LGBT respondents were hiding or disguising being LGBT at school. Violence and bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics can also have an impact on mental health (i.e. depression, low self-esteem, etc.), concentration and academic achievements, levels of attendance and

school-drop out, and their opportunities to enter higher education and employment (cf. Bradlow et al., 2017; Higgins et al., 2016; IGLYO, 2013; MGRM, 2011; National Union of Students, 2014; UNESCO, 2016). Learners might also be obliged to use gendered-spaces or wear school uniforms, inconsistent with the gender with which they identify, and might not be given the possibility to choose their own name or gender marker at school. Violence or invisibility faced by intersex young people also lead to health and educational problems (Ghattas, 2015; Council of Europe, 2015).

At the same time, educational professionals interviewed by the Fundamental Rights Agency (2016) stress that many countries still lack capacity and training, and school policies and guidelines. Teachers from European countries report a lack of objective information about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics, which often leads to low levels of awareness among professionals or lack of confidence to deal with these issues. This supports research carried out in specific countries (for instance, Mitchel et al., 2014; Rodrigues et al., 2015).

Council of Europe member States, however, have made specific commitments to warrant the right to education for all students. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)¹, UNESCO convention against discrimination on Education (1960)² or the Convention on the rights of the child (1990)³ are the most relevant binding documents to protect the human rights of learners in schools. More recently, the *Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation 2010(5)* stated that:

“member States should take appropriate legislative and other measures, addressed to educational staff and pupils, to ensure that the right to education can be effectively enjoyed without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity; this includes, in particular, safeguarding the right of children and youth to education in a safe environment, free from violence, bullying, social exclusion or other forms of discriminatory and degrading treatment related to sexual orientation or gender identity.”⁴

For its part, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on Member States to “ensure access by LGBTI children to quality education by promoting respect and inclusion of LGBTI persons and the dissemination of objective information concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, and by introducing measures to address homophobic and transphobic bullying” (Resolution 2097 (2016))⁵. Likewise, the Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2048 on discrimination against transgender people in Europe*⁶, called on Member States to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender identity, and to develop quick, transparent and

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

² http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12949&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

³ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁴ [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2010\)5](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2010)5)

⁵ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22510>

⁶ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=21736>

accessible procedures, based on self-determination, for changing the name and registered sex of trans people on educational certificates and other similar documents.

UNESCO recently launched a *Call for Action by Ministers to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from discrimination and violence*⁷. By signing this call, 56 countries globally, 28 of which are in Europe, have already committed to reinforce their efforts to tackle SOGIE-based violence in schools, within the broad framework of a comprehensive education sector response. Following their previous report on education responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, UNESCO asked Ministries of Education to offer a comprehensive-response, including:

1. Monitoring systematically the prevalence of violence in educational settings
2. Developing comprehensive policies
3. Providing learners with inclusive curricula and learning materials
4. Providing training and/or support to teachers and other educational and school staff
5. Taking actions to support for learners and their families
6. Establishing partnerships with civil society
7. Evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of education sector responses

Member States are responsible for the care of all learners and have the duty to provide safe, inclusive and supportive environment. Many Council of Europe countries have already taken important steps to match some minimum standards (IGLYO, 2014). Local civil society organisations from countries like Malta, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden report that these countries have developed comprehensive national policies to ensure inclusive education for all students. In other countries, important steps have also been made, but there are still some areas that need further development.

5. Actions developed by Member States

IGLYO has developed a list of ten comparable indicators to assess the extent to which governments have implemented measures to ensure education is inclusive of all LGBTIQ learners. This research will be presented in the meeting, together with recent European overviews developed by other organisations and institutions.

Anti-discrimination law applicable to education

Education should be safe and accessible for all learners. A legal framework is therefore necessary to ensure effective enjoyment of the right of education. All states should guarantee the right to education to all by explicitly tackling discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or variations in sex characteristics. Civil society organisations report that 31 member States have developed anti-discrimination laws that are applicable to education and protect at least one of these grounds.

⁷ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002462/246247E.pdf>

Policies and action plans

National or regional policies to promote a safe and inclusive environment for all learners are crucial for outlining the necessary processes and actions that schools should follow to tackle homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia, and provide teachers and other school staff with the framework to prevent and address discrimination with confidence and support. Civil society organisations report that 21 member States have developed national or regional action plans to prevent and address discrimination in, at least, one of the mentioned grounds.

Inclusive national curricula

General invisibility and lack of positive representations of LGBTQI people in schools have negative consequences for all students. The affirming inclusion of LGBTQI identities and realities across curricula and learning materials ensures that teachers have many opportunities to discuss diversity. Ensuring that curricula and learning materials convey positive messages and avoid negative representations or stereotypes of LGBTQI people in specific subjects is also necessary. While there is evidence in 26 countries of voluntary or random inclusion of LGBTQI issues, they have only been embedded throughout the full curriculum or, at least, been mandatory for all students in 17 member States. As a result, countries have been scored only on mandatory curricula.

Teacher training on LGBTQI awareness

Teachers play a vital role in creating a safe atmosphere for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or variations in sex characteristics. Many teachers, however, still report that they lack the confidence and knowledge to discuss LGBTQI issues or support learners who are LGBTQI. A national or regional training programme for teachers and other school staff on LGBTQI awareness and inclusion is essential to translate policies into reality. Although civil society organisations report that more than 20 countries have provided some sort of training, only 4 member States have enabled mandatory teacher training.

Gender recognition

In order to meet the needs of trans, non-binary, gender variant and intersex students, all learners should have the right to have their own name and gender marker recognised. That decision should be supported by the whole school with all documents and certificates using the chosen name and gender and the learner being able to use the gendered spaces of their choice. Legal gender recognition with self-determination for LGBTQI young people under 16 has only been reported in 4 member States.

National or regional data collection on bullying and harassment

Monitoring the nature, prevalence and impact of violence at school is necessary to plan effective interventions to tackle homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic bullying. Bullying based on learners' (perceived or actual) sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or variations in sex characteristics must be recorded as such to build up an accurate record of the issue within each school. Although several countries have evidence of data collection, civil society organisations report that only 6 member States are either

systematically collecting data directly through governments, a funded institution, or NGOs that received government funding to work on inclusive education.

Support systems for young people

Teachers and school staff are responsible for the health and wellbeing of all learners. At times, LGBTQI students may require additional support and guidance, so school staff should be trained and ready to deal with any requests. Links to relevant LGBTQI youth services and groups should also be established for signposting and referrals. Furthermore, specific support for everyone affected by homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic violence should be provided. Civil society organisations report that 18 member States provide have enabled services or have funded projects that provide support.

Information and guidelines

Learners should have access to information and guidance regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics. Information should be provided in different formats, and posters and leaflets should be on display in both public and more private areas of the school and relevant websites should be accessible from all school computers. This is also helpful for creating an environment that encourages greater understanding and respect from all learners. Civil society organisations report that 21 member States directly provide guidance or fund projects that create such information.

Partnership between governments and civil society

Partnerships between the education sector, civil society organisations and other relevant service providers and organisations ensures that schools have access to the most up to date information and guidance on LGBTQI inclusion. LGBTQI organisations can often provide expertise on school policy, staff training, curriculum development and supporting learners. According to local NGOs, 23 member States have partnered with civil society organisations to develop strategies and/or build up project in the field of education.

International commitment

Homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic bullying remains a global issue and requires attention beyond local and national levels if it is to be eradicated. International commitment to the issue from Member States shows political leadership to other countries and highlights the importance of cooperation. Membership of the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network (29 Council of Europe member States) and the signing of the UNESCO *Call for Action by Ministers on inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from discrimination and violence* (signed by 28 Council of Europe member States), both highlight such commitment on LGBTQI inclusive education.

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