

NATIONAL REPORT - CROATIA

WP1: Modelling Non-Discriminatory VET Education Strategy

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

KA03 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMON VALUES

THE CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – LOT 1

EqUal iNcluslon of LGBTIQ stUdents in VET: “UNIQUE”

Project no. 621478-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

Start date of the project: 15-01-2021

Duration: 24 Months

Project No: 621418-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Acronym	UNIQUE
Project Title	Equal Inclusion of LGBTIQ students in VET
Agreement Number	621478-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
EU Programme	ERASMUS+ KA3 Support for Policy Reform
Project Website	www.uniqueproject.eu
<hr/>	
Authoring Partners	Algebra University College
Date	June 2021
Version	Final
Approved by	Symplexis & AKMI S.A.
Dissemination Level	Public

Disclaimer

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
<i>The project</i>	5
Part A: Desk Research Results	7
<i>LGBTIQ Discriminatory Practices in Croatia compared to EU-28 Countries</i>	7
<i>LGBTIQ IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CROATIA</i>	8
<i>Croatian Legal Framework</i>	14
Part B: Field Research Results	19
<i>Interviews with VET Teachers and LGBTIQ Expert</i>	19
<i>Focus Groups with VET Students</i>	27
<i>Online Research</i>	30
<i>General Conclusions</i>	37
References:	39

Executive Summary

Algebra University College conducted a research on the subject of discrimination against LGBTIQ population in Croatian VET institutions. To begin with, we will present secondary research results, including an overview of LGBTIQ discriminatory practices generally in Croatian society and the comparison to the EU-28 countries. Furthermore, we will present the data considering LGBTIQ population in Croatian VET institutions as well as the legal framework protecting LGBTIQ rights within them. Finally, we will showcase our primary research results, including data collected from target groups, focus groups and survey.

Introduction

The project

Discrimination against LGBTIQ people is a reality, even in countries where LGBTIQ individuals' civic rights are well established. Despite the progress that has been made and their legal recognition in all OECD countries, LGBTIQ people are still far from being offered equal opportunities in education, work or healthcare. They are stigmatized and frequently refused access to normal jobs. The study of the Eurobarometer on Discrimination 2019 on how comfortable the respondents would feel if one of their colleagues would be a transgender person, is revealing, with the EU average to be below 50%. ***The exclusion of LGBTIQ people from the professional field could be further spiralled by early school drop-out and low performance which is an imminent result of constant bullying and direct discrimination*** (2015, Overview of Youth Discrimination in the European Union).

Nevertheless, ***current educational structure is distant from being characterized as inclusive***. On the contrary, it seems to be lagging the social reality, particularly *in the VET sector, which, counter to the compulsory education, has been neglected*.

Taking those elements into consideration, our project aims at ***reversing the perceptions and attitudes towards LGBTIQ learners in VET education***. Classic educational material replicates the traditional gender norms, contributing, thus, to the perpetuation of the discrimination and stereotypes, even unintentionally or unconsciously. Besides, ***VET teachers are not trained or prepared to openly discuss*** in the classroom issues that are considered "sensitive" or *may be biased themselves*.

The objectives of UNIQUE could be summarized as follows:

- **O1: Provide a renewed skillset** to VET teachers
- **O2: Highlight the significance of diversifying manuals and educational materials**
- **O3: Introduce new training methods** which promote the active involvement of **VET teachers**
- **O4: Reduce school drop-out rates**
- **O5: Motivate LGBT people and provide a clear pathway towards employment**
- **O6: Set up effective monitoring mechanisms**
- **O7: Raise awareness on LGBTIQ issues**, combat stereotypes
- **O8: Promote equality, human rights and EU values**
- **O9: Support local economies with qualified workforce**

TARGET GROUPS

The UNIQUE project has a solid and coherent **multi-level approach** that is going to target both **individuals** (A) and **institutions** (B), ensuring that a useful transition from policy change to policy implementation is succeeded.

More specifically, the project strategy aims at engaging the following target groups:

Individuals

1. LGBTIQ People (i.e., VET students and communities)
2. VET teachers and Staff
3. Others (including): NGOs, Parents of LGBTIQ, employers, representatives of the educational or professional sector, trade unions etc.

Institutions

4. VET Providers
5. LGBTIQ organized communities and established institutions in European and national level
6. European and national authorities

EXPEXTED RESULTS

- 1) A comprehensive methodology on how to develop gender diversity friendly curricula, avoiding stereotypes and discriminatory patterns
- 2) A Curriculum that will promote gender-based diversity for the benefit of LGBTIQ students
- 3) Introduction of UNIQUE Ambassadors in VET environment
- 4) Roll out of the methodology on the field by screening VET curricula

Part A: Desk Research Results

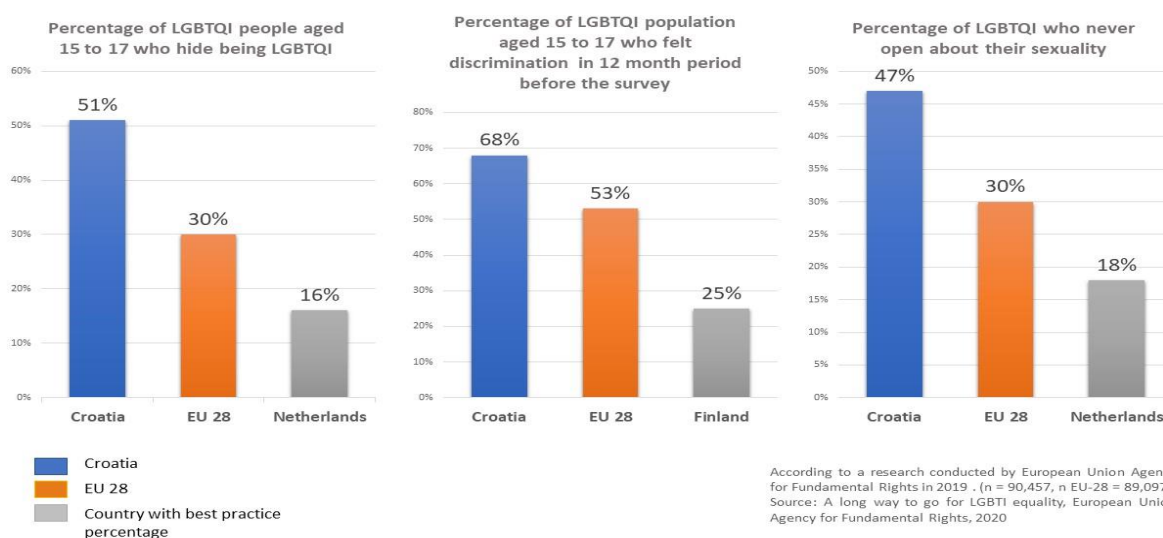
LGBTIQ Discriminatory Practices in Croatia compared to EU-28 Countries

In 2019 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights conducted a research on how LGBTIQ people experience their human and fundamental rights in daily life as well as social stances. This research included 89.097 participants from different EU-28 countries. Using data from this research, we provide an overview of the general situation in Croatia considering LGBTIQ discriminatory practices, as well as comparison to the EU-28 average and to the EU countries with the best practices.

What is noticeable while analysing LGBTIQ discriminatory practices in EU-28 is a pronounced polarity. This means certain countries continuously stand out as non-discriminatory, while others continuously show pronounced discriminatory practices. Croatia is most often to be found in the second category, as visible from Figures 1 and 2.

Discriminatory behaviours and attitudes are most pronounced between the ages of 15 and 17, which is particularly worrying, with the highest discrimination rates in Greece and Croatia. The graphs show that 51% of LGBTIQ people in Croatia, due to fear of discrimination or physical assault, hide their gender identity and sexual orientation at school, which is the highest percentage in the EU 28. As many as 70% of respondents aged 15 to 17 have faced some form of discrimination.

Figure 1

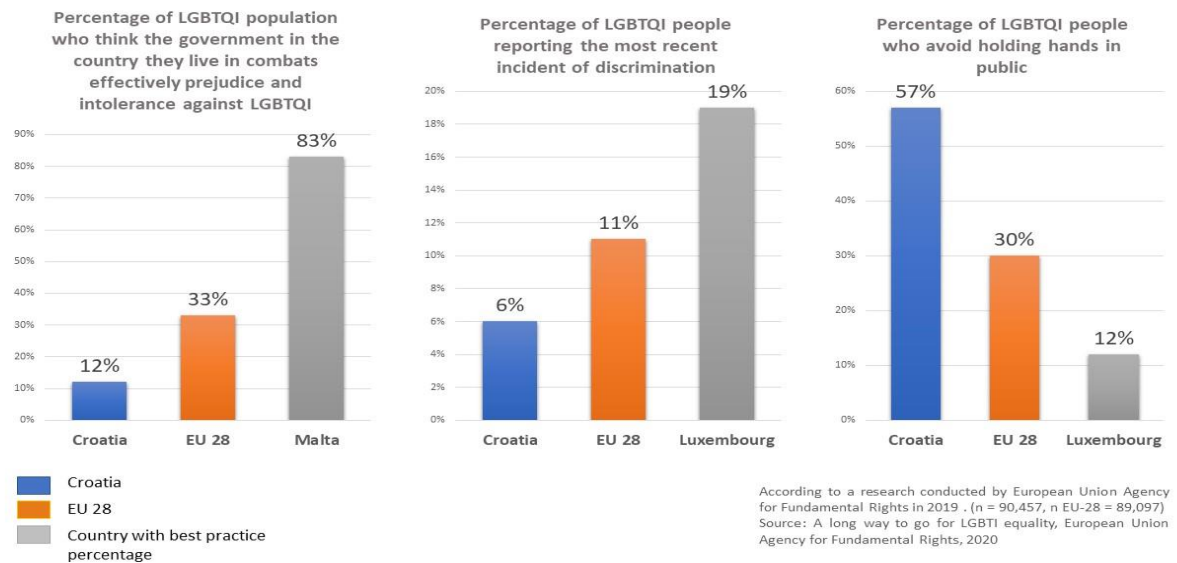


Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

It is also worrying that only 12% of respondents believe that the legal and state framework in Croatia effectively solves the problem of discrimination, while 94% of them did not report the last discriminatory incident to any authorities out of the belief that nothing will change and nothing will be undertaken.

Figure 2



Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTIQ equality*.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

LGBTIQ IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CROATIA

A) Student Attitudes

Little is known about the LGBTIQ population in Croatia. Consequently, there is no or very little relevant data on the topic of the LGBTIQ population in the VET sector in Croatia. We have found a small number of pertinent studies that partially cover this specialized topic.



In May 2021, the GOOD initiative and IDIZ published the results of “Research of political literacy of high school students in the Republic of Croatia”. The same research was conducted also in 2010 and 2015 which is a good base to compare the results over the years. The research, among other things, examined the attitudes of high school students towards homosexuality. 1122 students from gymnasias and VET schools were included, of which 52.2% were female and 47.8% male, with 70% of students from VET school and 30% from gymnasias.

When compared to the findings of the research conducted in 2015, the results from 2021 show a significant shift of a more tolerant attitude towards the LGBTIQ population, as shown in Table 1.








Nevertheless, a significant percentage of negative assessments and discriminatory tendencies towards homosexual individuals are still present. Thus, for example, approximately one-third of the sample believes that homosexuality is a disorder or disease and that homosexuals should not appear in public because of the dangers of bad impact on young people. Almost 50% of young people believe that homosexual orientation should not be publicly emphasized and that homosexuals should express their sexual orientation only in private, and almost 20% of young people believe that homosexuals orientation prohibits work with children. When asked whether homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children, there is a strong polarization - about 40% of young people are against it, and about 40% support it (Baketa, Bovan, Bojić, 2021).

The research also showed that gymnasia students have more positive attitudes than students in VET. Moreover, male students have significantly more negative attitudes towards the LGBTIQ population than female students. Finally, students from regions Dalmatia, Lika, Moslavina, Kordun, Slavonia, and Banovina show more homophobic attitudes when compared to the national average. Students from Zagreb and Zagreb County, Istria, Primorje, and Northern Croatia have more positive attitudes.

Table 1: Comparison of research results¹ published by GOOD initiative and IDIZ about political literacy of high school students in the Republic of Croatia for 2015 and 2021 (showing results related to questions about homosexuality).

	2021		2015	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Homosexuality is some kind of disorder or diseases	33.9 	46.8 	48.1	34.3

¹ The results shown in Table 1 do not include percentages for the category “I neither agree nor disagree”, which is why the sum of percentages for each question is not equal to 100.

Homosexual persons should be banned from working with children	18.9 	62.2 	29.4	49.2
Homosexual persons should be allowed to adopt children	42.2 	37.9 	26.3	55.1
Public appearances should be prohibited to homosexual people because of the bad effect they have on young people	31.2 	52.2 	49.5	33.3
Homosexuals have the right to do whatever they want privately, but in public, they should not express their sexual orientation	48.8 	31.8 	64.9	19.7

These findings are in line with research published in 2018 in the journal *Psyche* titled “Research on the relationship between educational factors and attitudes of high school students related to people of homosexual orientation” conducted by psychology students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb.

The research was conducted with fourth-grade students of three high schools and three vocational schools in Zagreb. 239 students participated, 49.2% female students, and 50.8% male students, of which 50.2% were from vocational schools and 49.8% from gymnasia. According to the research, VET students have been shown to have more negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians and poorer knowledge of homosexuality than gymnasium students. Additionally, the research shows that VET students witness violence against homosexual students at their school more often. However, it should be emphasized that violence is present in all schools. As many as 53% of students state that they have often or several times witnessed verbal violence against homosexuals, 13% of them have witnessed at least one

minor incident, while 5% witnessed more severe physical injuries at school. (Kuliš, Petrović, 2018)

Moreover, students' knowledge of homosexuality is low. As many as 50% of students think that homosexuality is a choice, and that a child who grew up with parents of homosexual orientation is more likely to become gay or lesbian. In addition, more than a quarter of students believe that sexual orientation can be changed through therapy and are prone to the prejudice that all gays are feminized. Another worrying figure is that almost one-fifth of students believe that most homosexuals are infected with HI. (Kuliš, Petrović, 2018).

Further analysis showed the correlation between knowledge and attitude; students who knew more about LGBTIQ population also had a more positive attitude. Gymnasium students on average know more about homosexuality than VET students. Female students generally have a more positive attitude towards homosexuals than male students, with male students having a more positive attitude towards lesbians than towards gays, while female students' attitudes towards gays and lesbians do not differ. These results agree with other Croatian research on students where the same data on attitude were obtained. (Huić, Jugović and Kamenov, 2015). In addition to such stereotypes and prejudices, the results of the existing research document confirmed a large amount of verbal and physical abuse of LGBTIQ students in schools. In a study conducted by Hodžić and Bijelić (2012; according to Lori, 2016), 26% of students were verbally violent towards a person due to her/his alleged LGBTIQ orientation, about 6% of students were also physically violent, while 20% of them passively observed violence towards a LGBTIQ student. Hodžić and Bijelić (2012; according to Lori, 2016) state that in such situations, students who are victims of violence most often do not turn to teachers and professional associates for help out of fear of rejection and condemnation.

There is no clear data showing pronounced interest of LGBTIQ population in certain professional/VET fields. An interview with a student of the Faculty of Health Studies in Rijeka and a member of the LGBTIQ population (published on the portal mojfaks.hr) showed that the LGBTIQ population gravitates towards educational institutions whose students are more tolerant and inclusive. The interviewee gives an example of The Faculty of Philosophy and Medical Professions, where, he says “a large number of LGBTIQ people are present” (mojfaks.hr,2020).

B) Awareness of LGBTIQ Issues among Teachers

For her graduate thesis, Helena Pađen from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb conducted a survey into teachers' level of knowledge about LGBTIQ population. 267 high school teachers² participated in the survey, of which 83.9% were women and 16.1% were men³. The scale contained factual questions about homosexual orientation and persons of homosexual orientation.

Teachers had 59% correct answers on the Knowledge Scale⁴. 1.9% of them did not offer the correct answer to any question, while 0.8% of participants had all the correct answers. Participants who expressed an interest in educational material⁵ had greater knowledge and a lower total number of answers "I do not know" compared to participants who were not interested in educational material.

Even school staff does not seem to have enough information, knowledge, and skills to support LGBTIQ students or are homophobic themselves. Teacher training courses typically do not include content about LGBTIQ topics or needs, while topics related to gender are mostly present in optional courses (IGLYO, 2018).

C) School Textbooks

The analysis of Croatian VET textbooks on subjects such as politics and economy, history, biology, hygiene, psychiatry and social medicine shows that LGBTIQ topics are mostly ignored or placed in a context of HIV. Only one textbook (on ethics for the second grade of high school

² The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 64 years. The largest number of participants (65.9%) teach in a four-year vocational school, 40.4% of them teach in a gymnasium, while 26.6% of participants teach in a three-year vocational school. The sum of these percentages exceeds 100% because a certain number of participants (29.2% of them) are employed in more than one high school, which is not uncommon, especially in smaller places. Of the total number of participants, 95.5% described their sexual orientation as exclusively and mostly heterosexual, but the sample also included persons of bisexual (1.5%), exclusively and mostly homosexual (1.2%), and asexual (1.5%) orientation.

³ According to TALIS research conducted in 2018, 67,2% of high school teachers in Croatia are female. This could explain the disparity in the percentage of male and female participants.

⁴ Participants gave answers to the questions on a scale with three offered answers - correct (T), incorrect (N) and I do not know. The questions were based on a scale constructed in a study by Alderson, Orzeck, and McEwen (2009), and on various public myths about homosexuals. The scale contained 14 particles, and examples of some were "Homosexuals are easily recognized by appearance, style or manner of expression" or "Most homosexual women and men want to be heterosexual".

⁵ At the very end of the questionnaire, participants were able to choose whether they wanted to read educational material that contained the results of previous research on the experiences of LGBT students in the school environment in the United States.

and vocational school) deals more comprehensively with LGBTIQ issues and issues of human rights and discrimination against sexual minorities⁶ (Brumen, 2012).

LGBTIQ issues are mostly discussed in subjects such as psychology and sociology. These subjects are more frequently taught in gymnasias than in vocational schools. It is therefore assumed that the lack of this content in VET schools could lead to less knowledge among VET students of vocational schools. Elective subjects such as religious education and ethics were cited⁷ as school subjects in which LGBTIQ issues were most often discussed. Students who chose ethics as an elective subject have a significantly more positive attitude towards LGBTIQ population than those who chose religious education. (Kuliš, Petrović, 2018).

According to the COWI study, the program of Catholic religious education addresses the theme of human sexuality in primary schools, and the religious education textbook approved by the Ministry contains content which encourages discrimination against LGBTIQ population labelling homosexual relations as "wrong forms of sexuality". After a complaint of two LGBT organizations, the government replaced the word "wrong" with "sinful" in 2005. In 2006, discriminatory references were removed from the program, although it remains heteronormative (COWI, 2010).

D) Curriculum Reform

With an intention to modernise school curricula and connect them more directly to learning outcomes that are pertinent for different life experiences, a comprehensive curriculum reform was initiated in 2015 by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Croatia (IGLYO, 2018). Health Education was intended to cover topics of gender equality, prevention of violent behaviour and responsible sexual behaviour (vlada.gov.hr, 2015). The planned outcomes included "equality between sexes" (the term gender equality is not used), human rights, and anti-discrimination, but most of the bases for discrimination, such as gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation as well as different categories of the LGBTIQ population are not mentioned. The topic of sexuality was present in biology and lessons related to health, and it was restricted to topics such as "responsible sexual behaviour". (IGLYO, 2018). Health Education was, however, not introduced to schools.

⁶ The LGBTIQ issues are discussed in the context of "Human Rights and Human Rights Movements - LGBT Movements".

⁷ This data is collected from previously mentioned research, "Research on the relationship between educational factors and attitudes of high school students related to people of homosexual orientation" conducted in 2018 by psychology students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb.

Croatian Legal Framework

A) LGBTIQ Rights in Croatia

The legislative framework in Croatia that protects the rights of the LGBTIQ population can be divided into three categories: International laws implemented in Croatia, EU laws implemented in Croatia, and national laws.

Table 2 shows the international and EU laws adopted by Croatia, while Table 3 shows the national laws which, directly or indirectly, affect the protection of the LGBTIQ population from discrimination and violence.

Table 2: International and EU laws addressing LGBTIQ rights implemented in Croatia

INTERNATIONAL AND EU LAWS
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights
The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

Additionally, there are several other laws and regulations which protect the rights of the LGBTIQ population, prohibit any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and which penalise the incitement of hatred or discrimination of any kind (Law on Media, Law on Electronic Media, Law on State officials, the Law on Sports, the Law on Volunteering, etc.).

Table 3: Croatian national legal framework addressing LGBTIQ rights

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK		
YEAR	LAW	DESCRIPTION
1990	Constitution of the Republic of Croatia	Unique general legal act with the highest legal force in the Republic of Croatia that protects all citizens of the Republic of Croatia from any form of discrimination.
1997	Criminal Law	This law defines a hate crime as any criminal offense committed out of hatred against a person because of her/his race, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
2003	Gender Equality Law	The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and encouraging others to discriminate.
2003	Law on Same-Sex Communities	The law introduces the right to maintenance and acquisition of joint property of same-sex couples and envisages anti-discrimination provisions that protect members of sexual minorities.
2004	Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education	This law establishes the right of all people to education. Therefore, members of the LGBT population have the right to education without any form of discrimination based on sex, gender and sexual orientation.
2008	Anti-discrimination Law	The law promotes equality and protection against discrimination regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion and more.
2014	Life Partnership Law	The law defines a Life Partnership (formal and informal) as a family union of two persons of the same sex. The law is equated with the marital union of persons of different sexes except in the case of adoption of children in both cases.

B) Laws Protecting LGBTIQ Rights in Croatian Educational System

Next to the international and EU laws addressing education (UN Convention on Children's Rights and EU Strategy on the Rights of a Child), Croatia has implemented national laws and strategies which help to protect the rights of the LGBTIQ population in education. Those laws and strategies are as follows:

- The National Strategy for the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Croatia** for the period from 2014 to 2020 (Government of the Republic of Croatia, September 2014) focuses on the elimination of all forms of violence against children and ensuring children's rights in vulnerable situations. "Teachers, professors, professional associates, and other employees in school institutions are obliged to take measures to protect the rights of students and immediately report any violation of these rights, especially forms of physical or mental violence, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, abuse or exploitation of students." The document points out that, although most schools have developed prevention programs and protocols for responding to cases of violence, it is necessary to define the achievement indicators of implementing laws and regulations of reducing school violence (among peers, students to teachers and teachers to students). In this regard, the Strategy strives to achieve the following goals: ensure the realization of the child's right to a non-violent school environment; eliminate tolerance towards violence against children and among children; promote long-term, systematized, planned and organized activities to combat violence against children and among children at all levels (local and

national); ensure cross-sectoral cooperation at the national and local level in the implementation of activities aimed at the elimination of violence among and against children; improve ways of continuous monitoring and public reporting; ensure the right to quality, accessible and non-stigmatizing recovery for children experiencing violence and professional assistance for children who commit violence (Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2020).

- **The Strategy of Education, Science, and Technology** (2014) obliges school institutions to prevent unacceptable forms of student behaviour, advise and assist students in solving difficulties and problems they face (The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2020).
- **The Law on General Education and Education in Primary and Secondary Schools** declares unacceptable behaviours of students as a breach of their duty, non-fulfilment of their obligations, and violent behaviour. The same law imposes an obligation on school institutions to ensure equal educational opportunities to all students, the right to advice and assistance in solving problems, as well as the right to educational support and professional treatment of students with behavioural problems. In cooperation with social services, school institutions are obliged to monitor social problems in student population and take measures to eliminate their causes and consequences and protect the rights of students. The law also obliges schools to implement and evaluate school prevention programs and to implement pedagogical measures in the best interest of students (The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2020).
- **Protocol on the Procedure in the Case of Abuse Among Children and Youth** (2004) and a **Protocol on the Procedure in the Case of Abuse and Neglect of Child** (2014). Both documents state that the treatment of children, as well as the exercise of their rights, shall be ensured without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other status. These protocols establish that all educational institutions shall implement the existing preventive and intervention programs, as well as develop new ones where necessary, to tackle violence, sexual abuse, neglect, educational neglect, negligent behaviour, abuse, and exploitation.

In January 2020, The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia published “Plan of Action for Preventing Violence in School (2020-2024)”, which also refers to the prevention of gender-based violence, homophobic and transphobic violence and states the

need to ensure the implementation of the program for the prevention of gender-based violence in schools. "It is necessary to include educative programs/projects and raise awareness on the topic of gender-based violence in programs for professional development of teachers, and to offer preventive programs/projects to combat violence in youth relationships, as well as training programs for teachers on homophobic and transphobic violence, and offer content and programs/projects in schools related to the prevention of these types of violence... It is necessary to continue to improve existing prevention programs and develop new ones that will provide an effective response to all types of violence... it is necessary to provide professional assistance to students who experienced violence, but also to students who committed it" (The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2020).

C) LGBTI; Institutions

With the coming to power of the coalition of left-liberal parties, in 2000 more favourable conditions were created for the establishment and operation of LGBTIQ organisations (see Table 4).

It is important to note that the HDZ, a right-wing party, when it came to power again in 2003, did not prevent the introduction of anti-discrimination norms into laws and did not repeal the Law on Same-Sex Communities. The HDZ has significantly changed its political program and has moved closer to the political centre (Dolenec, 2013). This fact can be interpreted as an indicator of the strength of the political influence of the process of accession to the European Union. Given the conditions that the EU imposes on potential member states, concerning "stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities" (Europa.eu, 2016), the visibility of the LGBT community has become greater and legal protection wider (Čemažar, Mikulin, 2017).

Consequently, the first Croatian Gay Pride, organized in 2002, was "supported by members of the Government (...), members of the Croatian Parliament, representatives of the international community, as well as the Minister of the Internal Affairs Šime Lučin" (Lgbt.ba, 2013).

In 2016, at the Zagreb Pride, seventeen-year-old Dino Markešić, a student of the secondary vocational school STŠ Faust Vrančić, spoke about the problems of LGBTIQ youth in Croatia.

"Young people should be safe at least in schools, but that is not the case. I know from personal experience that the ignorance of school staff can be shocking, and often borders with homophobia... Life for the youngest members of the LGBTIQ community is very difficult. Each generation of LGBTIQ students declares itself earlier and experiences more and more problems. Most of my schoolmates rejected me. For a period, I suffered constant insults and threats ... I was thinking about suicide and I started to injure myself" (srednja.hr, 2016). This shows a worrying level of discrimination, but also a troublesome effect discriminatory acts have on young people's lives.

Table 4. Increase of LGBTIQ civil society organisations in Croatia THROUGH TIME

YEAR	ORGANISATION	SELF-DESCRIPTION
1989.	Lila	First registered lesbian group in Croatia.
1992.	Ligma	Organisation gathering lesbians, homosexuals and bisexuals.
1999.	Kontra (Lila's branch)	Organisation promoting lesbian human rights.
2000.	Lori	Organisation publicly promoting LGBTIQ rights.
2002.	Iskorak	Civil society organisation promoting LGBTIQ rights.
2002.	Zagreb Pride	Organisation promoting LGBTIQ rights. Organiser of Zagreb Pride manifestations.
2006.	Inqueerzija	Organisation promoting social inclusion of LGBTIQ population.
2006.	Queer Zagreb	Festival organized by Inqueerzija, promoting and celebrating LGBTIQ population.
N/A	deNormativ	Organisation promoting diversity and tolerance.
2012	Trans Aid Hrvatska	First registered organisation for transgender support.
2011	Split Pride	Organisation promoting LGBTIQ rights. Organiser of Split Pride manifestations.

Part B: Field Research Results

Interviews with VET Teachers and LGBTIQ Expert

Algebra College University has conducted interviews with 6 professors and 3 LGBTIQ experts on the subject of LGBTIQ inclusive practices in Croatian VET institutions.

All of the professors who participated in the interview work at a private HEI VET institution. 4 of those professors hold the position of Head of the Department, 2 of them hold the position of Vice Dean, and 1 holds the position of a Professor. All of the professors have graduated from higher education. Years of their experience at positions stated earlier are between 5 and 13 years.

The LGBTIQ experts are coordinators (with one of them being a co-founder) of civil organisations with 8 to 14 years of experience at stated positions.

A) Deliberating Discrimination in the VET Sector

When asked about the definition of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or sex characteristics, nearly all professors defined discrimination as any type of change in behaviour or acceptance towards an individual based on these characteristics, whether it is an active form of discrimination or passive⁸. On the other hand, LGBTIQ experts defined discrimination as bringing a LGBTIQ group or a person in a disadvantaged position and denying a person's fundamental rights.

All interviewed VET professors believe that these forms of discrimination are marginal in VET HEIs and that they might be more pronounced in VET high schools. They also added that “the environment is not affirmative and positive in general” and discrimination “exists implicitly... discriminatory practices, while low in intensity, are dominant”. Experts believe those discriminatory acts are more pronounced in VET institutions than in gymnasia and more pronounced in boys than in girls. In addition, one expert says that “the difference in discrimination patterns between students in gymnasia and VET institutions is getting smaller according to trends. Peer violence and hate speech are on the rise in general. According to my opinion and impression, based on no data, it is more difficult in vocational schools, especially

⁸ Two professors additionally explain that discrimination manifests itself in two different ways. One is a change in communication and interaction (verbal, para-verbal, non-verbal), and the other one, which is “behind the back” such as not offering a job, and also hiding true feelings, and avoiding this population.

typical male schools, such as technical schools, electrical engineering, construction, where also teachers are not empathic. Perhaps because of fewer humanities subjects. On the other hand, service-oriented VET schools such as hairdressers, baking, cooking, show more inclusivity “. As a form of discrimination on institutional and central-state level, the expert gives an example of textbooks talking about the LGBTIQ population with a negative connotation using terminology such as "unexplored area of human sexuality" (religion textbook). Also, the expert believes lack of education on this topic is a form of discrimination itself. These opinions are in line with secondary research data.

Two experts pointed out, even though the organisation they work at has never received any attack/discrimination reports, it „does not mean discrimination does not exist... LGBTIQ population usually hides their sexual orientation or gender identity precisely to avoid any form of discrimination or attacks. Furthermore, LGBTIQ members do not report discrimination or attacks because that would automatically expose them. It is a vicious circle “. Another LGBTIQ expert mentioned that in a 10-year period, 7 to 10 cases of discrimination towards LGBTIQ students were reported to his organisation.

While VET professors would refer a student facing any type of discrimination to the Vice Dean of their institutions, LGBTIQ experts would refer LGBTIQ student facing discrimination to their organizations, and then to the police and state attorney, if they and the person facing discrimination would estimate that would be useful for them and that police has no discriminatory attitude. One expert says he would not refer LGBTIQ person to any public (national) institution because the institution he works at has developed a system of help and support for LGBTIQ persons that includes educated staff, a system of legal aid and legal representation, and a system of psychosocial help.

2 VET professors out of 6 witnessed discrimination in the classroom in the form of mockery when an LGBTIQ person was answering the professor's question. One of the professors who said never to have witnessed an act of discrimination also said “there are always some small jokes, nothing serious based on my subjective estimation”. This might lead to the conclusion that some VET professors don't perceive certain acts of discrimination as discrimination at all. Some general examples of discrimination against the LGBTIQ population in Croatia given by LGBTIQ experts and VET professors are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Examples of discriminatory practices towards LGBTIQ population in Croatia as provided by VET professors and LGBTIQ experts

EXPERT'S EXAMPLES	PROFESSORS' EXAMPLES
Denial/restriction of the right to services	Teacher giving better/worse grade to an LGBTIQ student because of his/her sexual orientation or gender identity
Denial/restriction of the rights in public or private institutions	Commenting short hair on a woman and labelling her as LGBTIQ or feminist
Discrimination in the workplace – the absence of promotion, getting fired, not getting a job	The decision on offering a job influenced by the sexual orientation and gender identity of the candidate
Not addressing LGBTIQ person in the gender he/she wants to be addressed in	Mockery when LGBTIQ person is talking during the lesson
Denying the name LGBTIQ person wants to be called by	Note: One professor couldn't think of any examples of discrimination on this basis
Absence of category "Life Partnership" on the E-građani portal ⁹ (difference in public service)	Students rarely choosing LGBTIQ professors for mentorship, and if they are chosen it is by students who are also LGBTIQ
The Croatian Constitution defines marriage exclusively as a male-female community and restricts the possibility of adoption ¹⁰	Student openly express hate towards LGBTIQ population

⁹ E-građani is a Croatian online public service portal. It was established to modernize, simplify, and accelerate communication between citizens and the public sector (for example issuing personal documents, marriage-related documents, etc.), and increasing the transparency of public services.

¹⁰ After the interview with the expert, on May 2021 the Administrative court in Zagreb made a decision that sets a precedent in Croatia, allowing LGBTIQ life partners entry into the child adoption process.

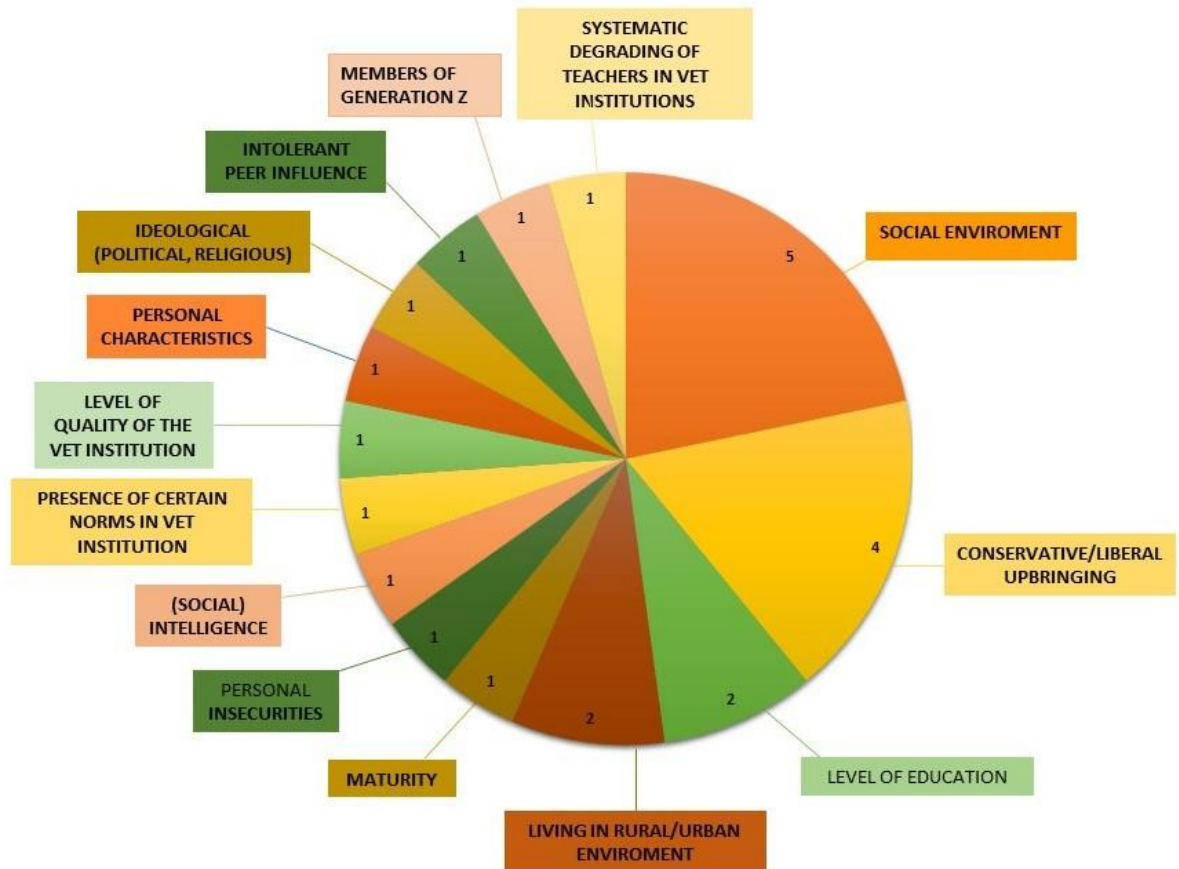
Ridicule and humiliation of LGBTIQ people/students	Teachers who prohibit to their students to talk about their sexual orientation openly
Public discourse (by politicians) in which gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as LGBTIQ population is presented with negative connotation and as something that should not be supported (hate speech)	LGBTIQ teachers face slander, mockery and disrespect of their authority from students' part
Destroying LGBTIQ flag	
Physical attack	

The majority of VET professors believe crucial factors that cause discrimination towards LGBTIQ students are social environment and liberal/conservative upbringing. All factors mentioned by VET professors are shown in Figure 3.

Along with those factors, "the general systematic degrading of teachers in VET institutions" was mentioned. "Teachers are not interested or motivated to work, vocational schools are mostly attended by students who don't have another option. Also, students in gymnasias, where there are more girls, are more positive towards differences...". Additionally, Generation Z was mentioned. "Members of Generation Z are very liberal and don't "care about these differences".

On the other hand, LGBTIQ expert says 6 crucial factors cause discrimination of the LGBTIQ population: generally homophobic, biphobic, lesbophobic society; peer influence (if the social group is affirmative, individuals who want to be part of that social group will adjust their own opinion to opinion of the group); lack of education on sexuality in general as well as in primary schools; Professors' influence depending on their personal stances; Roman Catholic ideology and influence of church; stances of dominant political parties. "Politics is key because of institutional work. Religious education does the greatest damage, the best intentions of some teachers are annulled by religious education".

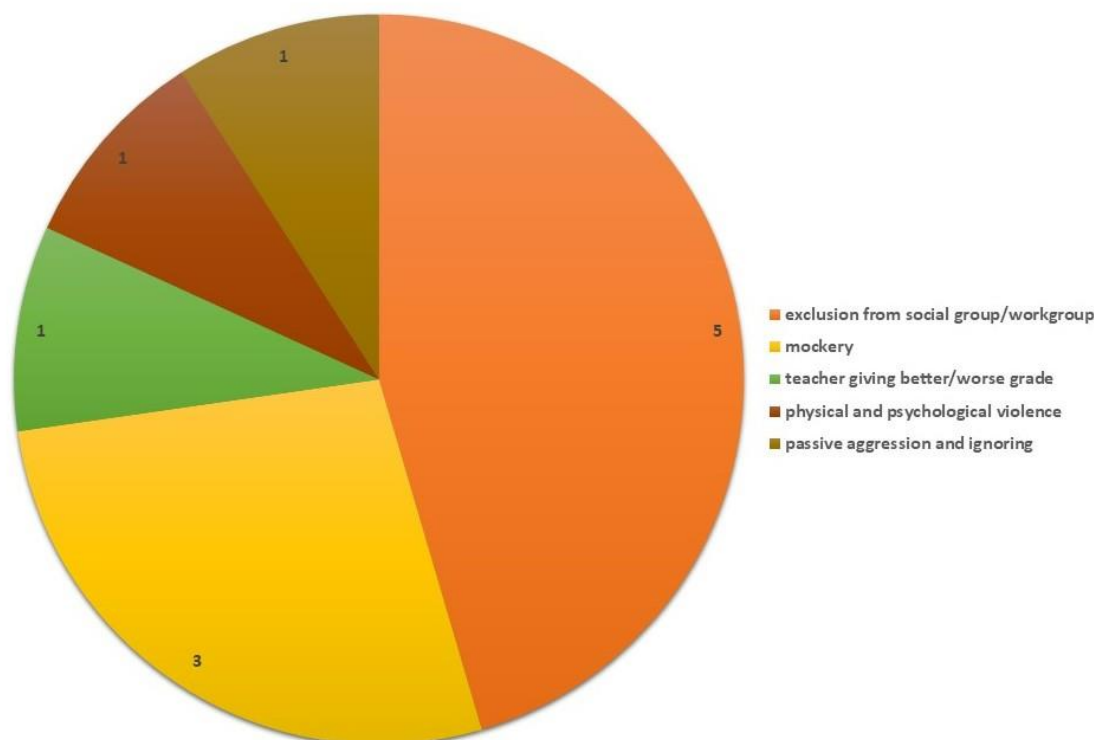
Figure 3: VET professors' thoughts on crucial factors that cause discriminatory behaviour towards LGBTIQ students in Croatian VET institutions.



When asked about the most usual forms of discrimination in Croatian VET institutions, the majority of VET professors believe those are the exclusion of the LGBTIQ student from social group/workgroup and mockery. All forms mentioned by VET professors are shown in Figure 4.

LGBTIQ experts point out that school principals and deans often ignore discrimination towards the LGBTIQ population. They are „afraid of such situations because they are potentially explosive for their work...principles and deans are aware that the student who is openly LGBTIQ is very likely to be exposed to ridicule, ignorance, insults, gossip, isolation, psychological abuse, physical violence, humiliation...they don't want to deal with it “.

Figure 4: Examples of the usual forms of discrimination towards LGBTIQ students in Croatian VET institutions as provided by VET professors.



B) Legal Framework and Thoughts on Good Practices in Croatia

When asked about the legal framework, not one interviewed VET professor could name a law addressing issues of discriminatory practices towards the LGBTIQ population and students. An overall impression is that this is because LGBTIQ issues are not their field of expertise or narrow interest. According to their statements, even if laws do exist, it is questionable if those laws are applied in practice. Experts also share this opinion. One of the professors points out that the Government has no real interest in making a change considering this issue. Most of the work considering LGBTIQ inclusivity is done by civil society organisations¹¹, but those actions are a “drop in the sea”.

What was also detectable is that VET professors believe that general culture, which influences public opinion, is not affirmative. They say culture and general awareness are segments that need to be worked on through the educational system. Education about equality should start

¹¹ Some interviewees express their concerns about the overprotection of certain minorities, including the LGBTIQ, saying it might lead to “the status of more equal among equals which shouldn’t be the case”. From these concerns expressed by some professors, and considering the very narrow frame of LGBTIQ rights in Croatia in general, we can notice a classical issue that emerges in the general population (majority) that feels endangered by minorities.

in preschool when children should learn about “general inclusivity and why discrimination is wrong”. One professor believes “parents are probably the biggest problem because they would potentially refuse to educate their children about this issue”.

This was confirmed by experts’ example. Experts were conducting education about women and LGBTIQ rights in 3 educational institutions (VET and gymnasia). When parents and the local church found out about the education, they expressed disapproval and the education was no longer allowed. Experts believe these reactions send a message to LGBTIQ students that they are not welcome, making them hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

There were several thoughts and ideas on activities that might be adopted by VET institutions to educate staff as well as students in order to increase the inclusivity of LGBTIQ students. Interviewees mentioned as desirable practice, seminars by the Ministry of Science and Education for deans and school principals with a clear plan of action, educating them on why this is an important issue and how to react properly in situations of discrimination, as well as how to include LGBTIQ lifestyle in their lessons by avoiding only heteronormative examples. Experts also point out that those educational activities should be continuous, not sporadic. Also, it is important for educational institutions to have a professional to advise teachers on how to deal with LGBTIQ issues and incidents of discrimination and where to refer a student facing discrimination as well as creating a rulebook on procedures in case of discrimination. One professor addresses the issue related to teachers in high school VET institutions saying “existing teaching staff in some institutions is completely unmotivated, therefore, hiring new, motivated teachers who are educated and willing to act could contribute to solving this issue”. Ideas of activities related to raising inclusivity among students were workshops, educative materials, debates, round tables, talks about sexuality in general (to avoid singling out LGBTIQ), internal marketing to create affirmative culture, additional subjects to improve all social skills including inclusivity “because Generation Z has a lower level of social skills”, and finally a school psychologist available for all the students, including LGBTIQ students.

Not one professor was familiar with any strategies or good practices implemented by the state. Half of them knew about civil society organisations and their work. That half mostly mentioned Gay Pride Parade¹² as one of them.

¹² What was expressed by several professors is scepticism and concern about the results of the Gay Pride Parade as well as its opposite effect on the general public. “The question is, are those actions the right ones and at the

As expected, the LGBTIQ experts were very well informed about the legal framework protecting LGBTIQ rights in general, but not particularly with those protecting LGBTIQ rights in VET education or education in general. However, they concluded “the superiority of The Anti-Discrimination Law” includes the VET sector. Furthermore, EU Strategies on LGBTIQ Equality, and the National Plan of Fighting Discrimination and Promoting Human Rights addresses the VET sector as well. One expert points out “For years, we have advocated for at least 1 educational measure considering LGBTIQ population to be formally adopted in educational curricula, but LGBTIQ organisations have not been recognised as relevant by the Ministry of Education. We send proposals by mail to which we do not receive any response”. The expert says organisation he works at conducted extracurricular educations in high schools with the principal’s approval. Mostly, the approval comes from gymnasia in Primorsko-goranska county, Istria, and Zagreb. Those counties are most developed and mostly left-oriented. Experts, as well as professors, consider these activities useful but insufficient, because of the general culture and because those educations are intermittent and sporadic.

In conclusion, VET professors, as well as LGBTIQ experts, believe the overall culture in Croatia is not affirmative and they believe education is the right way to address this issue. VET professors believe the approach should be subtle and in a form of extracurricular lessons (e.g. workshops), while the LGBTIQ expert believes additional content about the LGBTIQ population should be introduced into educational curricula¹³.

right time. I would rather inform myself in the way that works with me, than in a way someone else sees as the only possible. In that sense, this is also a tolerance moment”.

One professor even expressed disapproval of the Gay Pride Parade stating “it is a show which doesn’t help” and he believes “those are actions of political interest by certain people. Even laws which stress out differences, only make those differences stand out even more”. He believes most of the organizations “only exist to create jobs for themselves, exaggerating the issue”, which he believes is not even that widespread.

If we take into consideration the numbers delivered in this report through secondary research which shows that 53% of students in Croatian high schools have often or several times witnessed verbal violence against homosexuals, it is clear that one part of the educational staff is not versed about the real situation considering this issue.

¹³ One LGBTIQ expert gave an example of how LGBTIQ topics should be covered by educational curricula, saying sexual orientation should be stated in biographies of writers, composers, etc.

Focus Groups with VET Students

Focus groups conducted by Algebra University College included 6 students in total, aged from 20 to 46¹⁴ years. 2 of those students study Digital Marketing while others study Software Engineering. All students attend the same private VET institution.

A) Students' Impressions of Discriminatory Practices in their VET Institution

All of the students at focus groups believe their VET institution is very inclusive and that it shows no signs of intolerance, allowing all of the LGBTIQ students to be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity without any restraint.¹⁵ Not one student has witnessed an act of discrimination in their VET institution, and they said “in general, sexuality is not something we speak of because everyone is focused on work. Also, teachers do not participate in conversations about student matters”.

Students however point out that certain other groups of students, which seem to have more conservative stances, may not be entirely inclusive. Since the environment at their VET institution is affirmative, those students, if they do exist, are probably outnumbered and keep those conservative stances to themselves.

One student, who is not a Croatian citizen, believes Zagreb is very liberal and anyone whose stances are not liberal cannot impose his/her opinion, “...maybe in other cities in Croatia discrimination is present, and probably more in high schools than in higher education institutions. In the higher education institutions certain norms exist and discrimination is not pronounced, at least not explicitly, as that might be the case outside HEIs.”

Furthermore, one student points out that, unlike technical subjects, social science and humanities subjects provide more opportunity for discussion and therefore more possibility for discriminatory comments and stances to come out, if they do exist. This was backed up by a comment of a student who said that in their class of Digital Marketing, professors sometimes use examples related to the LGBTIQ population. However, this student did not notice a change in students' reaction when working on LGBTIQ examples, and everyone constructively commented on the case.

¹⁴ Age included: 20, 24, 26, 34, 36, 46

¹⁵ It is important to emphasize that all of interviewed students attend private VET HEI where regulations are firmer than in public VET HEI and there is no tolerance for discrimination of any kind.

Also, students think employers might be discriminatory towards LGBTIQ population, which might be one of the reasons why LGBTIQ students do not talk openly about their sexual orientation or gender identity, “so their potential employers wouldn’t find out”. One student disagreed saying employers are interested in employees’ level of knowledge, not their sexual preferences.

Students from focus groups do not know of discriminatory practices in other VET institutions, but according to general stances and based on what they hear from LGBTIQ people, they are under the impression that discrimination does exist generally in educational institutions. Furthermore, students say some other educational institutions may not be as inclusive as theirs, especially if teachers are older and more conservative. One student gave an example of discrimination she heard of from another university where the professor “gave an ugly comment about LGBTIQ person’s look”.

Also, students stressed that discrimination by professors does not exist at their VET institution. On the contrary, “discrimination might come from individual students, not from professors”.

B) Student’s Stances and Ideas Considering Good Practices

Students believe VET institutions should implement good practices “to let LGBTIQ population know discrimination is not present at their institution”. “Our university is inclusive, but an inclusive attitude should also be publicly communicated because without public communication there is only an assumption that the environment is affirmative, without a clear message”. The institution should also make it clear that “it sanctions all forms of discrimination and violence. One student believes institutions shouldn’t send a message “you too (referring to LGBTIQ population) are welcome to enrol at our institution”, because it singles the LGBTIQ population out and emphasizes inequality.

When asked about good practices at their VET institution, two students were able to give the following examples: official documents at the institution have the option “other” in the gender section, availability of university's psychologist, and programs for personal growth and wellbeing¹⁶.

¹⁶ It is important to emphasize that this type of programs could be implemented in private VET institutions, whilst this might be challenging to implement in public VET institutions.

Students point out it would be of good use if LGBTIQ students knew whom they can turn to if they face discrimination (an officially designated person). Only two students were familiar with such personnel at their VET institution, and those are an official psychologist, Vice Dean, Ethics Committees. Students believe the university should stress out and make it clear that the institution's psychological help is intended for LGBTIQ issues as well, because "it can be understood that psychological help is only for problems of a different nature".

Students think, in general, professors and the entire staff should be educated about inclusivity and inclusive language as well as educated on how to adequately react to violence when they face it, as "professors sometimes remain silent because they do not know how to adequately respond". Everyone agrees that professors at their institution probably have good knowledge of conflict management, but in general, these educations would be useful.

Moreover, students suggested that workshops should be conducted where the LGBTIQ community would present itself and LGBTIQ individuals would talk about problems they face in life "to develop empathy in general student population". This was also mentioned by LGBTIQ experts as a form of good practice "because, since most of the LGBTIQ population does not declare itself as LGBTIQ publicly, people think they do not know anyone who is LGBTIQ and in that way, LGBTIQ issues are mystified and seem distant. Seeing a person and listening to its problems causes more sympathy than in a case of only reading facts about LGBTIQ population".

Furthermore, students propose organizing clubs for LGBTIQ people would send an affirmative message. Even though students think that our society is not yet at the level to accept this, and also, people who would attend the groups would automatically expose themselves, in their opinion a club should be created. Even if no one came, the very opening of the club sends an affirmative message. One student believes those clubs would be accepted without any issues. Also, support (psychological and financial) groups for LGBTIQ students might be of help. The idea of the University's magazine was also mentioned.

One of the students concluded the conversation by saying "Any positive shift that the institution makes is very beneficial because it affects the general acceptance. Even though the academic community itself is more sensitive, our society is quite homophobic. Incidents are

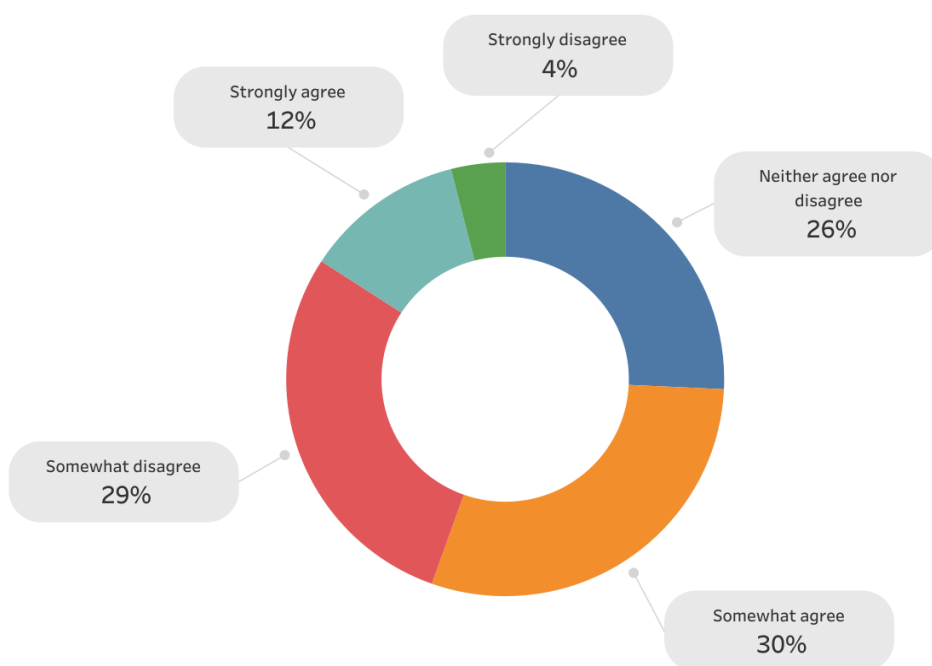
probably more pronounced in elementary school as well as high school, that’s why this sensitization should start at home - education is the most important thing “.

Online Research

Algebra has conducted an online survey with a total number of 103 participants, 85 VET students, and 15 VET teachers, with 56% of women, 39% of men, and less than 5% in other categories. Most of surveyed are aged between 20 and 29, while the second biggest age category is between 30 and 39. 65% of participants are heterosexual, 14% bisexual, 12% homosexual (gay/lesbian), and others.

Throughout the majority of the answers, we can notice that positive, negative, and neutral stances take almost the same proportion/percentage. The prevalence of the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” is surprisingly high and on average nearly 26.4%¹⁷.

Figure 5: Graphic visualization of survey question 5: LGBTIQ people are generally respected in VET environments (in the country).



¹⁷ This average is based on percentages for answers to questions 5 to 12, with a significant percentage of 41,5 for question 9, and only 9 percent for question 12.

Figure 6: Graphic visualization of survey question 6: A VET student/trainee can be openly LGBTIQ in a VET environment (in the country).

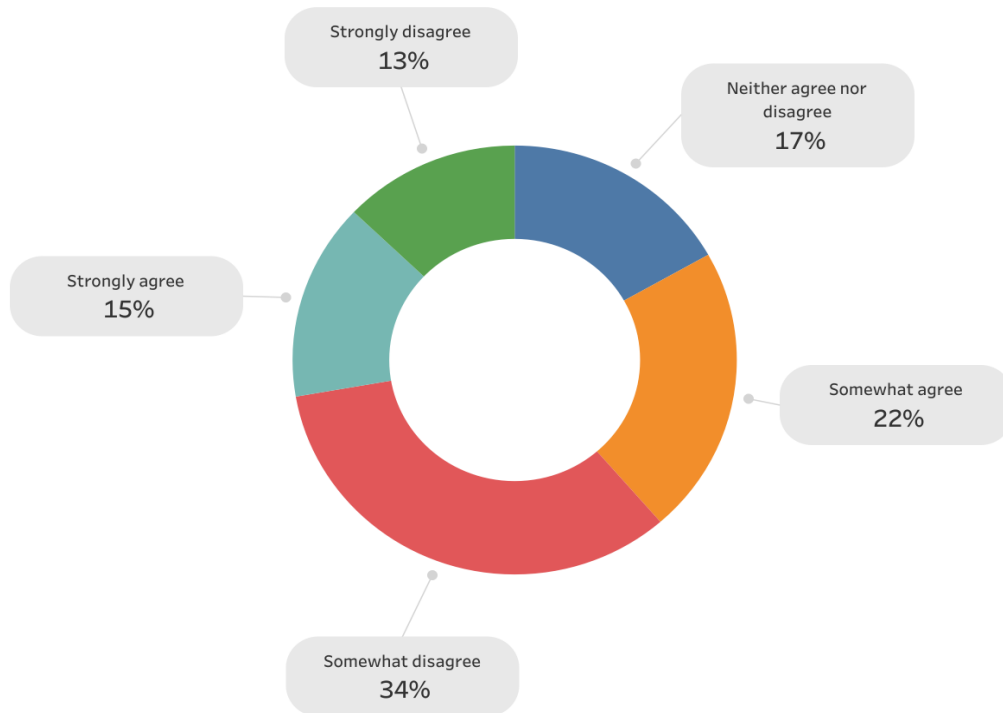


Figure 7: Graphic visualization of survey question 7: VET environments are safe and inclusive for LGBTIQ students/trainees (in the country).

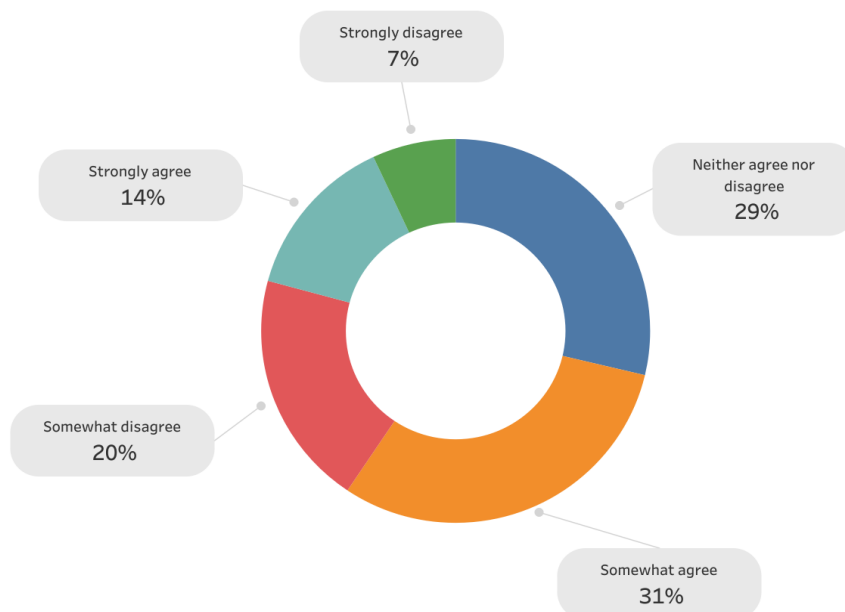
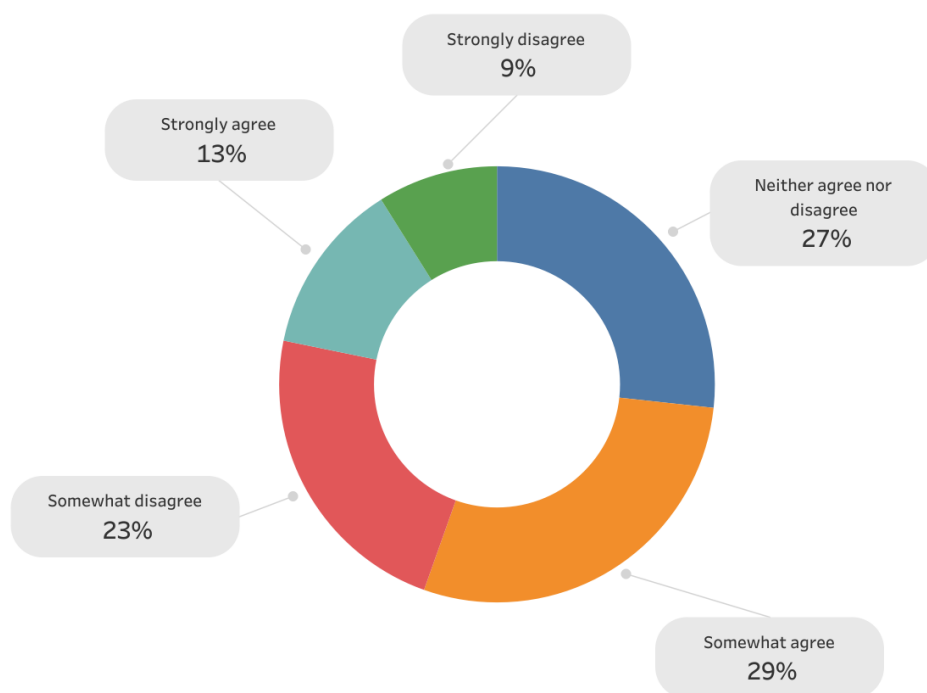


Figure 8: Graphic visualization of survey question 8: Trainees/students are often harassed, bullied and/or discriminated against for being LGBTIQ in VET environments (in the country).



What is significant to notice while analysing data from answers to questions 5 to 8 (see figure 5 to 8) is that the majority of surveyed think VET institutions in Croatia are safe for LGBTIQ students, but concurrently majority believes those students are often discriminated against and cannot openly express their sexual orientation or gender identity. These stances show a significant discrepancy, which might be correlated to the fact that people are aware of discrimination towards LGBTIQ in Croatian VET institutions, but at the same time they perceive it as marginal.

Figure 9: Graphic visualization of survey question 9: VET teachers/trainers usually have the proper skills to effectively handle cases of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees and support the victims.

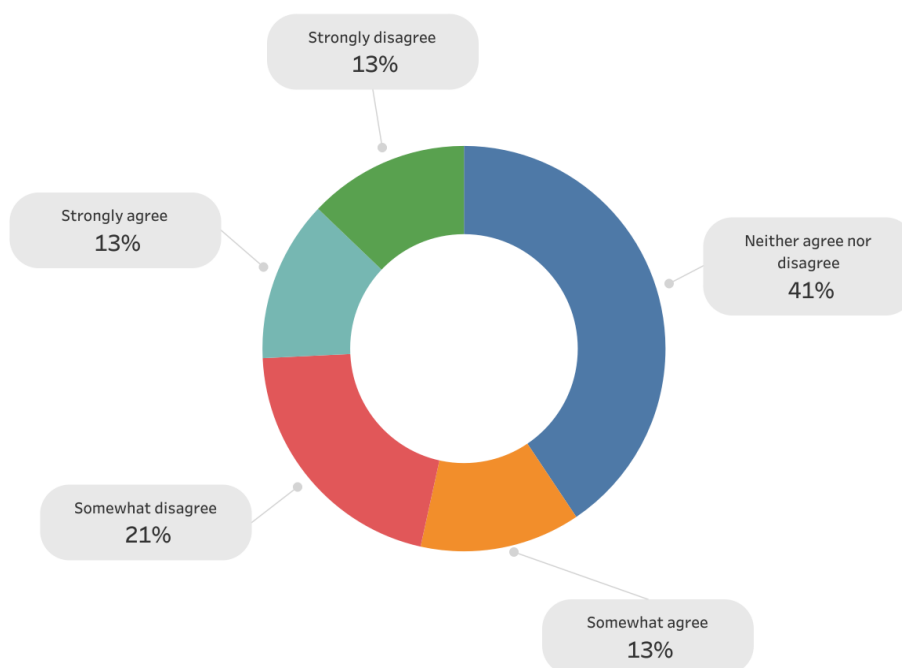


Figure 10: Graphic visualization of survey question 10: People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are **usually** other VET students/trainees.

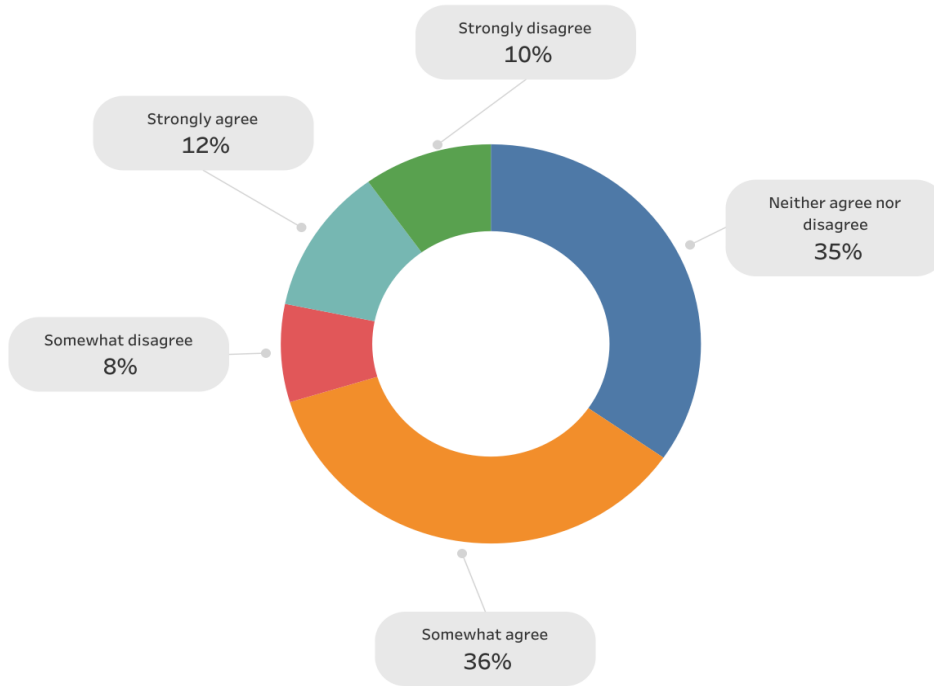


Figure 11: Graphic visualization of survey question 11: People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are **usually** VET professional staff (e.g., VET teachers/trainers, administrative staff etc.).

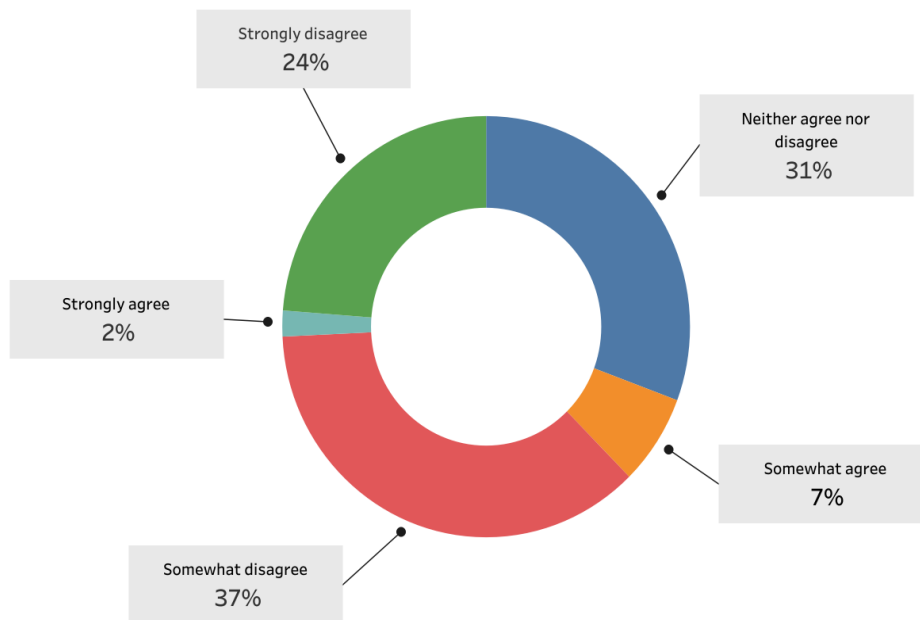
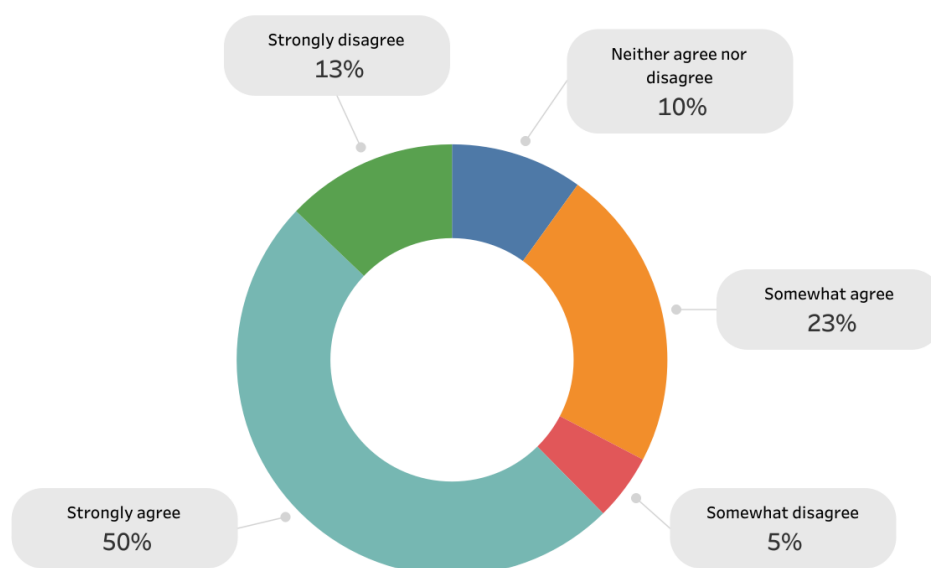


Figure 12: Graphic visualization of survey question 12: Measures preventing and combatting bullying, harassment against and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees should be taken in VET environments.



Most of the surveyed think other VET students are usually tentative bullies and harassers who discriminate against LGBTIQ students, while 9% think those harassers are VET professional staff (see Figure 10 and 11). Furthermore, majority believes VET teachers/trainers usually do not have proper skills to effectively handle cases of bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees and to support victims (see Figure 9). With that in mind, as much as 70% agree (with almost 50% strongly agreeing) that measures preventing and combatting bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees should be undertaken in VET environments. (see Figure 12).

Answers to question 13 and 14 (see Figure 13 and 14) show that 57% of teachers/professors have generally positive attitudes towards talking about LGBTIQ issues and their specific needs during the lesson, while as much as 95% of students would be friendly/professional towards LGBTIQ clients if they had one.

Figure 13: Graphic visualization of survey question 13: After students have completed their training, they may have to provide LGBTIQ clients with their services. Which of the following answers represents the way you think this should be dealt with in your VET courses?

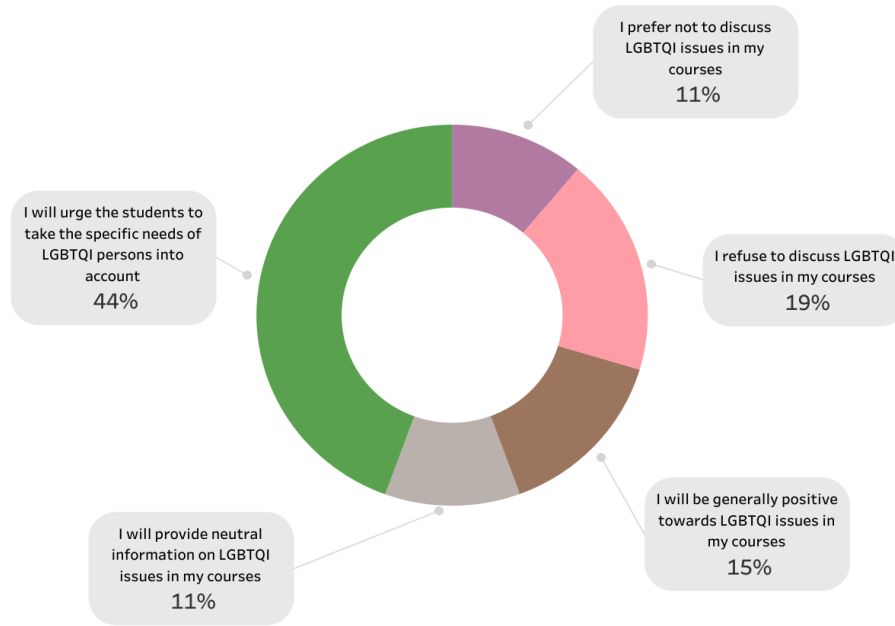
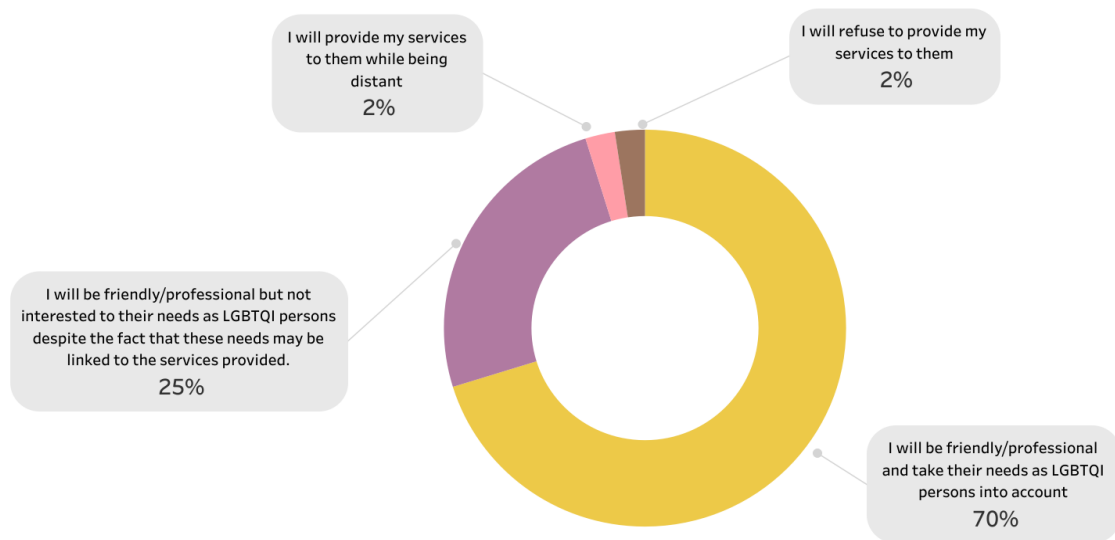


Figure 14: Graphic visualization of survey question 14: After having completed your training, you may have to provide LGBTIQ clients with your services. Which of the following answers better represents the way you are going to deal with them?



General Conclusions

Research shows that the number of high school students with positive stances towards the LGBTIQ population in Croatia has risen from 32.56% in average to 47.04%¹⁸ in the last 5 years, which shows a significant positive shift. However, research also shows that the general environment is homophobic and heteronormative. An expressed polarity between attitudes is present, where one part of the Croatian population is affirmative while another shows negative attitudes or restraint towards LGBTIQ. Our primary research data supports these findings. All of the interviewees from focus groups as well as from in-depth interviews believe overall culture is not affirmative towards the LGBTIQ population and discrimination does exist. In addition to that, LGBTIQ students still do not feel safe and protected at schools and discrimination is still present. Over 50% of high school students have witnessed some type of discrimination towards the LGBTIQ population in their school. Both VET teachers and LGBTIQ expert believe education is crucial in addressing this issue.

In comparison to students from gymnasias, VET students express significantly lower tolerance and lower level of inclusivity toward the LGBTIQ population, especially male students. This seems to be correlated to VET students' lower level of knowledge about LGBTIQ topics. Accordingly, a higher incidence of discrimination towards the LGBTIQ population is present in VET high schools. These findings are supported by our secondary and also primary research data demonstrating that most of the professors, as well as LGBTIQ expert, believe discrimination is more pronounced in VET institutions, more at the high school level than in gymnasias or HEIs. Also, the expert holds that service-oriented VET schools tend to be more inclusive than "typical male schools, such as technical schools, electrical engineering, construction". Furthermore, significant differences are present in different regions of Croatia, with high school students of more developed counties showing more inclusivity attitudes. VET students in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, show the most inclusive attitudes towards LGBTIQ.

VET school staff lacks knowledge and competencies to support LGBTIQ students and react properly if they face discrimination in the classroom, but they can also be homophobic themselves. Results of our online survey support these findings showing that 30% of VET teachers refuse or would rather not talk about LGBTIQ issues during their lessons. Also, all of the interviewed professors believe they do not have the relevant knowledge to support

¹⁸ Those averages were calculated according to data related to questions about homosexuality from the research published by GOOD initiative and IDIZ about political literacy of high school students in the Republic of Croatia for 2015 and 2021 (see Table 1).

LGBTIQ students if they face discrimination and do not know how to offer proper help. They believe an expert person should be present in educational institutions who is trained to handle these situations in a professional way.

The entire Croatian education curricula is heteronormative, and discrimination is present in school textbooks which contain negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ. This is especially pronounced in religious subjects. LGBTIQ expert believes religious subjects are the main corrosive factor preventing acceptance of the LGBTIQ population by general population.

The overall impression is that LGBTIQ students do not feel welcome to express their sexual orientation or gender identity and very often face discrimination, mostly in a verbal form (mockery). Based on the primary research data, some VET professors do not perceive subtle forms of discrimination (mockery) as such, which is worrying. Also, they believe these discriminatory acts are marginal, while secondary research data, as mentioned earlier, shows different trends.

What is also noticeable is the difference in attitudes between LGBTIQ expert and VET professors. While the latter believe that emphasizing differences leads to discrimination and should be avoided, advocating thus the discriminatory stance that minorities are discriminated against because they are visible, LGBTIQ expert believes differences should be emphasized and accepted by the general population.

Like most EU countries, Croatia has implemented European laws and strategies considering LGBTIQ rights, but those strategies are not fully put to practice. VET professors showed no knowledge of the legal framework considering LGBTIQ rights and also believe the government has no real interest in addressing these issues.

The majority of good practices are conducted by civil society organisations (education of teachers and students, psychological help and support, resolving incidents of discrimination), not by formal structures of national bodies.

References:

- Bagić, D. and Gvozdanović, A. (2015). *Istraživanje političke pismenosti učenika završnih razreda srednjih škola u Republici Hrvatskoj - istraživački izvještaj za 2021. Godinu*. Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu.
- Baketa, N., Bovan, K. and Matić Bojić, J. (2021). *Istraživanje političke pismenosti učenika završnih razreda srednjih škola u Republici Hrvatskoj - istraživački izvještaj za 2021. godinu*. Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu.
- Barbarić, T. (2017). *LGBT inkluzivna škola: Implikacije za odgojno-obrazovnu praksu*. Faculty of humanities and social sciences, University of Zagreb.
- Čemažar, S. and Mikulin, T. (2017). *Europeizacija kao (ne)prijateljica: Razvoj LGBT pokreta u Hrvatskoj*. Mali Levijatan, Volume 4, p. 29-58.
- Dekanić, A.M., Gregurović, M. and Markuš Sandrić, M. (2019). *TALIS 2018: Učitelji, nastavnici i ravnatelji- cijenjeni stručnjaci; Međunarodno istraživanje učenja i poučavanja*. Zagreb: National Center for External Evaluation of Education.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 1-72.
- Horvat, K and Kalamujić, D. (2018). *Primjeri dobre prakse suzbijanja diskriminacije na lokalnoj razini*. Zagreb: House of Human Rights Zagreb, p. 1-24.
- IGLYO — The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation, (2018). *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report*. Brussels: IGLYO, p. 1-184.
- Kuliš, I and Petrović, D. (2018). *Istraživanje povezanosti nekih obrazovnih faktora i stavova srednjoškolaca o osobama homoseksualne orijentacije*. Psyche, Volume 1, p. 9-16. Available at: https://www.crol.hr/images/kulis_petrovic_1.pdf.

Mojfaks.hr. (2020). *Kako je biti gay na zagrebačkim fakultetima? Studenti nam otkrili na kojim studijima se treba 'skrivati', a gdje možeš-biti svoj.* [online] Available at:
<https://mojfaks.dnevnik.hr/nakon-predavanja/lgbt-zajednica-ponovno-na-udaru-poljska-proglasava-zone-bez-lgbt-a-hrvatski-studenti-govore-nam-postoje-li-liberalniji-fakulteti-i-koji-su>

Pađen, H. (2018). *Samoeфикаsnost kao medijator znanja nastavnika o homoseksualnim osobama i pružanja podrške homoseksualnim učenicima.* Faculty of humanities and social sciences, University of Zagreb.

Srednja.hr. (2018). *Srednjoškolci najčešće o homoseksualnosti uče na vjeronauku, a 48% ih smatra da je to bolest ili poremećaj.* [online] Available at:
<https://www.srednja.hr/novosti/srednjoskolci-najcesce-homoseksualnosti-uce-vjeronauku-a-48-ih-smatra-da-to-bolesti-poremecaj/>

Srednja.hr. (2016). *Srednjoškolac koji je govorio na Prajdu: Najmlađi članovi LGBTIQ+ zajednice nisu sigurni u hrvatskim školama.* [online] Available at:
<https://www.srednja.hr/novosti/srednjoskolac-koji-je-govorio-na-prajdu-najmladi-clanovi-lgbtiq-zajednice-nisu-sigurni-u-hrvatskim-skolama-5/>

The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, (2020). *Akcijski plan za prevenciju nasilja u školama: 2020-2024.* Zagreb. P. 1-36

Vlada.gov.hr. (2015). *Obrazovanje i znanost- temelji razvoja društva.* [online] Available at:
<https://vlada.gov.hr/obrazovanje-i-znanost-temelji-razvoja-drustva/202?big=0>

Vučković Juroš, T. (2014). *Socijalna isključenost seksualnih manjina u Hrvatskoj.* Revija za socijalnu politiku, Volume 2, p. 195-218.