

## NATIONAL REPORT - GREECE

### 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	<a href="http://www.uniqueproject.eu">www.uniqueproject.eu</a>
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Authoring Partners	AKMI S.A.
Date	November 2021
Version	Final
Approved by	Symplexis
Dissemination Level	Public

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## Executive Summary

This Report aspires to explore the existence and levels of discrimination against LGBTIQ learners within Vocational Education and Training environment in Greece. It reflects the perceptions, attitudes and stances of both VET Teachers/Trainers and Learners, the main groups that interact on a regular basis within VET environment and shape each other's activity.

AKMI S.A., along with Symplexis, have consolidated the research that is detailed in the current document. Symplexis organized a series of in-depth interviews with experts in the field of LGBTIQ rights while AKMI S.A. conducted two focus groups (one with VET Teachers/Trainers and another with VET Learners), an online survey and a literature review in order to present the status quo by using different parameters and sources of information.

This report presents an overview of the national legislation, including its recent amendments in favor of the legal recognition of LGBTIQ identities, as well as the current practices and attitudes that are reproduced in the Greek VET schools. It also outlines the emerging trends, as they have been represented to official EU and national documents, reports and academic papers.

## 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 behind 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 LGBTIQ 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

### *History of LGBTIQ+ movement in Greece*

The first organized movement of the Greek LGBTIQ community appeared after the collapse of the dictatorship and the restoration of the democratic regime. In response to the enactment of a bill related to the protection of the public from sexually transmitted diseases, which was a legislative relic from the dictatorship regime and was reinforced in 1976, an autonomous activist group was set up, the Greek Gay Liberation Community, without statute, President and registered members. One of the main objectives of the movement was to increase LGBTIQ visibility, equal treatment and combat of discrimination. In the late 70s – early 80s, the LGBTIQ community was further enhanced and expressed their demands through the press, like the magazines AMFI and “The Screeching”, but a few years later, the movement started to perish.

In the aftermath of the new millennium, there was a boost in LGBTIQ movement in Greece; a lot of organizations were structured and developed an established form. The introduction of Pride significantly contributed to this direction, enabling the LGBTIQ community to raise awareness and promote their causes in an increasingly assertive way. A long way should still be walked as discrimination scores high but the institutional or social recognition of the LGBTIQ movements and organizations allow them to expand their activities to all spheres, from the workplace to the legal representation.

### *Existing Legal Framework for LGBTIQ rights*

LGBTIQ rights are safeguarded from a series of international, European and national laws that have been adopted or integrated into the Greek legal system. After years of political battles and organized activism for visibility and equal treatment, LGBTIQ rights entered the political agenda of various Greek parties. It is noteworthy that, in the last 7 years<sup>1</sup> and at least under a strict legal perspective, LGBTIQ organizations, with the support of political parties and social actors, have succeeded in promoting non-discrimination which was reflected to the bills that were passed in the Greek Parliament. Broader legal frameworks have penetrated into various field of activities, covering both public and private sphere of LGBTIQ people’s live.

As member of the United Nations and the European Union, Greece is a party of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the European Convention of Human Rights. It has also signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the

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<sup>1</sup> The first law that referred explicitly to the protection of LGBTIQ rights was enforced in 2014 with the Act 4285 (see below for more information about its content)

Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OHCHR).

Besides, it has ratified the International Covenant on Human and Civil Rights, the Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Colour Youth, 2015), the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which prohibits any kind of discrimination grounded on different human qualities or characteristics. The Charter makes a specific reference to sexual orientation as well as to special protection for children and young persons against physical or ethical risks they may be exposed to (Part 1, Article 7, §10, Charter of the European Union).

At national level, a net of legal protection against discrimination has been set even from the establishment of the Hellenic state. In proportion to the era in which it was developed and the acceptable social norms, the first Constitution introduced the principle of equality for all Greek citizens, a feature that was retained and expanded to other characteristics with the consecutive amendments. It should be noted that the current provisions do not explicitly refer to gender identity or sexual expression, despite the official proposal for Constitutional consolidation of prohibition of discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity that was submitted in November 2019 and was eventually voted against by the Parliament (<https://avmag.gr/115708/colour-youth-quot-chorane-ta-loatki-atoma-sto-syntagma-quot/>). Nevertheless, the Constitution establishes “the absolute protection of life, dignity and freedom, without discrimination due to nationality, ethnicity, language and religious or political beliefs” (Article 5 §2, Constitution of Greece) and unequivocally condemns “*any form of torture, physical injury, health damage or psychological abuse*” to all citizens (Article 7 §2, Constitution of Greece), a major institutional foundation that could act in defense of the LGBTIQ individuals.

A more concrete provision about gender was introduced through the Act 927/1979, amended by 4285/2014, which established penalties for persons that “*incite, cause, stimulate or urge to actions that may inflict discrimination, hate or violence*” against a human being due to its personal characteristics or beliefs, including sexual orientation or gender identity. The Hellenic Parliament has adopted 4443/2016 Act (which integrated a number of EU Directives<sup>2</sup>) which

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<sup>2</sup> Directive 2000/43/EC, Directive 2000/78/EC and Directive 2014/54/ EU



prohibited any form of direct<sup>3</sup> or indirect<sup>4</sup> discrimination and harassment based on, among other attributes, to gender identity or characteristics and established a status of equal treatment in the field of work and employment (Natsi & Pappa, The legal treatment of gender discrimination in Greece). However, this law didn't make any reference to education which was not put forward even after its last amendment by 4837/2021 Act.

During the recent years, a pro-LGBTIQ agenda was actively promoted through the establishment of the 4356/2015 Act for the Registered Partnership and 4491/2017 for the legal recognition of gender identity. Registered Partnership recognizes same-sex union, explicitly stating that it can be signed on the partners' will "*regardless of their gender*" (Article 1, Paper 181/24.12.2015, 4356/2015, Government Gazette). However, it does not cover parental rights (which are only recognized to heterosexual couples), a condition that was slightly modified with 4538/2018 Act which permitted homosexual couples to form foster families.

Further, 4491/2017 sets the basis for the recognition of gender spectrum and the applicability of non-discrimination, demonstrating, among others, that "*the individual's personality is lawfully respected based on their gender characteristics*". Gender is defined as "*the internal and personal way which an individual experience his/her gender with, regardless of the gender that was assigned to them at birth based on their biological characteristics*". Article 3 of the Act also sets the context and the process for "gender reassignment" (Paper 152/13.10.2017 Government Gazette), paving the way to a more inclusive society.

The more favorable legal environment for LGBTIQ individuals, however, does not mean that all issues are effectively settled. The process for legal gender recognition is regulated by binding decision of the Court, which means that transgender individuals need to endure long-lasting and complex legal procedures that may take up to 18 months or more until their new

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<sup>3</sup> Direct discrimination is defined as a [situation] in which a person receives less favourable treatment as compared with the way another person is treated, under similar circumstances, due to race, colour, ethnic origin, genetic information, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic disease, age, family or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics, 4443/2016, Article 2, §2a, Government Gazette, Hellenic Republic, A' 232/9.12.2016

<sup>4</sup> Indirect discrimination takes place when a provision, criterion or practice, which, at first sight, seems neutral, may render individuals to a disadvantaged status due to race, colour, ethnic origin, genetic information, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic disease, age, family or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics, 4443/2016, Article 2, §2b, Government Gazette, Hellenic Republic, A' 232/9.12.2016

gender status is officially approved. Besides, it is a really expensive option for individuals that are considered as the most vulnerable subgroup within LGBTIQ community, being often excluded by the workplace and living on the verge of poverty and marginalization. Another parameter for legal gender recognition is the applicant to be non-married. These serious problems that discourage transgender people to seek legal gender recognition and lead to difficulties with identification, as the person's gender identity and their legally assigned gender do not match, are one of the main criticisms that have been expressed by LGBTIQ organizations. Furthermore, the procedure is available only to certain ages: underage people who are 17 years old need the consent of their parents and/or legal guardians, and those between 15-16 years old need, additionally, the approval of a multidisciplinary committee. These requirements limit further trans youth's access to legal gender recognition, intensifying the stigmatization and discrimination they experience in educational settings.

In March 2021, the Greek Government appointed a Special Committee, composed of proclaimed professors of Law, independent bodies and representatives of the LGBTIQ organizations and institutions, with a mandate to formulate the **National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ Equality**, following and in alignment with the publication of the **European Strategy for LGBTIQ+ Equality 2020-2025**, in November 2020. The structure of the National Strategy has incorporated the four thematic areas that are promoted by the European one: (a) combatting discrimination against LGBTIQ individuals, (b) protection of LGBTIQ individuals, (c) establishment of open to LGBTIQ EU societies and (d) the overarching role the European Union should play in the effective promotion and safeguard of LGBTIQ rights.

Among the issues that are being dealt with in the National Strategy are policies against hate speech, the reformation of police departments and training of the respective Units against Racist Violence, support to disabled and ageing LGBTIQ persons as well as enhancement of policies for victims of abuse and violence (National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ Equality, 2021). Nevertheless, it is the setting up of a National Mechanism for LGBTIQ+ Equal Rights (EMYD) that constitutes a real breakthrough (if it is eventually adopted as foreseen in the draft), as it will be able to participate in future consultations with Ministries, coordinate their activities, resolve any conflict of powers in its field of responsibility and monitor the progress and the realization of the targets in the Greek society.

The societal changes that have taken place after the introduction of the Acts seemed to be towards the same direction. According to the ***EU LGBTI Survey II: A long way to go for LGBTI equality***, conducted by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *57% of the respondents (general population) claimed that prejudice and intolerance has dropped in the country during the last five years* (FRA, 2020) but it is still present in all spheres of activity. Overall Greece is placed in the 18<sup>th</sup> position out of 49 EU countries regarding LGBTIQ inclusiveness, scoring 47.2% in the scale of respect of LGBTIQ rights and full equality (ILGA-Europe) and being the top of middle-rated countries of the group.

However, the legal framework for LGBTIQ people remains quite generic in its scope. Apart from the establishment and protection of human rights, the initiatives that are adopted by the Greek state to effectively support LGBTIQ inclusiveness are quite limited and refer mostly to equal treatment at the workplace. On the contrary, there is a gap in laws or regulations specialized to combat discrimination in education and, especially, Vocational Education and Training in Greece.

The international paradigm shows a clear indication towards more inclusiveness of human rights in education, as it is demonstrated by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education and the Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (referred shortly as “1974 Recommendation” - <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>) and as implemented in practice by organizations such as Equitas - International Centre for Human Rights Education in Canada.

At EU level, the Commission published in 2015 the List of Actions to advance LGBTIQ equality, where, among other fields of intervention, it committed at supporting Member States *“through the organization of a best practice exchange on LGBTI anti-discrimination actions in education and homo and transphobic school bullying, safe school environments and diversity lessons at school in the context of the tolerance and diversity policy development that will implement the Paris Declaration”* and at examining the implementation of consolidated actions for intersex and transgender persons that are more seriously affected in the labour market. According to the report published in May 2020 and summarized the findings by the implementation of the proposed actions, the European Commission supported a number of

Erasmus+ and Rights, Equality and Citizens (REC) projects that promoted LGBTIQ rights, a trend that will be reinforced in the new Programme Period (Final Report 2015-2019 on the List of Actions to advance LGBTI equality).

Apart from the legal part and the international and EU policies that are being shaped and influence our country as well, Greece's national and cultural characteristics should be taken into consideration for a realistic representation of the LGBTIQ status in the society and in education. Greece is a Mediterranean and Balkan, Orthodox country where religion and heterosexual family still play a key role. The value system of its people could be perceived as more traditional or conservative, which demands additional effort for the LGBTIQ community to be treated with respect and secure equal treatment. Despite the progress that has been made in the last decade, society is divided in the field of same-sex marriage or adoption of children or even in how "visible" the identity of a LGBTIQ person should be. These beliefs are transmitted to younger generations, affecting their attitudes and behaviours. The expansion of ICT technologies and social media as well as the public support of role models to the LGBTIQ community have facilitated their inclusion to society, on the one hand, but it has generated other, more concealed, ways of harassment.

### *LGBTIQ inclusiveness in VET*

To be able to discuss further about the current status of LGBTIQ inclusiveness in VET, it is important to analyse how the Greek VET system works. Vocational Education and Training (VET) lays under the responsibility and supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and is distinguished in initial and continuous studies, covering secondary and post-secondary education, that is offered after the completion of compulsory education<sup>5</sup>. To attend a VET Programme, learners must have completed at least their 15<sup>th</sup> year of age, which coincides with the termination of the third class of junior high school.

Further, VET is categorized in typical and a-typical studies which are regulated primarily by 4763/2020 Act which established the National System of Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (published in the Government's Gazette of the Hellenic Republic/Vol. A' 254/21.12.2020). Initial, typical, VET studies are offered by:

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<sup>5</sup> Compulsory education in Greece covers: 2 years of pre-school education, 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior high school (γυμνάσιο).

- **Professional Schools of Internships (EPAS)** which are state-run and supervised by the National Manpower Organization (OAED) or competent Ministries, like Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Naval Affairs etc. (Karkalakos, Plessa-Papadaki, Theodoridou, Chinopoulou, 2020). They are aligned to EQF level 3.
- **Professional Schools of Vocational Education (ESK)** which may be public or private and are also aligned to EQF level 3. The organization and operation of public ESKs is under the responsibility of competent Ministries (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Naval Affairs, Karkalakos-Plessa-Papadaki-Theodoridou-Chinopoulou, Vocational Education and Training in Greece) while the educational context and supervision remains to the authority of the Ministry of Education.
- **Professional High Schools (EPAL)** which are controlled by the Ministry of Education and provide two circles of study (typical and atypical).

Consequently, initial, atypical VET studies, which lead to degrees of EQF/HQF level 5, consist of:

- A post-secondary and atypical **Internship Class (Τάξη Μαθητείας)** which is offered for EPAL graduates (second cycle of EPAL education). It is supervised by the National Manpower Organization (OAED) and National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).
- **Public and private post-secondary VET institutes (IEK) and Colleges** which are supervised by the General Secretariat of Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth (as it was named after the 4763/2020 Act) and certified by the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (E.O.P.P.E.P)



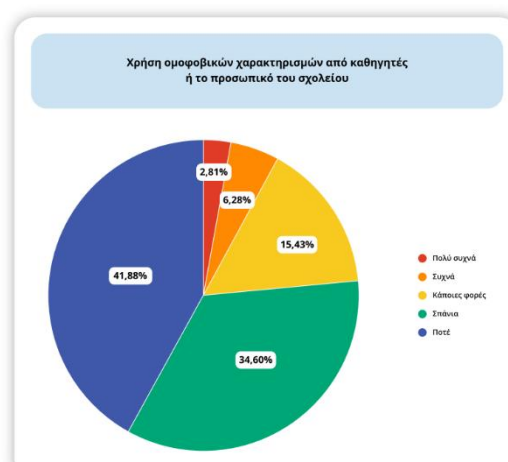
Source: EOPPEP 1

Continuous VET is offered by both public and private organizations and is addressed mainly to adult learners who have completed the 18<sup>th</sup> year of age. It includes studies that are provided by Centers for Lifelong Learning (K.D.V.M).

Evidently, VET system in Greece comprises a great spectrum of activities and learners which makes it difficult to come to uncontested conclusions concerning the attitudes and perceptions that are reflected in each individual part of the whole structure. Besides, there is a lack of studies or researches on the LGBTIQ numbers and their treatment in VET system in Greece. However, there are strong indications that the discrimination patterns against LGBTIQ people show similar trends with other levels of education, especially for adolescents between 15-18 years old. Although there is no concrete data about VET schools specifically, it is revealing that 79% of Greek learners *reported that they hide their LGBTIQ identity at school whereas merely 19% of school and university students responded that they would open up about their sexual orientation to their classmates (FRA, 2020).*

Another alarming evidence is that fear of being assaulted at schools due to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) was attested by 32% of the LGBTIQ respondents (FRA, 2020). According to data provided by Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), in 2019, 12 out of 113 incidents that were reported to the Hellenic Police entailed violent attacks against LGBTIQ and 12 threats of use of violence, being the second most frequent category of reported hate crime incidents (retrieved from OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - <https://www.osce.org/odhr>).

The first Panhellenic Study for School Environment, which collected the stances and opinions of **1.963 secondary school learners among 13 to 20 years old** who self-identify as non-heterosexual/cisgender (including learners of initial VET schools), revealed that **84,9% of the participants had heard the word “gay” to be said with negative connotations** while more than half of them **(58,1%) admitted that their teachers/trainers had made homophobic comments**, a fact that is detrimental for the learners’ mental health and emotional wellbeing. Another 34,3% also clarified that their teachers/trainers were not likely to



Source: Colour Youth 1

intervene in incidents of harassment or abuse due to SOGIESC (Colour Youth, 2018) and even when they did, their actions were limited to verbal warnings and, rarely, to disciplinary actions unless there was a very serious case of physical assault. Considering the extent of discriminatory behaviours to schools as testified by the learners, there is no available data about any reaction from the Ministry or the enforcement of preventive measures against LGBTIQ discrimination in an organized way.

Evidently, harassment is not addressed effectively; even worse it is underreported, which leads to a constant feeling of exclusion and non-safety for LGBTIQ learners while it degrades the quality of school environment overall. LGBTIQ learners seemed hesitant to discuss openly about their sexual orientation or gender identity with their teachers/trainers and even worse with their principals (Colour Youth, 2018). In relation to an overall penetration of far-right radicalization that is observed at schools, especially in secondary level, it is not a coincidence that there are official complaints concerning incidents of serious abuse, violence and even rapes. Even if these incidents cannot be correlated with LGBTIQ violence specifically (as they fall under a broader category of gender-based violence which is also on the rise), they indicate a “culture of fear and coercion” with a strong gender perspective which increases the vulnerability of LGBTIQ school population.

Despite the problems that LGBTIQ learners face at school, their performance remains high and most of them are interested in continuing their studies in post-secondary and tertiary level. This is connected to Greek cultural characteristics and family values which are exercised through family pressure for excellence; it also reflects the fact that a good performance at school is a way for LGBTIQ youth to hide or set their sexual orientation out of the spotlight, gaining their parents’, teachers’ or co-mates’ acceptance and improving their living and schooling conditions. Things are quite different for transgender students, however, as they tend to believe that they won’t be offered significant career opportunities even if they get a degree.

**The fact that LGBTIQ inclusiveness in education has been neglected**, highlights the low significance that has been given to sexual education in its entirety at all school levels, where heteronormativity still prevails in the representation of sexual orientation/gender identity. Since 2016, sexual education has entered Junior High School in a more organized way through

Thematic Weeks; until then, sexual education was seen strictly under biological perspective and it was at the discretion of the teacher/professor which extent they will talk to their learners at. According to Mrs Elena Skarpidou, Coordinator of Education at Rainbow School, the sexual education was implemented for 3 years but it was retracted by the Minister of Education amid strong opposition by religious and far-right groups. Eventually, it was restored in 2021 and introduced as a compulsory lesson to all schools under pilot mode through the “Qualifications Workshop”, causing again tensions from ultra-conservative groups but at a very low scale and without affecting its implementation.

Towards this direction, the Institute of Educational Policy (IPE) approved a series of modules that cover different thematic areas (including gender diversity and equality) and are taught in the whole spectrum of education (from fifth and sixth grade of Primary School to High School, <http://www.iep.edu.gr/el/psifiako-apothetirio/skill-labs>). Although there is no data about the entry of Sex Education in initial Vocational Education and Training, there are indications that relevant actions for the delivery of targeted info sessions or speeches are organized in EPALs throughout the country.

Until now, LGBTIQ learners resort to out-of-school materials for getting the information they need because school handbooks do not provide any guidance. Teachers/trainers’ stereotypes, lack of (re)-training on gender issues and awkwardness to discuss LGBTIQ issues, combined with parents’ skepticism, are also factors that expand the gap among heterosexual/cisgender and LGBTIQ learners. There are no mandatory trainings for teachers on LGBTIQ awareness<sup>6</sup>, no information or guidelines and no LGBTIQ-inclusive Curricula offered so far (IGLYO, 2018). An LGBTIQ learner testified that the units that referred to LGBTIQ and were introduced into

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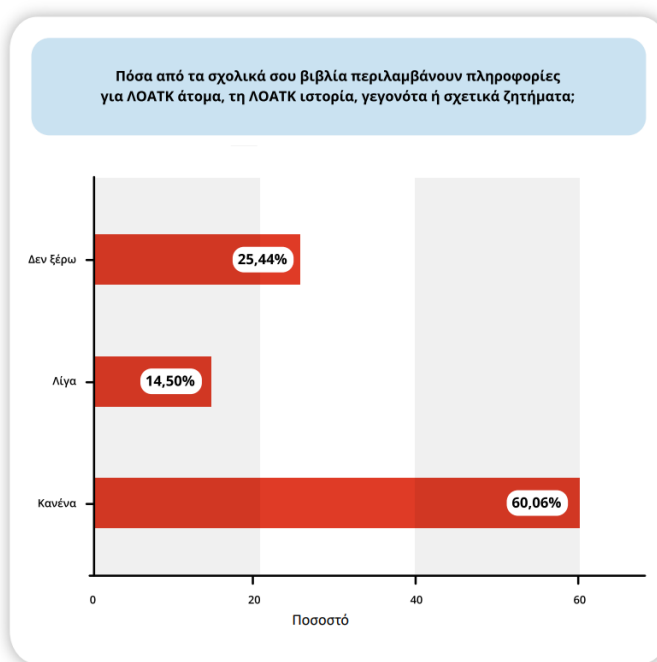
<sup>6</sup> The E-learning Centre of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens currently offers a short-term (lifelong learning) course that is addressed to teachers of all school levels, psychologists, experts or other interested parties and it is entitled “**Gender Identities: Politics and Rhetorics**”. The course examines the context of gender under historical, philosophical and psychosocial perspective. At university education level, the official Curriculum of the Department of Early Childhood Education of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens has integrated two relevant to this field courses; “**Gender Theories**” which focus on the interaction of gender and social life as well as a “**Thematic Week: Gender, body, otherness**” which studies the norms about gender, bodies and sexual orientation.



the Thematic Weeks, were totally ignored by their teacher who decided not to teach the lesson at all (Colour Youth, 2018).

The graphic below shows at which extent, according to the participants' opinions, LGBTIQ-related issues are presented in school books:

*Which of your school handbooks contain information about LGBT people, LGBT history, facts or related matters?*



Source: Colour Youth 2

It should be outlined that the LGBTIQ political actions in education are, at greatest part, the outcome of the initiatives for visibility of LGBTIQ learners that have been sustained and promoted by LGBTIQ organizations or other LGBTIQ-friendly NGOs that collaborate with agencies of the Ministry of Education or other independent bodies. Until recently, a great focus has been given to mostly address incidents of bullying and abuse or supporting activism for non-discrimination in education.

Among the initiatives developed by NGOs that deserve a special reference are the preparation of a brochure by Colour Youth with response actions to incidents of violence that was addressed to learners of all ages, including VET learners, as well as the activities of Rainbow

School which provides a holistic approach for LGBTIQ inclusiveness to education. The organization offers trainings to teachers and professors or all school levels but also it has developed non-heteronormative training material and launched inclusive classrooms from nursery to high school, adjusted to the needs and learning abilities of each age (<https://rainbowschool.gr/>).

## Useful Contacts

The below tables contain a list of the independent authorities for the protection of equality and equal treatment and most well-known organizations for the protection of LGBTIQ rights in Greece, where victims of discrimination, witnesses or bystanders, VET learners, VET Teachers/Trainers and general public could refer to, in order to seek advice, support or protection.

It should be noted that this is a non-exhaustive list; it is highly possible that there are other movements, groups or initiatives at local level that are not included in the table. We collected the ones that have an established or institutional form, have had a strong local, regional and national impact and have made targeted interventions.

### A. Independent bodies and official authorities:

<p><b>Special Unit against Racist Violence, Hellenic Police</b> <b>Athens: 2106476751, Piraeus: 2104178714, Thessaloniki: 2310388436)</b></p> <p><b>Hellenic Police Hotline against racist violence 11414</b></p>	<p>The Special Unit against Racist Violence of the Hellenic Police is responsible for intervening ex officio or following charges or complaints in the investigation and persecution of every kind of exhortation, preparation, and/or perpetration of activities or actions that may incite racial discrimination, hatred, and/or violence against persons or groups of persons because of their race, complexion, religion, family-tree history, genealogic, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. It also provides information to the victims for shelter,</p>
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psychosocial support or medical care, keeps a record of the relevant crimes for statistical and monitoring purposes and collaborates with International Organizations and Bodies in combatting racist crimes.

Within its framework, it offers a 24/7 Hotline 11414 where they receive calls and complaints about incidents of racist violence. All reported cases are handled with respect to anonymity and confidentiality.

## Greek Ombudsman

**Mr. Andreas Pottakis**

**Address: 17 Halkokondyli Street,  
10432 Athens**

**Website: <https://www.synigoros.gr/>**

**E-mail: [ombudsman@synigoros.gr](mailto:ombudsman@synigoros.gr)**

The Greek Ombudsman is the national equality body with a mandate to combat discrimination and promote the principle of equal treatment irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, family or social status, religion or belief, disability or chronic disease, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender characteristics (law 3896/2010 and Law 4443/2016). These laws incorporate into national legal order the Directives: 2000/43/EC, 2000/73/EC, 2004/113/EC, and 2014/54/EC. The Department of Equal Treatment is competent for handling cases of discrimination pertaining to all aforementioned grounds as they relate to access of employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions, in both public and private sector, including contractual employment, self-employment, work and pay. It is also responsible for

handling cases of discrimination based on gender, ethnic or racial origin in regards to access to and supply of goods and services.

The promotion of the principle of equal treatment is an additional important mission which is carried out in cooperation with government agencies, NGOs and enterprises/agencies of the private sector.

## Greek Ombudsman for the Child

Deputy Ombudsman: **Theoni**

**Koufonikolakou**

Website: <https://www.synigoros.gr/paidi/>

The role of the Greek Ombudsman for the Child has been assigned to the Circle of Child's Rights, a department of the Greek Ombudsman, since 2003. Its mission is to protect all lawful rights of underaged Greek residents, up to the age of 18 years old.

Focus is particularly laid upon the violation of children's rights by public services, as well as private individuals or legal entities.

## B. LGBTIQ+ Organizations

### Athens Pride

Website: <https://athenspride.eu/>

**Athens Pride** is the biggest Festival for LGBTIQ visibility, which is organized every June in Athens.

The first Athens Pride was organized in 2005, in Klafthmonos Square, signaling a yearly Pride Parade towards Syntagma Square. In 2017, the start of the Parade was moved to Syntagma Square, in front of the Hellenic Parliament, as a response to the steady request of its Steering Committee.

Since its first organization, **Athens Pride** has been gradually expanded its members and network of supporters and has gained an ever-increasing recognition and respect as an activist movement from the Greek state. Apart from the organization of the main Event and its participation or support to LGBTIQ causes, **Athens Pride** aspires to shape a political discourse and assert LGBTIQ rights by achieving greater visibility.

It is composed of a General Assembly which each year publishes an open call for the formulation of the Steering Committee; the Committee, in consultation with LGBTIQ associations and NGOs, decides upon the subject, the agenda and the representatives of the Political Group of Athens Pride.

### Thessaloniki Pride

**Address: 7, Afentouli street, 54630,**

**Thessaloniki**

**E-mail:**

[contact@thessalonikipride.com](mailto:contact@thessalonikipride.com)

**Website:**

<https://thessalonikipride.com/>

**Thessaloniki Pride** is a movement of local civil society which aims at increasing LGBTIQ visibility, and in general, of any minority that is discriminated due to SOGIESCs and at demonstrating equality in the area of Thessaloniki and around it.

**Thessaloniki Pride** was established in spring 2012 with the objective to organize the first Pride Parade. After its success, its Steering Committee decided to organize it every year in June and expanded its activities which can be grouped in the following four categories:

- Organization of Thessaloniki Pride
- Raising awareness events, workshops at schools, radio broadcasts, trainings and services to vulnerable LGBTIQ people

- Networking and empowerment activities in collaboration with local LGBTIQ associations or other civil society's initiatives
- Legal activism against homo- and transphobic hate speech

In 2020, **Thessaloniki Pride** was appointed EuroPride host, signaling the first city in Southeastern Europe which would be responsible for the organization of a European Pride Parade and related activities. Unfortunately, pandemic has postponed these plans but Thessaloniki Pride's Steering Committee has been in close collaboration with the European Confederation of Pride Hosts for a more suitable date in the years to come.

## Patras Pride

E-mail: [pridepatras@gmail.com](mailto:pridepatras@gmail.com)

Facebook

page: <https://www.facebook.com/patraspride/>

**Patras Pride** was first organized in June 2016, being the third local festival which has developed a considerable network and dynamic. The Festival has a strong self-organized character and its Steering Committee acts "collectively, horizontally, non-hierarchically, through members' meetings".

Among its institutional positions are:

- Reverse discrimination in the workplace and equal treatment of all regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity
- Teachers' training on sexuality and gender identity and introduction of respective lessons into the curricula
- Institutional interventions against HIV-positive persons' stigma and discrimination as well as abrogation of the prohibition of LGBTIQ's blood donations

- Expansion of the Civil Partnership scope to include same-sex couples and establishment of equal rights to adoption and surrogacy regardless of parents' sexual orientation or gender identity
- Establishment of quick and transparent processes for legal recognition of gender reassignment
- Concession of intersex identities to medical gender assignment

**Transgender Support Association**  
(Σωματείο Υποστήριξης  
Διεμφυλικών – ΣΥΔ)

**Address: 79, Syggrou Avenue, 3rd  
floor, 11745, Athens**

**Website: <https://tgender.gr/>**

**E-mail: [contact@tgender.gr](mailto:contact@tgender.gr)**

**Transgender Support Association** is a non-governmental organization based in volunteering, which was established in March 2010. It was founded by 23 members and now it counts for 200 full members. It has offices in Athens and Thessaloniki and offers services of mental health in groups and in pairs, legal services to victims of discrimination or racist violence and a sense of solidarity to the most vulnerable LGBTIQ members.

Its objectives are: (a) to promote equalitarianism, equality and equal treatment for intersex and transgender people, (b) the elimination of discrimination based on SOGIESCs, (c) the development of a sense of solidarity between intersex and transgender people, (d) the organization of events and info days and publication of their actions and positions on their website (e) the creation of a shelter for intersex and transgender people's accommodation, nutrition and support and (f) networking with other local and foreign initiatives.

Among the projects it has implemented, SYD has participated in a Mobile Unit for Streetwork which approaches trans people and informs them on health and hygiene issues and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). It has also been very active in the support of LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers, publishing a short guide about their rights and the legal protection they could seek. Additionally, it provides a platform for complaints on discriminatory and violent incidents against trans people which, on the one hand, operates as a safe forum and support desk to victims and, on the other, as a record for statistical and analytical purposes towards political action.

SYD is a member of RVRN - Racist Violence Recording Network.

## Red Umbrella Athens

**Address:** 42, Favierou street,  
Metaxourgeio

**Website:**

<https://redumbrella.org.gr/>

**Red Umbrella Athens** was set up in December 2015 by a partnership of the Association of HIV-Positive People “Positive Voice”, Centre of Prevention and Examination “Checkpoint” and the Association of Liver Patients in Greece “Promitheas” and operates under the scientific supervision of the Department of Psychology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

This partnership aspires to promote health and sex workers’ rights, to raise awareness and empower them, contributing to their social integration in the Greek society.

**Red Umbrella Athens** runs a Day Centre which provides numerous services, covering health



protection, consultation for drug addicts, social and artistic activities. In collaboration with Médecins Sans Frontières Greece and Metadrasi (organization that offers interpreting services), it provides information about sexual and reproductive health.

## Rainbow Families

Facebook page:

<http://www.rainbowfamiliesgreece.com/>

**Rainbow Families** is a non-governmental organization that deals with all families with LGBTIQ members: LGBTIQ parents or LGBTIQ individuals who want to become parents, adults who were raised by LGBTIQ parents and parents of LGBTIQ children. Its aim is to protect LGBTIQ rights to parenthood and offer to its beneficiaries' useful information about it as well as to support family members of LGBTIQ individuals to stand by their side and promote their rights.

Its goals are to promote equal rights to marriage for same-sex partners, equal treatment of homo and heterosexual couples as well as single-parent families, equal rights to adoption and the creation of foster families with a special care on children so that they are not subject to discrimination due to their parents' SOGIESCs, the right to assisted reproduction or surrogacy for all and equal treatment for LGBTIQ individuals and their families all over Europe.

**Rainbow School (Πολύχρωμο Σχολείο)**

**Address: Sahtouri 3, Athens**

**Email: [info@rainbowschool.gr](mailto:info@rainbowschool.gr)**

**Rainbow School** was created in 2009 as a group of support and empowerment towards LGBTIQ teachers under the title "Homophobia and Transphobia in Education". Gradually, it was transformed to an organized and established activist group, aiming at promoting institutional changes for more inclusive schools.

Ten years after its first establishment, it got legal recognition and expanded its work and network of members coming from education, social and mental health sciences and LGBTIQ community.

To meet its aims, **Rainbow School** retrains teachers, students, parents, authorities and general public on LGBTIQ issues, creates training materials, does research on relevant fields, collaborates with LGBTIQ associations and collectives and lobbies for institutional registration.

## Orlando LGBT+

Website: <https://orlandolgbt.gr>

E-mail: [contact@orlandolgbt.gr](mailto:contact@orlandolgbt.gr)

**Orlando LGBT+** is a scientific organization that specializes in mental health services for LGBTIQ people. Inspired by Virginia Wolf's novel "Orlando", the organization aims at promoting a modern, scientific approach regarding LGBTIQ people's mental health, away from any consideration of non-heteronormative sexual orientation or gender identity as a pathological deviation and with respect to the principles of self-identification and human rights. It also focuses on combatting discrimination against LGBTIQ which constitutes a factor of great risk for their mental health.

**Orlando LGBT+** is composed of a group of mental health experts who are specialized in sexual orientation and gender identity studies and are experienced with LGBTIQ people.

Its fields of activities include the promotion of scientific knowledge around LGBTIQ mental health, the demonstration of a gender-inclusive scientific and public discourse, the de-stigmatization of

LGBTIQ and especially intersex persons, safeguarding of uninterrupted accessibility to mental health services for LGBTIQ individuals, provision of trainings to institutions and supporting services that are significant for the psychological and emotional development of LGBTIQ people, the establishment of intersectional approaches for addressing causes of additional vulnerability and the provision of free of charge or low-cost quality mental health services to financially-challenged LGBTIQ individuals.

**Gay and Lesbian Community of Greece**  
(Ομοφυλοφυλική, Λεσβιακή Κοινότητα Ελλάδας)

**Website:** <https://olke.org/>

**E-mail:** [info.olke@gmail.com](mailto:info.olke@gmail.com)

**OLKE** is a non-governmental organization (NGO), founded in Athens in April 17th, 2004 with basic aims to combat discrimination and protect human rights of LGBTIQ people in Greece. The organization also strives to raise awareness on issues like sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sexual health, marriage equality and same-sex parenting.

Furthermore, it promotes same-sex marriage and registered partnerships, comprehensive and inclusive sex education in schools, better training of the police officers on sexual orientation and gender identity issues and anything that will reduce all forms of violence against LGBTIQ persons and promote self-awareness and self-acceptance of lesbians, gay, bisexual and trans persons.

Among **OLKE's** greater achievements are the realization of the first two LGBT marriages in Greece. Besides, it has managed to become a founding member of NELFA (Network of European LGBT Families Associations) and to deal with issues that concern the LGBT families.

## Positive Voice (Θετική Φωνή)

**Address:** 13, Agion Anargyron street, 10554

**Phone number:** 210 8627572

**Website:** <https://positivevoice.gr>

**Email:** [info@positivevoice.gr](mailto:info@positivevoice.gr)

**OLKE** co-hosts the Hotline for Psychological Support 11528 (see the respective section of the table below)

**Positive Voice** is the Association of People living with HIV/AIDS. It was established in 2009 aiming at safeguarding HIV-positive people's rights, campaigning for the control of HIV/AIDS spreading and eliminating HIV/AIDS social and economic impact in Greece.

**Positive Voice** works for promoting and raising awareness on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and access to information primarily for vulnerable to HIV groups, the provision of better services of health and social care for HIV positive people as well as their social acceptance and support against any violation of their dignity and human rights.

Although its primary goal is to support HIV-positive people, **Positive Voice** has been very active in the promotion of LGBTIQ rights and has participated in numerous interventions or institutional/social initiatives for greater inclusiveness.

**Positive Voice** co-hosts the Hotline for Psychological Support 11528 (see at the end of the table).

## Colour Youth – LGBTQ Community

**Website:**

<https://www.colouryouth.gr/>

**Address:** Sahtouri 3, Athens

**Email:** [info@colouryouth.gr](mailto:info@colouryouth.gr)

**Colour Youth – LGBTQ Community** is a not-for-profit Association which aims at (a) "creating a forum for the interaction and mutual support among gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer young people and their supporters for their personal development and socialization as well as the acceptance of their sexual identity and/or gender

identity and expression by themselves, the combat against internalized homophobia and transphobia and, as an effect, the development of complete personalities” (Statute of Colour Youth), (b) promoting a dialogue about LGBTIQ issues, (c) raising awareness for equal treatment, sexual and mental health etc., (d) combatting discrimination based on SOGIESCs in education, workplace, family and the society and (e) fighting homophobia/transphobia at institutional levels as well as (f) supporting young LGBTIQ people who have been victims of mistreatment or abuse.

It was set up by a group of people in 2011, as a place where young LGBTQ people could express themselves and assert their rights. The organization provides, among other services, legal and psychosocial support to victims of violence, drama sessions as a means of psychotherapy as well as recordkeeping of acts of violence due to SOGIESCs.

**Colour Youth** is a member of IGLYO, ILGA-Europe, TGEU – Transgender Europe and RVRN - Racist Violence Recording Network.

One of Colour Youth’s services is Transcending Youth, initiated in 2018, which aims at empowering and increasing the visibility of young trans people, providing support services to them during their gender transition or legal recognition of their gender identity and training medical providers and professionals about trans issues.

**Psychological Support Line – 11528 – Near You**

It is a project implemented by the partnership of Gay and Lesbian Community of Greece (OLKE), Athens

**Website:** <https://11528.gr>

**E-mail:** [management@11528.gr](mailto:management@11528.gr)

Pride, Thessaloniki Pride and Positive Voice. It deals with lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender people and their families and teachers of all school levels, aiming at providing support to all individuals that are marginalized due to their gender identity or sexual orientation in every aspect of their lives as well as raising awareness and training professionals or general public on gender/sexual expression but also on hate speech, homo/transphobia, Project against Discrimination due to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, bullying based on SOGIESCs and the practice of discretely silencing such phenomena.

The Project for Combatting Discrimination due to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity was initiated in 2015-2016 as a sequence of the Project “We live as you do” which was designed in 2010 and implemented in 2011-2013 by the General Secretary of New Generation of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. One of the project’s deliverables was the Hotline which, from 14/06/2016, operates under the auspices of the Ministry.

**LGBT AmeA (ΛΟΑΤ ΑμΕΑ)**

**Website:** <https://loatamea.gr/>

**E-mail:** [info@loatamea.gr](mailto:info@loatamea.gr)

**Facebook**

**page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/loatamea/>

**LGBT AMEA** is an association which was set up in March, 2016. Its aims are (a) to create a forum for the interaction and mutual support among gay, lesbian, bisexual, transexual, transgender, intersex and queer young people that have also some form of disability as defined by the national legislation and their supporters for their personal development and socialization as well as the self-acceptance of their sexual identity and/or gender identity and expression, the combat against internalized

homophobia and transphobia, (b) to promote equalitarianism, equality and equal treatment for all, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity and an open dialogue for disabled LGBTIQ people and their supporters, (c) to protect disabled LGBTIQ people's rights and safeguard their accessibility to equal opportunities and services in the Greek society, (d) to raise awareness and training on sexuality, mental and sexual health and LGBTIQ disabilities, (e) to prevent homo/by/trans-phobic trends and perceptions and to combat bias, stereotypes, stigmatization and social exclusion against disabled LGBTIQ and (f) to provide social and psychological support to disabled LGBTIQ aiming at developing their self-respect, self-confidence and sexual emancipation.

Among its achievements, LGBT AmeA could showcase the development of a glossary about LGBTIQ terminology, tailored to the needs of disabled beneficiaries, in Greek Sign Language which was delivered in collaboration with the social company HandsUp.

## Intersex Greece

### Website:

<https://intersexgreece.org.gr/>

Email: [info@intersexgreece.org.gr](mailto:info@intersexgreece.org.gr)

[intersexgreece@gmail.com](mailto:intersexgreece@gmail.com)

**Intersex Greece** is a community of intersex people, their supportive families and advocates that live in Greece. They are fighting for the human rights of children born with variation of sex characteristics towards restoring intersex bodies and lives, to bodies and lives that matter.

Its aims and objectives are to provide specialized, peer-to-peer support to intersex people and their families, to provide support, training and information on all issues related to the natural

diversity of sex characteristics (intersex physiology), while working for visibility and intersex community building, raising awareness, promoting and safeguarding the rights of intersex people in our country, and – consequently – abroad.

Since May 2021, **Intersex Greece** is a member organisation of **Organisation Intersex International Europe**. OII Europe is the umbrella organisation of European human rights-based intersex organisations, founded on Human Rights Day, 10 December, during the Second Intersex Forum at Stockholm in 2012.

**Proud Parents (Υπερήφανοι Γονείς)**

**Email:**

[proudparentsgreece@gmail.com](mailto:proudparentsgreece@gmail.com)

**Facebook page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/proudparentsgreece/>

**Rainbow Seniors**

**Website:**

<https://rainbowseniors.eu/>

**Email:** [info@rainbowseniors.eu](mailto:info@rainbowseniors.eu)

**Proud Parents Greece** is a group that provides support, empowerment and information to parents of LGBTIQ children, aiming at stopping the reproduction of negative stereotypes and biases against sexual orientation, gender identity and characteristics.

The **Rainbow Seniors** were founded in February 2020 by a group of people of diverse status and beliefs but united by a strong drive and a disposition to open an intergenerational discourse about LGBTIQ community.

Their objectives are to meet the needs of medical care, entertainment, psychological support, work and favorable living conditions for LGBTIQ middle-aged and mature individuals and respond to their requests.

**Emantes - International LGBTQIA+ Solidarity**

The Social Cooperative Enterprise **“Emantes”** (meaning “we” in Greek LGBTIQ slung) was founded



**Website:**

<https://www.emantes.com/about>

**E-mail:** [info.emantes@gmail.com](mailto:info.emantes@gmail.com)

in July 2018 by active members of the “**Lgbtqia+ Refugees Welcome**” collective in collaboration with migration and refugee experts. The collective was created in September 2016 by refugees and solidary persons as an attempt to underline one of the most unseen facets of the refugee “crisis”: that of the LGBTIQ community.

Following a year of action, the members of the collective started considering to give an official legal form to their initiative, as a counterbalance to the restrictions of their access to hot spots, camps, detention centers, asylum services, public services or other agencies and to the limited funding resources, which compromised the services they provided to refugees/asylum seekers.

**Emantes** was formed in order to overcome these barriers and facilitate fundraising, visibility, and collaboration efforts. Its main objectives are to further support the LGBTIQ community and to raise awareness of their struggles. **Emantes** offers services of psychosocial support to LGBTIQ people in need as well as food distribution and aesthetics (laser facial hair removal) to LGBTIQ refugees.

**Proud Seniors Greece (Ομάδα Υποστήριξης ΛΟΑΤΚΙ+ Ατόμων Ηλικίας 50 ετών και άνω)**

**Details soon to be published**

**Facebook page: Proud Seniors Greece**

**Proud Seniors Greece** is a social, self-organized initiative that was created in 2015 with the aim to provide support to LGBTIQ people over 50 years old. It was set up when some of its founding members experienced the discrimination and serious health problems that an old transgender member of the Greek LGBTIQ community suffered from, realizing that they wanted to do something about it.

The group demonstrates that “it is open to all vulnerable individuals in every means and way, away from stereotypes, biases and sexist, anachronistic standards”. Recently, they submitted their statute to the Courts of Athens in order to get the official approval for their upgrade to an Association.

It is a member of ILGA Europe, Sage America and TGE (Transgender Europe) as well as the Greek Network of LGBTIQ Organizations and collaborates with the Dutch organizations Roze +50 and Roze Poort

## Part B: Field Research Results

AKMI S.A. and Symplexis have jointly conducted 2 in-depth interviews with experts and 2 focus groups (one with VET Teachers/Trainers and another with VET Learners) at national level.

Below, there is a summary of the findings.

### *In-depth interviews with LGBTIQ experts*

Symplexis conducted **two in-depth interviews with two experts** who both have served as Members of the Board of the same Athens-based LGBTIQ organization. Today, one of them works as a project and financial manager of LGBTIQ-focused projects for the same NGO. He/she is a professional translator and has 5 years' experience working in LGBTIQ organizations on LGBTIQ issues. The other one is a psychologist with 9 years of experience and works as a scientific associate of another LGBTIQ organization that focuses on the psychological support of LGBTIQ people where he/she holds the position of a researcher and adult trainer for LGBTIQ focused projects. Also, he/she offers his services in the LGBTIQ organization in which he/she previously served as Member of its Board.

When asked to provide a definition of discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC, the first interviewee said it refers to a different (negative) behavior towards another person due to his/her/theirs SOGIESC. Similarly, the second interviewee argued that discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC refers to a different (negative) behavior towards people who actually are or *“perceived to be”* LGBTIQ than the behavior towards to non LGBTIQ people and/or to people who are not perceived to be LGBTIQ. This is an important remark as in reality, according to Article 2 of Law No. 4443/2016, discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC against a person who is perceived to be LGBTIQ is still a discrimination - it is the motivation that matters and not the actual status or identity of the victim.

The same interviewee also divided such discrimination in two main categories: the *“negative”* – for example, deny to provide services to a LGBTIQ person because he/she/they is/are LGBTIQ - and the *“positive”* ones - for example, prioritize LGBTIQ candidates for a job position in a LGBTIQ-focused project. According to the other interviewee, discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC *“exist everywhere, in our society’s system”* namely *“at school, at health sector, in any part of our society”*.

He/she argued that SOGIESC are protected under the existing national framework but on the other hand he/she added that there is a distance/difference *“between theory and practice”* meaning that the law is not always implemented. The existing legal framework – according to the same interviewee – covers discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC in all sectors - including VET sector - but he/she added that proving that a discriminatory incident actually occurred may be challenging and the same goes for the legal procedures that have to be activated. The other interviewee argued that existing legal framework on the grounds of SOGIESC covers employment sector - including VET sector – and that Greek Ombudsman is the responsible authority in which a victim of discrimination can file an official report.

Actually, according to Article 3 of Law No. 4443/2016, discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC is explicitly forbidden in employment sector as well as to “all levels of vocational guidance, apprenticeship, vocational training, retraining and vocational retraining, including the acquisition of practical work experience”. Furthermore, according to Articles 18 and 20 of the same law, Greek Ombudsman is the responsible authority to receive and investigate cases of discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC both in private and public sector.

When asked about the status of LGBTIQ people in VET sector, an interviewee said that while he/she is not aware of any relevant data, he/she thinks that after taking consideration the persistence of homo/transphobia in secondary and higher education, VET sector should not be an exception. The other interviewee highlighted the fact that people belonging to the LGBTIQ spectrum do not face the same types of discrimination: for example, a gay man won't have to deal with the same discriminatory behaviors as the ones faced by a trans woman. He/she believes that homophobia does exist in VET sector *“for sure”* but, in general, homophobic incidents may not be very serious ones – *“microaggressions”*, *“homophobic comments”* - while some gay people may be part of a LGBTIQ-safe education environment.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for trans people: both interviewees believe that trans people will have to deal with a very hostile environment. According to an interviewee, some usual transphobic incidents in VET sector may include transphobic verbal attacks, targeting and making fun of trans people, non-inclusion of trans identities in curriculum where applicable and, in general, the creation of a hostile environment towards trans VET students. The other interviewee identified misgendering and dead-naming as usual transphobic

incidents in VET sector but he/she referred to even worse cases of transphobia as well: he/she recalled the case of a trans VET student who was violently attacked by other VET students due to her trans identity – they even tried to burn her alive. As if these were not enough, the trans student was expelled and the perpetrators faced no punishment.

The same interviewee believes that homo/transphobia does exist in VET sector not for any particular reason but for the same reasons the whole Greek society is not friendly towards LGBTIQ people. Similarly, the other interviewee does not believe that there is a particular reason for the persistence of transphobia in VET sector, but common challenges for all trans people are present in VET sector as well: for example, since not all trans people may have access to the procedures for the legal recognition of their gender identity, this gap may cause “*problems*” to a trans VET student as well e.g., the use of its dead-name in his/her/theirs diploma. He/she added that transphobic stereotypes are dominant in society and trans VET students will be in a far more difficult position in comparison with LGB persons, because – as the interviewee explained, the latter may hide their orientation to protect themselves but a trans person may not be able to do that due to the difference between his/her/their gender expression and the name used in his/her/theirs documents: “*this will immediately make the [trans] person become a target of discrimination or negative behaviors*”.

The other interviewee added that VET teachers are not trained on LGBTIQ issues, for example how to appropriately behave to LGBTIQ persons. He/she even added that teachers may also be involved in homo/transphobic incidents and/or witness such incidents but do nothing to stop them: “*this make things worse because the person who, supposedly, is in charge inside the classroom in that moment, he/she shows - in this way [by being involved as a perpetrator or witness an incident and do nothing] - that it is ok to continue to make fun of this [LGBTIQ] person*”.

When asked about central policies/strategies carried out by the government or state actors – both in Greece and across the EU – as well as good practices implemented by other bodies/organizations that facilitate the access of LGBTIQ students in VET sector and/or create a LGBTIQ-safe environment, one interviewee said that he/she was pretty sure that such central policies/strategies or good practices do not exist in Greece while the other just noticed that the previous Greek government showed some “*will*” to support training activities of civil

servants on LGBTIQ issues. The latter added that according to his/her knowledge, in some other countries future teachers are trained on LGBTIQ issues when studying and is easier to report a discriminatory incident that has occurred in an education/training environment – “*in the case of Greece, this is not so easy*”.

When it comes to recommendations, an interviewee suggested that legal gender recognition should be available to younger trans persons. According to Article 3 of Law No. 4491/2017 on legal gender recognition, 17 years old trans people need the consent of their parents before proceeding to the legal recognition of their gender identity, while 15-16 years old trans people need both their parent’s and a scientific committee’s consent. Such measure, according to the same interviewee, is necessary because “*it will solve some problems*” (and) in VET sector such as the name used in VET students’ documents. The same interviewee suggested that the Ministry of Education should also provide VET schools with specific guidelines on how to create a safe and inclusive VET environment - thus, encouraging positive initiatives carried out by VET schools - while the other interviewee suggested the introduction of new law that focuses on discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC in education sector.

Both interviewees believe that the organization of training activities for VET teachers/trainers on LGBTIQ issues is necessary in order to prevent/tackle the homo/transphobia in VET sector, while one of them also suggested that such activities should also target VET students. According to both interviewees these activities will have to be delivered by or in cooperation with LGBTIQ organizations, especially if they are organized by the Ministry of Education as an interviewee added. Interviewees suggested that the training activities should cover the following topics:

- **understand key terms**
- **understand that LGBTIQ is a “spectrum”**
- **learn which behaviors are accepted and which ones are not**
- **become familiar with relevant and already available educational/awareness material – for example the one produced by LGBTIQ organizations - focusing on education environments, understand how “helpful” is a “safe environment” for a LGBTIQ trainee/student**
- **create an LGBTIQ-inclusive VET environment**
- **handle homo/transphobic incidents**

- **use of appropriate language**
- **legal framework on discrimination with a particular focus in education sector**
- **introduce LGBTIQ issues in training curriculum (if applicable/relevant)**
- **challenge common stereotypes and prejudices of participants in training activities towards LGBTIQ people**
- **be able to identify discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC**

Finally, according to an interviewee, VET schools must enforce *“very strict rules regarding students’ behaviors”* and a similar *“strict framework for VET teachers themselves”* and provide LGBTIQ VET students with the option to report incidents but this procedure must be carried out *“anonymously”* in order to avoid the risk of dire *“consequences”* on the victim. He/she also suggested the formulation of groups of LGBTIQ VET students inside VET schools – these groups will help LGBTIQ VET students to *“socialize”*, to *“express themselves”* and/or *“suggest activities”*. The other interviewee said that VET schools could provide additional training to their staff based on training activities carried out by the Ministry of Education, introduce *“inclusive registration forms”* - thus, give trans VET students who haven’t still proceeded to the legal recognition of their gender identity, the option to use the name they want in line with their gender identity -, make use of relevant inclusive policies for *“common spaces”* e.g., *“toilettes”*, introduce an *“internal procedure”* that a LGBTIQ VET student may follow to report a case e.g. a discriminatory incident.

### *Focus groups with VET Teachers/Staff*

AKMI S.A. organized one focus group with VET Teachers/Trainers of diverse departments and fields of expertise, in an effort to provide inter-sectional data, trying to highlight similarities or potential divergences among various VET studies. The focus group was composed of:

- a) one VET Teacher in the department of Economics and Business Administration; graduate of Accounting, holding a MBA in Human Resources and currently being a PhD candidate in Organizational Psychology
- b) one VET Teacher from Sound Engineering and Musical Technology and Director of the Department of Audiovisual Infrastructure with a lot of years of teaching experience in Greece and abroad,
- c) a VET Teacher in the department of Journalism who pursues a career as an active journalist in a nationwide TV station,

- d) a Head of Department of Pre-school Pedagogies and Teacher of Psychology with 8 years of professional experience and a specialization in Special Education
- e) Head of Department of Economics, VET Teacher of Accounting, Economics and Business Administration with 11 years of experience in both public and private VET schools, graduate of Department of Economics, with a MBA in Tourism and a PhD in Business Strategy and
- f) a VET Teacher and Head of Department of Applied Arts, Media and Journalism, graduate of Civil Engineering studies, holding a MSc in Environment and Infrastructure and currently enrolled in another MSc programme in Educational Sciences.

With regards to the definition of discrimination based on SOGIESC, the participants expressed their difficulty to provide a concrete answer. Instead, they described discrimination against LGBTIQ community as “any form of intimidating behavior, covering derogatory and insulting language, gossip and physical assaults between heterosexual/cisgender and homosexual individuals or groups”.

When asked to exemplify discrimination, the participants referred to general incidents from their personal and professional experience; all of them admitted that they were present at incidents of verbal and emotional abuse that included intimidating language, insults and mockery due to gender expression or sexual orientation but they did not happen to be bystanders to incidents of physical assault, neither at their personal or professional lives.

With regards to the reasons that generate a discriminatory conduct against LGBTIQ people, the VET Teachers focused on variables such as place of origin (*the majority of the VET Teachers/Trainers emphasized that there is a great difference in the perceptions and attitudes of young people living in the capital and Greek big cities as compared with rural or remote areas towards LGBTIQ community*), the family values and the overall upbringing of a person.

Besides the strictly personal and family background, social norms and stereotypes also shape the beliefs and values of the individuals. One VET Teacher/Trainer outlined that “*discrimination is rooted on the divergence of one person’s behavior from the dominant and widely acceptable societal code of conduct*”. Another stated that “*gender taboos are still persistent in the Greek society and continue to feed local perceptions or misconceptions*”.



Other factors that, according to the participants, affect the level of tolerance towards LGBTIQ people are the professional field and the level of education. It is indicative that people working in beauty, fashion, arts and media industries, are more likely to be open towards a more diverse gender spectrum and expression in contrast to fields that are considered as “more masculine” and traditional, as it was highlighted by the VET Teachers in Sound Engineering and Journalism during the discussion.

With regards to their knowledge or familiarization with the legal protection of SOGIESC at national level, the participants could not state any specific laws and regulations for the protection of LGBTIQ individuals, in general or within VET environment. One participant cited the articles of the Hellenic Constitution which forbid any action of discrimination (even if, as stated above, there is no specific reference to gender identity or sexual orientation) and illustrated the fact that the legal framework exists but needs to be respected and enforced by the society. According to his words, *“it is implementation in practice that is missing, instead of more complex legal frameworks”*.

They all agreed that there has been progress in the way the openly LGBTIQ people are treated nowadays as compared to the past decade. The VET Teachers in Pedagogies and Economics/Business Administration emphasized that *“young adults and new generations seem more open and inclusive towards LGBTIQ community even if more efforts should be made for establishing a society of equal opportunities and mutual respect to the freedom of expression”*. However, none of them could mention an agency or an official institution where victims of discrimination could report to, admitting that they are unaware of such a possibility, either within VET environment or in their personal lives.

When asked about the seriousness of incidents against LGBTIQ people within VET schools at national level, the teachers attempted a distinction between other schools they are aware/have heard about (both public and private) and their own. While confirming that discrimination due to SOGIESC is an existing phenomenon with a diverse scale among different regions, resources and teaching community’s perceptions, they mostly responded about their own working environment. They said that discrimination against LGBTIQ learners is a marginal

phenomenon, at least inside the classrooms and the common spaces – possibly due to their supervision.

Some of the participants admitted that they intervened immediately when they had heard or realized that there were *“tensions among heterosexual/cisgender and LGBTIQ learners without letting them escalate”* and making clear that VET school is not tolerant of such behaviors. In a more proactive approach towards LGBTIQ inclusiveness, one VET Teacher referred to the case of a VET learner who had started his transitioning (from female to male) without being able to change his birth name in his documents due to the then existing legal gap – the incident occurred a few years before N.4491/2017 Law enters into force. To handle this new reality, the VET Teacher decided to generate an open discussion with the learner’s classmates one day that he was absent. With his action, the VET Teacher tried to raise awareness on the issue, in an attempt to prevent the trans learner’s possible exclusion or targeting.

In terms of the reasons for the occurrence of discriminatory behaviors inside VET, the participants said that there are no particular factors that apply specifically to VET education; VET studies reflect the same tendencies and realities that exist at all levels of education, especially adolescent, emphasizing, however, that they mostly deal with adult VET learners which makes things noticeably better. According to the opinion of one VET Teacher, *“age plays an important role in the expression of discriminatory behavior as children of early adolescence tend to display a tougher attitude and engage in bullying acts against their LGBTIQ classmates more often as compared with VET learners in post-secondary education who are at least 18 years old”*.

Nevertheless, a VET Teacher admitted that age is a restrictive factor in the reverse of stereotypes since the older a VET learner is, the more difficult is to alter their established values. Bias based on gender expression or sexual orientation is generated during the early childhood and most of the times VET learners’ behavior is a replication of their parents’ values and attitudes. All VET teachers/trainers agreed that it is very difficult for them to interfere with the perceptions, views and conduct of VET learners as they are already adults or adolescents.

When the question was about the forms of discrimination against LGBTIQ people within VET environment, the teachers repeated that they are usually incidents of “verbal abuse, laughter, gossip and insults and can rarely take the form of self-isolation and distance from the classmates” which they try to confront through discussion. They highlighted, though, that there were a few cases of LGBTIQ persons who deliberately had a “provocative behavior” in an attempt to be the center of their classmates’ attention, as it had happened with one former learner who “ended up being isolated from the rest of the classroom”. However, the teachers did not portray only a negative image in terms of the relationships among learners of diverse sexual orientation or gender expression; for instance, the Teacher of Sound Engineering mentioned one case where heterosexual/cisgender learners addressed “innocent and light jokes to their LGBTIQ classmate who seemed to feel comfortable and enjoy with them”.

As far as central policies/strategies implemented by the government/state actors for the inclusion and equal participation of LGBTIQ learners in VET are concerned, some of the teachers stated generic examples from abroad. One participant talked about “*an Israeli male homosexual couple who adopted a child and were addressed with respect and equal treatment by the school authorities when they filled in the registration process*”. Another referred to the Be-You Project (<https://thebeyouproject.co.uk/>) as an example of good practice, which focuses on the creation of safe spaces for LGBTIQ people in Kent and Medway promoting self-expression and socialization. According to his/her view, good practices should be established and backed by official authorities in order to be efficient and have an essential impact (e.g. “Be-You project is supported by the NHS”). None of the teachers/trainers was aware about established best practices in Greece.

As an effect, when they were asked about any actions that should be undertaken at central level in order to encourage equal participation of LGBTIQ learners in a safe and free-of-discrimination classroom, the same teacher expressed the need for an established, by the competent national authorities, system within VET schools – a proposal that was also approved by the rest of the group - where VET Teachers/Trainers would rely on for practical solutions or guidance when they become witnesses of discriminatory behaviors or acts of bullying. They all acknowledged that VET Teachers/Trainers do not know how to approach or how to handle LGBTIQ VET Learners; some of them address LGBTIQ students under their own prism/stereotypes. Therefore, they need support provided by experts. The participants

envisioned this service as a “Desk” with a multi-disciplined staff from different sciences (psychologists, social scientists, lawyers, educators, doctors, experts in gender issues and inclusiveness etc.) who will support them and the VET learners on a regular basis.

In terms of the production of LGBTIQ inclusive training materials, the VET Teachers/Trainers are either susceptible or negative; they all agreed that this step, as a sole action, would not be sufficient. The learners’ engagement will be greater with interactive learning methodologies and through their identification with VET Teachers they admire or are their mentors. The role of VET Teachers/Trainers is crucial for the successfulness and efficiency of the process and the training materials could be a supportive tool that would be used after an introduction by a VET Teacher/Trainer.

Another important dimension for the creation of an inclusive environment in VET is to train the trainers on LGBTIQ issues and organize workshops and discussions within working groups. From the participants’ perspective, there is a need to address fragmented information which is currently offered in an inconsistent and impaired way, therefore VET Teachers would benefit from gender-specific seminars. Also, they need support from psychologists/social scientists/experts. Modern policies and institutions should be established inside VET schools which will support all the involved parties with up-to-date, inclusive and useful tools.

Last but not least, the participants highlighted the importance to consider school as a system which also involves parents. This requires a holistic approach which will engage them as well in the process of reversing the stereotypes by introducing a more inclusive representation of genders. As one VET Teacher/Trainer said “*VET learners may be more open while their parents may not be so much*”.

### *Focus groups with VET learners / trainees*

A second focus group was conducted by AKMI S.A. with the participation of 3 VET learners in an attempt to demonstrate the views of direct recipients or witnesses of acts of discrimination and bullying based on SOGIESC. Again, our aim was to build a group among participants of different fields of studies. As a result, we hosted:

- (a) one VET Learner having recently graduated from the Department of Journalism and applying for a master degree;

- (b) one VET Learner being a graduate of Pharmacology;
- (c) one VET Learner currently studying Graphic Design.

With regards to an openly LGBTIQ person that the participants may happen to know in their VET environment, all of them replied that they do. According to their view, VET Teachers/Trainers or staff's attitude towards LGBTIQ learners is not indicative of discrimination and stigmatization, either directly or indirectly, at least to their knowledge and as far as they have noticed. Nevertheless, it was not the same when they referred to heterosexual/cisgender VET learners as perpetrators of discrimination, where there was a disagreement among the participants concerning the existence and level of discrimination towards LGBTIQ learners. Specifically, one participant outlined that, *"since VET studies in Greece are mostly addressed to adults, stereotypes related to SOGIESC have been overcome and they are still retained in elementary and secondary levels"*. The other two, however, described a different reality; they emphasized that there are signs of biased behavior which, most of the times, is not overtly expressed but it is disguised in verbal and psychological abuse, gossip, intimidating language, mocking glances, laughter and abrupt manners. The participants also stated that these behaviors usually make them feel uncomfortable or unable to respond efficiently and terminate them.

When asked if, according to their opinion, an LGBTIQ person could openly express their sexual orientation or gender identity within VET environment, the participants mentioned that it is important for LGBTIQ people not to be *"provocative"* or *"attracting the attention too much"*. Instead, they should keep a *"low profile"* in regards to the demonstration of their sexual identity or gender expression. While explaining that they personally do not feel *"offended or annoyed"*, they have been present to incidents with people who may be hostile or susceptible towards the LGBTIQ community. However, they clarified that this is not acceptable inside their VET schools and any discrimination is handled immediately by VET Teachers if it becomes noticed.

When asked if they had ever personally witnessed such incidents, participants admitted that, comparatively to incidents that they had heard or experienced in their *"out-of-studies"* life, the ones that had occurred inside their VET environment were not of major gravity and usually involved harassment, bullying and verbal/psychological abuse instead of physical assaults.

One of the participants with migrant background affirmed that she was present at a discussion where VET learners coming from her country of origin were laughing and joking against an LGBTIQ classmate at their national language; even though the victim of the abuse did not understand the content of their discussion, he/she recognized their hostile attitude through their body language and facial expressions. The same person was often ignored or mistreated when asking a question to his/her classmates. Another incident that was reported – which one of the participants witnessed but did not involve other VET learners – took place outside of a school where *“one person openly threatened one of his LGBTIQ classmates that he would kill him”*.

Another dimension which was shed light upon, is the concealed (in-the-closet) LGBTIQ identity or its perception as such which is often based on the personal filters, arbitrary conclusions or misinterpretation of some learners’ actions or behaviors. These also become topics of discussion and comments among VET learners and may be reasons of harassment and constant gossip against the perceived (who may indeed be or not be) LGBTIQ individuals. On the other hand, the participants showcased a reverse -and unprovoked- act of bullying, perpetrated by a gay VET learner towards a heterosexual/cisgender classmate which caused tension between the two. The participants justified the gay learner’s behavior as a sign of *“suppressed anger caused by constant bullying and exploded against the wrong person”*.

As per the participants’ common view, most of the serious incidents are happening primarily at the corridors, the public spaces of their VET schools and the outdoor surroundings and rarely inside the classrooms where the perpetrators are engaged in *“lighter”* – and most of the times unnoticed by the VET Teachers/Trainers- acts of harassment. In general, the VET Teachers/Trainers’ presence is a counterweight to discriminatory or abusive behaviors, preventing them from happening or escalating. Most of the time, tensions are being transferred outside of the classroom and are taking place during breaks or even after school hours. It is under these circumstances that incidents of mistreatment are mostly witnessed or experienced.

Regarding any preventative or confronting measures or initiatives adopted within VET environment, the participants outlined that the most efficient approach that LGBTIQ victims of abuse followed, was to discuss with VET Teachers and classmates they felt closer with and

especially the ones identified as or perceived to be part of the LGBTIQ community. This reaction was mostly to comfort themselves from the stress and sorrow they experienced rather than asking to take any action against the perpetrators. However, the participants clarified that LGBTIQ VET learners do not trust VET staff or other services within VET system *“as they feel they will not pay attention”*. Another important factor that discourages LGBTIQ learners to report such incidents is the fear of reprisals; they avoid revealing the harassment they are experiencing out of embarrassment or valid concerns of bullying intensification.

In general, the participants feel that asking for VET Teachers/Trainers’ support is the most effective way to handle such incidents, which, at their greatest part, are relatively soft and manageable within the classroom and are resolved through conversation and verbal remarks to the perpetrators. At the same time, the participants admitted that they did not know if the incidents were being referred to senior levels of hierarchy, including the Board of Directors.

In terms of the necessity for the adoption of measures against discrimination and harassment due to SOGIESC, all the participants agreed that it is essential. Among the practices that should be reinforced, one participant favored the organization of specific seminars and open discussions for inclusiveness and gender equality in the beginning of the school year where VET learners of all gender spectrums and sexuality could attend and exchange views. There also could be debates and *“awareness days”* dedicated to embracing diversity of different kinds, including LGBTIQ. Another participant, though, emphasized that these initiatives could affect only those who are really open to such actions and not those with negatively established mindsets.

The reproduction of LGBTIQ-friendly training materials in VET could be an essential step towards the equal representation of genders in VET and the society *“as they would present LGBTIQ individuals and relationships as normal and not extraordinary and unnatural as is the case now”*. According to the participants, however, the respective materials should be introduced at early childhood and integrated into all grades of education system, not isolated in VET. They admitted, though, that this could have a serious risk of causing negative reactions, not from learners primarily but from their parents and old generation teachers. Therefore, these actions should be always launched after careful thought and planning.

### Online Survey

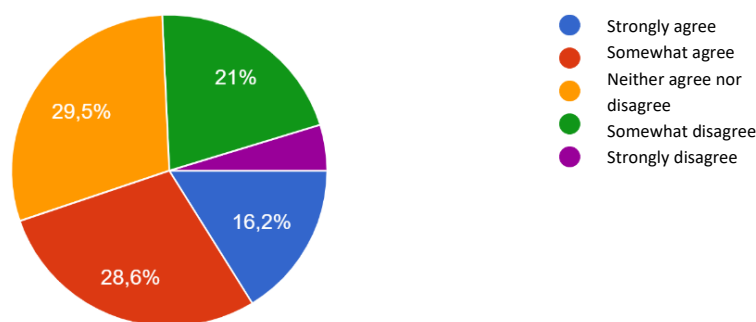
AKMI S.A. has conducted an online survey with the participation of 105 respondents whose role was almost equally shared between VET Teachers/Trainers (53 respondents) and VET Learners (52 respondents). Concerning their gender expression and sexual orientation, their profile is quite unbalanced; 59% of the respondents are female, 39% male and 2% non-binary while only 19% of them belonged to LGBTIQ. At great part, this reflects the answers of VET Teachers/Trainers, 48 of which self-identified as heterosexual/cisgender against 37 of VET Learners.

With regards to their age, the respondents cover a wide spectrum; the majority (46,7%) are between 20-29 years old; the next group (28,6%) between 30-39; 16,2% between 40-49; 7,6% of 50-59 and only 0,9% between 15-19.

The stances that are demonstrated towards LGBTIQ inclusiveness in VET Schools in Greece are characterized by wide variety, as shown in Figure 5 below. In the question whether LGBTIQ rights are generally respected in VET environments in Greece, most of the responders (29.5%) were neutral: they neither agreed or disagreed. The next higher percentage is of the opinion that LGBTIQ rights are relatively respected (28,1%) against 25,7% who claimed that they are not (either to some extent or not at all).

Figure 5: LGBTIQ people are generally respected in VET environments (in the country).

105 answers

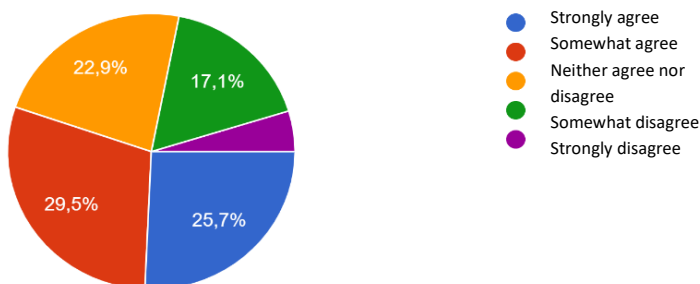


The next pie chart shows the percentages of the respondents who believe that a person could be openly LGBTIQ in VET. Again, the opinions vary, with 29% to agree with the statement and 17,1% to disagree.

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



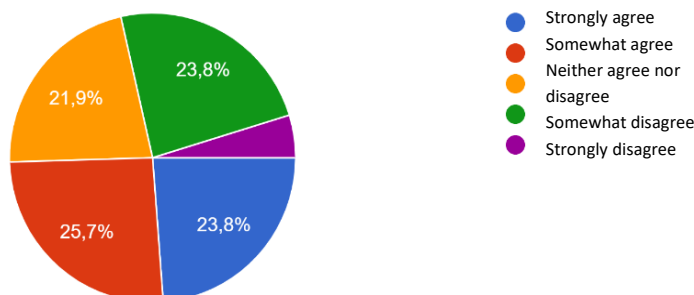
105 answers



Concerning LGBTIQ Learners’ security and non-discrimination within VET environment, the stances were comparable to the first two questions. The answers “totally agree” and “somewhat disagree” shared the same percentage (23,8%) while it is revealing that 49,5% overall consider VET environment as “totally or somewhat” safe.

Figure 7 VET environments are safe and inclusive for LGBTIQ students/trainees (in the country).

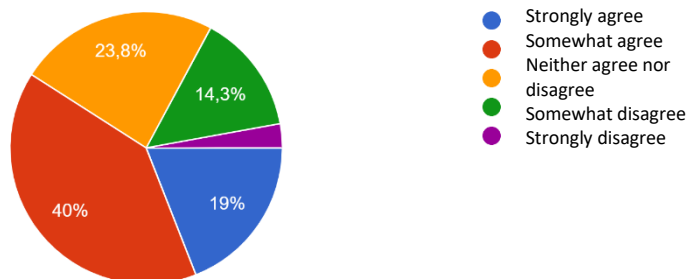
105 answers



Notably, the aforementioned findings are contradictory with the answers that were provided in the following question related to whether LGBTIQ VET Learners are often harassed, bullied and/or discriminated against for being LGBTIQ. 63,8% of the responders said that they either strongly or somewhat agreed with this statement, indicating that a percentage of the respondents who confirmed that VET Schools are quite safe for LGBTIQ Learners felt otherwise when a more specific question was addressed to them. A possible explanation, that is supported by the findings of former phases of our research, could be that the respondents defined as “secure and non-discriminatory” a place with no or low incidents of physical abuse and identify harassment and bullying as more verbal (or non-physical) abuse and intimidation.

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

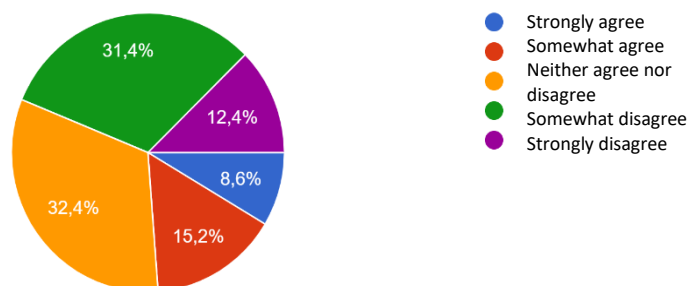
105 answers



Another significant dimension that is examined in the questionnaire (figure 9 below) is whether VET Teachers/Trainers have the proper skills to effectively handle cases of bullying, harassment or discrimination against LGBTIQ VET Learners, where the vast majority (46,6%) of the respondents said that they do not, either strongly or somewhat agreeing. If the percentage of the neutral responses is added to this, the survey indicates that VET Teachers/Trainers are in need of professional support in order to learn how to deal with such incidents, to an extent of 79%. It is impressive that the analysis of the respondents' profile in the above question showed that half of the replies came from VET Teachers/Trainers themselves. The figures reflect the complexity and the gravity of such incidents as perceived by the VET Teachers/Trainers.

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

105 answers



Regarding the perpetrators of bullying, harassment or discrimination, it seems that they usually are other VET Learners, at a percentage of 61%, and VET Teachers/Trainers at 17,2%

(Figures 10 and 11). Though the low rates of VET Teachers/Trainers' participation into intimidating and abusive attitude are encouraging, the numbers of those who neither agree nor disagree with this statement remain high (35,2%), which may imply that VET Teachers/Trainers are passive in front of abusive behavior that is exercised by other VET Learners or they are not attentive to the support LGBTIQ VET Learners may need.

Figure 10: People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are usually other VET students/trainees

105 answers

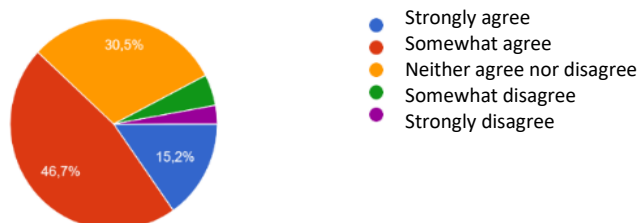
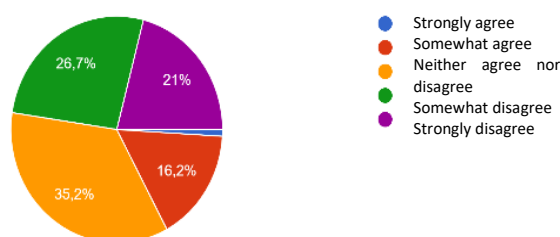


Figure 11: People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are usually VET professional staff (e.g., VET teachers/trainers, administrative staff etc.).

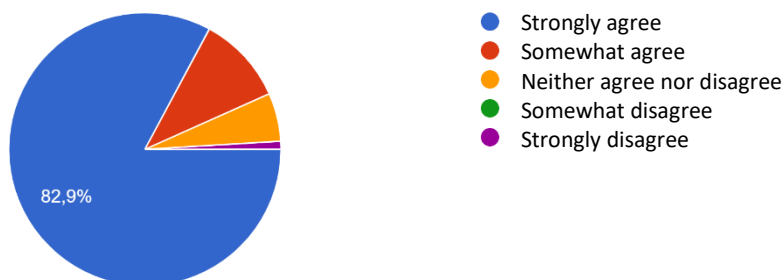
105 answers



Another encouraging finding is that the participants, almost unanimously, agree that measures against bullying, harassment and discrimination against LGBTIQ VET Learners should be put in place.

Figure 12 Measures preventing and combatting bullying, harassment against and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees in VET Environments.

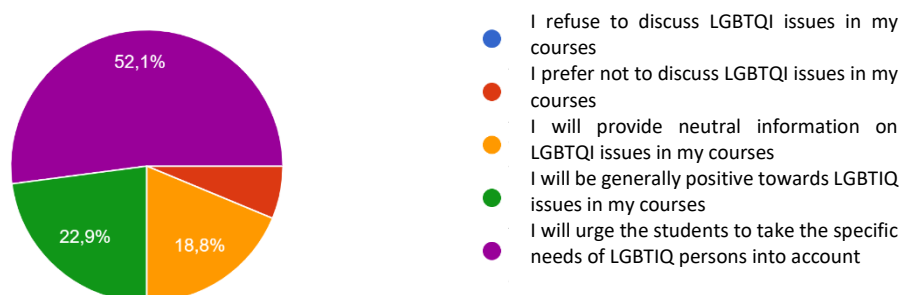
105 answers



The last two questions of the survey were addressed alternatively to one group at a time: the first question was exclusively designed for VET Teachers/Trainers and explored the possibility of them to talk about LGBTIQ issues within their classes. Three quarters declared that they would urge the learners to take into consideration LGBTIQ needs in their professional field or would be positive to include LGBTIQ issues in their courses.

Figure 13: For VET Teachers/Trainers only:

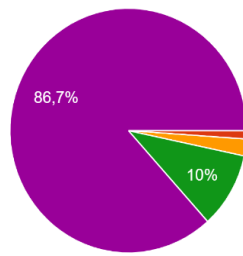
After students have completed their training, they may have to provide LGBTIQ clients with their services. Which of the following answers represents the way you think this should be dealt with in your VET courses?



The last field was addressed to VET Learners and sought to identify their eagerness to provide their services to LGBTIQ people after graduation. In general, VET Learners' attitude seems to be positive and inclusive, as the vast majority replied that they would take their needs into account. Only 12,2% of the respondents answered that, despite being professional, would be either not interested or keep a distance and just an 1,1% that would avoid them. Besides, none of the respondents definitively refused to provide their services.

Figure 14: For VET Learners only:

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?



- I will refuse to provide my services to them
- I will prefer not to provide my services to them
- I will provide my services to them while being distant
- I will be friendly/professional but not interested to their needs as LGBTIQ persons
- I will be friendly/professional and take their needs as LGBTIQ persons into account

### *Summary and synthesis of the results*

Inclusiveness of LGBTIQ VET Learners stands as a necessity within the modern VET environment in Greece, in alignment with current and emerging trends and policies throughout Europe and globally. Despite the efforts for a more open and positive environment towards LGBTIQ VET Learners and a more favorable political and social context over the years, there is strong evidence on relapses and an ever-growing number of incidents of bullying, harassment and discrimination due to SOGIESC, which comes in more sophisticated, pervasive or traumatic forms, such as verbal and emotional bullying.

The range of VET Schools, which cover both public and private institutions and entail a wide age diversity from adolescents of 15 years old to adult people, as well as a notable lack of studies and materials about VET Providers in particular, turned the research into a challenging field which required multiple crosschecks from different sources of information and a synthesis which combined theoretical tools, political framework and empirical data.

Based on the overall research that was conducted within an extended period, we concluded that there are similar trends in all levels of education in Greece with regards to LGBTIQ discrimination which is intensified by factors such as age, place of origin and personal or family beliefs. Adolescents are more prone to exercising abusive or intimidating behavior as compared with VET Learners of post-secondary level.

Bullying and discrimination may have permanent and irreversible effects on victims' psychology, well-being and overall performance. Notably, LGBTIQ Learners (from all levels of education) show considerable progress at school which results in low dropout rates, mostly due to the learners' need to "turn the spotlight away from them" as a coping mechanism against the (feared or real) lack of acceptance from their families, their classmates and teachers/trainers.

Notwithstanding, this does not remove the possibility of LGBTIQ VET Learners being threatened, discriminated or harassed. Most of the incidents, especially the most violent and traumatic ones, are taking place during breaks or after school hours and remain unnoticed by VET Teachers/Trainers. The usual response strategy entails verbal remarks which solve the problem rather temporarily than permanently. Likewise, these incidents almost never reach the higher levels of VET institute hierarchy for stricter measures or more drastic approaches.

On the other hand, VET Teachers/Trainers lack support, specialized training and tailored materials that would help them address incidents of harassment, abuse or discrimination. There is also an “information” gap as most of the VET Teachers/Trainers are not aware of established institutions or public authorities where both themselves and VET Learners could reach out to for individual support or official complaints.

With regards to the delivery of gender-neutral training materials that would promote LGBTIQ role models, the participants in the research do not consider them as an adequate measure per se. Both VET Teachers/Trainers and Learners focused on the role the first (or experts) could play during the training process and the need for learners to establish bonds of trust, compassion and understanding with them. They all agreed that other groups, such as parents, school authorities, businessmen etc. should be involved in the development of an overall strategy in order for it to be successful and fruitful, along with public authorities and other established efforts from the Ministry of Education or other competent institutional bodies.

To sum up, the findings from our extensive research confirmed, at their greatest part, the indications for the existence of stereotypes and discriminatory patterns within VET environments, expressed mostly by other VET Learners/classmates’ side. They also revealed similar trends across secondary and post-secondary level with a specific weight on learners’ age. Finally, they emphasized the need for a concrete, targeted and well-established intervention that is required for a meaningful change in VET institutes, addressing, first and foremost, VET Teachers/Trainers’ reskilling in order to contribute to the creation of a safer, more tolerant and non-discriminatory class environment.

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