

How to Prevent and Combat Violence Against LGBTI+ and Gender Non Conforming Children and Youth



A Handbook for Professionals working in:
Education, Health, Family Associations
and Child Protection Agencies, Media and
Public Spaces



PROJECT PARTNERS



SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS



Diversity and Childhood: Changing social attitudes towards gender diversity in children across Europe

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Introduction



This handbook was created within the framework of the Diversity and Childhood: Changing social attitudes towards gender diversity in children across Europe (DaC) project.

As its main expected results, the project seeks to raise awareness and reduce prejudice, as well as to improve protection against violence and support for LGBTI+ and gender non-conforming children and youth.¹ DaC also aims to provide effective tools to stakeholders and envisages strengthening the well-being and the fundamental rights of LGBTI+ and gender non-conforming children and youth, as well as providing deeper knowledge of the multiple dimensions of violence against them, increasing their empowerment. Finally, DaC aims to embed child safeguarding standards across a wide range of fields and stakeholders to better protect children from harm, abuse, and violence.

¹ The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. By that definition, therefore, children are those persons aged 14 and under. It is, however, worth noting that Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines 'children' as persons up to the age of 18. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/faq.html>

The key professional areas we work with are:

1. Education
2. Health
3. Family associations and child protection agencies
4. Media
5. Public spaces and community action, such as law enforcement or social workers.

We are glad that there are so many professionals working with children who support our work. However, the comparative analysis based on the nine national research reports written by partners in the Diversity and Childhood project revealed an urgent need to include LGBTI+ themes in the training curricula of all professionals who work with children and young people: health professionals, including psychologists, teachers, social workers, etc. States should realise that they have a positive obligation to defend children's rights and well-being by providing information and if needed, support and care. Children and youth should also be involved in the work of creating social environments in which LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children can participate equally. Our societies need to respect diversity and actively work towards it, offering children the chance to participate in this work.



Terminology



People often confuse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, even though differentiating these is necessary for understanding terminology when talking about LGBTI+ and heterosexual/cisgender people.

Sexual orientation refers to each person's capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to and intimate and sexual relations with individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

Gender identity refers to each person's internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the gender they were assigned at birth.

LGBTI+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex. The + refers to several other sexual and gender expressions, including queer, that do not support the heterosexual and cis logics. A heterogeneous group often looked at conjointly in social and political discourse.

Terms that relate to sexual orientation are:

Lesbian, meaning women who are sexually, physically and/or emotionally attracted to women.

Gay men are those men who are sexually, physically and/or emotionally

attracted to men. Gay is sometimes also used as an umbrella term to cover lesbian women and bisexual people as well as gay men.

Bisexual/pansexual people are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender. Bisexual means attracted to multiple genders, and pansexual means attracted to all genders, that is, finding that gender is not a decisive factor when feeling emotional and/or sexual attraction to someone.

By **asexual** we refer to someone who usually does not experience sexual attraction or an intrinsic desire to have sexual relationships. Not all asexual people are alike regarding their experiences and preferences, and they can have all kinds of sexual orientations.

When it comes to **gender identity**, we often refer to the 'T' in the LGBTI+ acronym:

Trans/transgender is an inclusive umbrella term referring to those people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It includes but is not limited to: men and women with transsexual pasts, and people who identify as trans, transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, or with any other gender identity and/or expression, which is not standard cisgender man/woman. Trans people express their gender through their choice of clothes, body modifications (including surgical procedures), or other forms of gender presentation.

Transition means the process of changing someone's gender to match the person's gender identity. This process also includes some or all of the following social and legal adjustments: coming out to family, friends and colleagues; dressing and acting according to one's gender; modifying one's body by means of hormone treatments, surgical procedures or other treatments; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; and meeting other legal or judicial procedures depending on national law.

Legal gender recognition (LGR) is the process whereby a trans person's gender is recognised under the law, or the completion of the process. States may impose different conditions to define who is entitled to LGR. Forced sterilisation, forced divorce, obligatory diagnosis of mental illness, and age limit are conditions that may hurt individuals' human rights when trying to achieve LGR. Hungarian authorities use the term 'gender reassignment' for LGR.

Gender reassignment refers to the process through which people redefine the gender in which they live in order to better express their gender identity. It is often referred to as a process that may involve medical assistance, including hormone therapies and surgical procedures, that trans people undergo to align their bodies with their gender. This process, however, also includes some or all of the following social and legal adjustments: coming out to family, friends and colleagues; dressing and acting according to one's gender; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; and completing other legal or judicial procedures depending on national law. In *P v S and Cornwall County Council*, the European Court of Justice affirmed that gender reassignment is included within the scope of the ground of 'sex' in EU law.

Gender reassignment surgery is a medical term for what trans people often call gender confirmation surgery: surgery to bring the primary and secondary sex characteristics of a trans person's body into alignment with their gender identity.

Many people, however, define themselves outside the male-female/ man-woman binary system.

Non-binary is an umbrella term for many gender identities that lie outside the man-woman binary, such as agender (to define oneself genderlessly) or genderfluid (to reiteratively define oneself differently). Some non-binary people identify as trans and some do not.



Queer is an expression referring to people who do not regard sexual orientation and gender identity as binary categories (heterosexual or gay/lesbian, male or female). It is often used as a collective term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. It also implies a political stance: those who identify as queer oppose not only dominant heteronormative structures but the traditional politics of mainstream LGBT movements, too. It has become an academic term that is inclusive of people who are not heterosexual, including lesbians, gay men, bisexual, trans and intersex people. 'Queer theory' challenges heteronormative social norms concerning gender and sexuality, and it claims that gender roles are social constructs. Traditionally, the term 'queer' was an abusive term and therefore for some it still has negative connotations; however, many LGBTI+ people have reclaimed the term as a symbol of pride.

Sex refers to primary and secondary sexual characteristics, including genes and hormones. Legal sex is usually assigned at birth and has traditionally been understood as consisting of two mutually exclusive groups: male and female. However, this classification does not represent the realities of many people, and sex assigned at birth may not correspond to a person's gender expression or gender identity.

By **sex characteristics** we mean a combination of bodily characteristics including primary sex characteristics (present at birth), secondary sex characteristics that appear during puberty.

The term **intersex** relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between or outside stereotypical ideals of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal and/or genetic features that are not recognised as either female or male or are a combination of female and male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category. That is why intersex activists frequently prefer to use the

term 'sex characteristics' (for example, when talking about protections against discrimination). There is not one static state called 'intersex status', so using the term 'sex characteristics' reflects the fact that being intersex is a bodily experience and only one part of a person's identity.

Endosex means the opposite of intersex. It means that a person was born with physical sex characteristics (e.g. chromosomes, hormones, genitals) that match what is expected for female or male bodies.

Cis/cisgender/cissexual people are those who actively or passively stay within the social norms of the gender assigned to them at birth.

Heteronormativity/heterosexism/cisnormativity/cissexism/endonormativity/endosexism are cultural and social practices according to which men and women are led to believe that heterosexuality, being cisgender and endosex are the only conceivable sexuality, gender and sex characteristics, implying that heterosexuality, being cisgender and being endosex are the only ways of being 'normal' or 'natural'.

It is because of hetero- and cisnormativity that most people assume that others are hetero- and cisgender, and this means that many LGBTI+ people may wish to 'come out' publicly in order to be visible.

Coming out is the process of realising, accepting, and revealing oneself as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex person. The concept itself is built upon hetero-, cis- and endonormativity, as people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender and/or endosex must reveal this fact to others. Coming out is not a one-time act, as LGBTI+ people decide or are forced to come out several times during their lives to different people, e.g. colleagues, new friends, neighbours and doctors, etc.

Discrimination is also caused by hetero- and cissexism. By this term we refer to unequal or unfair treatment which can be based on a range of grounds, including but not limited to age, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, and gender expression/identity and sex characteristics. Different types related to LGBTI+ people include:

- *Direct discrimination*: when a person is treated less favourably than others on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender expression/identity and sex characteristics.
- *Indirect discrimination*: when an apparently neutral provision or practice would put people of a particular sexual orientation or gender expression/identity and sex characteristics at a disadvantage compared to others.
- *Multiple discrimination*: discrimination based on more than one ground.

Homophobia means fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance and/or hatred directed towards homosexual people.

Transphobia refers to negative cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear and/or hatred of trans people or against variations of gender identity and gender expression.

LGBTIphobia is general psychological and social hostility targeted at LGBTI+ people. This is a social construct which promotes heterosexuality as the only accepted sexuality, genders based on sex assigned at birth as the only accepted genders, and creates a hierarchy of sexuality. For many feminist authors, the root of homo-lesbo-trans-bi-inter-phobia is the sexism that plays the role of monitoring sexuality and suppresses any behaviour that crosses the boundaries between genders. Although in this sense homophobia, lesbophobia, gayphobia, transphobia, biphobia and interphobia are part of the same phenomenon, it is important to distinguish them because they have different manifestations and intensities.

By **harassment** we mean any act or conduct that is unwelcome (offensive, humiliating, and/or intimidating) to the victim, which for LGBTI+ people

could relate to the victim's sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics. It can include spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures, or other material. It may take place once or regularly. Harassment against LGBTI+ people may include threats, intimidation, verbal abuse, unwanted remarks, or jokes about sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Hate crimes are criminal offences which are perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on: a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability; gender identity or perceived gender identity. A hate incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender. Not all hate incidents will amount to criminal offences, but it is equally important that these are reported and recorded by the police. Types of hate crimes include: physical assault; verbal abuse including threats and name-calling; and incitement to hatred, that is, when someone acts in a way that is threatening and intended to stir up hatred. This could be in words, pictures, videos, music, and includes information posted on websites.

Victimisation means being caused to suffer because of discrimination or violence. LGBTI+ people are often victimised on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Secondary victimisation or revictimisation is a type of institutional violence perpetrated by state operators or social service providers. It occurs when the victim of violence suffers further harm not as a direct result of the violent act but due to the manner in which institutions and other individuals deal with the victim. Secondary victimisation may be caused, for instance, by the use of inappropriate language or insensitive comments (e.g. victim blaming) made by all those who come into contact with victims.

To return to the basics:

Gender refers to people's perception and experience of maleness and femaleness, and the social construction that allocates certain behaviours to male and female roles. Although gender can be internalised and is now recognised by many as separate from biological sex, it has historically not been an individual decision, but rather a prescribed identity based on one's sex assigned at birth. The basis of the construction is a markedly hierarchical categorisation in which roles and characteristic features that can be linked to power are routinely related to and associated with the male gender. Although gender traditionally refers to gender roles within the gender binary (male/female), the concept 'gender' also includes non-binary gender expressions/identities.

Gender binary is a system of gender classification in which all people are categorised as being either male or female, that is, into two distinct, opposite forms of masculine and feminine, whether by social system or cultural belief, excluding non-binary gender expressions/identities.

Gender expression refers to people's manifestation of their gender identity: the way in which people manifest themselves in a gendered way, for example through haircuts, clothing, and also behaviour. Some people present themselves as male, others female, others present as both at the same time or don't want to be seen as male or female at all. This can be but is not necessarily linked to the person's sex assigned at birth, gender or gender identity.

Gender non-conformity/being gender non-conforming involves not conforming to a given culture's gender norms/gender expectations. 'Gender non-conforming' refers to people whose gender expression does not match their society's prescribed gender roles or norms for a given gender identity. Gender non-conformity transgresses societal or psychological expectations of perceived gender assignment, through presentation, behaviour, identity or other means.

Genderfluid people are those who prefer to remain flexible about their gender identity rather than identifying with a single gender. People who identify as genderfluid may fluctuate between genders or express multiple genders at the same time. **Genderqueer**, if used as an adjective, refers to people who transgress distinctions of gender, regardless of their self-defined gender identity, i.e. those who 'queer'gender, expressing it non-normatively, or overall not conforming to the binary genders of man and woman.





Violence Against LGBTI+ Children: Definition, Types and Impacts

NEGATIVE

discrimination, harassment,
abuse, violence, minority stress,
microaggressions, hate crimes,
hate speech, intimate partner violence,
silencing, underrepresentation,
lack of information

POSITIVE

inclusion, diversity, violence prevention,
supportive professionals, affirmative
psychology, community work for harm
reduction, awareness raising, monitoring,
policies on prevention, policies on
treating harassment

**This chapter provides an outline of example
and types of violence LGBTI+ children often
face in our societies.**

2.1 Homo-, bi-, trans- and interphobia as gender-based violence

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia are commonly viewed by researchers as being based on prejudices, misunderstanding, false information, stereotypes, or fears that often have deep social, religious, historical, cultural, or other justifications. Prejudices as well as social structures of power (the way our societies divide people into groups, such as men and women, or cis and trans people, and hierarchise them in such a way that one group is privileged and the other is discriminated against) are often learned in one's primary family or in other social groups. Prejudices are often maintained by educational institutions and even state level policies, deepening the inequality and unequal treatment faced by LGBTI+ people.

Similar to other forms of gender-based violence, LGBTI+phobic violence occurs as a result of normative gender-related expectations. In societies and different communities there are social expectations about acceptable gender roles and forms of behaviour related to these. Anyone can become a target of physical or verbal attacks for transgressing these expectations:

- Lesbian (and bisexual) women transgress the rules pertaining to femininity in that they are sexually attracted to other women.
- Gay (and bisexual) men transgress the rules pertaining to masculinity in that they are sexually attracted to other men.
- Some men and women transgress the rules pertaining to masculinity/ femininity in that their gender expression does not match the prescribed ways of gender expression (e.g. if a man's gender expression is seen as 'too feminine' or a woman's gender expression as 'too masculine').
- Some women transgress the rules pertaining to femininity because they demand the same treatment as men (e.g. in the family, workplace, or in public life).
- Trans people transgress the rules pertaining to gender because they cast off the idea that gender derives from one's sex characteristics.
- Non-binary trans people also transgress the rules pertaining to gender because they identify themselves outside of the two culturally accepted genders (male and female).
- Intersex people, by having bodies that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies, transgress the concept of having two distinct sexes and reveal that the very concept of two distinct sexes is culturally constructed. The fact that all bodies have to correspond to compulsory norms can be seen in the medical treatment of intersex children.

LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children are also affected by gender-based violence: they are victimised because they defy and destabilise the gender norms (and power structures) of the societies or micro-communities they live in.

The impact of bias-motivated violence against LGBTI+ children

Victims of maltreatment, discrimination, and crimes that are bias-motivated, regardless of whether they are adults and children, are more likely to experience safety concerns, depression, anxiety and anger than victims of crimes that are not motivated by bias. Hate crimes as well as bias-motivated school bullying send messages to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome and unsafe in society, victimising the entire group and decreasing feelings of safety and security. Furthermore, witnessing discrimination against one's own group can lead to psychological distress and lower self-esteem.²

Bias-motivated bullying, harassment and hate crimes have the potential to cause injury and distress both at the individual and community level. Even though reactions to traumatic experiences are individual and therefore can vary, they can be grouped into several categories. Most of the reactions of those affected are combinations of these categories:

Emotional reactions – fear, shame, anxiety, helplessness, insecurity, sadness, depression, a feeling of losing control, guilt, distrust in other people, oversensitivity, constant changes of mood, and other intense emotional reactions;

Physical reactions – dizziness, psychomotor disturbances, headaches, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, low blood sugar, digestive problems, hyperarousal, difficulty speaking, difficulty breathing, various stages of shock;

² Out in the Open: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. UNESCO, 2016, p. 11.

Behavioural reactions – reticence, refusing communication, isolation, crying, aggression, verbal outbursts, impatience, drug or alcohol abuse, self-harm, attempting suicide;

Cognitive reactions – disorientation, confusion, difficulty concentrating, difficulty speaking, forgetfulness, distraction.

Anti-‘gender ideology’ discourses, based on accusations by conservative and religious right-wing groups stating that LGBTI+ organisations attack ‘natural’ social values, aiming to stop talking about sexual, gender and bodily diversity and LGBTI+ people in schools, contributing to silencing LGBTI+ children and maintaining violence against them.

2.2 LGBTI+phobic violence in educational settings

Violence in educational settings, a key scene in the lives of all children and youth, is a global issue also present in European countries. Studies show that:

- a significant proportion of LGBTI+ students experience homophobic and transphobic violence in school
- LGBTI+ students report a higher prevalence of violence at school than their non-LGBTI+ peers
- students who are not LGBTI+ but are perceived not to conform to gender norms are also targets
- school-related homophobic and transphobic violence affects students’ education, employment prospects and well-being.³

3 Out in the Open: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. UNESCO, 2016, p. 14.

Homophobic and transphobic violence can occur in many different educational (and non-educational) settings: at school, around school, in dormitories and camps, on the way to and from school, during sports and leisure activities, in online spaces, etc.

“ ‘On paper, there can be zero tolerance policy for any kind of violence, but can it be put in practice? And if a couple of people try and act on it, then it will positively affect 500 children as well.’ (SLOVENIA, COUNSELLOR, PSYCHOLOGIST IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL).⁴

Bias-motivated violence impacts LGBTI+ children and young people in many ways. Those who are bullied are more likely to miss classes, skip school, avoid school and other social activities, which often leads to lower academic achievement and even drop out.

Gender inequalities and gender-based prejudices are even worse for trans people, who are particularly at risk of gender-based violence because they challenge traditional gender norms and roles maybe even more than LGB youth.

4 Quotes are from Diversity and Childhood (DaC) - Changing social attitudes towards gender diversity in children across Europe (Comparative Analysis on Violence against LGBTI and Gender Non-Conforming Children), 2020.

2.3 State violence against intersex children

'In a world where the overwhelming majority of people and governments only know and accept two sexes ("male" and "female") the existence of intersex people and their bodies is not recognised. Instead, healthy intersex bodies are considered to be a "medical problem" and a "psychosocial emergency" that needs to be fixed by surgical, hormonal, other medical and sometimes psychological means,' writes Dan Christian Ghattas.⁵

In most European countries, intersex people face pathologisation and extreme violations of their human rights. After birth, as children, adolescents and adults, intersex people face violations of their physical integrity, including medical interventions such as surgeries and/or other medical treatments without personal, prior, persistent and fully informed consent. This can cause psychological trauma as well as severe physical impairments, ranging from infertility, painful scar-tissue or lack of sensation to osteoporosis and urethral issues.



'Intersex people have learnt to be in silence.'

(SPAIN, NURSE, LESBIAN WOMAN)

Intersex children face the risk of a disturbed family life due to taboo and medicalisation. They are also at risk of dropping out of school, due to the effects of medical treatments and bullying. At every age, intersex people can face stigma, structural and verbal discrimination, harassment, lack of adequate medical care, lack of access to needed medication, lack of legal recognition, and the invisibility of their bodies in our society.

5 Standing up for the rights of intersex people, 2015, ILGA Europe and OII Europe

Intersex organisations and their supporters therefore demand an end to mutilatory, 'normalising' and non-consensual practices such as genital surgeries and psychological and other medical treatments through legislative and other means. Intersex people must be empowered to make their own decisions regarding their own bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination.

2.4 Intimate partner violence in same-sex and trans people's relationships

It was the women's movement that called attention to domestic and intimate partner violence, and it was male violence against women that they focused on. However, recent studies show that intimate violence between same-sex partners and against trans people is often underestimated in public consciousness (Viggiani, 2015). Young people are particularly vulnerable and unprotected in violent relationships, because of greater barriers: not knowing where to seek help, and/or not being out, and/or being afraid of the consequences of coming out to their family.



LGBTI+ people (including youth) report the following forms of violence when asked about their relationship experiences:

- jealousy and related accusations (often preceding violent attacks)
- constant control (via phone, or text messages)
- physical violence (pushing, beating)
- isolating the partner (from friends and family)
- blackmailing (e.g. threatening with job loss)
- harassment (during the relationship or after breaking up)
- sexual violence
- dating violence (violent behaviour or threatening with violence at the beginning of a relationship)
- insisting upon changing the partner
- violent fits, breaking or slamming objects.⁶

Just as in any relationship, violent partners want to control their partner's behaviour through violent or coercive behaviour, or punishing their partner if they resist their intention to control. Those who commit violence want to satisfy their own needs and desires; they learn violent behaviour by following patterns and they commit violent acts if the risk of punishment is relatively low. The homo-, bi-, trans- and interphobia of society helps violence to go unnoticed and unpunished, as those affected by violence are often isolated and cannot ask for help from their family, support service providers or judicial authorities.

⁶ See the information material published by Háttér Society as part of the Bleeding Love project (bleedinglove.eu): <http://hatter.hu/sites/default/files/dokumentum/kiadvany/bleedinglove-infokiadvany-0.pdf>, p. 22.

2.5 Family violence

LGBTI+ young people may also experience family violence, especially from parents but sometimes also from other family members. While abuse by parents often includes physical, verbal and emotional abuse, LGBTI+ young people often complain about social abuse (including controlling and isolation from those who could support them, e.g. friends) and often have nowhere to turn to.

Research shows that a disproportionate number of homeless youth in Europe identify as LGBTI+ and that this is primarily a result of hostility and abuse from the young people's families leading to eviction or running away. In addition, LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming youth are often at greater risk of certain dangers while homeless, including being victims of crime, substance abuse and mental health concerns (e.g. because of the rejection they experience from their family or community)⁷. Human services professionals should have a clear understanding of the unique needs, risk factors, and challenges facing LGBTI+ homeless youth in order to design and deliver the best possible services to their clients.

” *‘Fear of being thrown out of their own home is very common [among LGBTI+ youth].’* (POLAND, RESEARCH PARTICIPANT)

⁷ Homeless in Europe. The Magazine of FEANTSА. Autumn 2017, LGBTQI Homelessness. https://www.feantsa.org/download/fea-008-17-magazine_v33480239002912617830.pdf

2.6 Media

Historically, portrayals of LGBTI+ people and communities in the media have been negative, reflecting intolerance and stereotyping. However, in the last two decades, there has been an increase in depictions of LGBTI+ people, issues, and concerns within mainstream media, especially in the United States and Canada. However, these issues and concerns are much less often represented in some European countries' national contexts.

LGBTI+ people and communities have also taken an increasingly proactive stand in being visible on social media with a primary goal of achieving an affirmative visibility in media spaces. The positive portrayal and increased presence of LGBTI+ people and organisations in the media has served to increase acceptance and support for LGBTI+ communities and provide information on relevant topics. There is still a lot to be done for the equal representation of LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children and youth and to secure their access to affirmative and proper information.

2.7 Conclusions: violence against LGBTI+ children and youth in everyday experiences of service providers

Based on surveys conducted by partner organisations in DaC, services report a broad spectrum of violence against LGBTI+ youth, with no area remaining untouched, be it in intimate partnerships or family contexts, at school, on the street or within the healthcare system.

Numerous fundamental rights of those seeking services are often violated, especially those LGBTI+ people who are transgender, intersex, black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) and/or disabled. Many of them experience violence on a daily basis, even though they are less likely than many other groups to seek help from the available services. This leads to the

individualisation of difficulties: certain consequences of social structures are viewed as individual problems (e.g. mental illness), and thus remain invisible to services.

Many LGBTI+ people are desensitised to violence and soon perceive significantly violent incidents as such. Trans people are especially vulnerable to multiple types of violence in scenarios in their everyday lives, from family to social environments and institutions.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are behaviours that subtly or indirectly communicate a derogatory and/or hostile message to the recipient. On these occasions, people's biases on grounds of prejudices related to sexual orientation, gender expression/identity or sex characteristics (from the denial of the existence of LGBTI+phobia to assumptions of pathology or abnormality) reveal themselves in a way that leaves individuals belonging to these groups feeling uncomfortable or insulted, for example when they are misgendered or burdened with disturbing questions either intentionally or because of a lack of information. Microaggressions have the power to make those on the receiving end feel socially uneasy, culturally out of place, or even physically unsafe. Many LGBTI+ people experience microaggressions on a daily basis and even at therapy and support services which they turn to for help. Many studies have found that the more people experience microaggressions, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression, psychological distress, and even physical health issues. In many cases, microaggression remains unnoticed, because it is not regarded as violence by society.

Community violence is manifested in **bullying** or **harassment**, whether in educational settings or in public spaces, the street and public services.

“I think it is still dangerous to show you’re different in any way in Croatian public spaces, especially if you’re outside the gender binary. A boy with nail polish, even if dressed in men’s clothing, can expect verbal or physical harassment. So, this is still a very ignorant environment and although there are cases where we can meet and be relaxed, a gay couple still cannot hold hands in the street.” (CROATIA, PROFESSIONAL IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC SPACES)

“Clothes, music, everything that belongs to finding one’s identity is “punished” if it differs from the mainstream.” (HUNGARY, SPORT PROFESSIONAL)

The service providers we have interviewed as part of the Diversity and Childhood project and other projects have also reported on **institutional violence**. Within the **healthcare system**, trans people in particular are likely to suffer violence stemming from lack of knowledge and denial.

“In the hospital everyone will look up and react in case a transgender person would come. The medical staff would talk behind this person’s back.” (LITHUANIA, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL)

“The biggest problem is this horrible feeling in their body and the awareness that it takes ages to finally get something done and get that first appointment so you can start the process of gender reassignment. My child also cuts himself/herself and since healthcare doesn’t have the capacity to get to an expert soon enough this becomes a long-lasting problem.”

(SLOVENIA, MOTHER OF A TRANS CHILD)

As for **interpersonal violence**, service providers report **intimate-partner violence** as well as **violence coming from family members**. The threat of **being outed without consent** is widespread.

There are still many barriers to the social integration of LGBTI+ people, requiring continuous and systematic engagement by both civil society and governments and services to ensure the protection and safety of all LGBTI+ people, including youth.

The next chapters will elucidate what can be done against violence and minority stress caused by microaggressions.





Inclusive Representation: A Key to Breaking the Silence and Silencing



The first barrier professionals working with LGBTI+ children must overcome is silence.

In some of our countries, there is massive silence about LGBTI+ issues and childhood, but all of our societies can still work more on the actual inclusion of LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children in social communities and environments.⁸

Whatever area you work in, be it an educational institution, a health service provider, a family centre, a media outlet, sports or law enforcement, check the list and suggestions below!⁹

⁸ Diversity and Childhood (DaC) - Changing social attitudes towards gender diversity in children across Europe (Comparative Analysis on Violence against LGBTI and Gender Non-Conforming Children), 2020, p 15-16.

⁹ Based on the Checklist for a welcoming LGBTQ and gender inclusive school environment: <https://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/checklist-for-a-welcoming-and-inclusive-school-environment>

Inclusive Language

Often a family's and child's first contact with an institution or the organisers of programs and activities is through forms, whether completed online or in an office. Are these forms friendly to different family structures? Do they use language such as 'parent' or 'guardian?' Do forms ask for the names people want to be called and the pronouns they use (she/her/hers; he/him/his and they/them/theirs)? Check through forms and communications to ensure inclusivity. Do you model inclusive language for children, for other staff, and for parents and caregivers when talking about families?

Stopping Mean Words and Actions

Interrupt hurtful name-calling including the derogatory use of the word 'gay' and race- or gender-based slurs. Practice how to respond when you hear children say things like 'That's gay!'; 'You act like a girl!' or 'You're not a real family because you don't have a dad!' Does your professional development on bullying and harassment include the opportunity to practice interrupting and stopping bias-based name-calling or bullying and ways to respond to students' questions on LGBTI+ people and diverse families? Learn about these!

Diverse Images and Books

Do your publications or the books in your school/institution reflect the lives of the children you work with? Do hallway and/or classroom images show diverse family structures, as well as people of different gender expressions/identities, sex characteristics, ethnicities and abilities? Do the displays encourage respect for all people? Are your young clients/students exposed to diverse, positive role models in literature?

Institutional Climate – Setting a Positive, Inclusive Tone for All

When someone walks around your institution, can they tell that all children and their families are welcome? Is there children’s work featured in the hallways highlighting both diversity and commonalities? Have you held events recognising and celebrating diversity? Do staff treat all families with respect, and avoid stereotyping or judgment when communicating with two-mum, two-dad, single-parent, racially diverse and/or multi-linguistic families? Do school management, teachers and classmates support the child by recognising their preferred name and pronoun? Do all children know who they can connect with if they experience harassment or discrimination? Have you created and implemented clear agreements with children in groups regarding respect, caring for mates and not hurting each other with words or actions? Do children know that this means no put-downs about who someone is or who their family is? Do your anti-bullying policies specifically name groups that are bullied or harassed more frequently?

“*The fact that in Greece a homosexual teacher doesn’t show up with his/her partner in a school celebration is a significant issue that exists and we must combat it, if we want to help and support LGBTI+ community to feel more comfortable to talk about their orientation. We talk about the opening to diversity but, in real life, due to society in Greece, we cannot represent this opening easily.*”

(GREECE, TEACHER)

“*You should never tell your child they shouldn’t wear an outfit because “people” will look at them, laugh at them. Instead open the conversation. Tell them “most people won’t care, some will find it fantastic, but others may find it strange”. Ask the child if they thought about how they would react if someone said something mean. At that point you are training your child in resilience and presenting them an inherently different world view.*”

(BELGIUM, MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER)

To Have an LGBTI+ and Gender-Nonconformity Inclusive Environment

Use inclusive phrases to address children that are not gendered such as, ‘Good morning, everyone.’

Develop messages for children that emphasise ‘All children can... (dance, cook, have short or long hair, do maths, make art, play sports, etc.)’

Group children in ways that do not rely on gender such as table groups, letters in their names or colours of their clothes.

Provide role models. Show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people that move beyond gender-role stereotypes. Read diverse biographies.

Help children see the limitations of gender stereotyping. Ask children to examine popular culture, advertising, or children’s toys and books for gender stereotypes.

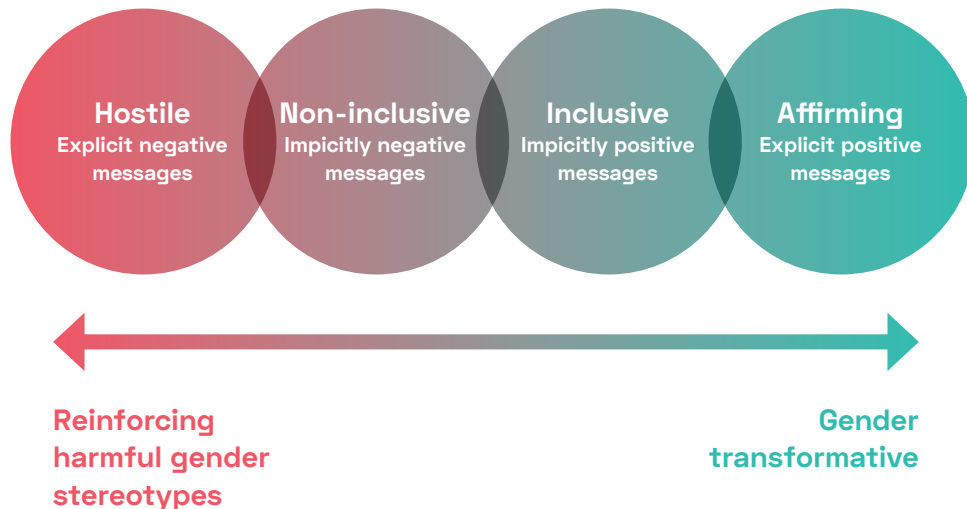
Build child allies. With the group of children you work with, look at ways to be an ally when someone is teased or bullied for any reason. Can they try to stop it directly? Should they talk with an adult? Could they talk with the child who has been harassed? Find methodologies to help children think through the options.

Be an upstander yourself. Interrupt children’s comments based on gender (or other) stereotypes. Engage in discussion with children by using these situations as teachable moments.

Ensure safety. Be aware of whether children feel safe both inside and outside of your institution. (If you work in a school, use lesson plans to engage students on where they feel safe or unsafe and what makes them feel safe or unsafe.)

Be a role model! When possible, give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender and bodily stereotypes.

“*Education should be the doorway to knowledge, the doorway to diversity. And students must feel that the adult in the classroom is the first to stand for equality. Otherwise, the doorway is wide open to abuse.*” (PORTUGAL, TEACHER)



Always help LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming youth

by using inclusive language,

creating a safe environment for LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children, and

promoting their equal representation.

Showcasing zero tolerance in situations of violence and hate speech towards anyone on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.



4 Attitudes that Support LGBTI+ Children and Youth: Examples



According to data from the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency's LGBT Survey published in 2020, 65% of students in the EU had heard or seen negative comments or conduct because a schoolmate/peer was perceived to be LGBTI (of course the ratio is significantly higher in many member states), and in several countries up to 1 in 5 LGBTI students had considered leaving or changing school because they were LGBTI.¹⁰

National surveys conducted among LGBTI+ students show that the frequency and severity of victimisation correlates with grade average: more severe victimisation was also related to lower academic achievement among LGBTI+ students¹¹. Students who experience victimisation or discrimination at school may also feel **excluded and disconnected from the school community**. LGBTI+ students who reported more frequent victimisation regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression also had **lower levels of self-esteem**.

10 <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2020/lgbti-survey-data-explorer>

11 Out in the Open: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. UNESCO, 2016

On the other hand, **the presence of supportive teachers and other professionals as well as the inclusion of positive LGBTI+-related information in the curriculum** is directly connected to students' wellbeing. Research data from various countries show that LGBTI+ students who were taught positive information about LGBTI+ people, history and events were more likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBTI+ people; more likely to feel like they belong in their school; less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe; and less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming students in schools with any type of **policy about bullying or harassment** were more likely to report that teachers intervened when homophobic or transphobic remarks were made; more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff; and more likely to report that staff intervention regarding harassment and assault was effective.¹²

Although our primary data is about school experiences, the experience of civil society organisations (CSOs) providing support services to LGBTI+ people, including partners in the Diversity and Childhood project, show that **students, that is, LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children and youth, feel and study better in supportive communities that take action against bullying**.

Professionals working with LGBTI+ individuals need to provide a safe and inclusive space for any sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and sex characteristics and to establish an intersectional and affirmative approach. They should be aware of the different legal and human rights contexts in their countries and how experiences of discrimination in different cultures shape the psychological reality of LGBTI+ young people.

12 <https://en.hatter.hu/sites/default/files/dokumentum/kiadvany/school-environment-report-en.pdf>

Paying proper attention to bullying, being supportive and preventing and responding to harassment deliver results, and so does proper representation and using inclusive language and imagery. Our aim is to make all professionals working with youth able to support LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming children and youth, and create inclusive and safe environments in which all children and families can thrive.

Support from peers, families, professionals, and communities can significantly strengthen young people who are LGBTI+ or gender-nonconforming. This support can help to protect against risks and foster wellbeing.

Professionals working with youth in all spheres and walks of life can make a direct and real impact on the lives of all communities.

In this chapter, we make recommendations and provide directions for working both with individuals and for the purpose of advocating for better institutional policies.

4.1 Basic principles for professionals who work with LGBTI+ children and youth

- Respect self-identification and bodily diversity. A person's sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and/or sex characteristics should not be assumed on the basis of appearance. Trying to question or change someone's sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and/or sex characteristics is unacceptable in all circumstances and is a direct violation of human rights.
- Recognise and understand that sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and sex characteristics are distinct and not necessarily connected, and be able to differentiate them when working with LGBTI+ people.

- Understand that gender is a non-binary construct that allows for a range of gender identities, and that a person's gender identity may not align with their sex assigned at birth. Also, a person's gender identity may or may not be included within the gender binary. Professionals should use the names or pronouns someone uses or suggests with their self-identification and should not insist on the use of the names written in people's official papers.
- Professionals should not consider that exploration of sexual orientation or fluidity of gender expression/identity are symptoms of disorders or indications of psychopathology. Gender dysphoria (when someone experiences significant distress and/or problems functioning associated with the conflict between the way they feel and think of themselves and their physical or assigned gender) is not a mental disorder and should not be considered as a common experience or expression for all trans people either.
- Professionals should not in any circumstances recommend that trans and/or intersex children and adolescents undergo non-consensual medical procedures that can be postponed until the intersex person can decide by themselves and give fully-informed consent. Only interventions that are necessary for saving the life of the intersex newborn, child or adolescent are an exception. Recognise that stigma, prejudice, discrimination and violence affect the health and wellbeing of LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming people, as well as the effects of institutional (systemic) barriers, like discriminatory legislation, on the lives of LGBTI+ people.
- Create a supportive and affirmative environment for LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming people.
- Recognise and respect the importance of LGBTI+ relationships, regarding them as equal to heterosexual ones, regardless of their legal recognition.
- Recognise the challenges related to multiple and often conflicting

norms, values, and beliefs faced by LGBTI+ young people who may also be members of racial and ethnic minority groups, as well as other communities.

- Increase knowledge and understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity through continuing education, training, supervision, and consultation.
- Acknowledge that, while LGBTI+ individuals might share common experiences, they are unique individuals with different needs and lives. It is crucial to recognise these differences and the different ways individuals experience discrimination and stigma. Every individual and every identity or experience represented in the acronym (as well as all other identities and experiences that are not specifically mentioned but included in the LGBTI+ spectrum, such as asexual, queer, non-binary, etc.) has discreet needs and realities.
- Acknowledge and become aware of the existence of internalised stereotypes, and be committed to creating an atmosphere of safety and trust as the cornerstone of applying best practices and providing affirmative services.

'A positive evolution to me is that general practitioners are organising in group practices more and more. You get a more interdisciplinary approach – the GP works with the psychologist, works with a social assistant... this widens the expertise and makes referral easier. You can't expect a GP to be an expert about everything.' (BELGIUM, UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER)

4.2 Prevention

Effective and appropriate prevention strategies can be built only after identifying the particular risk factors for anti-LGBTI+ violence in different settings, as well as providing specialised activities for each target group.

Possible target groups are:

1. potential perpetrators,
2. people affected by anti-LGBTI+ violence, and
3. actors involved with the identification and care of those affected.

There are many factors that can strengthen prevention strategies, such as strengthening support in families and in communities, and creating or improving monitoring and documentation procedures for anti-LGBTI+ violence incidents.

Because anti-LGBTI+ violence is rooted in widely accepted sexual, gender and bodily norms, there are two main fields to work on that could promote long term and lasting prevention:

- **improving the legal system** in order to empower, protect, and destigmatise LGBTI+ people, including youth, by accepting protective legislation and policies to combat LGBTI+phobic bullying, and creating codes of ethics for health and psychosocial support professionals, among others.
- **efforts to transform socio-cultural norms based on heterosexual representations**, raising awareness against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia in various social groups and services.

All professionals who work with children or represent their interests and views can make steps to come closer to societies in which all children and youth, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics are respected.

**What Can
You Start Doing
Today?**



5.1. Affirmative and supportive steps

1. Secure an inclusive and safe environment, and support children who are or have been victims of violence (including violence based on sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and sex characteristics).
2. Accept and implement policies (or integrate these into the existing policies) against discrimination and bullying in your institution, including bullying and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
3. Cover the topic of sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and sex characteristics in publications, programs and curricula, and ensure that all these set the goal of inclusion of and respect for LGBTI+ people.
4. In institutions, prepare detailed reports of incidents of bullying: forms used should contain the time of the incident, whether it happened once or repeatedly, its venue, its type, the protected characteristic in case of bias-motivated bullying, the source of knowledge about the incident, and the steps taken to resolve the problem. These reports should be used for systematic and regular monitoring of bullying.
5. Integrate the problem of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic violence into all programs aiming at eliminating violence and promoting safety in institutions.
6. Review all forms you use to include options outside the gender binary for both children and families.
7. Ensure that trans youth can express their gender and participate in all activities according to their gender identity, including the use of their preferred name and the flexible application of rules pertaining to clothing.

8. Ensure that transgender children and staff can use locker rooms and bathrooms in accordance with their gender identity.
9. Support the creation of groups organised by LGBTI+ youth and their allies.
10. Support the participation of staff (e.g. teachers, school psychologists, social workers, health professionals, victim support service providers) in awareness raising programs or accredited in-service training programs that cover the social situation of LGBTI+ people and the special problems and needs of LGBTI+ youth.
11. Support the invitation of training programs operated by LGBTI+ and other human rights organisations on topics related to sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and sex characteristics for staff and children.
12. Conduct regular anonymous research among children on the prevalence of bullying and violence in your work environment, including children's needs related to these.

5.2. All professionals working with children and young people can and should

1. Take care of their professional development and attend training on understanding gender, gender diversity and stopping anti-LGBTI+ bullying.
2. Be inclusive of LGBTI+ young people and parents in all their work and whenever they represent young people and families.
3. Practice intervening when clients, students or anyone else is limiting, teasing and bullying each other based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. Respect the name and the pronouns clients, students and others use.
5. Let everyone know that they respect the human dignity of LGBTI+ people by their choice of words as well as a non-judgmental acknowledgement of LGBTI+ people's existence.
6. Support proactive action against bias-motivated bullying, including the development and implementation of policies and prevention programs.
7. If they are members of professional unions, suggest and support directing more attention in these organisations at responding to bias-motivated bullying.
8. If they witness or are informed about mockery, verbal abuse or physical assault, or if anyone talks about LGBTI+ and gender-nonconforming people in a negative context, initiate discussions about the subject in cooperation with other professionals working with youth.
9. In educational institutions, reframe dress code policy to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without assigning clothing options to particular genders. For example, for a celebration, ask students to wear white on the top and dark or black on the bottom. Ensure that students are welcome and safe to wear the clothes, hairstyle and accessories that reflect their affirmed gender.



List of resources and organisations



UNESCO

[HTTPS://EN.UNESCO.ORG/THEMES/HOMOPHOBIC-AND-TRANSPHOBIC-VIOLENCE-EDUCATION](https://en.unesco.org/themes/homophobic-and-transphobic-violence-education)

Publications on homo- and transphobic violence in the education sector, including *Out in the open: education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression: summary report* (2016), *Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence* (2016), *Bringing it out in the open: monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in national and international surveys* (2019).

Stonewall: Schools and Colleges

[HTTPS://WWW.STONEWALL.ORG.UK/SCHOOLS-COLLEGES](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/schools-colleges)

While Britain has made huge strides towards LGBT equality in recent decades, anti-LGBT bullying and language unfortunately remain commonplace in Britain's schools. Nearly half of all LGBT pupils still face bullying for being LGBT. A crucial part of tackling this problem is delivering a curriculum that includes LGBT people and their experiences. LGBT-inclusive teaching ensures that LGBT children and young people, and children and young people with LGBT families, see themselves reflected in what they learn. It also encourages all young people to grow up with inclusive and accepting attitudes.

Human Rights Campaign Foundation: Welcoming Schools

[HTTPS://WWW.WELCOMINGSCHOOLS.ORG/RESOURCES/SCHOOL-TIPS/LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE-SCHOOLS-WHAT/](https://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/school-tips/lgbtq-inclusive-schools-what/)

Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools is a professional development program providing training and resources to elementary school educators to:

- embrace all families
- create LGBTQ and gender inclusive schools
- prevent bias-based bullying
- support transgender and non-binary students

Convention on the Rights of the Child

[HTTPS://WWW.OHCHR.ORG/EN/PROFESSIONALINTEREST/PAGES/CRC.ASPX](https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx)

International human rights treaty establishing civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights for children.

IGLYO - The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth and Student Organisation

[HTTPS://WWW.IGLYO.COM](https://www.iglyo.com)

IGLYO is a youth development and leadership organization building LGBTQI youth activists, ensuring LGBTQI young people are present and heard, and making schools safe, inclusive, and supportive of LGBTQI learners.

Illustrating gender

[HTTP://WWW.DIBGEN.COM/INDEX-EN.HTML](http://www.dibgen.com/index-en.html)

An informative project based on the book *Illustrating gender*, which seeks to bring contributions from gender studies to a wider audience.



List of references



Checklist for a welcoming LGBTQ and gender inclusive school environment:

[HTTPS://WWW.WELCOMINGSCHOOLS.ORG/PAGES/CHECKLIST-FOR-A-WELCOMING-AND-INCLUSIVE-SCHOOL-ENVIRONMENT](https://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/checklist-for-a-welcoming-and-inclusive-school-environment)

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Diversity *and*
Childhood



