

Global report on needs analysis on sexual and gender diversity

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Summary of the Project

The project intends to make schools more inclusive by addressing the LGBTIQ community problems in the educational system. Indeed, inclusive schools set the starting points from which students chart the course of the rest of their lives. Schools are the place where opinions form, values are established, and aspirations are set. In this framework schools are called to contribute to the promotion of equality and the prevention of discrimination.

As a result, many school educators may not be ready to address the problems of the LGBTIQ community in school because of lack of resources and knowledge. Thus, teachers may need basic knowledge about this topic. Also, teachers express the need to be trained, but also uncertainty on how raise the topic in class. Research indicates that about half of the teachers does not have adequate information to educate about gender issues during their time in classrooms. The large-scale FRA (2016) research on LGBTIQ and gender discrimination in EU shows that the students have a high need for more explicit attention for sexual orientation and gender identity.

Therefore, the main objective of this project is to support a comprehensive approach and specific educative actions to address intersectional discrimination and inequality experienced on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics in the school. This can result to be challenging as these attitudes can be extremely difficult to change by the school, but the school is the right place to prevent any negative effects: there is a need to deal with homophobic negative effects on the students and their families.

Thus, the My-ID projects is very crucial, especially as it runs during a key time for the European education system. Indeed, it is on during the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 adopted in 2020, that marks a new phase of integration of LGBTIQ equality in all policy areas and aims to bring together the Member States in a common endeavour to address LGBTI discrimination more effectively by 2025. Therefore, this project offers a good framework for future actions that needs to be filled in with concrete initiatives and My-ID can be one of these.

Executive summary

The objectives of the My-ID project will directly benefit students, teachers and school staff, parents, and the general population and caretakers.

Students will be more aware of the importance of having diversity skills in the personal and professional social domain through concrete classroom activities to integrate gender sensitivity in specific subjects.

Teachers and other school staff will improve their diversity skills on how to help create a safer and more inclusive group environment via a manual, a guide and training to empower them to start dialogue and educating about sexual and gender issues and on how to deal with potential conflicts arising from this.

Parents of the involved schools will be aware that the school has an inclusive diversity policy, and that this includes gender sensitivity by providing them guidance so to understand and tolerate/accept sexual and gender diversity, both in their own family and in relation to how the school deals with the topic.

The general population of parents and caretakers will have at hand an informative brochure with suggestions on how to deal with gender and sexual diversity.

As a result, the project includes 3 Project Results:

- 1) A teacher manual with a compendium of activities and they will be piloted in the participating schools, resulting in a piloting report based on impact survey and a Review report; Teacher guide with practical suggestions on how to deal with questions students may ask and Video impression
- 2) A teacher training manual and four video clips which explain the My-ID methodology on how to engage on a deeper emotional level with diversity, and a resulting teacher training report and analysis on how to overcome cultural differences in teaching styles and how to deal with doubt and resistance. In the context of this result
- 3) In order to inform and mentor parents to understand and tolerate/accept sexual and gender diversity, first needs assessment among parents will be organised, and then the development of a Manual for professionals on how to reach out and work with parents.

Introduction

Aims of the report

The partnership will analyse the specific needs regarding gender and sexual inclusivity in their classrooms and will be used as the first step in developing a more comprehensive manual.

Profile of participants

Each partner will interview 20 teachers (amongst whom the ones that will implement the pilot testing will be included) and 70 students (approximately three classes).

Methodology applied

This section includes an overview of the procedures carried out to complete the desk research and interview analysis activity.

In the first place, the questionnaire used for the interviews was designed in English by Defoin (Spain), being reviewed and improved by Gale (Netherlands). The questionnaires were then translated into the partner's languages and delivered to the participants through Google Forms.

The questionnaires were tailored to collect the necessary information from both participating profiles. Both the students and teachers' surveys include questions about sexual and gender diversity, orientation, identity, perception about these topics, self-expression in the classroom context, perception of needs by students and teachers according to their respective roles, among other questions related to LGBT as it is approached in the Secondary Schools.

The procedures to deliver the questionnaires among teachers and students included a pre-selection of Educational Centres, student's associations, and other venues in which the target group could be contacted.

The approach was different depending on the target group. While the teachers were contacted mainly by email, but also by telephone, the secondary target group of students was contacted through the schools and youth associations.

Data summary

Number of participant schools: 5

Number of students interviewed (in total): 350

Number of teachers interviewed (in total): 100

Main results

After analysing each national report, we have seen a variety of results. Therefore, in this section we will analyse and see the main results that have collected throughout the participating countries, starting with the common aspects in LGBTIQ diversity and education and then the main differences between the students' and teachers' responses.

Common aspects in LGBT diversity and education among the participant countries

Teachers

The first common aspects that we have found out through our questionnaire was that most teachers are either interested or very interested in learning more about identity formation, (non) conformity, how to stimulate equal rights, how to deal with diversity, gender identities, sexual orientations, and gender stereotypes/heteronormativity.

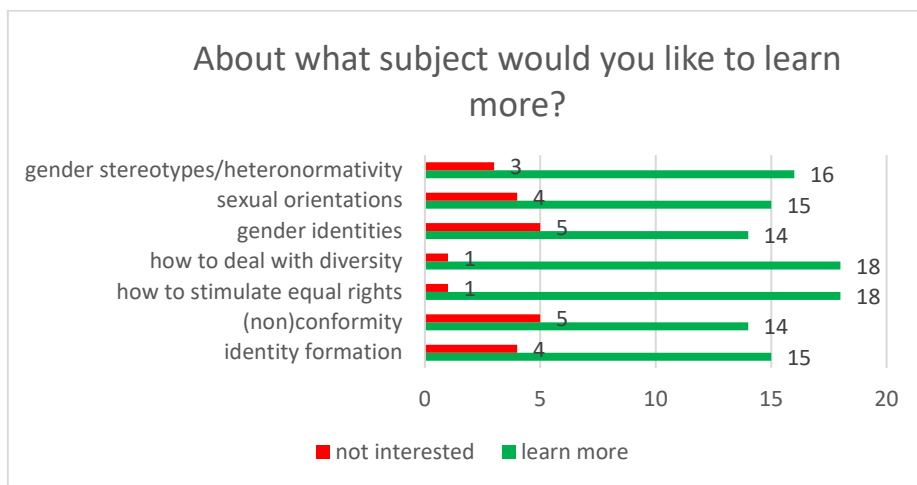


Figure 1. Elaborated by Iedersland College (The Netherlands)

Students

The main common point between students is the lack of information available to them in the school environment about the LGBTIQ community issues. As a result, students must consult this topic mostly on the web and agree that sexual and gender diversity should be part of a formal curriculum.

Teachers and students

There are also many common points between students' and teachers' opinions about this topic. Although most of the teachers and students agree to individual freedom of choice, the two categories highlight that, when it comes to sharing the sexual and the gender orientation of an individual, schools are not yet a fully safe environment where people can feel free to express their sexual or gender orientation. Indeed, many think that non-heteronormative students would only share their sexual or gender orientation with close friends and not in an open way.

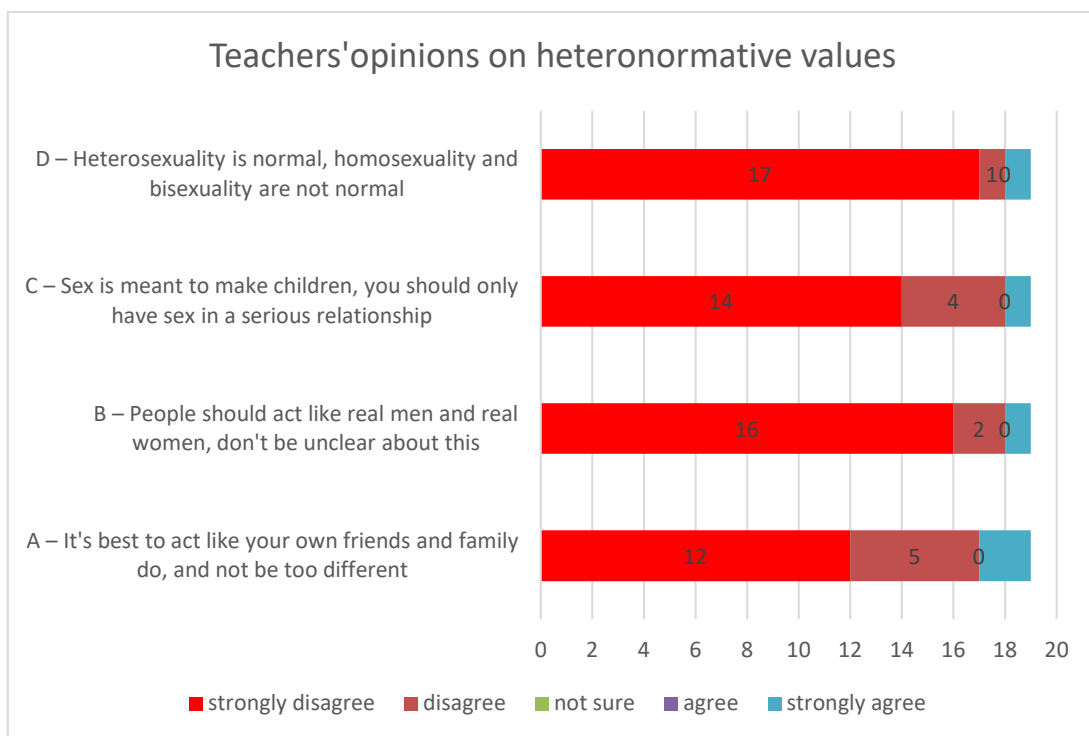


Figure 2. Elaborated by DEFOIN (Spain).

Also, both categories agree that sex education should be implemented in schools through various activities and it should form part of the school curriculum. They both agree that tutorial hours with specific activities would be the best solution to raise awareness about this topic.

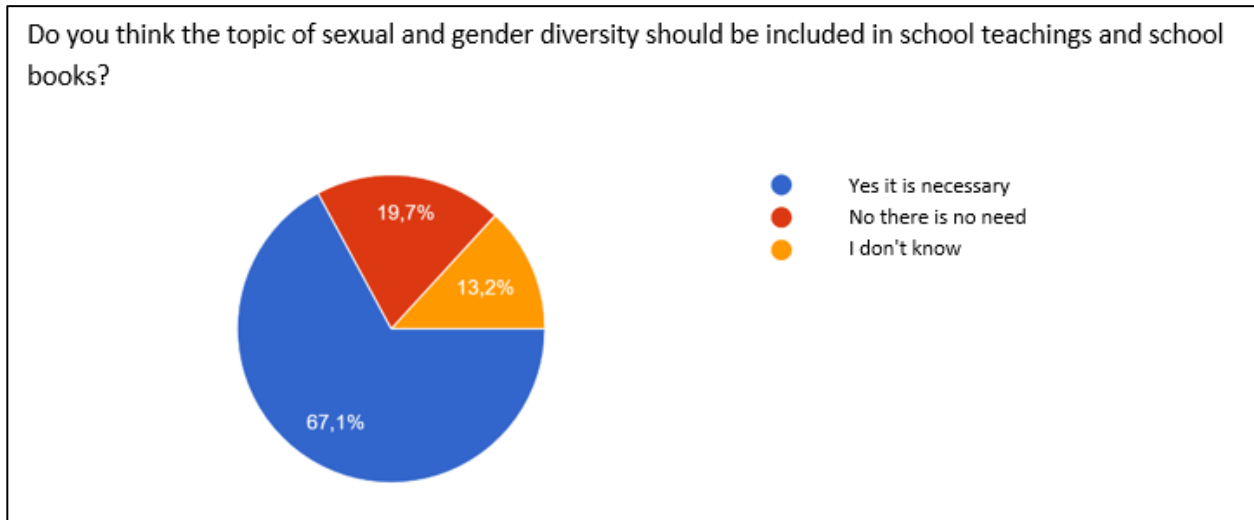


Figure 3. Elaborated by CESIE (Italy).

Main differences in the students' and teachers' needs regarding sex and gender diversity in the participant countries

During our survey we have also encountered some differences in the needs regarding sex and gender diversity in the involved parties.

On one hand, many teachers feel that schools are a safe environment where students can feel safe when sharing their sexual and gender orientations, as it is not considered to be a major taboo. On the other hand, students feel that the school environment is not yet a safe environment in which they can fully express their sexual and gender orientation. Indeed, as mentioned before, students feel that non-heterosexual oriented individuals would only share their orientation with only a few close friends.

Another difference that is important to point out is that, while many students seem to know where to seek help outside the classroom (social media, the internet, close friends), teachers do not even know if there are any existing policies for the LGBTIQ

community in their schools, or whether there is specific support in place. This underlines the importance of this project when it comes to the implementation of new guidelines and policies for teachers.

There are some differences between the teaching body too. For example, although the great majority of teachers share the same beliefs about equality, not all of them agree on how to put in practice the right measures to ensure equality amongst the LGBTIQ student community. Also, when teachers say that they have implemented activities on sexual and gender diversity, most students disagree on that, stating that such topics are either not mentioned or the input is given by the students themselves.

Conclusions and recommendations

After analysing each national report and results, we have come up with some conclusions and recommendations that should be taken into consideration to tackle the LGBTIQ community in schools.

Although there is a strong interest toward the inclusion and equality of the LGBTIQ community in the school environment amongst students and teachers, this is still a very sensitive topic for many. Consequently, not everyone might be prepared to discuss it, especially teachers, as they would rather opt for inviting external educators or discussing a film or documentary. These are methods that provide a certain level of safety for the teacher because they are less interactive and provide less opportunity for criticism and chaos in class. Thus, the first recommendation would be that training for teachers should provide confidence when talking about these issues, deliver skills in managing interactive classroom activities and that the development of classroom activities includes concrete guidelines for facilitation of interactive methods.

The necessity of developing guidelines is highlighted as well by the lack of resources that have students in order to find out more information about this topic. Indeed, in all partner countries, we have found out that students rely mostly on social media and the

internet, which not always have the right answers or information. A competent body should guide students through specific activities towards a more inclusive society and school environment.

Another problem that we have encountered through our survey is that not all schools or educational systems have sex education. The reason of this could be the fact that most students hold rather heteronormative orientation and values, therefore are not directly affected by the problems that LGBTIQ community faces. Thus, their opinions on sex and relationships are more divided and this may be an opportunity to engage in a more open dialogue. Therefore, it would essential that schools started to implement LGBTIQ+ inclusive sex education and teacher training in order to raise awareness about this topic and to start an open debate. A good communication between all the involved parts is the key to create basic tolerance that could eventually extend to all areas of heteronormativity.

Therefore, there are many issues around the LGBTIQ community in schools. This is because most of the time the educational system does not have the resources and the necessary training of teachers to tackle these issues. This project, through the national reports of each participating country, tries to solve this problem through some useful recommendations that should be an inspiring starting point to make schools a safe and inclusive environment.



Partners

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GALE

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EUROTRAINING – Educational Organization

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