

CROSSING DIVERSITY Learning and Guidance Tools against Discrimination of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transexual People in different cultures Sessualità Stereotypes Comin out Homoseksuele en lesbische relaties nidad om Homofobiska aizskaršana Religion Storia e culture Identidades ation and C long Learning Programme

#### Editorial Note

**CROSSING DIVERSITY** 

Learning and Guidance Tools against Discrimination of GayLesbianBisexualTransexual People in different cultures

Published by Liceo Classico Statale "SOCRATE" (Socrate High school) – Rome (Italy)

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# **CROSSING DIVERSITY**

Learning and Guidance Tools against Discrimination of Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transexual People in different cultures

# HANDBOOK

The Handbook and the 9 Theme Guides enclosed herewith include the results of the LEONARDO-TOI "EURIALO" Project and are the Project deliverables. Cooperation of all Project Partners allowed designing and developing them.

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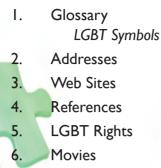
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(Map of LGBT Rights and Legislation in European Countries)

# THEME GUIDES

- I Identity and Coming Out
- 2 Gay and Lesbian Relationships
- 3 Lifestyle Differences and Stereotypes
- 4 Health-Related Psychological Aspects
- 5 Supporting LGBT Adolescents and Countering Homophobic Bullying
- 6 Sexualities
- 7. The LGBT Community
- 8 History and Cultures
- 9 Religions

# FOREWORD

A High School as the Lead Partner for a Project against homophobia and discrimination – is this unusual? Maybe, but for sure it is not inappropriate. As, as everybody knows, in our teens – while building our identity – we all see the group of our peers as a sort of "mirror", and are worried about the judgement of adults that should guide us throughout our self-knowledge journey.

Yet, teachers – both men and women – often unintentionally show behaviours and formulate judgements corroborating gender and role stereotypes, thus risking deeply affecting young boys and girls, hurting them, and increasing their feelings of inadequacy that are typical of adolescence.

Ours is a Humanities high school (Liceo Classico). This is why – one might say due to the very nature of our studies, as we place focus on ancient Greek and Latin literature and civilisations – we are constantly dealing with the topics of foreigners and sexual customs, also identifying the differences and similarities with contemporary mainstream attitudes and ideas. However, this does not mean that our teachers are more aware of the above-mentioned issues or that they can better tackle those topics. This is why, for many years now, Liceo Socrate has been involved in Projects and activities contributing helping teachers in the first place, and then students, to identify and enhance differences, considering them as enriching factors for any community.

Gender, ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, as well as those based on sexual orientation and "different abilities" are like the colourful tiles of a mosaic, which are arranged differently in any human being, thus making up every person's unique and irreproducible identity. An extremely complex identity, which might evolve during the life of each individual.

So, we decided to make our experience available to the EURIALO Project and contribute developing a tool meeting the needs of all the actors involved in an educational/training experience.

Many difficulties, questions, and doubts arose when writing every line and page of the Handbook and Theme Guides. Such issues included language as, especially in the Italian version, the language utilised was the expression of sexism that has been stratifying over the centuries, and which was quite difficult to adjust to modern awareness. And this was even more true for a text like this one, where we would have liked to put an end to the lack of visibility of women, but decided not to force things and not to make the language too heavy, thus partially giving up our initial intention. The same applied to the LGBT acronym, which we have kept although it is not very convincing to us, in that it again creates categories and, as we all now, categories are never exhaustive and end up discriminating.

We will do better next time, also in this respect.

#### Gabriella de Angelis

Headmistress Liceo Classico Statale SOCRATE ROMA - ITALY

# INTRODUCTION

**Crossing Diversity** is the final output of the Leonardo – TOI "EURIALO - LEarning and gUidance tools against discRIminAtion: respect for alL different sexual chOices and cultural identities" Project, and has been developed by all Partners throughout the 2-year activities, which started in October 2009 and finished in October 2011.

Crossing Diversity consists of a Handbook (or Manual) and 9 Theme Guides. The food for thought proposed targets teachers, psychologists, counsellors, and social/health operators. Such theoretical and practical tools aim at fighting against discrimination based on sexual orientation and ethnicity, with particular focus on the youth (aged between 14 and 20).

The 9 Theme Guides tackle the following topics:

- I. Identity and Coming Out
- 2. Gay and Lesbian Relationships
- 3. Lifestyle Differences and Stereotypes
- 4. Health-Related Psychological Aspects
- 5. Supporting LGBT Adolescents and Countering Homophobic Bullying
- 6. Sexualities
- 7. The LGBT Community
- 8. History and Cultures
- 9. Religions

So, the EURIALO Project Partners have inherited the results of the TRI-ANGLE experience, and reviewed its Handbook and Theme Guides. The general information and practical tools and materials were further developed and, if necessary, supplemented, with a view to making the already unique and comprehensive original products even more effective in combating discrimination that, today, is still targeting young LGBT persons.

As the authors of "Different in More Ways Than One" already pointed out – and as it can be inferred from the surveys carried out in all Partner Countries (including Italy, Belgium, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain) – even today homosexual, bisexual, and transsexual people, especially in some specific backgrounds

As the authors of "Different in More Ways Than One" already pointed out – and as it can be inferred from the surveys carried out in all Partner Countries (including Italy, Belgium, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain) – even today homosexual, bisexual, and transsexual people, especially in some specific backgrounds

> «face discrimination on a regular basis. Many Europeans still consider it "natural" and think they have the "right" to despise, harass, or ignore homosexuals. European societies still take it for granted that "everyone" is heterosexual, thus denying the existence of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Many laws and other regulations still deny equal rights to heterosexuals and homosexuals. Negative attitudes and behaviour still stigmatise gays,

lesbians and bisexuals in most of Europe. These forms of discrimination deeply affect those individuals' daily lives. They usually do not even dare to hold hands in public as heterosexuals do. In every social situation, they have to make decisions whether to admit, declare or deny that they are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Any decision to be open about this implies risks such as being shunned, losing one's job, being harassed or intimidated, and even being physically abused».

Hence,

«On the one hand, the situation of lesbians and gays is improving because of an increasing awareness in many countries and European-level measures to combat discrimination. On the other hand, however, certain aspects of the situation are getting worse. New fears of international terrorism and fundamentalism add to already existing feelings of xenophobia and rejection of Muslims. Increasing immigration into Europe has led to the creation of increasingly intercultural societies, where the integration of new populations and new ideas is not easy, at times. There are tensions between European-born citizens and newcomers. The generally tolerant attitudes of Europeans towards homosexuals, still quite recent, are not always shared by newcomers. Most importantly, the growing number of people who have fundamentalist worldviews often find it very difficult to accept people who live their homosexuality openly. Conservative Islamic as well as Christian (religious and cultural) leaders regularly declare that homosexuality is a threat to society, and some young people who identify with this fundamentalism often take it as a license to disrespect homosexuals or even to resort to violence. Some people experiencing homosexual feelings feel very comfortable in this situation and live the experience of belonging to two different cultures as personally enriching, despite their (non-Western) cultural backgrounds. Other LGBT persons do not feel at home in the gay, lesbian and bisexual community, nor do they feel safe among their peers. Therefore, European intercultural societies should tackle some difficult issues concerning homosexuality, lifestyles, religion, and culture<sup>1</sup>».

In this framework, Crossing Diversity intends to contribute starting and spreading meditation on LGBT-related issues within Educational and Vocational Training Systems and in Guidance by enhancing the skills of teachers, psychotherapists, counsellors, and social workers, so to help them supporting LGBT young people risking being marginalised due to their sexual orientation. As a matter of fact, as it can be inferred from numerous European research studies on the living conditions of the youth, people in their teens shifting from school to work and from dependence to independence can be extremely vulnerable, and their relations to the world's hypercomplexity, to the educational and vocational training systems, and to the relevant professional challenges might overwhelm them and suffocate their sexual and cultural identities.

Therefore, developing and improving a Handbook in order to help figures that play a direct and significant role in the growth of boys and girls to fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and ethnicity – and, more generally in "crossing and matching diversity", be it gender, sex or cultural diversity – is a very innovative activity. In fact, at least in Italy – which is the Country that promoted the development of the original "Different in More Ways Than One" Best Practice – there are no as targeted and comprehensive teaching tools tackling LGBT-related issues as these ones, especially among the Projects financed through the Leonardo Da Vinci LLP – Lifelong Learning Programme.

I "Different in More Ways Than One. Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect" - Ministry for Women, the Youth and Family of Nordrhein Westphalia (Germany), Düsseldorf, August 2004.

In compliance with the guidelines of the strategic Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training through 2020 (ET2020), we therefore hope that Crossing Diversity will contribute "improving national educational and training systems" and reaching its strategic objectives, consisting in "promoting equality, social cohesion...provide the means for all citizens to realise their potentials, as well as ensure sustainable economic prosperity and employability, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue"<sup>2</sup>.

2 http://europa.eu/legislation\_summaries/education\_training\_youth/general\_framework/ef0016\_it.htm

# THE EURIALO PROJECT

Starting from the Good Practice carried out in previous TRIANGLE project, Handbook and 9 Theme guides (Maps) made available to teachers/educators, psychologists, counsellors, and social workers working with the youth, the EURIALO Project aims at updating and adjusting the contents of such BP, by focusing on the needs of teachers, trainers, psychologists, and counsellors working in high schools (with young boys and girls aged between 14 and 20), or in social/healthcare agencies (e.g. family advisory centres).

The Project aims at transferring the updated and adjusted product to a significant number of organisations that might be interested in field-testing the BP.

Therefore, the national and international Partnership is targeting various target groups, as the Project envisages pilot experiences, testing and validating – with/for a group of 'intermediate' beneficiaries – of active methodologies and tools, aiming at increasing the awareness of diversity, and disseminating the results in the relevant systems (educational, vocational training, and guidance systems, youth support services in high schools), in the medium and long run, so to reach their final beneficiaries.

#### Therefore, the Project has

- a "direct" target group which includes teachers/educators operating in high schools, psychologists, social counsellors working with the youth;
- as a group of "final beneficiaries", who are indirectly targeted by the Handbook and tools, made up by students and young adults.

The EURIALO Project's expected results are the development and drawing up of a revised version of the Handbook including guidelines, tools, and methodologies, aiming at:

- providing the various categories of users with skills increasing their awareness of diversity, and offering them training methods in such field;
  - improving/increasing awareness of diversity of young people and young adults (boys and girls aged between 14 and 20).

The adaptation of the Handbook, relating tools and Theme Guides will consist in:

- Updating its contents based on the new needs identified;
- Updating and adjusting the methodologies and tools, depending on the target groups identified, the characteristics and needs of final beneficiaries;
- Translating the prototype into the languages of the new Partners involved;
- Technological upgrading (transferring the Manual and Maps to a multimedia CD-ROM).

The EURIALO project had a 25 month duration: from October 1st, 2009 to October 31, 2011.

# **PROJECT PARTNERS**

#### IT - Project Leader LICEO CLASSICO STATALE "SOCRATE"

This high school's mission is to provide integrated education to students, considered as both pupils and citizens, by transferring them contents and tools allowing them to develop a general method for critical knowledge. This, also making students aware of the reality of the individual seen as an actor, part of a network of relations and rules that guarantee a disciplined development of society.

Such goals are pursued through the promotion of the rule of law, equal opportunities between men and women, respect for different ideas, cultural differences and religions and, hence, compliance with the Charter of High School Students ("Statuto delle Studentesse e degli Studenti della Scuola Superiore" - Presidential Decree n° 249/98). A feature of Italian "Liceo Classico" is focus on humanities, which are the core of teaching. This

A feature of Italian "Liceo Classico" is focus on humanities, which are the core of teaching. This does not mean that these schools should restrict themselves to worshipping a sterile past. On the contrary, they should take methods and values from the past allowing living in the present and being more aware of oneself and the others.

Actually, by adopting a comprehensive idea of humanism, the school is led to widen its subject range, and its curriculum also includes – besides humanities, history and philosophy – scientific subjects, which are crucial disciplines to any education. In fact, as public high schools in Italy are somehow free to supplement or slightly modify government curricula, Liceo Socrate decided to place additional focus on scientific subjects within the limits of said "freedom".

www.liceosocrate.org

#### IT - Coordinating Partner CIRSES - Centro di Iniziativa e di Ricerca sul Sistema Educativo e Scientifico

CIRSES, Centro di Iniziativa e di Ricerca sul Sistema Educativo e Scientifico, (Educational and Scientific System Initiative and Research Centre) was established in 1980. Its mission consists in studying the Italian and European Educational and Vocational Training Systems. Senior and Junior Researchers work at the Centre, who are expert in educational systems and equal opportunity-related topics. CIRSES has carried out numerous research studies and provided consultancy services to the Cultural Exchange Division of the Italian Ministry of Education, the National Research Centre (CNR), the European Commission, ENEA, ISFOL, FORMEZ, Basilicata, Calabria, Emilia Romagna, and Lazio Regional Governments. Since the mid '90s, it has been participating – both as a Partner and Lead Partner – in various EU Projects, within the framework of the SOCRATES and Leonardo da Vinci Programmes. Over the last 5 years, they have carried out intercultural integration action feasibility studies, targeting groups of migrants coming from Eastern Europe, as well as research studies analysing sexist stereotypes in upper secondary school textbooks

www.cirses.it

#### IT - Rome Municipal Government - Municipio X

#### (Administrative District n. 10)

Rome Municipal Government –Administrative District n. 10 is one of the local public authorities working to improve relations between citizens and the city central government. This administrative District covers an area with 180,000 inhabitants, who are provided services by the Administrative District Offices especially in the fields of children and teenager education and immigration policies, with special focus on social access and integration of immigrants. These administrative units are entitled to organise cultural and recreational events in their territories.

In order to meet local needs, the Municipio carries out various initiatives targeting boys and girls, including cultural and recreational activities (toy libraries, cultural itineraries), support activities (pre-adolescences support centres; drug addict support centres; social support units, etc.).

<u>http://comune.roma.it</u>

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# IT - ARCIGAY ROMA

ARCIGAY ROMA - Gruppo ORA – is a social promotion association and Arcigay's Rome Provincial Committee. It cooperates closely with the Rome and Lazio branches of CGIL (a major Italian trade union), through its New Rights Office – as well as with Arcilesbica Roma, Azione Trans and NPS, in conducting prevention and education campaigns

The Association carries out numerous local initiatives, including:

- a) cooperating in the Gay Help Line 800 713 713 Toll-Free Number, supporting the LGBT community;
- b) participating in training initiatives against homophobia targeting schools, police forces, and other public institution personnel;
- c) carrying out cultural initiatives, including congresses, book presentations, screening and debates on movies, etc.;
- carrying out actions countering multiple discrimination vis-à-vis LGBT persons, including discrimination against immigrants, disabled people, religious minorities, etc.;
- e) carrying out activities in schools, including training for students and teachers;
- f) organising discussion and focus groups on specific topics, such as the Youth and Women Groups, and the HIV+ support Group, etc.;

Moreover, the Association is a Charter Member of "Coordinamento Roma Pride" – which organises the Pride-related activities – of "Coordination Council for sexual orientation and gender identity"

of the Municipality of Rome, Gay Centre, ILGA (International Lesbian and Gay Association), IGLYO (International Gay Lesbian Youth Organization). www.arcigayroma.it

# **IT - ISTITUTO GESTALT FIRENZE - IGF**

Istituto Gestalt Firenze (Florence Gestalt Institute) was established in Florence in 1988 by Prof. G. Paolo Quattrini, who is now the Institute's Scientific Manager, while Ms. Anna R. Ravenna is in charge of the Teaching-related aspects. IGF has three schools, located in Florence, Rome, and Leghorn respectively, where research programmes are carried out, as well as training and clinical activities relating to the evolutionary process of individuals, groups and communities.

I.G.F. organises various activities, including the 4-year post-graduate Gestalt Psychotherapy school, Gestalt Therapy Teaching Training; Clinical Supervision Training; Gestalt Counselling Training; theme training courses; individual training courses for foreign students and teachers. Over time, IGF has signed various agreements in the social and healthcare fields, including one with Rome S.Camillo-Forlanini Hospital, which in 1992 led to the opening of the Centre for adjusting Physical and Psychic identity (SAIFIP), a counselling service targeting people who whish to "rectify their sex attribution".

www.igf-gestalt.it

# LV - ISEC - Centre for Curriculum Development and Examina-tions of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia (VISC -Valsts izglītības satura centrs)

The Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations (ISEC, which was transformed into VISC last year), is a governmental organisation under the Ministry of Education ad Science of the Republic of Latvia. ISEC was established in 1994, and has more than 70 expert personnel. ts main activities include:

- Contributing to the training and professional development of teachers; developing on-thejob training projects, curricula and methods; coordinating and providing methodological support to on-the-job training projects in Latvia;
- Developing educational standards, teaching/learning curricula and model curricula in order to organise the development, approval and improvement of compulsory education, and secondary education in general;
- Organising and developing the national examination system, and providing centralised examination testing; cooperating with governmental and non-governmental Latvian institutions, as well as foreign organisations.

www.isec.gov.lv

## PT - CONSULTIS CONSULTORIA EMPRESARIAL, UNIPESSOAL, LDA

Consultis is a limited company operating n the fields of business consultancy, specialised research and innovation, guidance, education, and vocational training. It also carries out activities in the equal opportunity cross-sector, such as trainer, teacher, counsellor, and guidance expert training and lifelong training, the production of teaching material, and the development of teaching curricula, which have always been among Consultis' priorities.

In order to develop the aforesaid activities, Consultis works with all institutions dealing with training and education – including schools, training centres, and universities – as well as with companies and trade organisations, with which they signed partnership and cooperation agreements. Of course, EURIALO will benefit from such cooperation network.

www.consultis.pt

#### ES - COGAM - Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y **Bisexuales de Madrid**

COGAM is the Association that has been representing, since 1986, the Madrid LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual) community). Among its goals are: - Defending human rights and, in particular, the rights of LGBT persons;

- Working to create a society favouring inclusion and respect, promoting freedom and equality of people, both as individuals or as members of social groups;
- Promoting social and legal equality for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, their gender identities, and their sexual relations;
- Working to eliminate homophobic and transphobic behaviours;
- Working to eliminate all sorts of discrimination vis-à-vis HIV-positive people, and promoting their right to get public healthcare, psychological counselling, and social services.

www.cogam.es

## **BE - ÇAVARIA** (HOLEBIFEDERATIE)

Çavaria is an organization encompassing some 100 associations of LGBT persons in the whole Flemish area of Belgium. Çavaria provides information on legal issues and people-related problems through their web site, their magazines, brochures, etc.

Moreover, they organize events and initiatives for the LGBT community. Çavaria is involved in various educational and healthcare projects, and operates a telephone helpline called Holebifoon.

www.cavaria.be

# HANDBOOK AND THEME GUIDES' TARGET GROUPS

Crossing Diversity was developed to be used as a tool to combat discrimination especially among young people. It offers a variety of suggestions, as well as intervention methods that both schools and psychology professionals can adopt to increase people's awareness. It aims at addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation inside a multicultural society. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and on race or culture share a similar basis – the fear of the "other"- i.e. everything that seems "strange" or "abnormal".

Crossing Diversity places special focus on situations involving double discrimination, where individuals face discrimination based on race or ethnic origin, as well as on their sexual orientation.

Students and young people aged between 14 and 20 are the end-targets of the Handbook and Theme Guides. We deem it therefore important to inform educators, teachers and counsellors who deal with young people in crucial contexts (e.g. in schools, in the health system, etc.), so that they can react to xenophobia and homophobia and address them in a professional manner.

In order to develop a tool that will best address the needs of its direct users (teachers, psychologists, counsellors, social workers and health operators), the EURIALO Partners have also carried out a need assessment activity, by using some of the tools developed in the framework of the previous TRIANGLE Project.

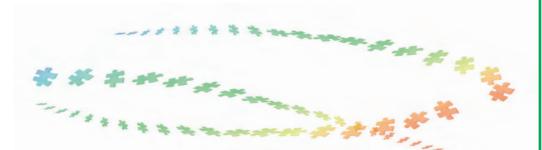
Hence, the EURIALO core working group has reviewed, edited and adapted the questionnaire drawn up by the TRIANGLE research team. The Questionnaire was then administered to groups of direct targets/users in all Partner Countries. This allowed investigating the new contexts selected for the transfer of the Good Practice and identifying the type of tools required by the professional profiles making up the EURIALO Project target groups to fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and ethnicity.

The information collected through the questionnaires was processed and shared by the Partners. It was one of the mainstays for the improvement and updating of the Handbook and the 9 Theme Guides<sup>3</sup>.

As a matter of fact, a SWOT analysis of the "Different in More Ways Than One" Best Practice was subsequently carried out, and Focus Group discussions were organised involving again groups of teachers, psychotherapists and counsellors, with a view to better identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the BP to be transferred and understanding what to improve and change in the Handbook and Theme Guides.<sup>4</sup>

The EURIALO Partners wish that the Handbook and the 9 Theme Guides will contribute to reduce discrimination by helping teachers and psycho/social/healthcare workers to deal with LGBT-related issues professionally.

The Handbook, which condenses the knowledge and experience of many experts, is a tool which will help the target group to perceive more clearly the crucial points involved in the fear of the "other", and will help them prevent or react to discrimination. A fundamental part of this process is, of course, that the young people as well as the adults involved in it should be willing to meditate on their own attitudes. The advice and methods included in this Handbook and in the Theme Guides will give them many opportunities to do so.



3 For more information on the need assessment activities carried out in the Partner Countries, please see the Need Assessment Report at www.eurialo.eu

4 The Report on the SWOT Analysis Focus Group results is available at www.eurialo.eu

# **HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK**

Crossing Diversity includes a Handbook – which consists of a short theoretical analysis of discrimination based on sexual orientation and ethnicity plus an Appendix with 7 enclosures (glossary, addresses, web-site addresses, references, LGBT rights in Europe, a list of LGBT-related films, and a list of songs) - and 9 Theme Guides providing detailed information on sexual orientation.

Each Theme Guide contains paragraphs entitled "Education", which are specifically designed for teachers, and "Counselling", which are specifically geared to psycho/social/healthcare professionals.

This approach corresponds to the present debate of educators and counsellors on whether their chief fields for action are school education or youth welfare. These two professions have different competences. For instance, a counsellor will undoubtedly be more competent in providing long-term individual support, whereas educators/teachers seem to be better equipped to place the issue or problem in question in the context of the group norms and processes and to tackle it through active discussion/ educational work where, however, these two approaches overlap. The approach of the Handbook and Theme Guides reflects the existing distinction between teaching and counselling, but allows overlapping the two contexts that, apart from the (individual/group) methods, share the same aim, namely allowing the person to get in touch with his/her inner world and emotions, in order to facilitate the self-awareness process and people's awareness of their relations to others.

## The Theme Guides

The Theme Guides aim at helping the reader to better explore an unknown (or not well known) subject. The various topics are presented in a specific order. It is however up to the reader to decide where he/she wishes to start. Users who read the Handbook and Theme Guides systematically from the beginning to end will note that some information is repeated several times, as the theme guides have been designed to be used individually.

#### **Story Telling**

Stories play an important role in our lives. From early childhood on, we all enjoy stories or fairy tales. In plays, in movies, in the newspaper gossip columns... almost everywhere, stories are told about people's lives, fortunes and misfortunes. Perhaps, we all like stories so much because they touch us in a very personal and intimate way. Children suddenly become silent and interested when the teacher starts telling a story. Intuitively, it seems, they hope to learn the answers to their essential questions such as "Where do I come from? Where will I go? And what am I supposed to do?" Listening to stories stimulates our imagination. Sometimes, we suffer together with the protagonists as if we personally experienced their feelings.

Crossing Diversity intends to use this empathic effect of the stories to help readers get more deeply involved with the topics tackled. Discrimination is not jus a word but, rather, an everyday experience for many people. At times, we cannot imagine what people are going through, what they feel or what dream of. This is no longer the case, however, if we have the chance to meet and connect with other people and look at the world through their eyes. We feel what they feel, and we can more easily understand their problems. One result of using stories and relating personally to them may be that we become more engaged in supporting those who are discriminated against and who are asking for respect and equality. This is the purpose of the stories presented in this Handbook.

If you are a teacher, an educator or a psycho/social/healthcare worker, you can use some of the stories as a starting point for discussion on the different forms of discrimination and their effects on people. It is the easiest way to talk (directly or indirectly) about someone's hidden fears, which might be the reason why that person discriminates others. Fighting against discrimination is not just empathizing with victims, it also means coping with one's own fears of being different from what our society's norms prescribe, being excluded or harmed. This is not an easy task. And, at times, we happen to learn how to acknowledge and show respect for other people's differences!

#### "Introduction"

In the "Introduction" sections, the reader acquires basic information related to the main theme of that chapter. Moreover, the problems one could be confronted with when tackling a given topic at school or in a psychology-related activity are analysed.

Sub-paragraphs aim at widening the reader's approach, by presenting different ways to deal with the problems relating to the topic under consideration. The The Theme Guides describe a variety of strategies that can be used in the reader's professional (and, perhaps, also private) life.

#### "Bear in Mind"

The work of teachers, educators and psycho/social/healthcare workers is strongly influenced by their personal views, experiences and values. Therefore, it is useful for you as a professional to first take a look at your own opinions and values before addressing your target group. Being aware of your personal attitude vis-à-vis relationships, religion, sexuality, lifestyles, culture, etc. and how your points of view have evolved, is crucial for respecting the attitudes and experiences of your students or of the people you are couselling. The questions proposed under the "Bear in Mind" paragraph should help you explore your own views.

However, you have to be careful not to project your own experiences on others. Dealing with the experiences or problems of others may awaken memories of your own feelings in similar situations. Such memories can influence teaching or psychology-related activities in an unconscious yet powerful way.

#### "Tools..."

#### ... in Education

The Theme Guides include a set of exercises that can be used by teachers in their everyday work. Each exercise is presented according to a standard pattern. First, the "Aim" of the method is presented in brief, simple terms. Then the "Method" is described – here one can understand how the exercise can be carried out. Last, a "Please note" commentary is provided. This section aims at calling the reader's attention to crucial aspects of a particular tool or complicated elements they should be aware of while carrying out the exercise.

Before using the tools in this Handbook, we would like to draw your attention to the following remarks:

- Don't spend only one meeting on a highly personal subject like sexual orientation, but rather try to spread the discussion over several sessions. Young people need time to digest new information and they should be given the opportunity to ask questions during the next meeting. You may want to work together with your colleagues on developing a series of sessions on love and sexuality. Try also to include and not to separate the topic of homosexuality from (hetero)sexuality. If you talk about love and partnership in general, you can also mention examples of same-sex love.
  - Work on the teenagers' own direct experiences with migrants and/or LGBT persons. What do they know about these topics? What are their experiences with migrants and/or LGBT persons in their families/surroundings?
  - Don't underestimate the knowledge of children or teenagers. Even the younger ones can have an unlimited access to TV, films, and Internet and are exposed to the stereotypes they convey. Children build myths to explain to themselves and to others their knowledge gaps. As a result, their knowledge of "differences" is incomplete. Try to help them to organize their fragmentary knowledge and provide them with new and balanced information. Naive

prejudices such as the belief that one can become gay or lesbian just through mutual masturbation or because one has touched people of the same sex are still strong and may cause irrational and intense fears.

- Consider inviting gay and/or lesbian people to take part in a discussion as experts.
- In some countries, volunteer (peer) projects are implemented to educate students on the topic of same-sex partnerships and lifestyles.

Contact addresses can be found in the Appendix.

#### "Tools ..."

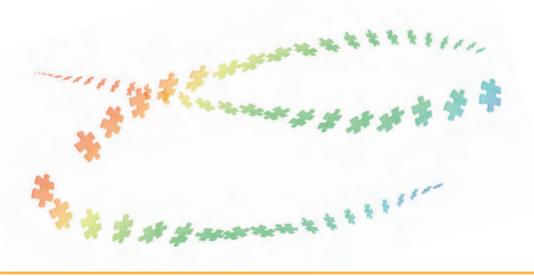
... in Psycho/Social/Healthcare Work

In this section, we offer a few suggestions to help readers address some specific issues concerning migrants and/or LGBT persons. Although there are many different schools of thought and different psychological support approaches, one common element is the importance of the relationship between the counsellor and the person being counselled. In order to have an effective relationship, free from personal prejudice, a psycho/social/healthcare worker should have spent some time thinking over his/her own views on homosexuality. They should ask themselves questions in order to become aware of their own point of view and thus avoid conveying negative messages, in particular through nonverbal behaviour.

Prejudice and stereotypes can be difficult to recognize, even in contexts where homosexuality is no longer seen as a disease or a deviant behaviour. Psycho/social/healthcare workers should be aware of the following issues (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- do not automatically attribute a user's problems to his/her homosexual orientation.
- recognize that a user's emotional disorders can be influenced by his/her own internalised homophobia.
- be aware of possible consequences when a LGBT person reveals his/her sexual orientation to others, including parents, employers, etc.
- be aware of the effects of prejudice and discrimination on the daily lives of migrants and LGBT persons.
- recognise the possible effects of the multiple social stigmas affecting LGBTs who belong to ethnic minorities. These individuals may face discrimination based on ethnicity, as well as sexual orientation.

Another aspect to be considered is the different culturally-accepted definitions of adolescence – what it is, when it starts, etc. When a young person of a different ethnic origin migrates to a Western country, a psycho/social/healthcare operator should take into account the expectations his/her culture and background have developed for young people of his/her gender and age group.



# BASICS

#### **Sexual Identity and Orientation**

Sexual features and behaviours have different meanings in the various cultures and nations on Earth.

Sexuality is an essential and complex aspect of a person's life, in that it concerns the growth of an individual and involves his/her whole relational life. As a matter of fact, besides being a source of pleasure for one's partner, it allows experiencing "intimacy" with the other, which gives us access to a special and fulfilling kind of communication.

Moreover, sexuality plays an important role in the building of personality in that, by experiencing sexuality, gender identity is reciprocally confirmed. It is also crucial also to the social evolution of an individual, as it involves affectivity, emotions, and relations. Last, it can enrich our lives on various levels and it is an important driver for reproduction. For instance, a sexual relationship can result in conceiving a child, or may also lead to other forms of creation (e.g. a house, a book, or another common project). These four functions of sexuality can be identified in relationships between two women, two men or a man and a woman.

Along with age, ethnic origin or social status, gender and sexuality are part of a multitude of aspects making up the identity of a person. Sexual identity is part of the basic understanding that a person has of her/himself as a sexual being – how he/she perceives her/himself and how he/she wants to be perceived by others.

The existential phenomenological thinking considers identity as a contingent intersection of the inner world with the external one, that is, a fluid form that varies over time, depending on needs and resources.

The person is seen in a present immersed in the stream of time, that is, coming from past and oriented towards the future, where the stream is guided by micro and macro choices, which are constantly made by the organism.

Hence, meditating on identity does not bring to any absolute truth, to any unchanging way of being over time. It rather shows a narrative reality, that is, how a person talks about him/herself to others, here and now. In this perspective, identity can be seen as one person's biography, and a biography varies each time it is narrated, even if the narrators is always the same.

Sexual identity – considered from a bio-psycho-social perspective – is a multidimensional construct, consisting of four components, including:

- a) biological sex
- b) gender identity
- c) gender or sexual role
- d) sexual orientation

Biological sex is determined by sex chromosomes, and defines whether one person is a man or a woman. In one or two out of 2000 births, the person's biological sex might not be clearly defined at birth. In such cases, we talk about "intersexuality". Gender identity refers to a person's inner conviction of belonging to the male or female genders. This primary identification occurs and is defined during the first years of one's life. Such process, through which one perceives oneself as a woman or a man, is influenced by both one's biological features and social "learning".

A person might also perceive herself/himself as belonging to both genders at the same time.

For instance, some people defined as "transgender" people don't regard themselves as being part of one sex. They should not be confused with transsexual people, who feel that their bodies do not have the right gender, but feel rather free to shift from attitudes and behaviours that their culture attributes to men, to behaviours and attitudes attributed to women. Transsexuality is a different condition, where a person feels he/she was born in the "wrong body" and, sometimes, people undergo surgeries allowing adjusting as much as possible their anatomical features to their gender identity.

Gender role is the set of expectations of a given culture vis-à-vis male and female behaviours. Hence, each behaviour is gender-typified (what is "male" and what is "female"), and cultures and society define the suitability criteria for a person's look (the way he/she behaves, his/her hair style, etc.), body language, and behaviours.

The past experiences of a person showing attitudes and behaviours that do not match said stereotypes can vary, depending on one's culture and society. Adjustment to one's gender role usually occurs between three and seven years of age.

Discrimination against women almost always concerns gender identity, not sexual identity as such.

Sexual orientation is defined as sexual, emotional, and sentimental attraction of a person for another one. This attraction may be directed towards women, men or both genders. Ad one may see, the definition itself includes two aspects, namely the affective and the erotic ones, which in some cases might not match. As a matter of fact, a person might mainly fall in love with people of the same gender, meanwhile being more erotically attracted by people of the opposite gender.

As it was explained above when dealing with the concept of identity, the aforementioned concepts are not static, as they can evolve and change throughout history and cultures, depending on how sexuality-related meanings are "organised" at different times and in different contexts. For instance, at every moment in history there have been women who have fallen in love with women and had sex with them, as well as men who have fallen in love with men and had sex with them. But they didn't necessarily identify as "lesbian" or "gay", because these concepts are relatively new.

Classifying people according to their sexual partners into hetero-, homo- and bisexuals is a cultural circumstance, also influenced by historical and cultural aspects. In this perspective, it becomes difficult to exactly define who is hetero-, homo- or bisexual. If a woman marries a man after having had a 12-year relationship with another woman, does she suddenly become heterosexual? Should a married man who regularly engaged in mutual masturbation with a friend when they were teenagers declare himself bisexual? Sexuality is much more than "just" sexual intercourse or having an orgasm. Human desire is very complex: every person has his/her own ideas of love and sex (which are strongly linked to our cultural background and education). Sexual fantasies can differ significantly from real sexual activities, one's personal opinion on such activities, and to what extent someone identifies with them. What is respectively considered by society as "straight", "bi", "lesbian" or "gay" varies from one individual to another and, in principle, can not be standardised.

The "homo-heterosexuality" dichotomy dates back to 1860s, and was partially used to justify why same-sex behaviour was not considered as good as sex with a partner from the opposite sex.

The fact that there existed a word to mark a difference in sexual behaviour, also made it possible to establish the norm of heterosexuality, which could then develop a more significant impact on individual behaviour than before. A new individual, "the homosexual", was born. Highlighting such "diversity" became an important expedient to exercise a form of power on individuals. Since the the late 20th century, there have been several movements in different Western countries fighting for equal rights for lesbian, bisexual and gay people. Today, the way homosexuality is valued in some cultures and societies has changed in a positive way. In some countries, lesbians and gays enjoy nearly the same rights as heterosexuals, but even there many people still socially discriminate them (see The May 2011 Rainbow Europe Map enclosed).

Recent studies on sexuality suggest that, although most people have at least some erotic thoughts or fantasies about both genders, only a minority actually dares to act on these desires. Today's western cultures and societies force us to define ourselves either as hetero- or homosexuals, and in this context bisexuality is not always seen as an category in its own right. One reason for this is that many people find it extremely difficult to have an "in-between" identity. Another reason is that, in different cultural and social contexts, homosexual contacts are still scorned by many people and therefore cause fear, especially among teenagers who do not yet feel secure with their own sexual orientation.

Just like sexual identity, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnicity is composed of a multitude of aspects. Current understanding of the individual's identity is not that of a unchanged entity from childhood on but, rather, that of an early biographical concept that can change over time, although there may be aspects that remain the same. Building up an identity is not only an individual accomplishment. We all use more or less traditional examples and role patterns to find guidance form an identity that will fit us. Identities are like mosaic, as they consist of various factors.

It is therefore not possible to talk of an essence of for instance Belgians, Muslims, workers or lesbians, because the way a person acts is not only determined by one factor only but, rather, by multiple aspects at the same time. The concept of "culture" is also not seen as a static, homogenous, hermetic and closed system anymore, and there are also indications that sexual orientation is more flexible than many of us might think.

## What is Discrimination?

Homonegativity – or, rather, internalised negativity vis-à-vis LGBT persons (which is usually defined as internalised homophobia) – can lead to social and legal discrimination. Legal discrimination is the unequal treatment of homosexuals and heterosexuals (like the non-legitimisation of same-sex couples) in international agreements, national or local laws. Social discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of people by institutions, companies, the media or other individuals.

**Sexual Orientation vs. Other Discrimination Grounds** By discrimination we mean that a person or a group of persons is treated differently than others. Discriminated people bear a so-called "stigma". People who display this mark or attribute are treated differently because society feels they are not worthy of the same rights or respect as others. Such "stigmas" are for example gender, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability. Sexual orientation and religion are not visible per se. A person who feels attracted to the same sex has to show this to make the "stigma" visible. It follows that homosexuals can avoid being

discriminated against by hiding their feelings. This makes discrimination based on sexual orientation different from other grounds of discrimination such as ethnic origin, which cannot always be hidden to others because of skin colour, language or other features.

Negative social attitudes against visible homosexuality result in concealment of homosexuality, especially in everyday life. Many lesbians, bisexuals and gay men try to avoid negative reactions by behaving according to heterosexist expectations or, in other words, by pretending to be heterosexual. This is called 'passing' or 'acting straight'. Heterosexuals add to this by maintaining silence concerning sexual orientation or even by maintaining a full taboo on discussing it. Lesbians and gays often don't dare to talk about their partner or to show openly their partnership by holding each other's hands in public areas because they are afraid of negative reactions. Such reactions could lead in the worst cases to losing their job or losing a good contact to their family. Experiencing this with such a fear for a long time can burden a relationship and even be fatal to it.

Moreover, this and other similar fears produce continuous stress, which can harm the heath of the people involved (*minority stress*, see **Map 4**).

Just like lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, migrants also have to fight against prejudice, because in the views of the majority they do not comply with norms, conventions or rules. Wrong and excessively widespread prejudice lead people to think that lesbians and gays are incapable of having long-term relationships, that they are sex-oriented and incapable of looking after children. Ethnic groups are often portrayed as mainly consisting of criminals, or as only interested in the benefits available in their host societies. Such stereotypes can have negative consequences for the members of both groups (ethnic minority or homosexual community), in terms of work or if they want to establish social contacts with others. As to people belonging to ethnic minorities, reasons for discriminations are mainly related to their culture (eating habits...) or clothing (headscarf...). Concerning lesbians and gays, reason for discrimination are related to their non-conformity in choosing their partners. Migrants who love persons of the same sex and/or have sex with them often suffer from multiple discrimination. In fact, on the one hand, many of them are targeted by prejudice as they are gays, lesbians or bisexuals and, on the other hand, their families do not support their choices the way they should because they think that homosexuality is not reconcilable with their tradition, culture, or religion.

# How Does Discrimination Work?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to explain some concepts and terms which are essential to understand how discrimination works. However, this Handbookr focuses on the psycho-social aspects of discrimination.

## Racism

Racism can be considered as a psychological and/or political attitude that – on the grounds of the alleged superiority of any race (more frequently the Caucasian descent) on others – favours or entails social discriminations and controls social mobility mechanisms to the advantage of the majority. Racist theories place emphasis on some differences (such as skin colour, ethnicity or nationality) to ideologically justify and enforce decisions entailing changes in the living conditions of the populations concerned.

The 1965 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>5</sup> states very clearly that discriminating human beings on the ground of race, colour or ethnic origin is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is questionable, however, whether one could define the members of minority groups showing hostility vis-à-vis the member of any majority as "racist", because their attitude does not entail the same consequences in terms of privilege and power acquisition.

The following paragraphs will show that gays and lesbians are in a relatively similar relationship/position vis-à-vis the "mainstream culture".

# Homophobia and Homonegativity

Homophobia is often defined as fear, aversion, intolerance, and hatred of homosexuality and homosexuals. Researchers define it as an intense, irrational apprehension because there are no objective reasons to fear lesbians, gays or their lifestyles. These prejudiced feelings fuel myths, stereotypes, discrimination and violence against homo- or bisexual people. Lesbians, gays, and bisexual people have grown up in a homophobic society; therefore, they are likely to internalise these negative stereotypes that have a strong impact on their self-esteem. This is described as "internalised homophobia".

Some critics have observed that the word "homophobia" can be tricky. Firstly,

5 Date of adoption December 12th, 1965

people suffering from a phobia in a clinical sense (e.g., claustrophobia, agoraphobia) try to avoid the objects of their fear. As a matter of fact, homophobic people are disproportionately worried of homosexuality, and try to fight against it. However, they do not show the physiological reactions to homosexuality that are typical of other phobias. On the contrary, homophobes are sometimes excessively frightened by homosexuality and try to actively combat it.

Second, the word homophobia implies considering anti-lesbian and antigay prejudice as a clinical entity, which is not the case at all (and the same applies to racism). Homophobia is rather a social phenomenon rooted in cultural ideologies and inter-group relations.

Since the discrimination of lesbians, gay and bisexual people does not take the clinical form of a "phobia", nowadays social scientists often prefer to use the expressions "homo-negativity" or "sexual prejudice", which refer to the whole range of negative feelings, attitudes and behaviours vis-à-vis homosexuals that are culturally transmitted from generation to generation. However, most people still prefer the word "homophobia", and use it as a synonym of "homo-negativity". In Crossing Diversity, we will use the word "homophobia" with the same meaning.

#### Heteronormativity

This paragraph deals with values and norms; the two are analytically distinguishable, but in fact they form an intertwined framework of ideas on how people should behave. With respect to 'sexual feelings', most people expect everyone to be heterosexual. With reference to 'gender', most people expect that everyone is either a "man" or "woman" and behaves or set gender role patterns raises doubts, often creates feelings of insecurity, and may lead to negative and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, as transgender people can explain.

Most people will implicitly rank 'male' features higher than 'female' features, and men who show 'female' traits are thus regarded "as" women and despised in many societies for voluntarily giving up their powerful position. Lesbians are often seen as negligible and suffer from double discrimination – as women and as homosexual people. These examples should give an idea of the existing link between heterosexism, discrimination of lesbians, gays and bisexuals, and sexism and show how social norms and values contribute to influence the behaviour of any individual through social exclusion and discrimination.

Heterosexuals also suffer from the disadvantages brought about by heterosexism. They are also reduced to typical role models. This can lead to conflicts when discussing task and role sharing in a partnership (e.g. concerning domestic chores and earning money). Passively conforming to a norm causes pressure and prevents people from fully developing their critical thinking capacities and personalities. Men in particular might have problems in establishing close friendships with other men, and avoid body contact with them in order not be seen as "sissified" or "gay".

Concerning romantic relationships, most people think that everybody wishes to have a long-lasting, monogamous relationship, a family and, in some cases, they believe that sex is only meant for reproduction purposes. Many people fear behaviours or ideas that differ too much from those of their own community. They will denounce and reprimand those attitudes that, in their opinion, go 'too far'. Therefore, some people influenced by the above ideas, strive to keep their supposedly 'deviant' behaviour as invisible as possible.

Now the link between heterosexism and homophobia is obvious. Homophobia is also part of a social and ideological perspective, which promotes specific forms of role behaviour and relationships, as well as norms for relationships and social organisation. This framework is also called "the norm of heterosexuality" because the prescriptive norm proposes the traditional heterosexual relationship as the only viable lifestyle. People feel the need for inner consistence and being socially accepted. One important factor leading to intolerance may be that people feel unsure whether they are able to maintain a socially acceptable identity and status. This insecurity may lead to holding too tenaciously to rigid concepts of identity and related norms. To reassure themselves and others that their identity is of the highest value, people may "punish" others who do not conform and project all kinds of discreditable behaviour and characteristics on to them. Many current ethnic tensions may also be attributed to this process.

# Forms of Homophobia

Negative or discriminatory behaviour comes in a range of gradations:

- Social marginalisation
- Denial of rights
- Bullying
- Threatening behaviour
- Violence

Social distance and bullying are the most common forms of discrimination homosexuals experience in their everyday lives. Violence is of course the most severe form. Sometimes, people are insulted or even physically attacked, their property destroyed and their organisations, institutions and meeting places are damaged.

# A Vicious Circle Strengthening Homophobia and Racism

Discrimination can be viewed as a vicious circle of events. If a person is different from what is usually considered as being "normal", this raises doubts in other people and might make them feel uncertain or even scared. This first primary emotion may lead to a negative attitude, which in turn may lead to negative behaviour. Many gay, lesbian and bisexual people try to avoid such discrimination by "passing"/"acting straight" or pretending to be heterosexual. This way they become "invisible" as homosexuals, and only gay men and lesbian women who do not hide are visible. Of course, their way of being is then applied and generalised to the whole LGBT community. Forced 'passing' behaviour thus leads to selective images of homosexuality. This fosters the general perception of all homosexuals as "small deviant minorities", which links to the negative emotions that start off the vicious cycle. As these images are perceived to be more and more deviant, they entail increasing fear and resentment. As a result, the chances that negative attitudes and behaviour might follow also increase. Therefore, the psycho-social process of discrimination can be viewed as a self-strengthening vicious circle. Discrimination based on ethnicity can also be explained through this theoretical framework.

# **Flexible Identities**

When intolerance is rooted in the act of holding on to rigid concepts of identity and related norms, then an effective counter-measure would be to support the creation and development of "flexible" identities. People with "flexible" identities, as opposed to those with "rigid" ones, are more flexible in terms of changing their behaviours and lifestyles in response to new needs and circumstances. Such people feel safe because they know their self-esteem and their happiness does not depend on the norms of others or on stereotyped behaviours. Changing circumstances are interesting to them and do not necessarily pose any threat.

In order for more flexible identities to exist, safe conditions must be created. This requires an explicit definition of how people want to deal with each other, with differences and diversity, with things that may be frightening, and what they need in order to feel safe.

The best place to do all of this is at school, as when one is young and is in an authoritative context one can learn how to enhance and accept people's differences.

# How to Fight against Discrimination Main Goals

First, it is important to define which results you want to obtain. Generally speaking, it is possible set two objectives in education and psychological support on homosexuality targeting teenagers and adolescents. The first one could simply consist in reducing discrimination among young people. The second goal mainly target teenagers – who belong to the overall target group – who are attracted by people of the same sex. Here, a specific aim would consist in helping them to accept their feelings, and give those feelings a place in their lives in a way that fits these people's social and personal situations.

These are very general aims and it is difficult to measure whether or to what extent they have been attained. Consider the following questions: If we say that one aim is to increase self-acceptance, what does this exactly mean? Does it mean that teenagers should be more open about their own feelings and those of others? Does this concern tolerance and acceptance of "normal" homosexuals or does it include respect for all types of gay and lesbian lifestyles? Similarly, when stating that the aim is "less discrimination", which specific discriminatory attitudes or behaviours are we referring to?

Do we expect teenagers to stop offending gays and lesbians? Do we expect them to know and understand why today, in many Countries throughout the world, gays and lesbian can get married?

These goals are quite varied, and some of them cannot be fully reached in school contexts.

#### General Strategies for Improvement

The actual battle against intolerance should be fought on all levels of the vicious circle described above. However, in Crossing Diversity, we focus on what you can do in your classroom or psychological support sessions.

- Debating alternatives to heterosexist social norms so as to question social norms, seeing when they are dysfunctional, and correcting stereotypes is a good starting point.
- It is possible to learn how to cope with "negative" emotions resulting from contacts with other people, especially if they are acknowledged in each experience and one learns how to give them all a name, such as fear and anger. It is often very difficult for members of unprivileged groups to keep in touch with their emotions and give them a name, as they might have the feeling of being confronted with an "enemy". Asking them to understand the fears and anger of intolerant people is, therefore, not easy at all.
- For group and mediation work, it is particularly useful to focus on the possible broadening of one's viewpoint. This can be done by making people think over the origin and validity of their ideas, and favouring their meditation on their usefulness for themselves and society.
- In settings where actual behaviour can be controlled, focusing directly on behaviour change (for example by setting ground rules and correcting negative behaviour) may be an option.

It is important to realise that teenagers cannot immediately go from homophobic behaviour to tolerance or even acceptance. Homophobia and heteronormativity are not massive "entities" that can be changed all at once. Rather, they are frameworks encompassing a range of values and norms relating to several spheres. Depending on the group or individual, one issue (like sexuality) may be a particularly relevant problem, while another may play a less important role. It is important for professionals to learn how to look analytically at themselves and at their students or users, in order to recognise any possible area of problems and the phases each individual and group is going through. Educators in particular, but also psycho/social/healthcare operators should set intermediate objectives and support the personal development of their students or clients step by step. For instance, in a group showing considerable resistance against any information about homosexuality, it is unrealistic to expect any attitude change. In such an event, focus should be first and foremost on raising people's awareness of the topic before expecting real involvement from the teenagers. In a group where teenagers show tolerance and have already made up their opinions in class discussions, it might be impossible to turn such tolerance into action, and one might suddenly be confronted with resistance. That might happen because some young people are merely following a social norm when expressing "tolerance", while their own views have not been "worked through" yet. If this is the case, you should spend some time first on "appreciating" the tolerant attitude the teenagers want to express (for example by discussing which concrete examples of homosexuality you do or don't accept) and then put this level of tolerance or acceptance into personal context (for instance, when a pupil states that he/she can understand monogamous homosexual relationships, but not promiscuity, because he/she wants a monogamous relationship).

#### **Dealing with Prejudice**

Above all, it is important to tell the truth. It is tempting to "correct" stereotypical images about homosexuality and bisexuality by trying to deny them. "No, homosexuals do not like to provoke others!" Such a statement does not work, especially when teenagers actually have seen homosexual and bisexual people by whom they have felt "provoked". Although stereotypes are exaggerations, they usually contain a grain of truth. For instance, some homosexuals make jokes about rigid heterosexual behaviour or mimic exaggerated homosexual behaviour, which they do mainly because they feel intimidated by those types of attitudes and want to make them less threatening.

This is a form of self-defence, like minority humour often is, but can also be read as a provocation, even though there is a reason behind it and is expressed within an appropriate context. That is why it is strategically advisable to explore the background of such phenomena instead of simply denying the contents of prejudice. This means that educators and psycho/social/healthcare operators need to have sufficient information about gay, bisexual and lesbian lifestyles. If some straight teenagers feel provoked by homosexuals, this must be taken into account. However, the reason for feeling provoked is linked to heterosexual norms, which are usually rigid, and not necessarily to the "fact" that one gay or lesbian person intends to provoke someone. Even when a homosexual person tries to make a pass at a heterosexual person (we are not referring to sexual harassment here), heterosexuals can learn to refuse such advances without feeling provoked in their sexual identity or orientation. Just as homosexual people has to do when getting advances from heterosexual people.

#### **Dealing with Negative Behaviours**

It is also important to accept that everyone has emotions and personal opinions on the topics of homosexuality and sexuality in general. Educators and psycho/social/healthcare operators should learn how to recognise and name them, first in themselves and then in others, especially when such opinions are negative. This can only be done by giving young people the space they need and taking a lot of time to explore personal feelings. It is better not to under/overestimate or deny discriminatory/negative comments, but rather see them as potential topics for discussion, using them to explore means of developing new and more respectful behaviour. This implies that educators and psycho/social/healthcare operators should be able to build up a relationship of trust with the teens.

#### Dealing with Your Own Emotions

Educators and psycho/social/healthcare operators should be aware of the fact that their own feelings and opinions on homosexuality, bisexuality and heteronormativity influence their teaching or counselling. Moreover, it would be useful to work together with colleagues, so to make them informed and aware too. Probably, It is difficult for heterosexuals to understand what it means to be gay. One might try to be "tolerant" but, at the same time, feel "uncomfortable" when imaging sexual acts between two people of the same sex.

If you feel insecure about your experience with the subject of homosexuality, you better try and explore it more thoroughly and share such feelings, instead of denying or hiding them.

#### Dealing with Different Groups

Different groups react differently in discussions about homosexuality. An individual's age, level of education, local environment, and cultural and/or ethnic background all contribute to determining what he/she feels and how he/she forms his/her opinions. For some, the fear of not being accepted may be important as well. For others, a religious conviction will have a lot of influence. Effective psychological support or education should take these influences into account. Although most teenagers in Europe have quite heteronormative ideas, the background and origin of these ideas differ and need to be explored. Moreover, focus should be placed on young people who belong to different ethnic and religious groups, who are significantly present in today's schools.

One way to do this in either a group or individual situation is to start a class or psychological support session with an association exercise about homosexuality. Such an exercise cuts two ways. It gives the teenagers an opportunity to voice their opinions and air their emotions, while giving the educator or psycho/social/healthcare operator a quick overview of the group "map" of emotions, attitudes, and questions concerning sexual preferences, gender issues, and sexuality.

#### **Dealing with Cultural Differences**

To overcome the reluctance of teenagers to discuss, a comprehensive/holistic approach is beneficial if the educator or psycho/social/healthcare operator is able to create an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. A crucial point is starting by allowing them enough space for discussion on their expectations, fears and sorrow. They absolutely need to be able to express their stereotypes and prejudice without fearing the consequences. When dealing with different cultures, it is also important for educators and psycho/social/healthcare operators to know what the living conditions of their pupils or people are like, and explore them together so that teenagers feel taken seriously and accepted.

It might also be helpful to develop a school manifesto or common declaration stating the values of mutual respect and banning discrimination. In this context it should be explicitly mentioned that no one has the right to discriminate against a person because of her/his gender, ethnic origin, age, disability or sexual orientation.

Such a declaration should be drawn up together with all the people concerned, especially the teenagers.

# Recommendations for Intercultural Dialogue

(quoted from Georg Auernheimer, Einführung in die Interkulturelle Pädagogik, 2003)

- Do not take a defensive or missionary position. Get rid of your distrust.
- Separate the person from the "issue". This means you should not make the respect you have for your conversation partner depend on your opinion on her/his different system of norms or perception of the world.
- Do not use an inappropriate standard of value. Don't compare the ideals of your own culture with the different social reality of others.
- Do not fight wars of belief but, rather, try to find a solution for each situation or life area! If necessary, go for a third way.
- Take into account that the person in front of you may have experienced discrimination.
- Take into consideration the functionality that many traditional models have (had) for the reproduction of society.

Accept the struggle for a cultural identity, but defend the rights of the individual.

# Strategies to Manage Heterosexism and Homophobia in School and, in General, when Dealing with the Youth

(partially quoted from Project 10 handbook, Friends of Project 10, Los Angeles 1989)

- Include lesbian and LGBT issues in your curriculum by discussing these topics when appropriate, as they apply to specific courses.
- Include LGBT issues in you lesson plans and syllabus as possible discussion topics for the class.
- Include readings which address lesbian and gay issues on required and recommended reading lists.
- Include LGBT issues on a list of possible and required topics for written assignments or class presentations.
- Implement lesson plans to address the issue of homophobic name-calling.
- Develop or obtain specific lesson plans concerning homophobia and heterosexism to implement in your classes.
- Encourage all students to think about, write about and discuss the ways in which homophobia has impacted their lives.
- Learn about LGBT authors who have given significant contributions. Acknowledge their sexual orientation as it relates to their contributions which you are discussing in class, e.g. Jane Adams, James Baldwin, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman and many others.
- Invite LGBT persons or their parents as guest speakers, when appropriate.
- Be familiar with local gay and lesbian resources and curricular materials like social or political organisations, health care agencies, counselling services, youth groups, readings and film materials and use them in your class.
- Use non-gender specific language like "partner", "lover", "person" consistently whenever discussions about relationships or partner-choice situations arise.
- Stop any homophobic comment by staff and students. State that attacks and derogatory jokes, behaviour or other actions against anyone because of perceived difference on the basis of sexual orientation is unfair, offensive and harmful.
- Prominently display leaflets and resource guides for LGBT communities in and around counsellors' offices and schools.
- Encourage comprehensive professional staff development and training regarding heterosexism and homophobia.







EURIALO - Learning and guidance tools against discrimination: respect for all different sexual choices and cultural identities





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