



Strengthening LGBTQI+'s Voice in Politics Policy Report

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WP2_D2.8_Policy Report



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1. Introduction

The United Nations' Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (United Nations, N.D.) and the EU Strategy on Gender Equality (European Commission, 2020) stress the need for investing in LGBTQI+'s¹ right to political participation as an essential step to achieve social, economic and political inclusion for all and subsequently global gender equality, human rights and sustainable democratic governance. The project 'VoiceIt: Strengthening LGBTQI+'s Voice in Politics' aims to contribute to the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in political decision-making processes in Greece, Cyprus and Italy, by creating a shared vision regarding LGBTQI+ inclusion in politics; increasing LGBTQI+ people's participation in political decision-making; strengthening national/international networks for LGBTQI+ individuals interested in participating in such processes; raising the awareness of stakeholders and the public about misconceptions regarding LGBTQI+ rights, experiences of discrimination and the importance of including minorities in political decision making processes; and by creating an action plan for policy change for an LGBTQI+ inclusive society.

Even though the levels of acceptance of LGBTQI+ people might have increased in recent years, discrimination, harassment, violence and hate crimes are still prevalent. As depicted in the first EU survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on the perceptions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons (2014), 47% of the total 93,079 participants felt discriminated against or harassed because of their sexual orientation during the 12 months preceding the survey. The FRA survey conducted in 2019, revealed that the numbers have decreased, as 38% of participants reported having been harassed due to their LGBTQI+ identity during the year preceding the survey. Results indicated that trans people²

¹ LGBTQI+: A common abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and other identities not included in the acronym (+).

² Trans: Is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. It may include, but is not limited to: people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, gender non-conforming, or with any other gender identity and/or expression which does not meet the societal and cultural expectations placed on gender identity.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_t



(48%) are more affected by such behaviours, followed by intersex people³ (42%) and lesbian women⁴ (41%).

As presented in the FRA survey (2016) on the views of public officials for LGBTQI+ equality, negative views are publicly expressed by public servants as well. Many indicated that such public attitudes of intolerance and an unfavourable political climate, expressed by their colleagues, undermine their work towards equality for LGBTQI+ people. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA, 2017) has expressed that *'democracy is dependent on the participation and representation of all citizens in democratic institutions and processes'*; *'every citizen, regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group, culture and ethnic or religious background, should have an equal right and opportunity to engage with and contribute to the functioning of these institutions and processes'*.

The research conducted in the context of the VoiceIt project constitutes the basis of transnational cooperation amongst the participating countries and the development of national action plans to promote the needs and rights of LGBTQI+ people, as identified by key stakeholders. Furthermore, an LGBTQI+ Rights Information and Empowerment Programme will be developed, aiming to empower civil society, state/government officials and political party representatives with knowledge about gaps in the perception of the national situation of LGBTQI+ rights in each partner country, the experience and perceptions of LGBTQI+ individuals regarding the situation, and the importance of including the community in the political discourse, as well as to enrich the discussion on human rights, equality and priorities.

The aim of the present report is to provide insights on the national situations, as depicted by the VoiceIt research results, and the existing legal frameworks of LGBTQI+ rights in Greece, Cyprus and Italy. Based on the

³ Intersex: A term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical ideals of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_i

⁴ Lesbian: A woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_l



findings of the research it also introduces recommendations for EU and national policy reform. The involvement of LGBTQI+ people, government officials, representatives of political institutions and the general public allows a more cohesive mapping of the national situations, while their inputs inform the recommendations on policy reform, providing different views and perspectives.



2. Methodology

Desk and quantitative research was conducted in Greece, Cyprus and Italy to map the current situation of LGBTQI+ rights, the obstacles and frequency of different forms of discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people, as well as the needs for policy reform. Former research was studied to provide insight into the European and national contexts around LGBTQI+ rights, the existing legal framework and the perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights, as expressed by the LGBTQI+ community, government officials, representatives of political institutions and the general public. In addition, desk research examined existing information on discriminatory behaviours against the LGBTQI+ community, obstacles faced by LGBTQI+ individuals with minority ethnic and cultural background, as well as the forms of LGBTQI+'s participation in politics and the potential needs for policy reform, as expressed by the four target groups.

An online survey, designed for this project, researched the perceptions and experiences of the four target groups on the above-mentioned topics, as well as discrepancies in the perceptions between the groups. KMOP - Social Action and Innovation Centre, as WP leader, developed the questionnaire with the contribution of all partners, which included closed and open-ended questions, informed by former research and available tools. The data was collected through LimeSurvey, an online tool ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, as the IP addresses of respondents are protected and undetectable. The introduction of the survey clarified that by answering the questions, respondents provided their consent to the analysis of their data.

The online survey ran from January to April 2020 and was available in English, Greek, Turkish and Italian. The intended sample size was 1,200 in total (400 per country). After removing the incomplete responses, the total sample reached 1,282 fully completed surveys; 442 were LGBTQI+ individuals, 690 were general public, 67 were representatives of political institutions and 83 were government officials. Each participant had to choose one of the above categories but government officials and representatives of political institutions could answer a follow-up question on whether they identify as LGBTQI+. The questionnaire was disseminated via the project's website, partners' websites, social media and targeted emails.

3. Legal Framework⁵

The current legal framework in each partner country was studied in the desk research to map the established rights of LGBTQI+ people in terms of, amongst others, marriage equality, protection from discrimination in different aspects of everyday life and hate speech.

Greek Law No. 4285/2014 (Articles 1-5, Amendment of Law 927/1979) on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law punishes all public acts that have the intention to cause, incite, stimulate or provoke actions, verbally or through the press and the internet or other means, that may lead to **discrimination, hate** or **violence** against a person or a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI), or disability in a way that endangers public order or is a threat for the life, freedom or the physical integrity of the aforementioned people. It also incriminates all relevant acts with the intention to cause, incite, stimulate or provoke actions that will damage possessions that are in use by the abovementioned person(s), in a way that endangers the public order. If the provocation, incitement, stimulation or instigation leads to a criminal offence, or if it is committed by a public servant or employee during the exercise of their duty, the penalty or punishment is higher. The criminal acts protected by Law No. 4285/2014 follow the ex officio prosecution and during the file of the complaint, the victim does not pay the relevant fee in favour of the State (Official Government Gazette, 2014).

A section of the *Cypriot Criminal Code* 134 (I) of 2011 regulates **hate speech**: the Law incriminates the incitement of violence or hatred against a person or group based on race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin (Cyprus Government Gazette, 2011). Following its amendment in 2015⁶, the Law now includes sexual orientation and gender identity in the list of protected characteristics.

⁵ All Cypriot Laws mentioned in the current chapter refer to the legal framework of the Republic of Cyprus

⁶ All amendments can be found in Greek in the following link:
http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2011_1_134.html

The *Italian* legal framework does not include any provisions for the banning of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia (Viggiani, 2020). Nonetheless, NGOs and relevant actors may use the Legislative Decree no. 216 of 9 July 2003 and the Legislative Decree no. 5 of 25 January 2010 regarding harassment in the workplace (Official Journal, 2003, 2010a), in order to bring cases of hate speech to court, in the same way as it successfully happens with regard to hate speech based on racial and ethnic origin (Bello 2019; Möschel 2019).

Article 21 of the *Greek* Law N. 4356/2015 (amendment of Article 81A of the Criminal Code) introduces harsher penalties for **criminal acts motivated by prejudice** against a person's or a group of persons' characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics (SOGISC). Furthermore, the aforementioned Law incriminates the **exclusion of people from goods or services** or the announcement of such exclusion out of contempt for their characteristics, including SOGISC (Official Government Gazette, 2015).

The Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), adopted by the EU in 2000, requires all States to implement legislation that bans **employment discrimination** based on sexual orientation (European Union, 2000). Equal treatment of employees regardless of race or ethnic background, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation was protected in *Greece* by Law N. 3304/2005. The law was later replaced by Law N. 4443/2016, introducing gender identity and sex characteristics amongst the protected characteristics. The latter defines discrimination based, amongst other characteristics, on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, discrimination based on a relationship with person(s) that have -amongst others- the aforementioned characteristics, discrimination based on perceived characteristics and multiple discrimination⁷. The mentioned Law also foresees the protection of employees who were unequally treated, from any kind of retaliation for reporting an incident or requesting the provision of legal

⁷The term **direct discrimination** refers to the less favourable treatment of a person based on the characteristics defined in Law N. 4443/2016, which include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender characteristics. **Discrimination** is considered to be **indirect** when an apparently neutral fact can put people in a situation of particular disadvantage compared to other people. **Harassment** is defined as an unwanted behaviour connected to the characteristics defined in the Law, aiming or resulting in the violation of the individual's dignity or the creation of an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or aggressive environment. **Discrimination based on perceived characteristics** is considered the discrimination that occurs due to the characteristics a person is perceived to have. **Multiple discrimination** indicates any form of discrimination, exclusion or restriction on the basis of the mentioned characteristics.

protection (Official Government Gazette, 2016). The aforementioned EU Directive was enacted in *Cyprus* by the Law N. 58(1)/2004 on the Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Law, which established a network aiming at the elimination of discrimination in employment based on racial or national identity, religion, opinion, age, or sexual orientation (Cyprus Government Gazette, 2004). Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in *Italy* is banned respectively by the Legislative Decree no. 216 of 9 July 2003, which enacted the aforementioned Directive (Official Journal, 2003), and the Legislative Decree no. 5 of 25 January 2010, which enacted the EU Directive 2006/54/CE (Official Journal, 2010a). In addition, Art. 1468 of Legislative Decree no. 66 of 2010 which includes the 'Military Code' prohibits all forms of discrimination against LGB military personnel in terms of accessing, being recruited, being assigned duties or being transferred.

The right to form a **civil union** in *Greece* is protected by the Law N. 4356/2015 on *Civil Union, Exercise of Rights, Penal and other Provisions*; the Law introduced the right to sign a contract of cohabitation, while it is foreseen that the relationship of the two parties follows the provisions for married couples, except if the parties have declared otherwise. The Act 184(I)/2015 ensured the right to civil union for same-sex couples in *Cyprus*, allowing them the same rights as married couples, except child adoption, as explained in the next section (Cyprus Government Gazette, 2015). Since 2016, same-sex couples can enter a registered union, as a "specific social formation" in *Italy* (art. 1, Law 20 May 2016, n. 76 - according to Art. 2 and 3 of the Italian Constitution). The Law foresees that the parties of the registered union have the same rights and duties, while they have a mutual obligation of moral and material assistance and cohabitation - Art. 11 (Official Journal, 2016).

Although **child adoption** by same-sex couples and/or co-parenting is not regulated by law in *Greece*, Law N. 4538/2018 introduced the right of **child fostering** by couples that have entered a civil union, regardless of their sex (Official Government Gazette, 2015). Similarly, same-sex parenting is not recognised in *Cyprus*, where the Law mentioned above, regulating the civil union partnerships, clearly states that although same-sex couples that have signed a contract of co-habitation have the same rights as married couples, this does not apply to the right of adoption (Cyprus Government Gazette, 2015). Although the *Italian* legal framework does not protect same-sex couples'





right to adoption, it does stipulate that they can become 'social parents' (stepparents). More specifically, Art. 44 par. 1(d) of the Law N. 184/1983 states that the same-sex partner of the biological parent must be living with them - and the child - or be a party of a registered union to be considered a step parent. The recognition of this kind of adoption also extends to same-sex couples who got married abroad. The prerequisites of this kind of adoption are the consent of the biological parent and the existence of an ongoing and stable relationship between the stepparent and the child (Official Journal, 1983).



4. Online Survey Findings⁸

4.1 Perceptions about LGBTQI+ rights

The majority of the survey participants in all three partner countries were aware of the current status of LGBTQI+ rights in their respective country in terms of marriage equality (civil union, marriage), child fostering and child adoption. In all three countries, LGBTQI+ people were the group more likely to know about these rights. In terms of the right to change one's gender marker, the majority of Greek and Italian participants were aware that it is recognised in their legal framework. Most Greek and Italian LGBTQI+ participants stated that intersex people are not protected from 'normalising' medical interventions. The majority of the other three groups from Greece remained unsure, while the same applied to general public respondents from Italy. On the other hand, government officials and representatives of political institutions from Cyprus appeared to be more convinced than expected⁹ regarding the existence of such protection. The majority of Greek participants stated that LGBTQI+ people are not legally protected against discrimination. On the contrary, even though the majority of LGBTQI+ Italian participants reported the same, approximately half of the respondents of each of the other three groups believed that LGBTQI+ people are legally protected against discrimination in Italy. A large proportion of LGBTQI+ and general public respondents from Cyprus remained unsure as to whether or not LGBTQI+ people are legally protected from discrimination. On the other hand, the majority of the sample from Greece was aware that LGBTQI+ people are legally protected from hate crimes in Greece. The majority of the Cypriot LGBTQI+ participants were also familiar with the protection from hate crimes ensured by law, whereas, the general public expressed uncertainty. The majority of Italian participants stated that such protection is not ensured in their country, with 74.65% of LGBTQI+ people believing that such a law does not exist.

⁸ The Cypriot questionnaire was answered by citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and citizens of the regions out of the control of the Republic of Cyprus

⁹ Meaning the expected value as calculated under the hypothesis of independency between the target groups' opinions.

In terms of opinions regarding whether LGBTQI+ rights should be protected and whether the LGBTQI+ community should be equally represented in the political life, the mean responses of all Greek groups ranged from "Undecided" to "Strongly Agree", indicating that none of the target groups had a clear negative attitude towards the LGBTQI+ community regarding those rights. The majority of the participants from all participating countries agreed that people should freely express their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, that they should have the same rights as cisgender heterosexual people and that they should be treated equally. With regards to employment equality, the majority agreed that people should not be fired or not hired because of their SOGISC, and that these protections should be enshrined in law. Furthermore, most of the participants agreed that same-sex marriage and child fostering by same-sex couples should be legal; most Greek and Italian participants agreed that child adoption should be legal as well. Likewise, most agreed that people should be able to change their gender marker on their legal documents. The majority of the participants further agreed that the LGBTQI+ community should be equally represented in the political life of each country (e.g. in parties, institutions, and organisations).

4.2 Perceptions on the occurrence of discriminatory incidents against the LGBTQI+ community

As emerged from the research, participants did not find that the LGBTQI+ community is generally accepted in the participating countries. One Greek LGBTQI+ person elaborated that *'people simply tolerate and don't accept'*, while others described a climate of hate, discrimination, under-representation in the media and lack of established rights. Some participants of the general public agreed that discrimination and homophobia are still prevalent. Furthermore, a Greek representative of political institutions supported that the Greek society *'remains conservative'* [sic], highlighting that the situation in big cities is better, in terms of acceptance. One Cypriot participant (general public) stated: *'A large portion of Cypriots are homophobic and anti-feminists. There is wide discrimination and hate against the LGBTQI society. It's embarrassing because this is driven by our politicians and the Church'*. Another LGBTQI+ participant reported *'I have*



LGBTQI+ friends who are still not out to their families because they are afraid of the consequences. I wouldn't say that's accepting'.

In terms of the target groups' perception on the occurrence of discriminatory incidents against the LGBTQI+ community, most Greek respondents stated that negative comments towards people that behave in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender are often or always being made, while Italian participants responded that this happens sometimes or often. Most Cypriot LGBTQI+ respondents seem to believe that such incidents take place often, whereas the representatives of political institutions believe that this happens sometimes or often. Most Greek respondents also believe that people often disclose someone's LGBTQI+ identity without their permission and intentionally misgender others, while Italian and Cypriot respondents believe it happens sometimes or often. In addition, most Greek respondents of the general public, government officials and representatives of political institutions believe that people sometimes use the dead name of transgender people to address them, while most LGBTQI+ people believe that it often happens. Most of the Italian respondents stated that this happens sometimes or often. Concerning negative comments against the LGBTQI+ community made in public places, most representatives of political institutions from Greece believe it sometimes happens, while the majority of the other three groups believe that it often happens. Respondents from Cyprus and Italy believe that such remarks are made sometimes or often. The majority of Greek respondents suggested that such comments are often made online, and that people often use LGBTQI+ terms in a derogative way or are often mocked because they are or perceived to be LGBTQI+. LGBTQI+ participants from Cyprus believe that such remarks are often made in online environments and LGBTQI+ terms are often used in a derogative way, while the three other groups believe that such incidents happen sometimes or often. With regards to people being mocked because they are or perceived to be LGBTQI+ in Cyprus, it was considered to happen sometimes or often. The majority of the Italian respondents indicated that the aforementioned forms of discrimination take place sometimes or often.

In terms of verbal harassment and unequal treatment due to people's LGBTQI+ identity, most of the Greek respondents indicated that it often occurs, while Cypriot and Italian participants believe it happens sometimes or often. Most of the Greek and Cypriot respondents believe that people are sometimes





excluded from an event or activity due to their LGBTQI+ identity, whereas most participants from Italy believe this happens rarely to sometimes. Most LGBTQI+ participants, general public and government officials from Greece believe that people are often discriminated against in public places due to their LGBTQI+ identity, whilst most representatives of political institutions believe that it sometimes happens. Similarly, most LGBTQI+ participants from Italy believe that people face such discrimination sometimes, while representatives of political institutions believe that it happens rarely or sometimes. Physical attacks on the basis of people's LGBTQI+ identity are believed to take place sometimes or rarely, according to the majority of respondents; some Greek participants believed that such incidents take place often. Furthermore, most of the Greek LGBTQI+ respondents believe that people are sometimes sexually harassed due to their LGBTQI+ identity, whereas most participants from the general public and government officials believe this happens more often, and most representatives of political institutions think that it rarely takes place. Cypriot participants believe that this happens sometimes and Italian participants believe it to happen rarely or sometimes. Lastly, most LGBTQI+ respondents, members of the public and government officials from Greece view that organised physical attacks against an individual because of their LGBTQI+ identity take place sometimes; the same frequency applies for Cypriot respondents. Italian participants believe that such incidents happen sometimes or often.

The vast majority of the total sample reported to have heard negative comments about the LGBTQI+ community made publicly. LGBTQI+ respondents from Greece elaborated that such comments are usually made by members of the Parliament and church officials, as well as by journalists, scientists and citizens of all educational backgrounds; one of the respondents stated that *'this has no beginning or end, it doesn't even affect those of us that are used to it. It has become a routine'*. Participants from the general public suggested that negative remarks can be heard in public transport and public places, such as squares, stores and supermarkets, while they can also be found on the internet. LGBTQI+ Cypriot participants agreed that such remarks are heard at school, at work, in public spaces or even within their social circles. A participant of the general public stated: *"[...] Unfortunately it has been normalised by our society to hear negative or racist [sic] comments about the LGBTQI+ community, especially when they are masked as 'humour'. Although nowadays it is not as acceptable as it used to be, it is still a part of our*



everyday life to hear, or for some, even make, these comments". Some Italian participants further stated that LGBTQI+ individuals are more "*tolerated than accepted*", although younger generations seem to be more open.

4.3 Occurrence of discrimination

Although, as indicated in the above section, all survey participants believe that discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community is quite frequent in all partner countries, LGBTQI+ respondents reported to have experienced discrimination in a lower frequency. However, it should be underlined, that this frequency is highly correlated to the personal experiences of the sample, and it could be that people who responded to the VoiceIt survey did not happen to experience discrimination in the perceived frequency of the four target groups.

Most Cypriot LGBTQI+ respondents reported that they had rarely experienced any of the forms of discrimination that were mentioned in the previous chapter. The most common forms of discrimination participants reported to have experienced rarely or sometimes are receiving negative comments for behaving in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender, being outed without their permission, and receiving negative comments or not being treated equally because they are or are perceived to be LGBTQI+. Participants reported to have rarely experienced intentional misgendering, the use of LGBTQI+ terms in a derogative way, negative comments online, mocking, verbal harassment, or discrimination in public places for being or being perceived to be LGBTQI+. The majority stated that people never use their dead names to address them, that they have never been excluded from an event or activity, and that they have never experienced physical attacks or sexual harassment for being or being perceived to be LGBTQI+. The answers of Cypriot LGBTQI+ participants with and without a minority ethnic and/or cultural background did not vary greatly.

Most Italian LGBTQI+ participants without a minority background reported to have sometimes or rarely received negative comments because they behaved in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender and that people have rarely or sometimes disclosed that they are LGBTQI+ without their permission. Most of them have never experienced physical attacks (organised or not) or sexual harassment. However, more than half of transgender

respondents indicated that people use their dead name to address them sometimes or often. Out of the total 142 Italian LGBTQI+ respondents, six stated that they had a minority ethnic and/or cultural background. They indicated to have experienced discriminatory incidents/behaviour more frequently than those who did not consider themselves to have a minority background. They stated that people disclose their LGBTQI+ identity sometimes or often, while they rarely or sometimes receive negative comments because they behave in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender. Furthermore, people rarely or sometimes make negative comments about them because of their LGBTQI+ identity, but this happens more frequently because of their LGBTQI+ identity, combined with their minority background. The frequency of negative comments made online because of their LGBTQI+ identity and their double identity was reported to be the same, i.e. such remarks are made rarely or sometimes. Nonetheless more people reported not to be treated equally on the basis of their LGBTQI+ identity. LGBTQI+ respondents with a minority background reported the same or lower frequency to non-minority LGBTQI+ respondents regarding receiving negative comments made because they behave in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender. The same applied to being mocked because of their LGBTQI+ identity, unequal treatment, discrimination at public places and sexual harassment because of their LGBTQI+ identity.

Out of the 123 Greek LGBTQI+ participants that did not consider themselves to have a minority ethnic and/or cultural background, most reported that people never intentionally misgender them or use their dead name to address them. They have never been verbally harassed (59%), excluded from an event or activity (75%), experienced discrimination in public places (50%) or been sexually harassed because of their LGBTQI+ identity (84%); less reported to have rarely experienced such behaviours (40%, 33%, 36%, 27% respectively). The same frequency applies to negative comments made online and people using LGBTQI+ terms in an insulting way to address them. In terms of unequal treatment, 43% of LGBTQI+ participants with no minority background have never experienced it and 40% reported to have rarely been unequally treated. Most have rarely received negative comments because they behave in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender, while people have rarely disclosed their LGBTQI+ identity without their permission. Most reported that people rarely make negative comments about them or mock them because of their LGBTQI+ identity, while less indicated that they have never

experienced such incidents. Lastly, most have never experienced physical attacks (organised or not) because of their LGBTQI+ identity. LGBTQI+ people with a minority ethnic and/or cultural background were more likely to report higher frequency, compared to non-minority LGBTQI+ respondents, meaning that the combination of the two identities could lead to more frequent discrimination. Discrepancies in mean responses were shown regarding negative comments because people behave in a different manner than expected according to their perceived gender. Ethnic/cultural minority participants were more likely to report higher frequency compared to non-minority participants, while they were also more likely to report higher frequency of negative comments due to their LGBTQI+ identity. The same applied to being mocked due to their identities. Furthermore, ethnic/cultural minority participants were significantly more likely to report a higher frequency of verbal harassment, as well as to not be treated equally. Likewise, they were significantly more likely to report a higher frequency of exclusion from events and activities, physical attacks and sexual harassment. Finally, discrepancies between the two groups were also found regarding organised physical attacks, with the participants with a minority background being significantly more likely to report higher frequency compared to non-minority participants.

4.4 Involvement of LGBTQI+ people in politics

The majority of Greek and Italian participants agreed that the LGBTQI+ community is not equally represented in the political life of the two countries. LGBTQI+ participants from Cyprus tended to share the aforementioned belief, whereas the other three groups were inclined to believe the opposite. In terms of openly LGBTQI+ people being members of political parties, the answers of the Greek sample varied. Most LGBTQI+ people, government officials, representatives of political institutions and general public respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the political parties, while some disagreed. Some government officials remained neutral. In addition, most LGBTQI+ people from Greece stated that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the political party they voted for in the last elections and that there are none in the parties they did not vote for, while most of the general public remained unaware. Approximately half of the government officials reported that there are no LGBTQI+ people in the party they voted for or in the parties they did not vote for, while

the rest suggested the opposite. Most representatives of political institutions stated that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the party they voted for and some indicated that there are in other parties. LGBTQI+ people from Cyprus tended to believe that there are no openly LGBTQI+ people in their political parties, while the rest of the groups were inclined to believe that there are. Cypriot representatives of political institutions reported that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the political parties, whereas the other groups remained uncertain. Italian participants found that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in political parties, but most government officials and respondents of the general public were unaware as to whether there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the political party they voted for or in those they did not vote for in the last elections. Most Italian LGBTQI+ participants and representatives of political institutions found that there are openly LGBTQI+ people in the political parties of the last elections. Most Greek and Italian participants suggested that there are not enough openly LGBTQI+ people involved in politics, and that there are not enough opportunities for LGBTQI+ people to participate. Even though most LGBTQI+ respondents from Cyprus agreed with the aforementioned belief, representatives of political institutions tended to have the opposite view.

Most LGBTQI+ respondents from all three participating countries felt they cannot engage in political processes without the risk of discrimination and that in case they did, their positions would not be taken into account as much as a cisgender heterosexual citizen. One participant from Greece reported that discrimination might come from people with the same political positions as theirs, while others focused on the general gender inequality and the segregation of social stratification, with the richest being the most privileged. One Cypriot respondent stated: *"I would definitely need to perform myself in a more macho way, adopting a different body language and vocabulary"* and another one added that *"political processes in Cyprus are sexist, patriarchal and homophobic. And many women holding positions of power in politics also act in sexist ways in order to conform, which is sad. There is also a lack of solidarity amongst minorities in politics"*.

Out of the total sample of government officials, the majority did not agree that the LGBTQI+ community is equally represented in the political scene of each partner country and that there are enough opportunities for LGBTQI+ people involved in politics. Most Greek and Italian government officials were

not aware as to whether there are openly LGBTQI+ people in their political party, while some participants from Greece stated that there are no LGBTQI+ people in their political party and some participants from Italy stated that they are aware of openly LGBTQI+ members of their political party. Most respondents from Cyprus declared that there are no LGBTQI+ people in the political parties of Cyprus. With regards to the manner in which LGBTQI+ individuals are involved in politics, LGBTQI+ respondents from Greece reported that there are LGBTQI+ parliamentary candidates and/or candidates for European elections and LGBTQI+ individuals holding public office, including local and regional positions, even though '*they are not many*'; government officials and representatives of political institutions agreed. Participants that identified as general public added that LGBTQI+ people are also involved in politics by organising festivals and events to raise awareness and that they are members of organisations, such as Colour Youth, Red Umbrella and Orlando LGBT+.

4.5 Needs for policy reform

Most of the participants from all participating countries agreed that there is a need for policy reform around LGBTQI+ rights. Even though the extent of agreement varied depending on the target group, the majority found that there is a need for policy reform in public services, social protection, civil and family rights protection, anti-discrimination law, labour policy, education and provision of health services.

Some Greek LGBTQI+ respondents highlighted that reforms need to be implemented for equality, inclusiveness, acceptance of diversity in general and the elimination of institutional racism. Two focused on the needs for policy reform in education and one suggested that education on SOGI should be provided from early school years, as well as training to mental health professionals, educators, social workers, etc. Another respondent highlighted that more structured and organised policies should be implemented, in order to ensure the already established rights. One respondent reported that trans people are usually refused services, thus an inclusive law for the protection against discrimination is needed. Reform towards marriage equality was also found important by LGBTQI+ participants from Greece.



One representative of political institutions from Greece focused on the general need '*to establish an open society and free market*', while another one suggested that reforms need to be made in the sectors of education, health and rights, as there are many retrogressions at national and EU levels. One government official elaborated that policy reforms constitute an important need in Greece, for all people to exercise their rights, while awareness raising campaigns are needed for the public to understand the importance of such reforms. Furthermore, they suggested that medical staff, administrative officers, police officers and journalists should be trained and relevant subjects should be added in the respective education centres. Education professionals should support the integration of training programmes in schools and countries should cooperate for the exchange of knowledge and practices in the sectors of education and policy reform. Another participant confirmed the need for policy reforms in education.



5. Policy recommendations

Currently, one of the greatest challenges to creating and implementing effective LGBTQI+ policy is a lack of high-quality data. According to a joint UNDP/World Bank report, only a few countries collected such data on lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and none on transgender and intersex people (Badgett and Sell 2018). Currently, only 5% of global funding for LGBTQI+ issues goes to research (World Bank Group and UNDP 2016). According to UNDP, *"As a result, we have almost no measures of LGBTI inclusion in key areas of human development"* (UNDP 2016:6). Because of this research void, a UN initiative to begin measuring LGBT inclusion was launched in 2015 with the creation of indicators around 5 dimensions: health, economic well-being, education, political and civic participation, and personal security and violence (UNDP 2016). These measures are needed to define problems, design programmes and document progress.

This is especially important in the area of rights because achieving justice for LGBTQI+ people requires more than simply expanding rights. Homophobia and transphobia are pervasive forms of stigma that drive exclusion, violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ people which *"contribute significantly to their exclusion from society, limit their access to health and social services and hinder social and economic development"* (UNDP 2019:12). The specific forms this discrimination takes in different countries is key, as such issues are often rooted in local cultural, religious and historical contexts. Targeted research that examines and responds to each country's local context can help to identify specific hurdles that LGBTQI+ people might face.

Data that reveals people's perceptions of LGBTQI+ issues is necessary to identify the barriers facing policy change towards LGBTI+ rights and inclusion. For example, the survey results clearly reveal the need for creating tolerance from a young age, specifically through including LGBTQI+ voices in school curricula and creating a zero-tolerance policy for violence, bullying and discrimination against LGBTQI+ students. Intervening at this level can lead to more acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in the long run, enabling the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and the expansion of rights for LGBTI+ people at the national level. Further, creating awareness around legislation proves key, as results show that not all members of society are aware of existing anti-discrimination legislation, making such legislation



less effective if would-be discriminators do not know they would face consequence for their actions, and LGBTQI+ people are not aware of their rights.

Beyond education and awareness raising, policy change requires the engagement of actors nationally and internationally – be they NGOs, community associations or activists/volunteers – to organize, raise funds, implement programming and lobby for change. This is essential both from a future-looking perspective as they advocate for change, but also for the present, as they work to ensure LGBTQI+ individuals receive the support they need in a context that is discriminative, either interpersonally or legally. Fostering a space, culturally and financially, for these types of organizations is key. Of particular importance is connecting to global initiatives and building alliances internationally in order to strengthen the movement and learn from other examples.


Finally, creating evidence-based policy requires investing in research and building a climate of cooperation and data sharing. However, it should be noted that it is not always a straight line from evidence to policy. This process is often fraught by communication issues, mismatched priorities between researchers and decision makers, and lack of political will. Some ways to address these challenges include: engaging communication professionals to assist with the task of translating research findings for policymakers; involving policymakers in the research process from the very beginning in order to align objectives and improve collaboration; and engaging a diversity of voices to participate in all stages of the project's conceptualization, design and implementation in order to ensure the process is inclusive and findings relevant, and to lend legitimacy to the results.


5.1 Recommendations for EU Policy Reform


Research participants from all participating countries suggested that policy reform around LGBTQI+ rights is needed in many aspects of everyday life. Taking the research findings into consideration, the following recommendations are proposed:

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:





 It was commonly agreed that policy reform in education is greatly needed. Content on LGBTQI+ identities and issues should be included in school textbooks and curricula. Exposing students to SOGISC diversity from a young age will help to cultivate tolerance and raise a generation of citizens committed to LGBTQI+ justice.

 Interventions in education systems to address bullying, violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ students should also be made. School professionals should have concrete and structured guidelines for addressing incidents of discrimination against LGBTQI+ students and fostering their inclusion. At the same time, guidelines should also be provided to students on ways they can contribute to an inclusive school environment and support their classmates and for reporting cases of SOGISC-based bullying/violence/discrimination that they may witness or experience. Further, schools should implement support services for victims of SOGISC-based bullying/violence/discrimination.


 Trainings on SOGISC matters should be provided to all mental health professionals, education professionals, social workers and other front-line professionals who may encounter LGBTQI+ people in need of support. Specialised training on working with LGBTQI+ people should be included in the curricula of third-level education for the aforementioned professions, in order to ensure that all future professionals are adequately informed about LGBTQI+ issues.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS


 Clear references protecting LGBTQI+ rights should be integrated into national legal frameworks in order to prevent all forms of discrimination and ensure equality, including intersectional discrimination.


 Clear references protecting LGBTQI+ rights should be integrated into national legal frameworks in order to prevent all forms of hate speech, both based on one and/or an intersection of characteristics.


AWARENESS RAISING

 Awareness raising campaigns around family rights (marriage equality and child adoption/ co-parenting) should be implemented so as to foster


public support of the aforementioned rights. This could be a first step towards including these rights in the legal framework.

 Awareness raising campaigns should also focus on the different forms of discrimination that LGBTQI+ people face, as well as popular misconceptions, in order to motivate the general public to work towards a more inclusive society.


 The aforementioned campaigns should engage key actors, including politicians with decision-making power and public figures with a voice which can be used to influence public opinion.


 Awareness raising campaigns should engage LGBTQI+ actors, fostering their participation in political decision-making processes to ensure such efforts to end discrimination and promote inclusion respect their rights, dignity and voice.

FUNDING

 Provision of support to organisations and NGOs working in the field of LGBTQI+ rights should be prioritized, especially to community-based organisations. Projects aimed at the protection and promotion of LGBTQI+ rights should be funded, in order to provide support, raise awareness and establish networks.

RESEARCH

 Further research should be conducted on LGBTQI+ rights and inclusion in national contexts, data which can be harnessed to foster justice and equality. A special focus should be placed on LGBTQI+ people with multiple minority backgrounds, such as refugees/migrants and people with disabilities, in order to better understand their needs and how best to address them. An intersectional perspective is suggested both in research design and data analysis.

 The results of these projects and the tools produced should be disseminated to relevant stakeholders, public authorities, and other researchers and activists, both nationally and globally, in order to inform policy and strengthen data. Simultaneously, projects should be



correlated in order to have a more holistic approach and fill in existing gaps.



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