



ACTION PLAN FOR THE LGBTQI+ RIGHTS

In the framework of the project «VoiceIt – Strengthening LGBTQI+'s Voice in Politics»

A. INTRODUCTION

VISION

Our vision is a society that ensures that no individual is discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and gender characteristics. We envision a secure, diverse, inclusive and intersectional environment that contribute in bringing about freedom and equality for all people in relation to human rights.

BASIC PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

The principle of non-discrimination

The principle of non-discrimination is the basis of the protection of human rights and provides that all human rights must be safeguarded without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national origin, property, religious or other beliefs, disability or other chronic illness, age, marital or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender characteristics, health status, place of residence or socioeconomic status.

Participation and inclusion





Based on the principle of participation and inclusion, all persons, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics, have the right to actively participate in all areas of human life, including public and political life, as well as to be actively involved in the decision-making on topics that affect them and have a direct impact on their well-being.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality describes how different characteristics of an individual's identity - such as gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, language, ethnic group, race, culture, disability, location or religion - intersect, are combined and interact to form people's individual life experiences, including experiences of discrimination.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The decriminalization of homosexuality in 1988, as a consequence of the activist action of Alekos Modinos, was a decisive moment for the legal protection of LGBTQI+ rights in Cyprus. Accept-LGBTI, the only registered organization that focuses on the protection of LGBTQI+ rights in the Republic of Cyprus was founded only in 2011. In 2014 Accept-LGBTI Cyprus and Kuir Kibris. organized the first Pride Marches in Cyprus.

Regarding the legal framework in the Republic of Cyprus, in the recent past, significant achievements have been recorded in terms of the legal protection of LGBTQI+ rights. Specifically, in 2015, the Civil Partnership Law of 2015 was passed, which concerns both same-sex and heterosexual couples. In the same year, after an amendment to the Penal Code (addition of Article 99.A), incitement to violence or hatred based on sexual orientation and gender identity was criminalized. In 2017, through an amendment to the Penal Code (Law 31(I)/2017), Article 35A was added, which defines the motivation for prejudice against groups of persons, including persons identified on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, as an aggravating factor. While the legal framework has improved, discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons in Cyprus remains common. Particular stagnation is observed in the enactment of legislation on legal gender recognition and more broadly in the protection of the rights of trans* individuals. Public debate on





the rights of intersex people is limited and there is no provision in the legal framework.

In the areas not controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, the public debate on LGBTQI+ issues began in 2007 when the organization Initiative Against Homophobia (Homofobiye Karşı inisiyatif, HOKI) was founded, which in 2012 was renamed as Kuir Kıbrıs Derneği . Kuir Kıbrıs put real pressure on the decriminalization of homosexuality and in 2014 the relevant provisions were repealed. According to Kuir Kıbrıs, despite the increasing visibility of LGBTQI+ issues and the legal change regarding the decriminalization of homosexuality, attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals have neither been eliminated nor adequately addressed at the institutional level due to the lack of effective law enforcement. In September 2019, Kuir Kıbrıs and Accept-LGBTI laid the foundations for partnership and cooperation through the signing of a memorandum.

According to the annual report published by ILGA Europe, in 2020 Cyprus is ranked 29th among 49 European countries regarding of legislation and policies that have a clear positive impact on LGBTQI+ human rights, with an overall score of 31%.

According to the Special Eurobarometer on Discrimination in the EU, 67% agree that discrimination based on sexual orientation is widespread, while the corresponding rate for discrimination based on gender identity is 54% and based on gender characteristics is 52%, percentages that may reflect reduced visibility for the discrimination suffered by trans* and intersex people in Cyprus.

This text aims at recording the key actions that must be taken in order to ensure the protection of LGBTQI+ rights in Cyprus, and to have them as the basis for consultation with all political and social actors regarding the adoption of a National Strategy for LGBTQI+ rights.

The adoption of a National Strategy for LGBTQI+ rights is a key prerequisite for the protection of the rights of all citizens and something that is recommended to states by a number of institutions at a European and global level, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe, the European Commission etc. The publication of the first LGBTQI Equality Strategy in the European Union (EU) strengthens the commitment to fundamental values in the EU, such as equality and the prohibition of discrimination and conveys the message to the Member States that all individuals in the EU should feel safe and free without being victims of discrimination or violence on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or characteristics.





B. STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTIONS

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: EQUALITY AND PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
1.1.	Design and promotion a basic information and awareness raising program on LGBTQI+ rights and the discrimination suffered by LGBTQI+ individuals (terminology, legal framework, human rights education, intersectionality) and its inclusion in the vocational training of all civil servants .	Accept-LGBTI Public Administration and Personnel Department, Ministry of Finance
1.2.	Adoption of Political Equality and Anti-Discrimination policies by all Departments of the Public Service.	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights Gender Equality Commissioner
1.3.	Addition of the terms "gender identity and gender expression, and gender characteristics" in article 2 of the ``2004 Law on the Vesting and Protection of Patients' Rights'' (``Περί της Κατοχύρωσης και της Προστασίας των Δικαιωμάτων των Ασθενών Νόμου του 2004	Ministry of Health Commissioner for Legislation





	(N. 1(I)/2005)' (Law 1(I)/2005)" where the concept of "Discrimination" is defined.	
1.4.	Addition of the terms "gender identity and gender expression, and gender characteristics" in Article 6 of the "Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law of 2002 ('Περί Της Μεταχείρισης Ανδρών και Γυναικών στην Απασχόληση και στην Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση Νόμου του 2002') (205(I)/2002)" - to be included as grounds for prohibition of discrimination.	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance Commissioner for Legislation
1.5.	Issuing of a code of practice for dealing with discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and gender characteristics in the workplace, by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights
1.6.	Regular training, education and specialization of the officials of the District Administrations, as well as of the Officers of the Welfare Office and awareness raising on the psychological and social needs of LGBTQI+ individuals.	Ministry of Interior Public Administration and Personnel Department, Ministry of Finance
1.7.	Immediate approval of the National Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and	House of Representatives





	preparation of an Action Plan for its implementation.	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
1.8.	Introduction of special parameters that ensure the equal access of LGBTQI people in general and trans* people in particular in the labour market.	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
1.9.	Utilization, in cooperation with universities and other bodies, of the available funding from the EU, with the aim of recording needs and combating discrimination (Erasmus+, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program, Horizon Europe).	Accept-LGBTI NGOs Universities
1.10	Establishment of systematic collaborations for the exchange of good practices for the protection of human rights between EU Member States (through the Network of European Contact Points LGBTI and/or other initiatives), as well as between organizations that are members of ILGA Europe.	Accept-LGBTI Human Rights Unit, Ministry of Justice and Public Order Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: EDUCATION

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
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<p>2.1 .</p>	<p>Inclusion of mandatory specialized courses on LGBTQI+ issues in the Schools of Education and Social Sciences in all public and private Universities.</p>	<p>All public and private universities</p> <p>Convocation of Rectors of Cyprus Universities</p> <p>POFEN (PAN-CYPRUS STUDENT ASSOCIATION FEDERATION)</p> <p>Associations of Sociologists, Psychologists</p>
<p>2.2 .</p>	<p>Inclusion of selected specialized courses on LGBTQI+ issues in public and private Universities</p>	<p>All public and private universities</p> <p>Associations of University Lecturers/Professors</p> <p>Convocation of Rectors of Cyprus Universities</p> <p>POFEN (PAN-CYPRUS STUDENT ASSOCIATION FEDERATION)</p> <p>Associations of Sociologists,</p>





		Psychologists
2.3	Teacher training, on a universal basis, in the use of the Code of Conduct against Racism and the Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents	pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth of Cyprus) OELMEK, OLTEK, POED
2.4	Effective implementation of sex education at all levels of education within the framework of the Health Education Program, and ensuring adequate inclusion of topics related to LGBTQI rights and issues.	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of the Child
2.5	Cooperation of Non-Governmental Organizations and Private and Public Universities for the creation and implementation of specialized training and education programs on gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity and sexuality, for university students at Schools of Education and Social Sciences.	Accept-LGBTI, NGOs Public and private universities
2.6	Systematic education and training of teachers through specialized additional educational seminars and workshops for the identification and change of homophobic, transphobic and more broadly LGBT-phobic attitudes of teachers.	Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth)





		NGOs Public and private universities
2.7	Training with the participation of school authorities, trade unions, and parents on tackling homophobic and transphobic bullying at schools.	OELMEK, POED, OLTEK, Confederations of Parents - Primary, Secondary, Special Education Pancyprian Parents School

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: HEALTH

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
3.1	Inclusion of mandatory specialized courses on LGBTQI+ topics in the Schools of Health Sciences in all public and private Universities.	All public and private universities Convocation of Rectors of Cyprus Universities POFEN, Association of Medical Students Pancyprian Medical Association (PIS)
3.2	Collaboration of Non-Governmental Organizations and Private and Public Universities for the creation and implementation of specialized training	All public and private universities





	and education programs on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and sexuality, for people attending health schools on the basis of the Health4L program.	Convocation of Rectors of Cyprus Universities POFEN NGOs
3.3	Regular training, education and specialization of medical and nursing staff, as well as other health professionals, on issues related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, in collaboration with the relevant services and agencies.	State Health Services Organization (OKYPY) Pancyprian Medical Association (PIS) Pancyprian Association of Nurses and Midwives (PA.SY.N.M.) Cyprus Endocrine Society Cyprus Psychology Association Pancyprian Association for Psychologists
3.4	Cooperation between Accept-LGBTI and organized groups, such as the Associations of Psychologists, Sociologists, etc. for organizing educational seminars and workshops.	Accept-LGBTI Cyprus Psychology Association Pancyprian Association for Psychologists Cyprus Sociological Association Cyprus Association





		of Social Workers
3.5	Utilization of funding from European research programs to understand the needs of LGBTQI + people who may experience multiple discrimination, ie LGBTQI + people who are elderly, young, disabled, have an immigrant biography, live in rural areas, live poverty conditions, etc., in order to investigate and record their needs for health services and to improve access to them.	Accept-LGBTI Public and private universities
3.6	Ensuring the accessibility of health services for LGBTQI+ people with disabilities (for example providing and publishing informative material in easy-to-read or audio format), as well as to other groups of the population such as LGBTQI people with immigrant biographies (providing interpretation services and publication of informative material in English, Turkish and other languages)	Ministry of Health Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organizations (KYSOA) and other organizations of people with disabilities Cyprus Patients' Associations Federation (OSAK) and other patient organizations

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: HEALTH SERVICES AND TRANS*

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
4.1	Inclusion in GESY of all necessary treatments, including hormone therapy and sex reassignment medical interventions.	Health Insurance Organization (OAS) Ministry of Health





		Council of Ministers
4.2 .	Establishment of a procedure that will cover the costs for medical sex reassignment medical intervention by the Ministry of Health and/or by utilizing the European Health Insurance Card, where the relevant treatments are not offered within GESY in Cyprus - presupposes harmonization of the legislation so that the relevant medical interventions are included at the necessary medical services.	Ministry of Health
4.3 .	Specialized education and training of medical and nursing staff in topics concerning trans people, treatments and procedures to be followed.	OKYPY PIS Pancyprian Association of Nurses and Midwives (PA.SY.N.M.)
4.4 .	Creation of a file with appropriate medical and informational material in various languages for the hospitals staff.	Ministry of Health Pancyprian Medical Association (PIS)
4.5	Posting of information regarding the procedures to be followed by persons who wish to have access to medical sex reassignment medical intervention on the website of the Ministry of Health and distribution of the information in printed form in the wards of the hospitals.	Ministry of Health

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: PRIVATE AND FAMILY LIFE





#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
5.1	Immediate enactment of legislation on legal gender recognition - introduction of human rights-based procedures that enable trans* persons to change personal data such as gender and name, in all official documents, on the basis of self-identification, without the need for medical intervention or other treatments.	House of Representatives Ministry of Interior
5.2	Ensuring the pension benefits of partners who have entered into a political cohabitation agreement without exceptions (for example a widow's pension).	Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance
5.3	Access to assisted reproduction for LGBTQI couples and access to benefits related to procedures regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression or gender characteristics	Ministry of Health
5.4	Adoption rights by LGBTQI persons who have entered into Civil Partnership and removal of the restriction for adoption rights in the law of 2015 (Law 184(I)/2015)	House of Representatives Ministry of Interior
5.5	Amendment of law L.184(I)/2015, in order to recognize the marriages of same-sex couples that have been legally performed abroad, as well as the introduction of legal regulations for the transnational recognition of rainbow families.	Ministry of Interior Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus
5.	Recognition of second parent rights for	Ministry of





6	LGBTQI families.	Interior
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STRATEGIC GOAL 6: PROTECTION FROM HATE SPEECH AND HATE CRIMES

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
6.1.	Equalization of punishments as defined in Article 99A of the Penal Code with the punishments defined in the Fight against Certain Forms and Manifestations of Racism and Xenophobia through the Criminal Law of 2011 (134(I)/2011) and/or amendment of the relevant legislation, in order to uniformly cover all grounds for discrimination. Inclusion of the terms sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and gender characteristics, as well as other characteristics of discrimination.	Commissioner for Legislation Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus
6.2.	Involvement of the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus in the creation of a Guide which set specific criteria for the collection of data and evidence in relation to Article 99.A. of the Penal Code.	Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus
6.3.	Creation of a unit in the Police, which is specialized in the investigation of cases of hate speech and hate crimes.	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
6.4.	Creation and implementation of specialized training and education programs on hate speech and hate crimes,	Accept-LGBTI, NGOs Ministry of Justice and Public





	as well as on issues relevant to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression or gender characteristics for persons attending the Cyprus Police Academy	Order
6. 5.	Creation and implementation of specialized training and education programs on hate speech and hate crimes in officials of the Judicial Service	Accept- LGBTI Ministry of Justice and Public Order
6. 6.	Cooperation between the Cyprus Police and the Mental Health Services (Ministry of Health) for the preparation of procedures that will ensure the access to support services, if necessary, after a complaint.	Mental Health Services, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Public Order
6. 7	Creation and implementation of appropriate training programs for combating hate speech for media professionals.	Accept- LGBTI Union of Cyprus Journalists Cyprus Media Complaints Commission

STRATEGIC GOAL 7: LGBTQI AND PARTICIPATION

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
7. 1	Cooperation between Accept LGBTI and Civil Society organizations, including youth organizations, with the aim of promoting actions and educational programs that offer an opportunity to LGBTQI+ people to be informed about	Accept- LGBTI NGOs





	their rights and issues that affect them, to be strengthened with knowledge and skills, but also to be able to claim their rights.	
7.2	Strengthening financial support for NGOs dealing with human rights and LGBTQI+ rights in particular	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
7.3	Creation of bodies and committees within the political parties that focus on LGBTQI+ issues and systematic cooperation with Accept-LGBTI and Civil Society organizations	Accept- LGBTI Political parties
7.4	Distribution of a percentage from the budget of political institutions for education and training on LGBTQI+ issues and issues relevant to gender and sexuality more broadly	Political parties
7.5	Establishment of a systematic cooperation between Accept-LGBTI with mass media, in order to enhance the visibility of LGBTQI+ issues, as well as the representation in the media.	Accept- LGBTI

STRATEGIC GOAL 8: MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
8.1	Regular training, education and specialization of the staff of the Asylum Service and the Immigration Department for LGBTQI+ rights and multiple discrimination that LGBTQI+ persons may suffer due to their	Asylum Service, Department of Immigration.





	immigrant background, gender, age, disability, health status or/and other characteristic	
8.2	Establishment of a team at the Asylum Service which examines applications from persons subject to persecution in their country of origin	Asylum Service, Department of Immigration
8.3	Establishment of a systematic cooperation between Accept-LGBTI and migrant citizens' organizations	Accept- LGBTI Obreras Empowered - Female Migrant Domestic Workers Cyprus, other migrant organizations

STRATEGIC GOAL 9: HOUSING

#	Actions	Implementation Actor(s)
9.1	Taking of measures to ensure that access to adequate housing is effectively implemented and applies equally to all persons, without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and gender characteristics.	Ministry of Interior





9.2 Cooperation between Accept-LGBTI and the respective social services at national and local level, in order to assess the needs, as well as the risk of homelessness that LGBTQI+ individuals, including LGBTQI youth, may face due to social and/or economic exclusion.

Accept- LGBTI
Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance
Cyprus Youth Organization
Municipalities

