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1. Introduction

This project “Voicelt- Strengthening LGBTQI+’s Voice in Politics” seeks to engage with four target groups in an effort to develop collaborative strategies to overcome discrimination and exclusion and to promote the rights and political voice of LGBTQI+ groups. The motivation of the current study is to expand the evidence base, to study changing attitudes, and help determine the extent to which LGBTQI+ groups participate in public life and politics.

The study targeted four groups:

- LGBTQI+ persons
- government officials
- representatives from political institutions
- general public

The study aimed to:

- identify perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights by the four groups
- identify obstacles faced by LGBTQI+ persons with minority ethnic or cultural backgrounds
- investigate opinions regarding policy reform
- investigate the participation of the LGBTQI+ community in politics

Cyprus is ranked 29th among 49 European countries regarding legislation and policies that have a clear positive impact on LGBTQI+ human rights, with a total score of 31% (ILGA-Europe, 2020). A few European surveys have concluded that Cyprus remains a country where intolerant attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people are prevalent (ECRI, 2019; FRA, 2014). The existence of two communities (Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot) represents another layer of complexity. The current study took into consideration the bi-communal character of the island and included a review of the two different contexts

Geographical south:

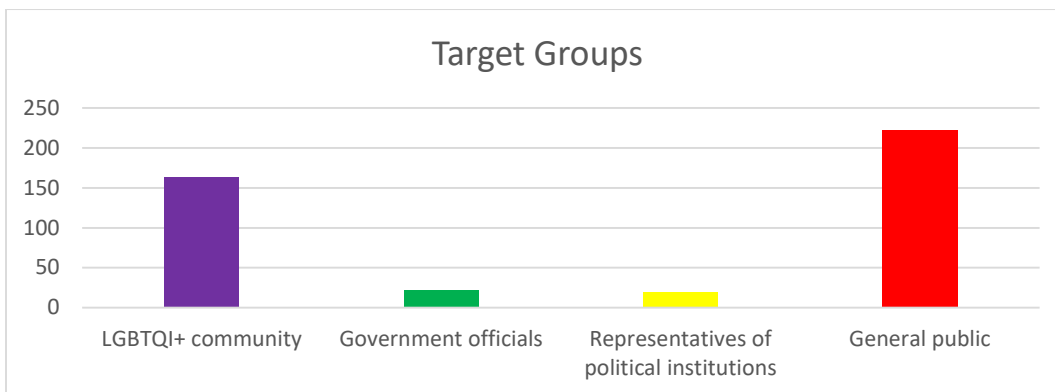
- In 1998, the Cypriot parliament voted to amend the law and decriminalise homosexuality.
- The Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Law was implemented in 2004 and its main objective is the elimination of discrimination in employment based on racial or national identity, religion, opinion, age, or sexual orientation (Cyprus, 2004)
- The civil partnership law was implemented in 2016.
- The amendment of the hate speech legislation changed in 2017 in order to include gender identity and sexual orientation (Cyprus, 2017)



- Accept-LGBT Cyprus is currently promoting new legislation to ensure the right of any person over 18 to request a correction of their registered gender without having to present any medical documentation of diagnosis, hormonal treatments, or surgeries (ILGA-Europe, 2020).
- Same-sex parenting remains legally unrecognized.

Geographical north

- In North Cyprus homosexuality was decriminalized in 2014.
- The first Pride march was organized by Queer Cyprus Association (QCA) in 2014.
- North Cyprus is not recognised as a state by international bodies, which has resulted in a political and economic dependence on Turkey. As a result, LGBTQI+ issues can also be seen in relation to the uncertainty that characterises the status of North Cyprus.
- Despite the growing visibility of LGBTQI+ issues, and the legal shift towards decriminalizing homosexuality, assaults against LGBTQI+ individuals have neither been eliminated nor adequately dealt with on an institutional level due to the lack of effective implementation of the law (History of QCA, 2019)



2. Methodology

An online survey took place (427 participants) with the main objective to map the status of LGBTQI+ individuals and issues in Cypriot society and politics. The study targeted four groups: LGBTQI+ persons, government officials, representatives from political institutions, and the general public. A questionnaire was prepared by the project partners and then translated into the official languages of Cyprus, Greek and Turkish, as well as English. An online platform was used to run the survey and collect data. The online survey ran for a period of two months. For hypothesis testing, we mainly used chi-squared and one-way ANOVA. For demographics we present some basic charts.

3. Results of the online survey

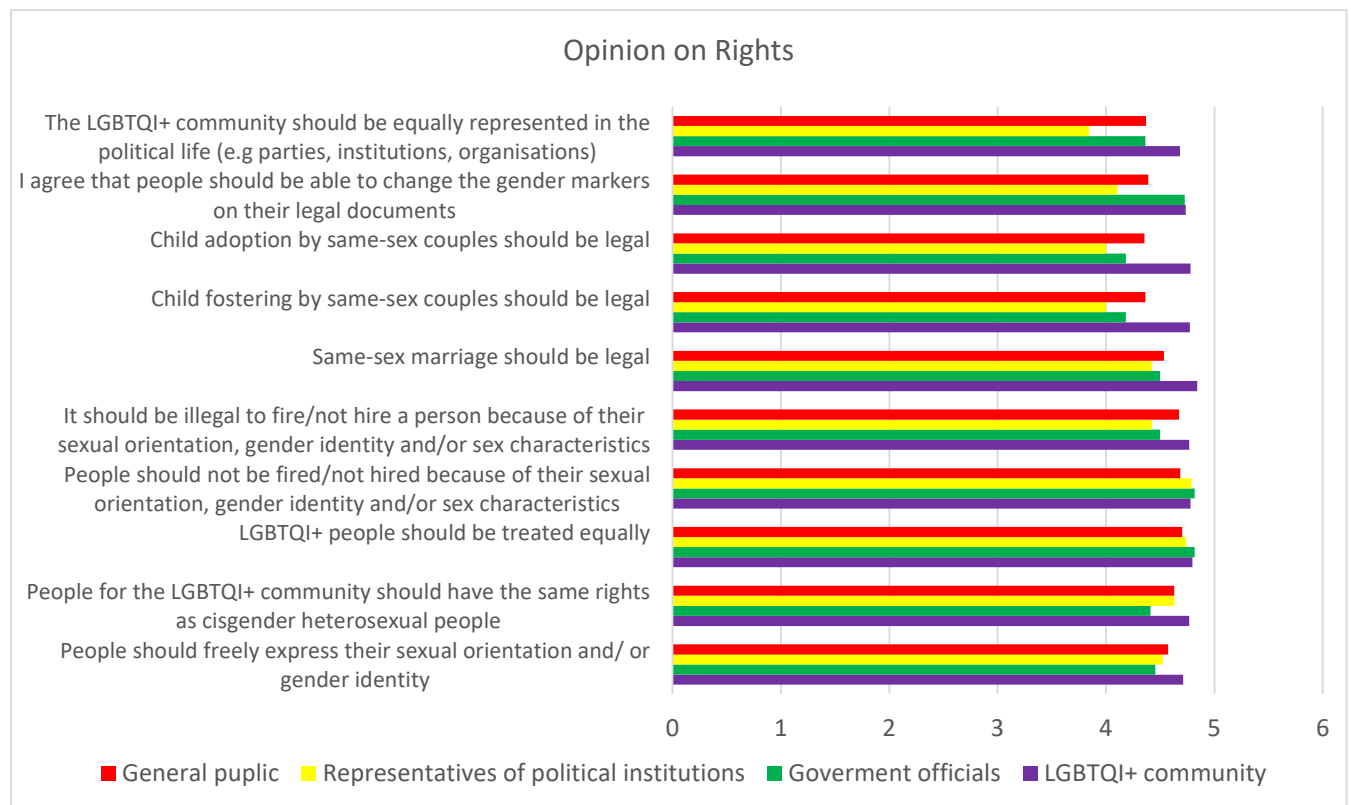
3.1. Perceptions about LGBTQI+ rights

Levels of awareness of the current state of LGBTQI+ rights in Cyprus

Regarding perceptions of the current legal framework of LGBTQI+ rights in Cyprus, our research shows that LGBTQI+ individuals are highly aware of their rights, while the general public is largely lacking in knowledge around the topic. In fact, the general public believes that the current legal framework affords more rights than it actually does. This lack of awareness may be partially due to the relatively recent development of the NGO landscape with regards to LGBTQI+ rights.

Question	Percentage of each target group answering YES				Current State
	LGBTQI+	GO	Rep of PI	GP	
Civil Union	85.3%	81.8%	89.5%	74.9%	YES
Marriage	8%	9.1%	10.5%	22.9%	NO
Foster parenthood	2.5%	0%	5.3%	6.7%	NO
Adoption	0.6%	0%	0%	4.5%	NO
Change of gender on legal docs	24.5%	27.3%	26.3%	22.9%	NO
Legal protection-discrimination	48.5%	54.5%	68.4%	42.6%	YES
Legal protection-hate crimes	51.5%	54.5%	52.6%	43.5%	YES

The majority of the participants from all four target groups replied that they either “agree” or “strongly agree” with statements pertaining to granting equal rights to LGBTQI+ people (see statements in graph below). This is in contrast with the recent EU survey that was published in 2019 by the European Commission (ECRI, 2019), in which the majority of the participants from Cyprus expressed their disagreement or discomfort with LGBTQI+ people acquiring equal rights as cisgender heterosexual people. On the other hand, there were some questions (Voice IT) that a substantial percentage of the non-LGBTQI+ groups (approximately 15-20%) were hesitant to agree with or even disagreed with. Those questions were the ones relating to rights that are not yet legally secured, i.e., adoption, foster-care, same-sex marriage and change of gender in legal documents.



3.2 Occurrence of discrimination

The results showed that the groups all agree on the prevalence of discriminatory incidents in Cypriot society. While certain statistical differences emerged in 5 out of 15 questions examining the perceptions of the four target groups, those differences were mainly concerned with the frequency of those incidents, with participant opinions mostly falling between “sometimes” and “often”. However, in some answers directly addressed to LGBTQI+ and ethnic minorities, the participants highlighted that they did not personally experience a high degree of discrimination, despite their belief that such incidents are prevalent in Cyprus. This gap could be attributed to the demographic characteristics of the survey sample.

3.3 Involvement of LGBTQI+ community in politics

72% of LGBTQI+ respondents feel that they cannot engage in political processes without the risk of discrimination, and 63% feel that if they do engage in political processes in Cyprus, their position/opinions will not be taken into account as much as those of cisgender heterosexual people. In the set of questions related to the representation of the LGBTQI+ community in the political sphere, the perceptions of the four target groups all presented statistical differences. The main contrast was between the LGBTQI+ individuals and the rest of the groups.

LGBTQI+ individuals were hesitant to confirm the adequacy of the involvement of LGBTQI+ individuals in politics, they are unaware of any openly LGBTQI+ persons in politics (apart from the Adviser to the President for Multiculturalism, Acceptance & Respect to Diversity) and they agree on the fact that opportunities for LGBTQI+ individual to access the political arena are inadequate.

4. Conclusions/Recommendations/Limitations

The findings of this research illustrated discrepancies between the four target groups' perceptions relevant to the categories of analysis. To summarize :

1. LGBTQI+ individuals are aware of their rights, while some discrepancies arose with regards to the level of awareness of other groups
2. While LGBTQI+ individuals agree that LGBTQI+ rights should be expanded, some participants from other groups seemed to be hesitant.
3. Discrimination is widespread in Cypriot society and all groups agree on the need of policy reform.
4. The involvement of the LGBTQI+ community in politics is limited.

Our recommendations could be implemented through a variety of avenues. While implementing specific measures towards inclusion and equal participation is key, what will ultimately influence the rate of progress is the state's willingness to embrace diversity and inclusivity, ensuring rights for all people, and commit to projects which deepen democracy:

- Further research is necessary in order to better understand the current status of the LGBTQI+ community.
- Additional changes are required regarding the legal and structural framework, particularly gender identity, parenthood and adoption, and hate speech and hate crime
- Mechanisms to ensure that existing legislation is actually effectively implemented, as in the case of hate speech, should be considered and enforced
- Educational programmes on LGBTQI+ rights for managers, employees, public sector, and members of political institutions should be designed, enhanced, offered and promoted
- The educational system should review its content and methodology so as to achieve a more LGBTQI+- inclusive curriculum.
- Support to NGOs working in the field of LGBTQI+ issues should be increased
- Political party engagement in projects investigating sexual citizenship should be encouraged
- Political parties should consider allocating of a percentage from their budgets for training and education around sexual orientation and gender identity
- Political parties should form bodies or committees within their structures that will raise and address LGBTQI+ concerns.



The main limitations of the survey included low participation by government officials and representatives of political institutions. The questionnaire was answered mainly by younger individuals (82% aged between 19-45) with an advanced educational background (almost 80% had completed tertiary education).

5. References

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Project Partners



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