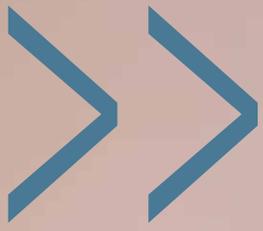
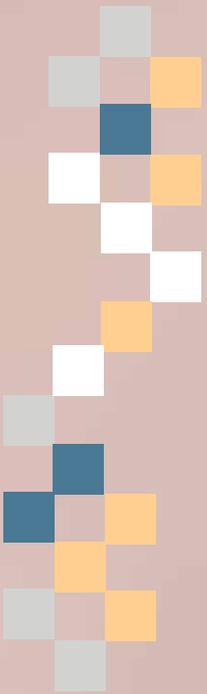


Destination



EQUALITY

winter 2012-13



Education



Editorial



Evelyne Paradis

For most of us working for equality, new surveys which show the high rates of homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools no longer come as a surprise. Over the past decade, not only have several researches shed light on the discrimination and marginalisation that LGBTI students experience in school settings, but they have also provided clear evidence of the negative impact of this discrimination on young people, from low self-esteem, mental ill-health and suicidal tendencies to underachievement and school drop-out.

Given all this knowledge, what continues to surprise me however is the lack of action taken by policy-makers and education professionals at European level and in many European countries to combat homophobia and transphobia in school. What is needed is clear: fear and ignorance must be dispelled, stereotypes must be challenged, students must all be protected and guaranteed a safe learning space, and everyone in schools must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to be able to confidently tackle discrimination.

Fortunately, there are more and more positive initiatives being taken by different actors across Europe. We wanted to dedicate this issue of Destination >> EQUALITY to give space to some of these good practices coming from UN agencies, human rights institutions and NGOs alike, and by doing so, hopefully give food for thought to other intergovernmental institutions, national policy-makers and human rights actors.

Building inclusive and safe schools for everyone is a priority for ILGA-Europe and for the whole LGBTI movement. Now it is time to make it a priority for European governments, for European institutions and educational professionals. And as always, ILGA-Europe stands ready to work with all the relevant actors to make this happen.

Evelyne Paradis
Executive Director

Building a strategy in the area of education based on our members needs

Sophie Aujean is responsible for the portfolio of education within ILGA-Europe. **Jasna Magic**, from the Slovenian member organisation Legebitra, is leading on a consultation which aims to learn more on the priorities and needs of ILGA-Europe's members in the field of education. They present ILGA-Europe's strategy in this area and the preliminary findings of the consultation.

Working in the area of education at European level – a challenge

Their Words Will Crush Concrete - Solzhenitsyn

Making headway towards safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTI youth is a growing priority for the organisation. Ensuring that children and students enjoy safe and open learning environments is not only necessary to prevent discrimination and stigmatisation affecting young LGBTI people. It also benefits the whole learning community and has a long-term impact on the knowledge and attitudes of students as they grow up.

However, addressing LGBTI issues in the area of education at European level is a challenge. Until the European Union (EU) adopts the horizontal anti-discrimination directive, EU institutions will continue to have limited competences in this area. In this context, ILGA-Europe has invested time to develop different kinds of strategies to promote inclusive education policy-making at European level. So far, we have focused our strategy in this field around three main activities:

- *Building alliances with mainstream education actors*
Together with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO), we convened in May 2012 a roundtable of education experts (teachers' unions, students organisations, inclusive education organisations) and policy-makers to contribute to our strategic thinking and coalition-building on education.

- *Advocating at European and international levels towards safe and inclusive schools*

While progress towards legal protection against discrimination in education is limited in the EU, the Council of Europe and United Nations (UN) bodies are starting to address the issue in various ways. ILGA-Europe therefore made use of opportunities with UNESCO and

actively contributed to the production of "Good practices guide on combating homophobic bullying", the first such tool produced by an intergovernmental body. In addition, we feature in an awareness-raising video produced by Council of Europe explaining the main challenges facing children who are LGBT or have parents that are LGBT.

● Consulting our members to assess their experiences, good practices and challenges in the area of education

Much of ILGA-Europe's attention is turning to what is happening at national level, in part because education remains a competence of national governments, but also because so much of the expertise lies with national and local LGBTI organisations. This is why we have launched in September 2012 a consultation on the experiences, challenges and needs of our members in the area of education.

Consulting our members to build our strategy

This consultation process started in mid-October 2012 and will end in February 2013 with the publication of a final report. 35 LGBTI rights organisations contributed through individual interviews and an internet survey. Members welcomed the consultation with much enthusiasm and were eager to share their experiences, work, future plans as well as concerns related to working in this field.

Quote from consultation with members

>> *The support of the government and its bodies is important, but since the political climate is currently not very supportive of LGBT issues we are finding all other possible channels to promote our products and results relevant for teachers and educators. It is not impossible to work without governmental support. There are other allies in the field.* <<

The consultation showed that members' key objectives in the area of education are the following:

- To ensure that curricula and textbooks reflect diversity and are free of heteronormative, homophobic and transphobic stereotypes and perceptions.
- To ensure safe learning environment for students (addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools).
- To advocate for anti-bullying/anti-discrimination policies for schools that expressly homophobia and transphobia as a form of violence and discrimination.
- To put in place a national training programme for teachers on how to address LGBTI issues in the classroom.

Quote from consultation with members""

>> *On the European level, adoption of a horizontal directive will help. Also, a proper European definition of bullying (including homophobic bullying) and expansion of European guidelines or directives on bullying would constitute a concrete political frame for a range of more practical initiatives.* <<

What emerges from the consultation is that members are doing much more work in the area of education than what was expected. Good practices mentioned ranged from small-scale projects (e.g. discussion workshops for students) to long-term advocacy strategies. Members have also reflected on practices and strategies that do not work for them and have assessed their needs, challenges and priorities relating to their work in addressing homophobia and transphobia in education. Moreover, the consultation provided the opportunity for respondents to share their experience on working with public authorities and the importance of building alliances and partnerships with relevant national and local stakeholders in the field.

Another finding of this consultation is the lack of knowledge of members on the work done by each other in this area. It has had an impact on the possibility to identify potential partners when applying for international projects. There is also a common feeling that a lot of work especially related to development of various resources (manuals, toolkits, websites, lesson plans, and researches) is being duplicated.

This consultation also provided useful information to better understand the challenges faced by members in the area of education:

- LGBTI rights organisations are not always seen as a relevant stakeholder in the area of education.
- Even when the legislation is supportive, its implementation depends very much of the willingness of heads of schools or teachers.
- There is a general lack of organisational resources (staff, financial support, skills, etc.) to work actively in this area.
- Prejudices and stereotypes, including of parents are still an important obstacle in many countries.

The findings of this consultation will form the basis for further development of ILGA-Europe's work in this area, including in relation to capacity-building of members and advocacy strategy at European and national levels.

United Nations take firm action on fighting bullying in schools

Christophe Cornu is EDUCAIDS and Country Implementation Team Leader, within the Section of HIV and Health Education (HIV) at UNESCO. He presents the recent pioneering consultation done by UNESCO on homophobic and transphobic bullying which has led to the publication of a booklet which collects practical guidance and tools to address homophobic and transphobic bullying.

"Homophobic bullying is an unacceptable infringement of basic human rights. In the school setting homophobia is a direct violation of the right to quality education. It leads to absenteeism, poorer academic performance and achievement, and sometimes to suicide. The right to quality education is not the privilege of a few ones. It is a universal right. All students – all of them – have the right to quality education in a safe environment" – Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, May 2012.

In 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) played a pioneering role by organising the first-ever United Nations consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). The consultation reviewed the scope and impact of this urgent problem and discussed best practices in programming and policies to address it. Participants came from 25 countries around the world, and represented non-governmental organisations, education ministries, United Nations agencies, academia and other development partners. The Consultation produced a 'Rio Statement on Homophobic Bullying and Education for All' where participants called upon governments to respond to widespread LGBT bullying in educational institutions in their respective countries.

UNESCO's engagement to addressing the issue of homophobic bullying reflects its commitment to the principles and goals of Education for All (EFA), building on its engagement with stopping violence in schools, and its work to address all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence, and its expertise in HIV and sexuality education.

The findings of the consultation were compiled in the publication Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying. It includes practical guidance for the development and implementation of policies, interventions and practical tools to prevent and address homophobic bullying in educational institutions, which are age-appropriate and adapted to a range of socio-cultural contexts. This booklet was launched during an international meeting at UNESCO in Paris on IDAHO 2012 (International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia- May 17), whose theme was "Fighting homophobia and transphobia IN and THROUGH education." In collaboration with the IDAHO Committee, UNESCO also developed a lesson plan for teachers to deal with Homophobia and Transphobia in the classroom, which was disseminated on the occasion of IDAHO.

At country level UNESCO support ministries of education and other education stakeholders in their efforts to prevent and address homophobic bullying in education in different ways:

- by reviewing available evidence on the nature and extent of homophobic bullying,
- by identifying and sharing examples of best practice,
- by trying to inspire and motivate more and better coordinated action; and,
- by providing practical guidance for the development and implementation of policies that are adapted to the context and linked to broader anti-bullying efforts and quality learning initiatives.



Photo by Willem Poelstra, copyright EduDivers

Hands-on tools for students, teachers and LGBT organisations

Mikkel Schmidt-Hansen is project manager within the Education Department of the Danish Institute for Human Rights. He has been one of the managers in charge of the project 'It takes all kinds', concluded in December 2012, which aimed to provide educational toolkits to address LGBT issues in the classroom.

The year of 2012 finished on a high note, with the conclusion of the project "It takes All Kinds" (ITAK), a project which aimed to provide educational materials for addressing and tackling homophobia in schools. The project was conducted by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) in cooperation with leading LGBT organisations in nine countries throughout Europe. The main outcome of the project is three websites, all of which have been translated to the languages of the nine participating countries: one for teachers; one for students; and one for LGBT organisations. The teacher website provides teaching materials and guides on teaching students about issues related to discrimination and homophobia. The student site has a more interactive and playful approach to the matter, and provides students with guidance on how to take action against homophobia in their respective countries. Finally, the site for LGBT organisations provides an (restricted) access forum, in which members of the organisations can share their experiences with each other.

A human rights approach to LGBT issues

Throughout the project, we saw that the brand of the DIHR and the use of human rights as an entry point opened doors for discussions of LGBT rights, in contexts where such discussions would usually be difficult. In many of the participating Eastern and Central European countries, local authorities were usually less willing to engage directly with LGBT organisations, but were eager to engage in a dialogue on human rights once DIHR got involved.

Using a broad human rights perspective on teaching LGBT rights can be useful in Western European countries as well. In a school in Ireland, the students expressed a degree of weariness at the prospect of talking about gay rights again: "Yes, yes – we've got the message!" But when we could put the LGBT rights issue into a broader perspective of non-discrimination and human rights, the

issue caught the interest of the students, as they were reminded why this issue remains important.

Progressing in East and West

When it comes to LGBT rights, there is a significant difference between Northern and Western Europe and Eastern and Southern European countries on the other. Where the former have generally come relatively far in recognising LGBT rights, the latter will often have strong political and institutional obstacles which must be overcome in order to secure basic protection against discrimination for LGBT persons. This can at times be an impediment to cooperation between LGBT organisations in different countries, as it makes it more difficult to find a common ground to work from.

By having a National Human Rights Institute as the coordinating body of the project, the differences in approach were mitigated by developing generic materials with a central entry point of respect for difference and human rights and focus on anti-discrimination at large which could be easily adapted to the local context. It also facilitated a mutual learning process and the possibility for local LGBT NGOs to share and exchange crucial best practices and lessons learned for their mutual benefit. Throughout the project, we have seen how students and teachers across the nine participating countries have benefited. The involved partner organisations and the general public of those countries have also benefited from the increased awareness surrounding the issue of homophobia.

What remains now is for the materials to be used. It is our hope that teachers and schools both within and outside of the nine participating countries will use ITAK to broach the subject of respect and equality to their students. We hope that you will help us spread awareness of the ITAK materials!

Find more information about the project here:

www.ittakesallkinds.eu

Advocacy guide for sexual diversity education published

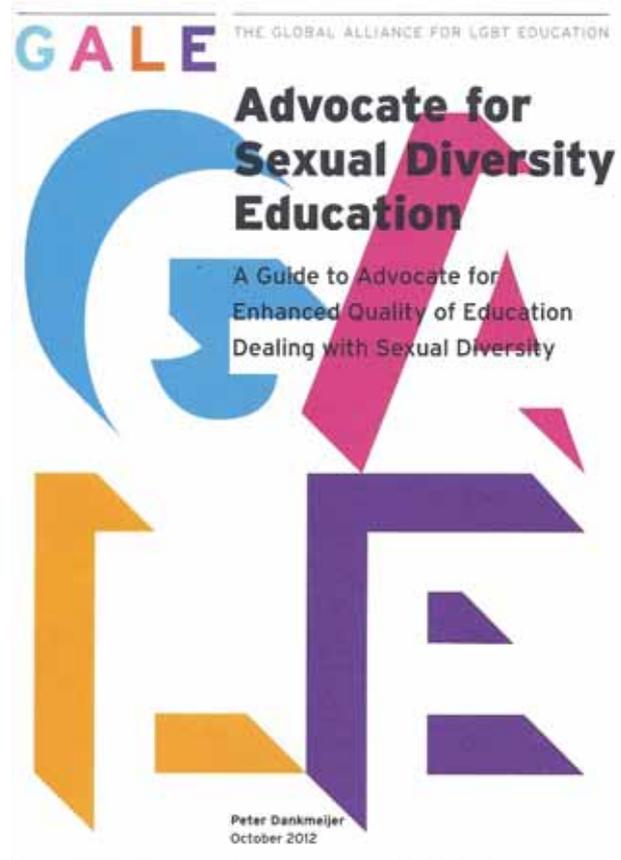
Peter Dankmeijer is director of EduDivers, the Dutch Expertise Centre on LGBT Education Issues. He founded the Global Alliance for LGBT Education (GALE) in 2004 and is currently executive director of the foundation supporting GALE. He presents in this article a recent publication, a guide to advocate in the area of sexual diversity education.

Global Alliance for LGBT Education (GALE) has published a new guide to advocate for sexual diversity education. The guide is a 40 page brochure, which offers guidelines on how to analyse the education context in your country, and helps advocacy organisations to make informed decisions on what national strategy would be most helpful to make education more inclusive for LGBT people. The guide can be downloaded from www.lgbt-education.info.

The core of the guide is a 15-point checklist which allows countries to analyse the local situation as related to the internationally recognised aspects of the right to education. The checklist yields a percentage score to what extent a state implements the right to education effectively for LGBT people, and in addition it points the way to whether a state should be labeled “denying”, “ambiguous” or “supportive”.

GALE recognises that advocacy strategies need to be different in every country and tailored to the local context. Without prescribing anything, it offers suggestions to develop a strategy by sketching some typical differences in “denying”, “ambiguous” or “supportive” states and by offering pointers on how to develop monitoring, research and action strategies in each of these contexts.

The GALE Guide is part on a 4 year project to create an international alliance to support the right to education for LGBT people. For more information mail to info@lgbt-education.info.



Homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools on the agenda of the Irish Government

Michael Barron is the Director of BeLong To that he co-founded in 2003. He presents below the recent initiatives taken by the Irish Government to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying and the role played by BeLong To to achieve those results.



The year of 2012 was a really important year for work on homophobic and transphobic bullying in Irish schools. The most critical advance was that the Irish Government implemented their commitment to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Homophobic and transphobic bullying have long been widespread in Irish schools. The majority of LGBT young people in BeLong To's national youth services have been bullied in school. Because they fear the consequences, they rarely report the bullying to their teachers or principals. Irish research studies have shown the devastating impact homophobic and transphobic bullying has on the mental health of LGBT young people, especially in relation to suicide and self-harm.

The most significant advances in tackling homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools were

National Anti-Bullying Action Plan: The Irish Minister for Education created a Working Group to develop a national anti-bullying Action Plan. The Action Plan recognises the serious impact of bullying on LGBT students and includes a number of targeted initiatives.

School Curriculum: The Irish government released a new sexual health curriculum focused on LGBT issues. In 2013, *Growing Up LGBT* will be distributed to all post-primary schools with lesson plans and resources for every school year.

Stand Up! Campaign: In 2012 BeLong To's annual awareness week against homophobic and transphobic bullying was marked in many schools across Ireland. It received huge TV and printed media attention.

Political support for LGBT young people: In 2012, education spokespeople from all political parties signed a commitment to work to end homophobic and transphobic bullying.

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO): Theme of 2012 was 'challenging homophobia and transphobia through education' and BeLong To marked it by 1) Speaking at the launch of UNESCO's global guide on tackling homophobic bullying; 2) Speaking in the Parliament about the rights of LGBT young people; 3) With GLEN, speaking at the Department of Education's national anti-bullying forum; 4) Writing an Op Ed about homophobic and transphobic bullying which was published in the Irish Times.



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