Youth empowerment: how to build GSAs in school?
6-8 November 2015, Amsterdam

COC Netherlands & ILGA-Europe
This morning...

• We will tell you all about the work of COC Netherlands in the field of education & youth

• Go into specifics of supporting teenage grassroots activism, in particular supporting Gay-Straight Alliances in schools.

• We won’t give you an outline of how this approach should work in your context, we will only talk about what has been successful for COC.

• After the presentation and questions we will invite you to talk about your regional realities.
Content of this presentation

• Who are we?
• The situation for LGBT youth in the Netherlands and the education system
• Our approach: inside-out
• Community: Young&Out
• Gay-Straight Alliances
  • How does a GSA look like?
  • What do GSAs do?
  • How can you support GSAs
• What if you perceive your situation as too unsafe? The Pink Elephant
• Result of the program
• How does it work in practice?
Who are we?

• COC is the oldest, still existing LGBT organisation in the world
• We are a federation of 20 autonomous organisations
• Focus: after successfully combating discriminatory legislation and gaining equal rights, now main focus social acceptance.
• COC Netherlands is national branch and works on several themes in NL and supports activists abroad.
LGBT Youth in the Netherlands

![Bar chart showing age at which young people in the Netherlands know they are 'different' and the age they come out.]

- Lesbian/bi girls
  - Age they know they are 'different': 14
  - Coming-out: 16

- Gay/bi boys
  - Age they know they are 'different': 13
  - Coming-out: 17
Dutch schools = still unsafe for LGBT

• Only 11 percent of all students say it’s safe enough to come-out at school.

• ¾ of LGB students experienced bullying and name-calling

• LGB youth give their lives a six, their straight peers an 8-

• Half of all students say they have problems with openly expressed homosexuality.
Dutch schools = still unsafe for LGBT

• Though education about sexual diversity is obliged, only half of all LGB students say they had education about this.

• Homo is the most used swear word in schools.

• Especially feminine boys and masculine girls are targeted.

• LGB youth have a weaker bond with their parents, skip classes more often, smoke more, use more drugs and report more psychological problems than their peers.
Result: LGBT youth are more depressed

• 50% of LGB youth says they had suicidal thoughts.

• 9% of gay/bi boys and 16% of lesbian/bi girls ever attempted suicide.

• This is up to 5 times higher than their straight peers.

• 51% of LGB youth that are out, say they they are bullied in the past year.
Result: LGBT youth are more depressed

- Scientific research showed a direct correlation between bullying and suicide amongst LGB youth

- For all this: this numbers will be higher for transgender youth, but only little research amongst this group has been done.

- Bisexual youth, religious youth, gender non conform youth
Education about sexual diversity in NL

• School system:
  • Primary school (6 – 12)
  • Secondary education (12 -18)
    • Pre-vocational education (15/16)
    • Higher general secondary education (16/17)
    • Pre-scientific education (17/18) Primary school (6 – 12)

• Higher education
  • Vocational education (15+)
  • Higher education (bachelors) (16+)
  • University (17+)
Education about sexual diversity

• Obligatory education about sexual diversity since 2012

• For last classes primary school (youth aged 10 – 12) and first classes of secondary education (youth aged 12 – 14)

• How schools talk about sexual diversity is their responsibility and they are free to do this in the way they want, as long there is respect for LGBT people
Questions?
COC’s storyteller approach

• Since ‘70s: storytellers in Dutch secondary schools

• Approach: an LGBT person talks about his or her life and organizes a dialogue about sexual diversity

• Autonomous groups all over the Netherlands from COCs
COC’s storyteller approach

- First time teenagers meet an LGBT person
- Dialogue about sexual diversity in schools
- Schools don’t take responsibility themselves
- Storytellers go away after class, COC is outsider
Happy school day

- Since 2000s: projects to make schools responsible
- Happy School Day: organize a diversity day at five schools
- Even with a substantial amount of money, schools did not want to participate
- After being turned down by school after school: COCs strategy had to be revised
Inside-Out

• COC is an outsider to schools: we are not the people that will change the environment, the insiders of schools will

• Also: if the LGBT people in schools are not visible in schools, who will ever hear their needs?

• If we support the insiders (students and teachers), we can help change the school for the better

• COC supports insiders. We help, connect, advice, empower the insiders: the ones that know their environment best.
Questions?
Start: community

• 2007: Danny & Gay Pride

• Website: jongenout.nl

• Youth activities in 15 locations

• Protected community
Ben jij lesbo, homo, bi, transgender of in dubio en zoek je vrienden die net als jij zijn?

Jong&Out is dé community voor lesbo's, homo's, bi's, transgenders en in dubio's tot en met 18 jaar

**MAAK CONTACT!**

**Chat!**
Gewoon lekker chatten met andere jongeren die net als jij zijn

**Vragen?**
Vind de antwoorden op je moeilijkste vragen op het forum

**Ontmoet!**
Op meer dan 15 plekken in Nederland worden Jong&Out-meetings georganiseerd
Jong&Out Arnhem: Het jaarlijkse Sinterkerst dobbelspel!

8 november 2015  12:00
COC Midden-Gelderland: St. Catharinaplaats 10 in Arnhem

Daar wordt aan de deur geklopt, hard geklopt, zacht geklopt... Horen we jou daar nu aan de deur kloppen? Top!
Kom binnen, want op 8 november vindt ons jaarlijks terugkerende Sinterkerst dobbelspel weer plaats. Je hoeft niets mee te nemen, want wij zorgen voor strooigoed en een aantal kleine cadeautjes. Deelname is gratis. Het lijkt ons leuk als je ook komt!

Den Bosch: Speculaas en pepernoten bakken

8 november 2015  13:00
Profiel

Persoonsgegevens

Naam: Laurens
Geboortedatum: 20-07-1996
Geslacht: Jongen
Woonplaats: Nijmegen

Biografie

Coordinator Jong&Out Pr- & Webteam, COC Youth Council/Anne Frank House/TNN
Ambassadeur en lid van de nationale GSA-raad.

Uiterlijk

Kleur ogen: blauw
Haarkleur: Ginger!
Lengte: 1.80

Relatie

Relatie: Helaas niet
Geaardheid: Hetero
Uit de kast?: Ja

Interesses

Favoriete zanger(es) / muziek genre: Van alles wat.
Hobby's: Portrettekenen
From community to movement: The Gay-Straight Alliance approach

• Core: LGBT students and their non-LGBT peers form an alliance (with supporting teachers).

• They try to set a new standard: everyone should be able to be who they are at school, and everyone should be able to feel safe at school.
What does a GSA look like?

• Student initiative: we support, they lead

• GSA: 9 students, 2 teachers

• Support of school board is important

• Whithin GSA: it doesn’t matter what you are or if you are out.

• Secondary education & vocational education
WHY DON'T YOU START A GSA?

GSA???

COC: A GSA, Gay Straight Alliance is a group of students (and supporting teachers) who want their school to be safe for everyone, whether Gay/Straight Lesbian Bisexual Transgender or Questioning.

GREAT IDEA!

YEAH!!!
LETS STOP HOMOPHOBIA!

The Frontliners

GSA INSIDE OUT:
Supporting young people to stand up for their LGBT friends

COC activates and supports Gay Straight Alliances
COC NETHERLANDS ACTIVATES, SUPPORTS AND BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO FIGHT LGBT BULLYING

SUPPORT
The GSA provides a safe environment in order to support LGBT students who want to discuss their challenges in life.

ACTION
- GSA sunrise
- School signs GSA manifesto
- Students sign GSA petition
- Day of silence
- Purple Friday
- Valentine project
- GSA party

INFORMATION
The GSA makes sure information about LGBTs is widely available at school, in library, in class, by teachers or storytellers or GSA members.

- Make sure the GSA is visible in and around school
- GSA Debate
- Posters and Flyers
- GSA week
- Facebook page
- Coming Out Day
GSAs support group

• Most important of all is that students in the GSA are a support to LGBT students
• Organize group activities
• LGBT representatives: the group is visibly setting social norm and get into dialogue with peers
• Students rather talk about issues with peers than with counselors
• GSAs show you: you are not the only one!
• E-mail address: anonimous contact with people that can understand you.
GSAs: make sexual diversity visible / dialogue

• Start at school board: ask them to take responsibility and sign manifest
• Ask students to sign petition
• Hang posters in the schools / campaign
• Join in national campaigns
• Ask for better services for transgender people / gender neutral bathrooms
GSAs: educating peers

• Some strong GSAs give informative classes about sexual diversity and gender identity
• Some GSAs will organise COC storytellers to visit the schools
• GSAs can give information in all sorts of ways. Think about the school library, in conversation, flyers or posters, give presentations or write papers/make assignments about sexual diversity and gender identity
• Try to get the school to use curricula about sexual diversity / gender identity in schools
What does COC do to support GSAs?

• Activate youth
• Give information to GSAs
• Support them with campaign materials / money
• Direct advice / support
• Connect GSAs to share experiences and good practices
Activate youth

• Through Young&Out
• Lots of social media: Facebook/instagram/tumblr/twitter
• Make LGBT teenagers and GSA visible in media: create role models
• Also: activate teachers.

• When students or teachers hear about us, they can order the free action pack on the website and start a GSA.
Providing GSAs with information

• GSAs can use the network of COC storytellers
• Websites like homogeschiedenis.nl (LGBT history) or iedereenisanders.nl (everyone is different, with all info about sexual diversity and gender identity)
• GSA curriculum for teachers
• Providing information about LGBT or (mental) health organizations.
Campaign materials / money

• GSAs can start with getting the free GSA action pack at COC. This contains campaign material to start up your GSA and make the subject visible in schools. Contains:
  
  + Guided letter
  + Stickers
  + Student guide materials
  + Teacher guide
  + Young &Out
  + Manifest
  + School board brochure
  + Petition
  + Information for school counselors
  + Astronaut
  + Posters
On the 2nd Friday of December, wear purple against homophobia.

At our school, 60% of all students and teachers wore purple.

I'm part of a movement.

I cannot believe how many people at my school support LGBTs.

Visit the (Dutch) website: www.gaystraightalliance.nl or Facebook www.facebook.com/GSAnl

Questions? Mail us at gsa@coc.nl
PAARSE VRUDAG

SMaken
VERSCHILLEN

DRAAG PAARS
VOOR GELIJKHEID
TUSSEN, HETERO'S, BT'S
TRANSGENDERS, LESBO'S
HOMO'S & IN DUBIO'S

11 December 2015
paarsevrijdag.nl

11 December 2015
paarsevrijdag.nl
PAARSE VRJGDAG

SMAKEN VERSCHILLEN

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11 December 2015
paarsevrijdag.nl
Advice

• Gaystraightalliance.nl contains lots of good practices that GSAs can use

• Direct contact with COC

• Locally: some COCs have GSA coordinators that give trainings and advice
  • At the moment we are training local COCs to be GSA coordinators
Een GSA opzetten is eigenlijk heel gemakkelijk. Bekijk dit filmpje hoe je dat kunt doen en lees hieronder verder wat je allemaal kunt doen met je GSA.
Connecting GSAs

• Twice a year a GSA congress
• Some trainings in the year
• Brainstorms
• On gaystraightalliance.nl students can find each other on a map
• Popular Facebook page facebook.com/gsanl and other social media
• In the future: Whatsapp
Questions?
COC supports – youth directs

• COC’s support is directed by youth themselves. We are in direct contact with youth (and teachers):
  • GSA council for youth
  • GSA council for teachers

Through Young&Out, GSA congresses, brainstorms and many times a year where we work with volunteers to make action packs, we stay in contact with youth.
What if schools are too unsafe for students to start a GSA?

- COC advocates on behalf of students/teachers
- Student/teacher stays anonymous
- Schools need to take responsibility, and often they do.
- Very often this will also result in GSAs or activities organized by schools.
Results of the program

• Movement of more than 500 GSAs throughout the Netherlands

• After 7 years, the GSA program reaches 80 % of all schools in the Netherlands

• Purple Friday 2015: 240,000 students wore purple to show their support for LGBT students
Results of the program

• GSA approach is the first project aiming at LGBT youth that is included in the Database for Effective Youth & Health interventions of the National institute of Health and Environment.

• First research and evaluations show that the program works.
  • GSA’s have a positive influence on their members, on LGBT’s and their allies.
  • GSA’s are also proven effective. LGBT students in schools with a GSA feel safer, come out of the closet at an earlier age and perform better at schools than students in schools without a GSA.
If the school management opposes the plans of the GSA, pupils can contact the Pink Elephant in order to mediate.

1. **Pupil(s)**
   - If the pupil or teacher has an action package and takes the initiative to set up the GSA:
     - Teacher finds pupils
     - Teacher always adopts a supporting role within the GSA. The teacher finds active pupils who want to set up a GSA and any other teachers who are also willing to provide support.
   - Pupil(s) seek(s) other pupils
     - Pupil(s) visit other classes, place a message on intranet, use the GSA petition or campaign with GSA posters from the action package.
   - Group plans a meeting and makes plans.

2. **GSA informs school management of the plans**
   - GSA participates in educational activities:
     - GSA engages in activities to make sexual diversity more visible and a topic to discuss.
     - GSA engages in activities in order to provide support to LGBT pupils.

3. **Ondersteuning icon**
   - COC Netherlands
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Teacher(s)

- Teacher always adopts a supporting role within the GSA. The teacher finds active pupils who went to set up a GSA and any other teachers who are also willing to provide support
- Teacher finds pupils

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4. **Ondersteuning COC Netherlands**

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- **GSA engages in educational activities**
- **GSA engages in activities to make sexual diversity more visible and a topic to discuss**
- **GSA engages in activities in order to provide support to LGBT+ pupils**

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Ondersteuning COC Netherlands
Activities of GSAs

- GSAs provide education
- COC Education on sexual diversity upon request
- GSAs request school management to sign a manifest in which they confirm to take action against LGBT discrimination
- GSAs request fellow pupils to sign a petition requesting not to use ‘homo’ as a swear word
- Self-designed actions (tips and good practices on www.xxxxxxxxxx.nl)
- Purple Friday: GSAs ask fellow pupils to wear purple against homo/trans/biphobia (annual campaign)
- International Day of Silence: Students stay silent to create awareness of the consequences of bullying
- Pupils discuss sexual diversity with their fellow pupils
- GSAs support LGBTIs during their coming-out and questions about sexual diversity

Support of COC Netherlands

- COC Education on sexual and gender diversity on request
- Sharing knowledge
- Homogeschiedenis.nl with information for papers and lessons
- GSA Lesson package on sexual and gender diversity
- GSA Fund where GSA can apply for subsidy
- Money and physical materials
- Action materials for national Purple Friday, International Day of Silence and one-off actions
- GSA action package with manuals, posters, stickers, information for school management, teachers and potential councillors
- Direct support by COC employees. Advice and guidance
- Exchange of knowledge and experiences
- Twice a year GSA Congress, when GSAs all meet to share knowledge and experience
- Map website on which the member GSAs can be found, as well as their contact details.