

The impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying on education and employment



Advocacy
Recommendations



Summary of research

In 2013, IGLYO commissioned research that examined the experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying within the educational context and its impact on employment and future career. An online survey targeted respondents in Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Poland.

The final results were drawn out of 187 survey responses, as well as a substantial number of complementary research reports.

The main conclusions of the research are as follows:

1. Experience or fear of bullying and/or discrimination can have specific impacts on young LGBTQ¹ people's education and employment opportunities
2. These impacts include loss of confidence, isolation, attendance and/or participation issues, and lack of motivation and/or concentration, resulting in potential disadvantages in academic attainment and/or achievement
3. Not all experiences of prejudice or harassment were from peers; teachers and/or family members were also sometimes responsible. Broader societal discrimination/pressures were also experienced negatively by participants. These issues are often not understood or acknowledged within a focus on 'bullying'

4. Identifying as LGBTQ can impact upon a person's plans or aspirations for the future, regarding choice of studies and/or career, as well as migration concerns
5. Migration issues were apparent in people's desires to avoid certain areas of education and/or employment, and in people's desire to move to locations with more progressive legislative frameworks in which to live their lives
6. Ongoing issues about fear, apprehension and/or a belief in the need to stay 'closeted' were apparent, including pervasive fears about securing and retaining employment as an 'out' LGBTQ person. Fear of prejudice can be as significant and influential as actual experiences of discrimination, for some people
7. LGBTQ identities are still experienced as, or assumed to be, stigmatised; even advocates and campaigners in this field were wary of acknowledging their (often voluntary) work on CVs and/or in job interviews
8. Caution is needed to not portray LGBTQ people as 'victims'; not all experiences of being young and identifying as LGBTQ are negative, so a 'one size fits all' approach from professionals working with young people may not be helpful

IGLYO calls on policy makers, school administrators, and teachers to combat all forms of homophobic and transphobic bullying in formal education. As demonstrated by the accompanying research, bullying has detrimental effects on an individual's personal and professional development. Such impacts reach everyone in society, when otherwise productive citizens do not reach their full potential.



Recommendations

IGLYO calls on the Council of Europe to:

- Strengthen the implementation and monitoring of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, particularly Article VI which addresses the right to education in a safe environment
- Provide tools for activists to combat bullying through national level advocacy
- Publish good practice from Council of Europe Member States on effective strategies to combat bullying

IGLYO calls on the European Union to:

- Produce and adopt an EU roadmap to LGBTQ equality which particularly addresses discrimination, harassment and bullying of LGBTQ people, hetero-normativity and gender normativity, teacher competences and non-inclusive policies in the field of education
- Promote the passage of the Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive with the strongest language available to protect from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression within education
- Provide further funding of LGBTQ projects particularly relevant to education
- Develop guidelines at EU level on preventing and responding to discrimination against LGBTQ people in education and to improving inclusion of such people
- Encourage and support research and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the experience of LGBTQ youth in Europe, in particular comparative data on the situation of young LGBTQ people in education

IGLYO calls on national governments to:

- Develop and promote anti-bullying policies and programs
- Enforce existing laws and/ or pass laws (if such law is non existent) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- Require and provide life-long continuing education for teachers in order to further develop their capacities in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

IGLYO calls on school systems and administrators to implement IGLYO's Minimum Standards² to Combat Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying:

- Policies and training: educational institutions must mandate diversity and/or anti-bullying policies or strategies that explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; all staff including teachers and administrators must receive training in order to have the competence to discuss topics and issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- Student support systems: all students and particularly those exposed to homophobic or transphobic bullying must have access to sufficient support services
- Systematic data collection: statistical data on homophobic and transphobic bullying in educational institutions must be collected systematically with the aim of identifying and monitoring the nature, extent and impact of bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- Multilevel policies and approach: anti-bullying policies and strategies that are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression must be pursued by all relevant stakeholders locally, as well as regionally, nationally and internationally



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Government of the Netherlands