

NATIONAL REPORT - POLAND

WP1: Modelling Non-Discriminatory VET Education Strategy

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

KA03 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMON VALUES

THE CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – LOT 1

EqUal iNcluslon of LGbTIQ stUdents in VET: “UNIQUE”

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Executive Summary

This report aims to show the attitudes of participants of Vocational Education institutions (both learners and teachers/trainers) towards LGBTIQ VET learners. The presented report refers to the situation in Poland. It also aspires to reach people directly involved in the national VET sector and listen to their opinions. Collecting their views on the situation of LGBTIQ people is a way to better understand the needs and specificity of the VET sector, but also to support VET Teachers/Trainers and Staff who have to cope with a diverse environment.

The topic of LGBTIQ people's status is very important and it appears more and more often in Poland. Especially in the education sector, it is worth paying attention to it. It is supposed that school environment should shape an attitude of openness and respect for diversity but sometimes it can also become a threat. That is why the role of education and good role models are so crucial. Within UNIQUE project, the attitudes of participants in Vocational Education in Poland will be examined, and materials will be created that will help and support education in the field of diversity and building an open environment.

The report contains an analysis of the existing data and data collected as a result of the research conducted among learners and teachers / trainers participating in Vocational Education in Poland. As part of the analysis of secondary data, reference will be made to reports on the status of LGBTIQ people in Poland. As part of the field research, an online survey and a series of interviews were conducted. In total, through the survey, IB Polska reached out to 101 VET learners and teachers/trainers while the in-depth interviews were organized with the participation of a vocational school teacher, a career counselor and a lecturer. Due to the pandemic and the applicable limitations, the research was conducted remotely.

In the report below, you will find a study on LGBTIQ discrimination in the VET sector, a description of policies, strategies and good practices at national level, information about organizations dealing with the topic, as well as conclusions from our own research.

Introduction

The project

Discrimination against LGBTIQ people is a reality, even in countries where LGBTIQ individuals' civic rights are well established. Despite the progress that has been made and their legal recognition in all OECD countries, LGBTIQ people are still far from being offered equal opportunities in education, work or healthcare. They are stigmatized and frequently refused access to normal jobs. The study of the Eurobarometer on Discrimination 2019 on how comfortable the respondents would feel if one of their colleagues would be a transgender person, is revealing, with the EU average to be below 50%. ***The exclusion of LGBTIQ people from the professional field could be further spiralled by early school drop-out and low performance which is an imminent result of constant bullying and direct discrimination*** (2015, Overview of Youth Discrimination in the European Union).

Nevertheless, ***current educational structure is distant from being characterized as inclusive***. On the contrary, it seems to be lagging the social reality, particularly *in the VET sector, which, counter to the compulsory education, has been neglected*.

Taking those elements into consideration, our project aims at ***reversing the perceptions and attitudes towards LGBTIQ learners in VET education***. Classic educational material replicates the traditional gender norms, contributing, thus, to the perpetuation of the discrimination and stereotypes, even unintentionally or unconsciously. Besides, ***VET teachers are not trained or prepared to openly discuss*** in the classroom issues that are considered "sensitive" or *may be biased themselves*.

The objectives of UNIQUE could be summarized as follows:

- **O1: Provide a renewed skillset** to VET teachers
- **O2:** Highlight the significance of **diversifying manuals and educational materials**
- **O3:** Introduce **new training methods** which promote the active involvement of **VET teachers**
- **O4: Reduce school drop-out rates**
- **O5: Motivate LGBTIQ people and provide a clear pathway towards employment**
- **O6:** Set up **effective monitoring mechanisms**
- **O7: Raise awareness on LGBTIQ issues, combat stereotypes**
- **O8: Promote equality, human rights and EU values**
- **O9: Support local economies with qualified workforce**

TARGET GROUPS

The UNIQUE project has a solid and coherent **multi-level approach** that is going to target both **individuals** (A) and **institutions** (B), ensuring that a useful transition from policy change to policy implementation is succeeded.

More specifically, the project strategy aims at engaging the following target groups:

Individuals

1. LGBTIQ People (i.e., VET students and communities)
2. VET teachers and Staff
3. Others (including): NGOs, Parents of LGBTIQ, employers, representatives of the educational or professional sector, trade unions etc.

Institutions

4. VET Providers
5. LGBTIQ organized communities and established institutions in European and national level
6. European and national authorities

EXPEXTED RESULTS

- 1) A comprehensive methodology on how to develop gender diversity friendly curricula, avoiding stereotypes and discriminatory patterns
- 2) A Curriculum that will promote gender-based diversity for the benefit of LGBTIQ students
- 3) Introduction of UNIQUE Ambassadors in VET environment
- 4) Roll out of the methodology on the field by screening VET curricula

Part A: Desk Research Results

A.1. LGBTIQ people in VET sector

According to a Dalia Research study from 2016, conducted in several European countries, in Poland about 5% of people identify themselves as LGBTIQ, while for people aged 14-29 it is about 10%, for people aged 30-49 - 1%, and for people aged 50-65 - 4%. It is hard to find more statistics and detailed data because of the fact that in a such personal matter as sexuality, even with a guarantee of anonymity, not everyone wants to answer. It is important to mention that in Dalia Research, there is still a great source of uncertainty with regards to the number, as 8% of the respondents preferred not to answer whether they identify themselves as LGBTIQ people and 12% were unable to define their sexuality.

The largest study regarding situation of LGBTIQ people in Poland was conducted by three Polish organizations for LGBTIQ rights: Campaign Against Homophobia, Lambda Warsaw Association, and Trans-Fuzja Foundation within 2015-2016 (<https://kph.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Situation-of-LGBTIA-Persons-in-Poland-10.07.pdf>). This report is added in a series of relevant studies that are being conducted on a regular basis by the same consortium of organizations since 1994. The edition that is illustrated in our report (2015-2016) is the latest one.

Its main aim is to carry out sociological and psychological analysis of the living conditions of LGBTIQ people in Poland. The study shows that the situation of non-heteronormative people has been worse in small cities and rural areas, due to lower level of education and income that are among the most important reasons which can explain the differentiation in the local population's attitude. What is more, as research indicated, sexual orientation and gender identity which differs from heteronormativity, usually are not tolerated by family members. More than half of gay men and lesbians are not accepted by any of their parents. Unfortunately, this problem affects one in three asexual persons, bisexual women, and transgender persons and four in five bisexual men. Lack of acceptance for one's sexual orientation or transgender identity by family members is associated with symptoms of depression, loneliness, and higher frequency of suicidal thoughts (according to the data from report "Situation of LGBTIA Persons in Poland" <https://kph.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Situation-of-LGBTIA-Persons-in-Poland-10.07.pdf>).

Another component that is being examined in the research is the significance of education in easier integration of LGBTIQ people in the society and in safeguarding their equal rights. The findings regarding educational system in Poland showed that activities focusing on supporting LGBTIQ school students should be aimed at educating society about LGBTIQ, raising social

acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, engaging in anti-violence activities in schools, increasing resources for psychological support for school students, and educating teachers.

In 2021, the latest research about the situation of LGBTIQ people in Poland was published by Campaign Against Homophobia and Lambda Warsaw Association. The research was conducted by the Center for Research on Prejudice of the University of Warsaw. The research "Social situation of LGBTIQ people in Poland 2019-2020" illustrated the negative experiences of the LGBTIQ community in Poland as a result of the discrimination they are confronted with by their colleagues, co-mates and social environment in general.

It is revealing that the number of LGBTIQ people reporting symptoms of depression has increased by more than half. Currently, the problem concerns almost every second respondent (44%), while in 2017 the respective percentage was 28%. At the same time, more than half (55%) of the respondents declared that they sometimes had thoughts of suicide (an increase from 45% in 2017 and 38% in 2012), with this issue to be particularly mentioned by people living in areas which have been declared "LGBTIQ-free zones" by local authorities. The research shows that 37% of respondents did not disclose their gender orientation / gender identity to anyone in their family (an increase from 33% in 2017). Only 55% of mothers and 40% of fathers knew about the non-heteronormative identity of their children.

It seems that friends are the main group which LGBTIQ people can open up and seek support - only 5% of the survey participants reported that their friends did not know anything about their gender identity or orientation. 25% of the respondents considered that it was better not to communicate their gender identity at the workplace. At the same time, the level of acceptance of children's gender orientation / identity by their own parents was considerably decreased, outlining that among mothers who knew about the sexual orientation of their children, only 61% accepted it (a decrease from 68% reported in 2017). It is even worse among fathers, as only 54% of LGBTIQ people could count on their tolerance (down from 59% in 2017). As the research shows, there is unfortunately a negative change over the last couple of years that is visible when we compare the research findings between 2016-2017 and 2019-2020 (https://kph.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Rapot_Duzy_Digital-1.pdf).

While there are strong indications about education in general, VET sector has been neglected; the information is limited. Considering, however, the results from the above analysed reports, it seems that the trends are similar. It is evident that there is a need for training and reskilling of both VET Learners and Teachers. Especially VET Teachers should be trained on how to talk

with their learners and how to help especially the LGBTIQ among them as well as how to build diversity groups that share common values and cooperate.

The report of the situation of LGBTIQ people in years 2015-2016 showcases some results that are referring to students (aged 13-19). It should be mentioned that students and youngsters from schools feel lonely more often than the adults and are more likely to have suicidal thoughts (69,4%) and to exhibit symptoms of depression. Regarding violent incidents and discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ people at schools - 26% of cases happened at school, while perpetrators were class mates at a percentage of 19,1% at the time. School was most often indicated as the place where respondents from this age group encountered violence the last time it happened. To offer a comparison, only 6,4% of respondents admitted that the last incident of this sort happened at home.

According to the respondents' declarations, forms of discrimination they most frequently had faced at school was verbal aggression and taunts; less often spreading negative opinions about them, insults, humiliation, and constant negative comments. Evidently, homophobic and transphobic peer violence is a prevalent problem in Polish schools. (<https://kph.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Situation-of-LGBTIA-Persons-in-Poland-10.07.pdf> p.132-133). The Campaign Against Homophobia conducted also a research at schools – LGBTIQ-friendly schools (<https://maparownosci.pl>). The students rated their schools in terms of their openness and safety towards LGBTIQ students. 22.000 people from all over the country had participated in the research and answered 17 questions concerning the presence of non-heteronormative persons, the attitudes of teachers and trainers, and possible discrimination in the facility. The critical factor on the existence of a school free of violence and discrimination was the systemic approach of the institution and teaching staff - the organization of Rainbow Friday, anti-discrimination workshops or addressing transgender people with their preferred name were among the practices that were referred as promoting equality and tolerance. In that sense, the principals and staff that exercised a more LGBTIQ-friendly attitude were also committed to the protection of human rights in general.

A.2. Policies, strategies and good practices at national level

The policies, strategies and good practices in Poland are implemented, in general, at schools. It should be noted, however, that there are no programs targeting VET sector specifically. Therefore, it is hard to list such practices.

Despite the fact that sex education has been approved as part of the Curricula in mandatory education, multiple analyses have proved that many schools do not implement it in practice.

Even when they do, it only covers safe sexual practices for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and general instructions on topics related to homosexuality. The LGBTIQ education in Poland is provided mainly by NGOs, like the one that was mentioned above -The Campaign Against Homophobia- that provides workshops, but also materials both for students and teachers. The Campaign Against Homophobia organizes also the LGBTIQ friendly school ranking - which helps to show good practices at schools and also provides information about the schools that are friendly and open. So far, training programs about LGBTIQ representation have not been provided by the Ministry of National Education in Poland. This is why the Polish educational system regarding LGBTIQ has been criticized by many authorities abroad.

Good practices regarding LGBTIQ education that are implemented at schools depend totally on the policy of the school. In LGBTIQ-friendly schools, the staff organizes workshops to promote anti-discrimination practices. Other practices entail the establishment of days called „Rainbow Friday” - „Tęczowy piątek” – an action that is initiated by the Campaign Against Homophobia in order to show solidarity to LGBTIQ youth and support them at their school environment. The action aspires to create a school that is a safe and friendly place for every young person, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender characteristics.

The campaign was launched for the first time on 28th of October 2016 and since then it has been organized every year on the last Friday of October. 75 schools participated in the first edition of the action. Two years later, the number of participating schools had reached over 200 institutions but in 2019 this initiative stopped abruptly as the core piloting period of the project ended. In 2020, it was hard to collect relevant data due to COVID-19 restrictions and the fact that many schools were on remote education. The campaign is publicly supported by Polish artists, politicians, activists and clergy who appeared in a spot promoting the campaign "I stand on the side of the youth".

Nevertheless, there were serious setbacks in the delivery of these activities as the Ministry of National Education expressed its opposition to "Rainbow Friday", considering the action to be contradictory to the culture and tradition of Poland. In 2019, to oppose to Rainbow Friday, the Ministry of National Education initiated an action under the slogan "School remembers", under which students and teachers had to participate in common activities of a different scope. This has caused a backlash in social media with the hashtag #tęczowypiątek to be the most popular for 5 hours on Polish Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The # was also popular among politicians.

So far, the Rainbow Friday has been the largest educational action in solidarity to LGBTIQ people in Polish schools regarding LGBTIQ rights.

A.3. Useful contacts

Campaign Against Homophobia - NGO that is active in anti-discrimination field and also provides many research and publication regarding LGBTIQ+ in Poland - <https://kph.org.pl/kontakt/>

Janina Daily - Polish activist and educator on Instagram - actively involved in activities for the benefit of LGBTIQ people (<https://www.instagram.com/janina.daily/?hl=pl>), popular in different age group, mainly 20-30 years old)

Lambda Warsaw Association - <http://lambdawarszawa.org> - Lambda Warszawa is an organization that works to support people who find themselves in a difficult situation due to their psychosexual orientation or gender identity, as well as those who have experienced or are experiencing discrimination and violence for these reasons.

Center for Research on Prejudice University of Warsaw - The Center is an academic research unit that deals with the topic of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. It was established in 2007 - <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/>

DOM EQ - Krakowskie Centrum Równości – Equality Centre in Kraków – the centre has opened in 2019. The main aim of the organization is to create an open environment for LGBT+ in Kraków. They run workshops and campaigns. <https://www.facebook.com/domeq.krak/>

Part B: Primary Research Results

B.1 Interviews and focus groups summary

Conducting research, including an online survey, interviews and focus groups proved to be a challenging task. During the process, we encountered many problems and difficulties in reaching out to the participants, especially for the conduction of interviews and focus groups. Initially, IB Polska sent an invitation containing key information about the project directly to VET schools at secondary level and school complexes that include both VET school and high school, post-secondary schools (both universities and VET schools at post-secondary levels) and other institutions (using the official e-mail addresses available on the websites), with limited success. Through our persistent communication, however, we identified two experts who accepted to participate in the in-depth interviews. Unfortunately, the conduction of the focus groups was not possible, due to the fact that LGBTIQ issues is a very sensitive topic in Poland and people are reluctant to discuss it openly.

Our first interviewee, a VET Teacher, manifested that the current atmosphere at schools is not conducive to open conversation and is not LGBTIQ-friendly. She emphasized that there are cases of consent to discrimination and negative behavior. The teacher gave an example that when the headmaster wanted to organize Rainbow Friday, he received a phone call from the school board (a branch of the Ministry of Education in the voivodeship) which provoked him for organizing such events at school. So, this idea was abandoned. Given the circumstances, principals and teachers tend to avoid applying to participate in the Rainbow Friday, probably due to the fear of possible reprisals from institutional actors. This might explain why VET Managers/Board of Directors did not agree to organize focus groups in their institutions as well as our difficulty to approach VET learners who, under of fear of stigmatization, refused to participate in the respective focus group.

Admittedly, the online survey, due to its anonymity and digital delivery, proved much easier to be filled in. We collected 101 answers, which gave us an insight of the current status quo in Polish VET schools. The results are presented in details below.

Interviews

The interviews were successfully conducted with the following people: two VET teachers (including a beginner as a professional counsellor), an academic lecturer and a person working in higher education in the university's social responsibility department. The first VET Teacher/Trainer had almost 30 years of experience in both VET and high schools and also offered lessons to individual learners.

The first question was about the definition of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. All interviewees emphasized that, in their opinion, discrimination is the omission of certain groups due to selected features, but it can also take the form of a negative impact on people with certain features or a denial of the existence of a given group. Nevertheless, when asked to provide concrete examples, not all of them were able to provide some, emphasizing that they had not encountered discrimination in their practice, and had not been direct witnesses to it. Only the most experienced VET Teacher had to report incidents of paying attention to the appearance of students or their accessories as well as verbal taunts and jokes (both from teachers and students) that happened in her presence. The academic teacher, on the other hand, emphasized that, a question about certain features, e.g. sexual orientation, may already constitute discrimination, because this feature is irrelevant in education, it does not affect what a student does.

To the next question about whether sexual characteristics, gender identity or sexual orientation are protected under the law according to the interviewees' knowledge, only the staff member who works in the corporate social responsibility department replied that she was aware of. She mentioned the Diversity Charter of the Labor law, while she emphasized that, at international level, LGBTIQ rights result from respect for human rights. The rest of the interviewees replied that they did not know any regulations or solutions that would protect LGBTIQ identity either in general or in the VET sector. The teacher also emphasized that there is no direct reference to these features in the schools' statutes. There are only general records about respect for every human being. Moreover, the interviewees were not able to identify an authority or organization where they could refer an LGBTIQ person experiencing discrimination to.

Moving forward to the next question about how serious the discriminatory incidents within their VET environment had been and if they believed they were widespread or not, the respondents agreed that, unfortunately, discrimination is a common phenomenon, and it results, inter alia, from the atmosphere prevailing both across the country and at schools. According to them, the attitude of the headmaster and the teachers are key factors because they are role models for students. Especially the headmasters' attitude, plays a key role as they enjoy additional recognition and respect due to their authority.

With regards to other root causes for the existence of such phenomena in the VET sector, one interviewee was of the opinion that discrimination comes from the lack of education and understanding of diversity that is observed in the VET sector, implying that despite the differences, we are all the same. Another important factor is the media narrative, which

cultivates negative attitudes towards LGBTQI people. Put on a participant's quote in the interview: "However, it is a very short way and history that has already made people accountable for such attitudes". The academic teacher noted that due to the fact that higher-level education usually is offered in larger cities, and people from various backgrounds participate in them, it may also bring positive effects as young people tend to realize that being different is not something to be afraid of.

As described above, the main manifestations of discrimination in the VET sector mentioned by the interviewed participants include verbal acts, but also exclusion from group activities. The interviewees were not aware of any central practices or policies aimed at counteracting discrimination, considering them as not effective because imposing solutions from above does not bring the intended results. It is necessary to change attitudes instead. It should be also highlighted that if such initiatives exist or are under elaboration, they are not propagated in any way; thus VET Teachers/Trainers are not aware of where to refer to. Another opinion that was expressed by the person working in the CSR department at the university was that the known policies and strategies are declarative and are based on the consent of the institute and its activities. So, instead of establishing new central strategies to facilitate the access and equal participation of LGBTIQ VET Learners, it is preferable to invest in creating the right conditions for openness so that teachers or students are not afraid to report discriminatory incidents and, above all, they know how to react.

Everyone who participated in the interviews agreed that training is needed for teachers in order to learn how to react in discriminatory incidents, how to talk to VET learners (both LGBTIQ and heterosexual), what language to use, as colloquial language can sometimes be hurtful. Another dimension that was brought in surface was that there is a visible lack of knowledge about anti-discrimination strategies. This is mainly due to the shortcomings in teacher education, as there are no training courses dedicated to anti-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Moreover, the current atmosphere in Poland and the narrative of some institutions (including governmental ones) expresses a silent consent to discrimination and there are no top-down solutions that could be applied.

Overall, in VET schools (especially at the secondary school level), there are no anti-discrimination solutions and VET Teachers are unaware of central policies or strategies. On the contrary, there seem to be some solutions at college level, such as, for example, the aforementioned Diversity Charter, the Ombudsmen or specially designated persons to whom LGBTIQ people can report discrimination on the basis of various features, like the one that covers the experts employed at universities. Maybe this practice could be replicated in the

VET sector as well, offering safe spaces for victims of discrimination to open up about their challenges and develop coping mechanisms.

B.2. Online survey analysis

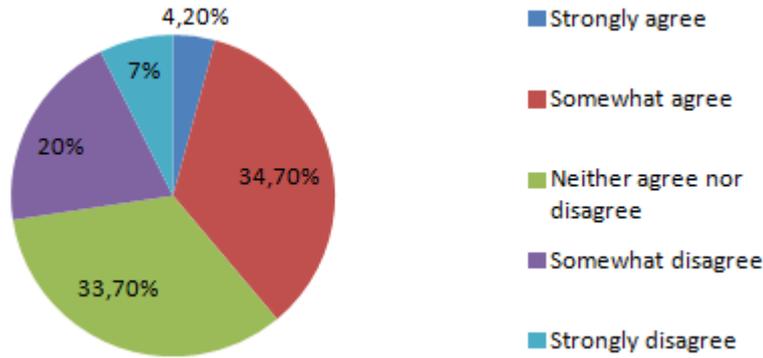
The survey took the form of an online questionnaire, provided in Google Form and translated in Polish. Each question was a single choice question. The link to the survey was sent, among others, to thematic groups on Facebook (e.g. groups of people who are registered in VET schools), or, via email, to the principals of VET schools and to VET teachers with a request to share the link among students. Selected people operating on social media (mainly Instagram) were also asked to share a link to the survey among their followers.

Overall, 101 people took part in the survey.

53,2% of the respondents to the questionnaire (the biggest group) were aged 15-19 years old, 26,6% respondents aged 15-19 years old, 15,3% of respondents aged 30-39 years old, 13,6% of respondents aged 20-29 years old, 9,6% - people 30-39 years old, 8,5% 40-49 years old and 2,1% - aged 50-59 years old. More than half of the respondents were women (61,3%) and one third (31,2%) were men. 4,3% of respondents stated their gender as "Other", while 3.2% of respondents would prefer not to answer this question. Most of the people participating in the survey defined their sexual orientation as „Straight” (51,1%) while 28,7% people did not want to answer this question. 8,5% of respondents chose the answer „Bisexual”, 3,2% - „Pansexual”, 1,1% - „Gay/Lesbian” and 7,4% „Other”. The vast majority of the respondents were VET Learners/Trainees (84,1%) and only 15,9% VET Teachers/Trainers. This is indicative of the VET Teachers/Trainers’ reluctance to participate in a survey of such a sensitive thematic area. However, the lack of parity in the online survey results is counterbalanced by the fact that focus groups with VET Learners were not organized due to the unfavourable social and educational environment.

Below are the tables with details regarding the questions from part.

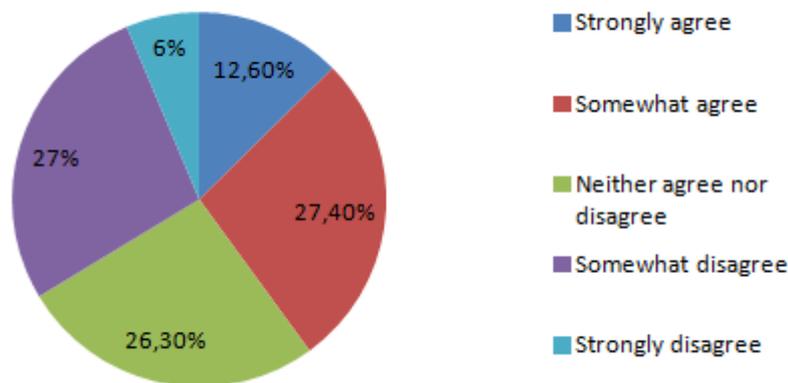
LGBTIQ students/trainees in VET environments LGBTIQI people are generally respected in VET environments



Strongly agree	4,2% (4 respondents)
Somewhat agree	34,7% (33 respondents)
Neither agree nor disagree	33,7% (32 respondents)
Somewhat disagree	20% (19 respondents)
Strongly disagree	7,4% (7 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

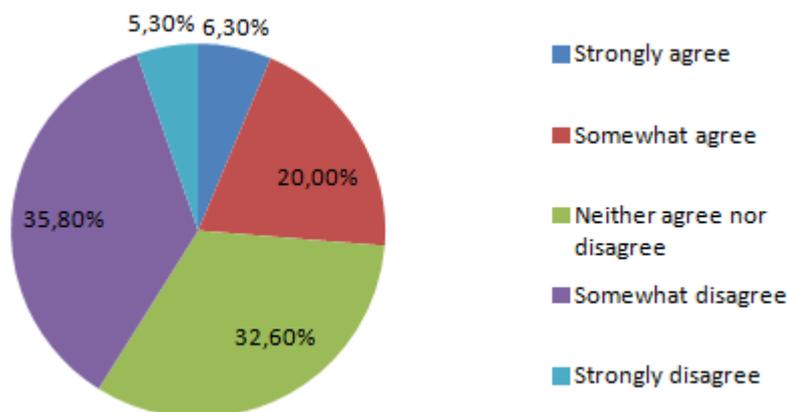
A VET student/trainee can be openly LGBTIQ in a VET environment



Strongly agree	12,6% (12 respondents)
Somewhat agree	27,4% (26 respondents)
Neither agree nor disagree	26,3% (25 respondents)
Somewhat disagree	27,4% (26 respondents)
Strongly disagree	6,3% (6 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

VET environments are safe and inclusive for LGBTIQ students/trainees

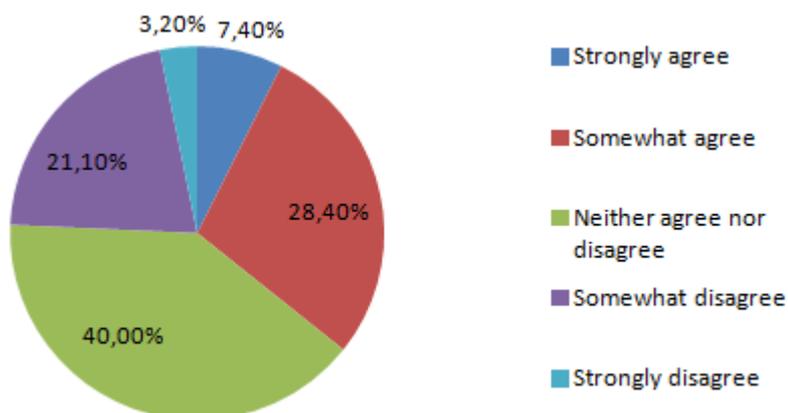


Strongly agree	6,3% (6 respondents)
Somewhat agree	20% (19 respondents)
Neither agree nor disagree	32,6% (31 respondents)
Somewhat disagree	35,8% (34 respondents)
Strongly disagree	5,3% (5 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

The findings from the answers in these last three questions are contradictory; the majority of the participants (68,4% in total) seemed to agree at some extent or to be neutral that LGBTIQ people are generally respected within VET environments while these percentages drop when they were asked if a person can be openly LGBTIQ (53,7% in total) or whether VET environment is safe and inclusive (52,6%). This might be the outcome of a perceived hostility in society in general and in the VET sector in particular about LGBTIQ or an indication that the respondents recognize only overt forms of discrimination as such and are unable to identify concealed acts of bullying.

Trainees/students are often harassed, bullied and/or discriminated against for being LGBTIQ in VET environments

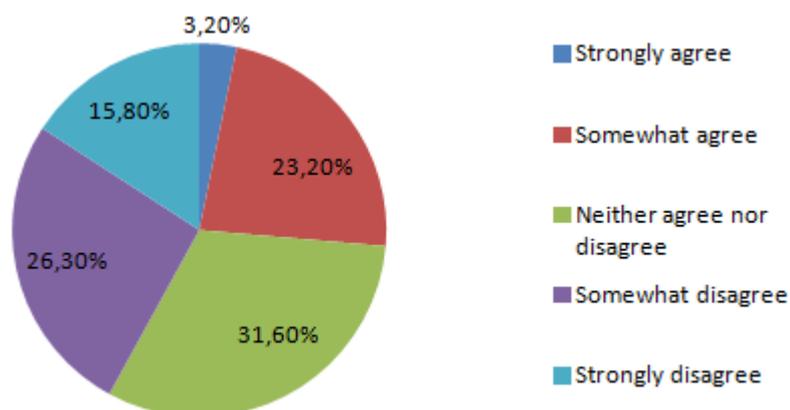


Strongly agree	7,4% (7 respondents)
Somewhat agree	28,4% (27 respondents)
Neither agree nor disagree	40% (38 respondents)
Somewhat disagree	21,1% (20 respondents)
Strongly disagree	3,2% (3 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

The findings from the answer for this above question shows that the majority of participants are not aware of LGBTIQ VET Learners being harassed, bullied or discriminated against for their identity among trainees/students in VET environments (40% of respondents chose answer “Neither agree nor disagree”). This may be because the respondents have not seen or experienced such phenomena in their environment. However, it should be noted that more respondents agree (35% of “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”) that phenomena such as bullying or discrimination against LGBTQI appears in VET environment.

VET teachers/trainers usually have the proper skills to effectively handle cases of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination against LGBTQI students/trainees and support the victims.

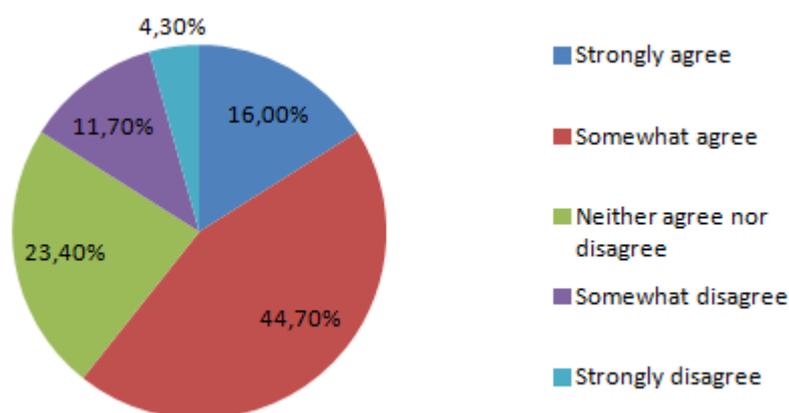


Strongly agree	3,2% (3 respondents)
Somewhat agree	23,2% (22 respondents)
Neither agree nor disagree	31,6% (30 respondents)
Somewhat disagree	26,3% (25 respondents)
Strongly disagree	15,8% (15 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

The majority of the respondents disagree that VET teachers/trainers usually have the proper skills to effectively handle cases of bullying, harassment or discrimination against LGBTIQ learners and support victims. There is a lack of such skills that needs to be effectively addressed.

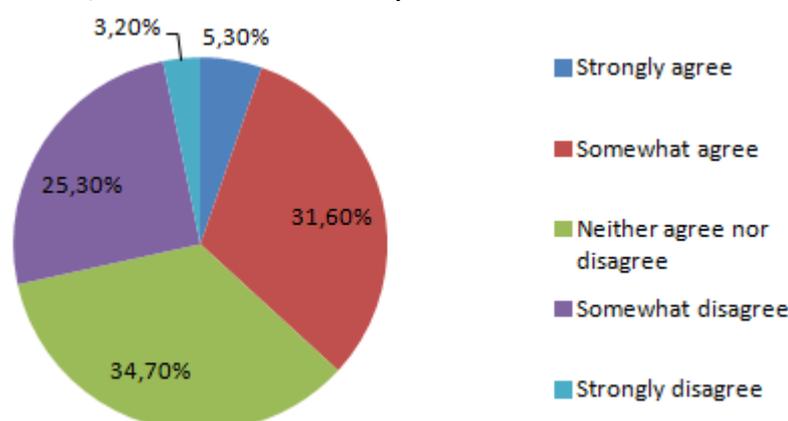
People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are usually other VET students/trainees.



a) Strongly agree	16% (15 respondents)
a) Somewhat agree	44,7% (42 respondents)
a) Neither agree nor disagree	23,4% (22 respondents)
a) Somewhat disagree	11,7% (11 respondents)
a) Strongly disagree	4,3% (4 respondents)

94 respondents answered the above question.

People who (possibly) bully, harass and or discriminate against LGBTIQ VET students/trainees in a VET environment, are usually VET professional staff (e.g., VET teachers/trainers, administrative staff etc.)



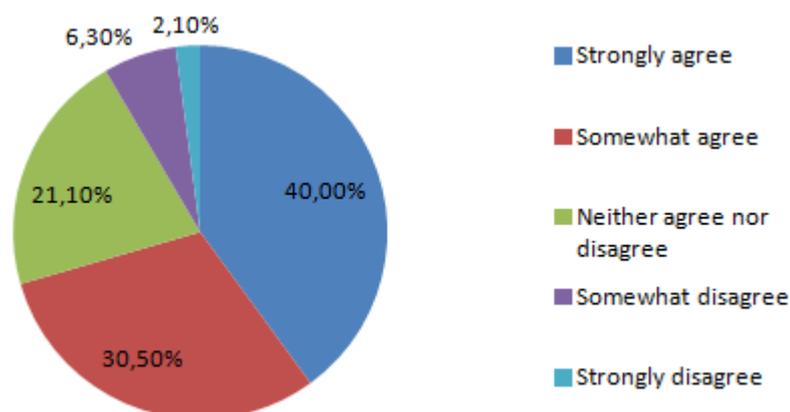
a) Strongly agree	5,3% (5 respondents)
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a) Somewhat agree	31,6% (30 respondents)
a) Neither agree nor disagree	34,7% (33 respondents)
a) Somewhat disagree	25,3% (24 respondents)
a) Strongly disagree	3,2% (3 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

The findings from two latest question show that according to the respondents' opinions, VET learners/trainees are more often the perpetrators of bullying harassment or discrimination against their LGBTIQ classmates (60,7%) than teachers/professionals (36,9%).

Measures preventing and combatting bullying, harassment against and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ students/trainees should be taken in VET environments.



a) Strongly agree	40% (38 respondents)
a) Somewhat agree	30,5% (29 respondents)
a) Neither agree nor disagree	21,1% (20 respondents)
a) Somewhat disagree	6,3% (6 respondents)
a) Strongly disagree	2,1% (2 respondents)

95 respondents answered the above question.

The majority of respondents agree that activities/measures preventing and combating bullying, harassment or discrimination against LGBTIQ learners/trainees should be introduced in VET environment. (70.5%). This confirms that the topic is important to the VET community and should be raised more frequently. The lack of such initiatives may also result in the lack of adequate skills for coping with difficult situations among VET Teachers/Trainers. This lack was confirmed by the respondents in their answers to the previous question.

After students have completed their training, they may have to provide LGBTIQ clients with their services. Which of the following answers represents the way you think this should be dealt with in your VET courses?

I refuse to discuss LGBTIQ issues in my courses	3,1% (1 respondent)
I prefer not to discuss LGBTIQ issues in my courses	28,1% (9 respondents)
I will provide neutral information on LGBTIQ issues in my courses	34,4% (11 respondents)
I will be generally positive towards LGBTIQ issues in my courses	21,9% (7 respondents)
I will urge the students to take the specific needs of LGBTIQ persons into account	12,5% (4 respondents)

32 respondents answered the above question.

After having completed your training, you may have to provide LGBTIQ clients with your services. Which of the following answers better represents the way you are going to deal with them?

I will refuse to provide my services to them	2,8% (2 respondent)
I will prefer not to provide my services to them	2,8% (2 respondent)
I will provide my services to them while being distant	11,1% (8 respondents)
I will be friendly/professional but not interested to their needs as LGBTIQ persons despite the fact that these needs may be linked to the services provided.	36,1% (26 respondents)
I will be friendly/professional and take their needs as LGBTIQ persons into account	47,2% (34 respondents)

72 respondents answered the above question.

The answers to this question show a positive attitude of VET Learners / trainees towards LGBTIQ people. The majority of respondents admitted that they will take the needs of LGBTIQ persons into account when they offer their services. This is a positive step which further stress the need for specialized trainings for VET Teachers/Trainers as it comes in contrast with their



neutral attitude when they were asked if they would talk about LGBTIQ issues in their classrooms.

Part C: Conclusions

The situation of LGBTIQ people in the VET sector is a topic that requires an extensive investigation as it has been neglected in comparison to other levels of education. The analyzed data, both the existing data and the reflections from the interviews, confirm the important role of education in shaping a good environment and conditions for LGBTIQ people. The findings from reports show that activities focusing on supporting LGBTIQ VET learners should be aimed at educating society about LGBTIQ, raising social acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, engaging in anti-violence activities in schools, increasing resources for psychological support for VET learners, and training teachers. With regards to the national literature review, there are no data regarding VET sector specifically, but, taking into account the general trends from reports regarding the situation of LGBTIQ people in Poland in general and at schools of all levels in particular, it seems that VET education follows the same path.

The findings of the desk research were also confirmed by the interviews conducted. One of the VET teachers who was interviewed, emphasized how important it is to understand the topic and needs of LGBTIQ people. Moreover, everyone who participated in the interviews agreed that education has offered a better understanding on the topic and people's attitudes have started to switch to more tolerant ones because they are not afraid of the diversity in sexual orientation and gender expression anymore. More and more people understand that, despite the differences, people are similar and thus their attitude is changing. It is also worth emphasizing that a significant proportion of the respondents participating in the online survey agreed that there should be trainings and measures preventing and combatting bullying, harassment and/or discrimination against LGBTIQ learners/trainees that are taking place in VET environments.

Another important element that should be noted is the lack of dedicated policies and strategies for counteracting discrimination against LGBTIQ people, both in education in general and in the VET sector in particular. Of course, there are provisions on counteracting discrimination, but these are rather general ones, with no specificity in the educational context as well as to the different age groups. Towards this end, some universities have signed the Diversity Charter or prepared their own regulations.

Last but not least, it should be emphasized that the regulations themselves are not sufficient, and their implementation is not always effective. As the research has shown, the attitude of managers, e.g. school principals, is very important. It is the directors who largely define the environment and activities at school.

Last but not least, we should not forget about external factors that influence the status of LGBTIQ people, such as the political environment. Legal changes carried out by the government or politicians may significantly limit, for example, the activities of VET organizations in the field of diversity or LGBTIQ rights at schools.

In conclusion, the whole research acknowledges that training in the field of non-discrimination can be a key element in creating an open society and a good environment for LGBTIQ people, also in the VET sector. Education should not only shape knowledge, but also build the attitudes of VET staff, especially within a sector where the role of authorities is very important.

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