

Transcending Barriers: Promoting Trans Inclusion in the Workplace National Report

LITHUANIA

Vytautas Magnus University

December 2025



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Title: Transcending Barriers. National Report: Lithuania

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Date: December 2025



Co-funded by
the European Union

The project "Transcending Barriers. Promoting Trans Inclusion in the Workplace." (reference code 101144262) is co-funded by the European Commission under the call CERV-2023-EQUAL Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values.

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1. Highlights

- **Transgender and non-binary people’s experiences looking for work and at work in Lithuania range from complete hostility to acceptance, yet essentially, their career choices are primarily guided by avoiding hostile environments and seeking safety.** In different situations, people face condemning looks, humiliation, disbelief, direct or indirect insults, forced coming out, pressure to quit their job, to fit the gendered work norms and others. Positive experiences at work are also not rare; they are defined mainly by the acceptance of at least some of the colleagues or simply by not facing direct hostility.
- People’s experiences highly differ depending on: **(1) the status of their official documents; (2) the type of workplace they work in; (3) their personal ties with the colleagues.** Cutting through all these factors are **people’s socio-economic circumstances (social class)**, where workplaces or positions with lower qualification requirements, lower education, lack of financial security, and lower accessibility of institutional and other support signify much higher vulnerability and less safety in people’s experiences looking for work and at work.
- **A gender diverse organisational culture is not widely practised.** The scope of this research suggests that diversity inclusion (DI) is generally more prevalent among large international corporations, some of which have specific practices and measures regarding gender diversity. Other workplaces often foster a very general idea of equality or rely on the “openness” of the employees, addressing emerging situations on a case-by-case basis after they emerge.
- **Inclusive stances matter.** Although people believe that an inclusive culture of workplaces can be superficial, used solely for PR purposes and not necessarily well implemented in the day-to-day, *they significantly value it regardless*, implying the vulnerability of the gender diverse community in finding safety at work. The official LGBTQIA+ friendly organisational stances and policies are emphasised as significant and hopeful.



2. Introduction

Transgender people remain one of the most marginalised and most frequently targeted by discrimination societal groups in Lithuania (European Commission, 2023). Like in many other European and international contexts, this group of people is highly pathologised and ideologised in the public sphere (Rūkaitė, 2024). Such a societal atmosphere inevitably affects very practical aspects of people's lives such as the ability to earn a living and feel basic safety at work. This research departs from the fact that work is not merely an opportunity for a career path but an essential need to earn a living, a cornerstone for well-being, dignity and recognition.

This report presents research results on transgender and non-binary people's experiences and perceptions of HR and managerial professionals in the workplace in Lithuania. The research aimed to (1) examine the lived experiences of transgender and non-binary people in the area of work in Lithuania, (2) to identify the challenges that arise in work relations in terms of inclusion and non-discrimination as well as (3) to understand the positions of the employers and the current practices of inclusion they employ (or do not employ) at their workplaces. For this purpose, both qualitative and quantitative research were conducted. The focus of both methods was primarily on experiences and opinions of transgender and non-binary people but also included perspectives of HR professionals and people in management positions, and the quantitative survey also included experiences of members of the broader LGB+ community. The research is part of an international project "Transcending Barriers: Promoting Trans Inclusion in the Workplace" aiming to fight discrimination of transgender and non-binary people in work relations. Research results will inform the development of training and mentoring programmes for employees and community members.

3. Legal and political context of trans people in Lithuania

3.1. Context

In Lithuania, 2021 marked a significant rise in the political, religious, and social movements opposing the so-called "gender ideology", meaning resistance towards the advancement of the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons, including transgender persons (Leonaitė & Jurgaitis, 2021). Due to political initiatives in Lithuania at that time (Istanbul Convention and gender-neutral partnership-related) there has been a significant increase in the number of publications in the public sphere that portray the LGBTQIA+ community in a negative light. In February 2021, for instance, negative portrayals exceeded publications of a positive context by 18 times (Media4Change, 2021). A 2021–2023-year national media publications analysis revealed that public discourse around gender diversity continues to be heavily shaped by ideologizing “political” debates rather than people’s own perspectives, as peoples’ voices were represented in less than 2% of over 2700 content units (Rūkaitė, 2024). At the same time, 2024 public opinion survey showed that 53% of respondents claim they receive information about transgender people from the internet and even 47% from the media (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2024).

The 2024 public opinion poll also revealed that a significant proportion of Lithuanians claim they would feel uncomfortable with the mere presence of transgender people: 35% would feel uncomfortable if a transgender person had a leading position in the government, 36% if a transgender person worked at their child’s school, and 20% if a transgender person lived in their neighbourhood. Whilst 50% of respondents agreed that transgender people in Lithuania often face difficulties when looking for a job, only 22% said they would feel comfortable if a transgender person worked at their workplace (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2024).

The vulnerability of transgender people in the labor market was revealed by a 2020 survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2020), which showed that 30% of transgender people in Lithuania felt discriminated against in the last 12 months when looking for work or at work because they are transgender. Despite that, as many as 93% reported not seeking help. Although research on transgender people in Lithuania is generally scarce, in 2024-2025 the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson significantly contributed to understanding the situation of transgender and non-binary people in Lithuania (Laugalytė, 2024). The qualitative study about people’s experiences in work relations showed that people experience discriminatory, harassment-like, and other kinds of hostile behaviour during the process of looking for a job as well as at their workplaces, experiences varying from psychological violence to social isolation and gossip (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2025). This report adds insights into people’s experiences in the work sphere from an intersectional perspective, articulates their needs as well as perspectives of HR and similar professionals.

3.2. Legal Framework

In 2025 Lithuania scored 5 points out of 32 in terms of legal and social protections for transgender people (Transgender Europe, 2025). Nevertheless, there have been several significant changes in the partial realisation of transgender and non-binary people's rights in recent years. In 2022, the Lithuanian Minister of Health signed an order regulating some healthcare services required by transgender people (Lietuvos Respublikos sveikatos apsaugos ministerija, 2022). The description defines two areas: the diagnosis of "gender identity disorder" and the procedure for prescribing hormone replacement therapy. While these changes are mostly positive, in Lithuania they are contingent on a diagnosis by a psychiatrist (and the Consilium), which is no longer in line with the latest International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) and is generally considered as pathologizing, infringing on people's dignity and autonomy (Alvarez, 2022).

Since February 2022 an order by the Minister of Justice came into force, allowing people who have a diagnosis of "transsexuality" to change their first and last names according to their identity in a simplified administrative procedure (Lietuvos Respublikos teisingumo ministerija, 2021), instead of going through court procedures. Although people can change their names more easily, this procedure does not allow changes of the gender marker, allows only gendered names, is also time-intensive, and has excessive requirements: a diagnosis of "transsexuality", a person must not be married, be of legal age, and others. It is noteworthy that due to different orders of health and justice ministries, restrictions on transgender people holding certain professional positions, such as prosecutor, judge, notary, bailiff, lawyer, and assistant lawyer, were lifted (Laugalytė, 2024).

Although the Equal Opportunities Act, the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act, and the Labour Code prohibit discrimination in employment, neither gender identity nor gender expression has yet been included as a separate grounds for non-discrimination in the Lithuanian legal framework. This means that people are not specifically protected neither generally nor in the work sphere. As of 2025, employers with more than 50 employees are obliged to adopt and publish the organization's equal opportunities policy and measures for its implementation (National Labour Inspectorate, 2025), a reality that has yet to be monitored. Since the rights of gender diverse people are not ensured and protected by the legal system, it is essentially left for the workplaces themselves.

4. Methodology

The objectives of the study were (1) to explore the experiences of transgender and non-binary people in the workplace and identify needs that could contribute to better employment and inclusion opportunities; as well as (2) to explore the experiences and practices of HR and management professionals in relation to diversity inclusion in the workplace, particularly regarding transgender and non-binary people. Methods used in the empirical study – (1) semi-structured interviews with (a) transgender and non-binary individuals and (b) specialists working in human resources and management positions; (2) quantitative survey of the same target groups, also including the broader LGBTQIA+ community members. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to expand and deepen the data collected through the survey on the experiences of the target groups in the work sphere and their needs to improve the current situation. Total number of participants by group (for demographic profile see Annex 1):

- Transgender and non-binary individuals: 12 semi-structured interviews, a total of 146 survey respondents (of which 79 respondents also identified as LGBTQIA+).
- Human Resources and management professionals: 6 semi-structured interviews, total of 29 survey respondents.
- LGBTQIA+ individuals total of 158 survey respondents (of which 79 respondents also identified as transgender or non-binary).

The sampling for qualitative research combined purposive sampling with the snowball sampling. Research participants were mostly contacted through social media platforms (such as the transgender Discord community and community Facebook groups), as well as through LGBTQIA+ organisations and their social media platforms. Potential research participants were also purposively contacted directly through Discord (particularly transgender men), and snowballing was used by asking each participant for references to their friends or acquaintances. The main criteria for selecting participants for semi-structured interviews was transgender and non-binary people currently working in Lithuania or who have worked/searched for work in Lithuania in the last five years. The five-year period was determined to be sufficient to accumulate experience across various aspects of the work sphere. A quantitative survey was distributed through community forums, organisations, online professional groups, and LinkedIn.

The analysis of interview data was conducted by thematic coding, using an inductive coding method (derived from the data itself), grouping emerging codes in meaningful categories and then into themes, guided by the main questionnaire themes (1– experiences, 2 – organisational culture and 3 – training needs). The material was analyzed using the reflective thematic analysis method. Quantitative data was analysed through descriptive statistics (SPSS) by project partner Girona University team.

Ethical dimensions guiding the research were confidentiality, data protection, voluntary participation, transparency regarding all the research processes and the publication of results,



and collaboration with research participants. The essential principle guiding research with transgender and non-binary people was their self-determination.

Essential limitations of this research are related to the diversity of research participants. Potentially because the researcher does not belong to the community, the chosen sampling methods, and the refusal of some people to participate due to the difficulties they face, the research mostly represents community members living in larger Lithuanian cities who are younger. Although the diversity of experiences is considered sufficient, older people's experiences and situations in smaller towns, especially those who are not part of online communities, are not fully represented. Another limitation is related to the small number of HR and other professionals survey responses. This might have been due to the length of the survey (as some pointed out) and to the researcher not being part of this community of professionals.

5. Findings

5.1. Trans and non-binary individuals

5.1.1. Experiences

Survey findings indicate that **although transgender and non-binary individuals rarely report overt physical violence in the workplace, they are nonetheless subject to a wide spectrum of symbolic, discursive, and structural forms of violence.** The highest marked experiences were: (1) ridiculing (making jokes about a person), with 13,9% of transgender and non-binary respondents having experienced it frequently and even 44,4% having experienced it at times or occasionally; (2) name calling (such as personal attacks or insults) with 19,2% having experienced it at times, as well as other verbal insults, abuse or humiliation, with 42,5% of people having experienced it at times or occasionally, (3) and isolation from something or somebody and ignoring, with 19,7% of people having experienced it at times. Moreover, a significant amount of transgender and non-binary people have experienced different forms of sexual harassment: 25,4% have experienced degrading sexual remarks, 22,8% have experienced non-consensual physical contact and 17,9% experienced unwanted sexual advances. Most frequently mentioned form of physical violence was pushing – by 11,4%.

Some negative work experiences differed by the person's identity. Even 42,3% of transgender men at times felt they had been treated with less respect than others and 40% at times felt like people acted as if they thought the person was not clever. Transgender women more frequently felt like people acted as if they thought the person was untrustworthy – 20% felt it frequently or very frequently, and 26,7% frequently or very frequently felt like people acted better than the person. Feeling less respected than others and being treated like others act better than the person was the most marked as “occasionally” occurring by the whole group (M = 2,12¹ and M = 2,26), signaling about forms of everyday regulation that delegitimize transgender subjectivities.

Interview narratives further illustrate that people experience many uncomfortable situations in the workplace, such as hostile comments during job interviews, condemning looks, humiliation, direct or indirect insults, forced coming outs, pressure to fit the gendered norms, and other kinds of discomfort at work. At the same time, people share positive cases of their expression of gender identity at work, sometimes being able to fully be themselves, sometimes simply being content when not faced with direct hostility. Differences in people's experiences vary depending on practical key factors: (1) the status of their documents, (2) the type of workplace and (3) personal ties with colleagues.

(1) Transgender people's experiences in Lithuania highly depend on the **status of their documents**. People face a specific set of issues when looking for a job without having officially changed their documents to match the name they identify with, which is not uncommon in Lithuania. Even though as of recently people no longer must go through costly court procedures to change their names and can do so in an administrative order, not only does the procedure not

¹ Likert scale was used for the questions where average is presented, ranging from 1 being “Not at all” to 5 being “Totally”. The average (M = mean) is indicated in brackets showing the overall rankings and trends.

change the gender marker but people also need to have a diagnosis of “transsexuality”, be not married, be of legal age, the name cannot be gender-neutral, it is also time and effort intensive.

Because of the mismatch between people’s documents and their identity, they are often “outed” or forced to come out. This is especially relevant when people are looking for a job as they sometimes have to prove that the identity is theirs. A person struggling to find a job shared: *“I submitted my resume for one job, they called me, I answered, and they asked me if that was my birth name, I said yes, obviously they didn’t believe me, they asked three times whether it was really me, or whether I was lying”* (T9). Because of the same reason people can be explicitly told during the interview that they are likely to not get the job because of their identity, getting such questions during the interview as *“where is the woman who is written in the documents?”* (T10).

The status of documents can also be a defining factor in the ability to use one’s preferred name within internal work systems. From people’s experiences, even inclusion-progressive workplaces sometimes struggle to change the person’s preferred name on their email, Microsoft Teams account or other internal systems if the person has not yet changed their documents, *“[...] instead they said ‘Just come out to your colleagues’, while everyone sees me as a cis man, so it was very uncomfortable for me.”* (T9)

(2) **The type of workplace** was another important factor. Research participants working within workplaces or in positions requiring lower qualifications (cashier in a store, factory worker, hotel restaurant worker, fast-food restaurant worker, warehouse worker, etc.) had significantly worse experiences than people working in offices or so-called desk jobs. Interviewees were sometimes completely hiding their identities; they shared experiences of both explicit harassment and inappropriate behaviour as well as indirect hostility. The latter included situations in which colleagues ridiculed them behind the person’s back, or in which direct leadership indirectly prevented them from moving up to certain positions. Explicit harassment included situations like: *“One colleague, for example, she comes to the store on her day off, I work as a cashier, she comes on purpose, with her child in a stroller, and shouts loudly across the hall, ‘Faggot, look! What should I say to my children?’ It’s actually a very unpleasant experience. And they often equate transsexuality with homosexuality.”* (T1) Another person hiding their identity at work shared that one of her colleagues was living in the neighbourhood and took a picture of her with make-up and a skirt, which was distributed among other colleagues. Everyone started constantly laughing and whispering behind her back; the event really affected her and *“even strongly pushed me to leave the workplace.”* (T8)

Over 1/3 of interview participants generally expressed quite positive experiences at work as transgender and non-binary people. These were partially related to some form of official awareness at the workplace or the initiation of formal procedures after coming out, yet mostly to trust in the “goodwill” of immediate colleagues, a kind of unarticulated sense that they are generally more open. All positive or positive-leaning experiences were shared by people working computer-based, office-like jobs. The importance of the type of workplace was expressed through feelings of safety and the ability, to some extent, to be oneself. A person who found

themselves in a fully accepting environment shared that it not only made them feel safe but also created space to explore their gender identity (T7).

(3) Personal ties with colleagues. In workplaces that were not explicitly hostile but where no inclusion politics were practiced, people relied heavily on personal relationships they established with management or coworkers, especially prior to coming out. In fact, most of such experiences were had particularly in environments where there was no organisational support structure of any kind, but the workplace or the immediate team was considered smaller, “younger” and thus perceived as more open. For instance, expressing that their industry is known for being hostile towards LGBTQIA+ people and other minorities, one research participant felt lucky with their team. After coming out to their manager and not experiencing any direct hostility from colleagues at work, *“I am very lucky to have my team, so I believe that everything will be fine”* (T2). Another participant started her coming-out journey at work thanks to a colleague she trusted, and then met nearly 30 of her colleagues one-on-one for coffee to build connections and explain her situation (T3). Smaller workplaces were even preferred precisely because of the ability to create personal connections with the colleagues which made it safer to come out (T6).

Whilst relying on their interpersonal relations, research participants still experience great amounts of stress and fear of coming out, even in accepting environments: *“The first time I came out was terribly frightening, actually. I remember that I was in tears from the stress.”* (T5) Emotional labor is also needed for unexpected coming outs, for correcting others when being misgendered, for all kinds of questions which can cross the boundaries of privacy, indicating the constant management of disclosure and hypervigilance. Whilst expressing gratitude and understanding towards people’s curiosity or unintentional misgendering, people admit that it requires emotional resources in the day-to-day life at work. For instance, after coming out to the manager and being well received, the manager warned her that he might joke about it unintentionally, that it is a new experience for him, and that she should not take it personally (T6). Research participants shared that jokes and uncomfortable questions were countless (T12, T3, T6, T11, T7, T1). In hostile work environments, people were negatively dependent on the attitudes of their colleagues and managerial staff to the extent of being pushed out: *“That director clearly wanted me to leave my job, she was always twisting the situation so that something would be my fault. When I quit that job, I noticed that she blocked me on Messenger”* (T1).

What essentially cuts through all these factors is the socio-economic circumstances (or social class) of research participants, which make them significantly more vulnerable in their efforts to earn a living. This entails lower acquired education, financial insecurity, lack of a support system, lack of access to mental healthcare and others. Several research participants articulated that the type of qualifications and the area of work gave them freedom to choose their workplace that is more likely to be accepting or at least less hostile: *“My positive experiences are probably related to the area I work in, because there are more opportunities to choose the workplace [...], but I know that for other people in the community everything is much harder, I understand”* (T6). Most others were navigating more vulnerable social circumstances, for instance: (1) A person with a secondary education was hiding her identity under constant

tension in most of her previous workplaces, was now unemployed due to health reasons and had to come back living with her family (T8); (2) Having had terrible experiences undergoing transition and working as a cashier and other alike positions in smaller Lithuanian cities, this research participant migrated abroad. After several attempts to again find a job in Lithuania and faced with humiliation, she feels that she was simply pushed away by her town and her country (T1); (3) Having transitioned yet not having his documents changed, a person is a straight transgender man working at a fast-food restaurant in order to support himself while studying, who must wear female uniform, endure jokes about gay people and answer questions about his “boyfriend” (T10).

People’s experiences illustrate that career decisions (in terms of workplace and professional field) are heavily shaped by the need to avoid hostile work environments as life at work is largely guided by fear, discomfort and constant risk of being rejected, humiliated or harassed. People’s unique experiences exemplify their own ways of navigating the structural obstacles, yet often at a cost of their own wellbeing, where **less privileged social contexts mean less safety, more hostile treatment, more anxiety and fear.**

5.1.2. Organisational Culture

The majority (57.8%) of trans and non-binary survey respondents claimed they have not come out to any colleagues at work, 19,3% only to a few, and 68.8% said they have not come out to their immediate supervisor or head of department. While it is important to recognize that some trans and non-binary individuals live their gender without the need for explicit disclosure, this does not reflect the broader social context of Lithuania, where coming out remains a social and institutional challenge. These numbers signify that people tend to hide their gender identity at work and that is highly related to the culture of workplaces.

When asked about what kind of organisational culture does their workplace promote, research participants have ranked that they believe LGBTQIA+ employees had quite equal opportunities for advancement or career growth at their workplaces ($M = 3,67$), as well as considered diversity as somehow important for their organisations ($M = 2,79$) and having between a little and somehow respect and safety for LGBTQIA+ people ($M = 2,49$). Yet other indicators signify that inclusion culture is not actively practiced or articulated: in most people’s experiences their workplaces have not provided any training or workshops about LGBTQIA+ (or gender identity) to the employees ($M = 1,47$) and have neither celebrated nor acknowledged LGBTQIA+ related celebrations or dates (like Pride Month, IDAHO, Transgender day of visibility, etc.) ($M = 1,33$). This suggests that people would rather rely on the general atmosphere of the organisation and the personal relationships with their colleagues, as illustrated by the interview material above.

Moreover, from different types of discrimination, people ranked gender identity the highest regarding their impression of its occurrence at their workplace, as occurring at times ($M = 2,62$). 2 out of 12 interview participants claimed that their organization had some form of equality and inclusion plan including the protection of LGBTQIA+ people, whilst others were not aware of any or highly aware that it does not exist. In most other cases, people either could not disclose their gender identity at work at all, or were in constant tension and discomfort regarding it (even when the general acceptance was positive), for instance: *"It simply really sucks and feels scary to tell*

my pronouns [to external colleagues], because depending on the attitudes of every person it can affect the whole image of the company, [...] but since there have been many very bad reactions both at work and in my personal life, it is just quite a huge stress. So I usually do not say anything until I decide that I kind of have to, so it feels like ripping off a bandage, I put up a wall and get myself ready for a potential shitstorm" (T12).

When organisational politics of inclusion are declared and practiced, people feel safer, supported and experience much less daily stress related to their identity. Even though the process remains constant *"you have to keep telling people, 'Hey, I'm not a girl'."* (T5), the perception shifts towards seeing acceptance as a need: *"[...] you spend most of your time at work and spend a lot of time with your colleagues, so my opinion is that if you can't be open at work, then you lose a lot of time where you could be openly yourself and explore your identity itself, too."* (T5). In workplaces where the dominant organisational culture is hostile, people feel rejected and even pressured to leave: *"I felt the pressure [to quit] all the time, and I was just starting my transition then and no one helped me, supported me, everyone was cold and calling me bad names, often used to refer to homosexuality"* (T1). In cases when research participants hide their identity and hostility is not expressed directly, the organisational culture is felt through jokes and comments about the LGBTQIA+ community in general: *"For instance, one time a gay couple came to our restaurant, everybody was laughing and saying to me 'look, look, faggots came!' [...]. It was so unpleasant. Or when a non-binary person won the Eurovision – [...] saying that if they saw a person like that walking down the street here, they would [...] beat them up"* (T10).

Importantly, although participants noted that workplace inclusion can be superficial—sometimes used primarily for public relations and not consistently reflected in day-to-day practices—they nonetheless placed significant value on it, underscoring the vulnerability of gender-diverse community in seeking safety. This was shared by most people, especially those who do not work in corporate environments and mainly do not reveal their gender identity at work. Yet they look for any signs of support from a potential workplace when seeking a job. The importance of the official stance was emphasised multiple times: *"when [...] I was looking for a job, [...] it was giving me such positive emotions when I saw some job ads that had a disclaimer that they do not discriminate at their workplace [...], maybe they just do it for the formalities, but it is explicitly written there, [...] and maybe there will be some safe space there, potentially."* (T12). Research participants felt that the official stance and what is written down in the policy had a bigger impact than diversity training (T2). The same sentiment was expressed regarding diversity representation in higher positions – although people do not have such expectations, they would very much consider it as an inspiration and a huge sign of safety.

All research participants faced various gendered norms at their workplaces and felt the pressure to adapt to them to varying degrees. People shared that even subtle things like dividing tasks into stereotypically girly (like taking care of the tablecloth and the table at a fair) and manly (like carrying boxes) made them feel dysphoric (T12). Situations when people's gender is assumed and thus specific expectations ascribed are very common: *"I would go out for a smoke [...], and the director would come out and want to have a very manly conversation [...], and he would start talking about gays or something, and that already made me feel*

uncomfortable [..].” (T8). A non-binary person constantly faced with “oh we have this many girls at our workplace, how nice!”, debating whether to come out and be pushed away from the girls circle, having nowhere to be included, “[...] I feel like they see me just like the rest of society sees me, which is not my truth and not my gender.” (T2). In other cases, the pressure to adapt to rules not aligned with one’s gender was direct. For instance, a transgender man who has not changed his documents was not allowed to wear a male uniform, had to use female changing rooms, where colleagues would stare at him, scrutinize every detail, and thus made him switch to changing in the bathroom because of the discomfort. All that made him feel dysphoric: “I therefore wear a jacket on top of the female uniform, regardless of the hot weather outside, I am working with a thick puffy jacket”. (T10) Such explicit gendered norms can also be gender-affirming, as one research participant was very happy to be added to the “women’s group” after coming out (T6), yet most often falsely assume and restrain people’s identities.

5.1.3. Training needs

For the HR experts, managerial staff and recruitment specialists. The biggest need expressed by all research participants was general awareness of gender diversity. It was directed mostly at HR, managerial, and recruitment professionals and expressed through specific needs that transgender and non-binary people themselves have:

1. Awareness during the application and recruitment process:

- 1.1. **A need for less rigid application forms in terms of the name and gender**, particularly for large organisations that have their own application forms, for instance, indicating the ability to write down preferred/ used name and creating an ability to choose other than male/female gender (T12, T10, T9).
- 1.2. A need for gender diversity-aware recruitment process so that people are aware that “a person may sound or look different from their gender on their document.” (T9).

2. Diversity awareness and a safe environment:

- 2.1. **A need for official support from the leadership**, especially for places where there are no inclusion policies or HR staff.
- 2.2. **Creating a safe environment to come out.** In the words of non-binary HR professional, it is important to “Promote that culture, ask people their pronouns instead of assuming what they are, based on their appearance” (T5) to normalize diversity *before* anyone speaks up, so that people can feel safe and less frightened.
- 2.3. **Efforts to use the preferred name, pronouns, and to understand their meaning.** Whilst encouraging less emphasis on the name in the documents, research participants emphasize their chosen name and their pronouns, because that is what they identify as. This is relevant not only in terms of changing names in the work systems, but also in terms of awareness of others that their preferred name and pronouns are what people actually identify as, instead of being a “whim”.
- 2.4. **Boundaries regarding intimate questions or jokes related to gender identity.** Research participants expressed that they were very happy to help other colleagues to understand them, but nearly everyone shared experiences of inappropriate jokes or questions that crossed boundaries of the professional environment, requiring a lot of emotional labor. For instance, when a colleague asks whether a transgender woman will want breast implants, joking about wanting to “test” them (T6).

For themselves or the community. Although participation in trainings was not a primary focus for many participants, they shared their experiences with friends and the community more broadly. Some said that the community tends to be shy, and people need genuine, caring support with work-related matters (T3), “especially for younger people who are afraid to ask questions or don't have the resources” (T9). Below are the most common training needs that people believed could be useful (from both interview and survey data) for the gender-diverse community:

- 1) **Knowing one's rights and opportunities at work and beyond** as well as practical knowledge from **the labour law**. Ranked as necessary by the survey respondents: Training in LGBTQIA+ rights-related laws (M = 4,26), legal rights and protections (M = 4,37), labour rights (M = 4,33) and LGBTQIA+ organisations (M = 4,31).
- 2) **Dealing with discrimination at work** (M = 4,07), especially handling inappropriate situations at workplaces where there are no formal protocols or no HR to address situations.
- 3) **Addressing one's gender identity in formal settings** in general, and navigating the boundaries when faced with all kinds of questions from colleagues about one's gender identity. This was also ranked as necessary by the survey respondents (M = 4,05).
- 4) **Financial planning** (M = 4,04), especially during all forms of transition (not generic, but trans and non-binary specific).
- 5) **Practical skills** for people looking for a job or wanting to change their current job: public speaking (M = 4,17), job-searching strategies (M = 3,81), CV preparation (M = 3,86), job interview preparations/ simulations (M = 3,78) and networking (M = 3,83).
- 6) Psychological well-being (M = 3,99), support for people encountering difficulties at work who otherwise are scared to ask for it or cannot afford it.

Importantly, research participants emphasised that when organising any kind of training, it is essential to make sure that (1) the trainers are either transgender/ non-binary people or are thoroughly aware of the community's realities and the specific issues gender-diverse people face; (2) the trainings are framed and organized with an emphasis that the difficulties that people encounter are related to other people's attitudes and not with the gender identity itself, being highly cautious about any demeaning connotations (e.g. insinuating particularly transgender people as unskilful, unwell, etc.); (3) and that trainings are organised with awareness that the community is not homogenous, but that different people will have different needs and interests.

5.2. Human Resources professionals and managers

5.2.1. Experiences

Of all HR and managerial professionals who participated in the survey, only 21,1% responded that their organisation has employed someone who was perceived as or was openly transgender or non-binary, with 31,6% answering that they do not know. At the same time, from different types of discrimination the highest marked ones, as occasionally occurring, were gender (M = 2,27), ethnic origin (M = 2,20), gender identity (2,14) and sexual orientation (2,14), illustrating that there is a general perception that inappropriate situations towards the LGBTQIA+ community occur.



From those 21,1% of people who know that their workplace hired a gender diverse person, they claimed to have noticed or been informed about their occasional ridiculing (M = 1,88), excessive negative comments (M = 1,88), as well as occasional name calling (M = 1,75), other non-verbal insults (M = 1,75) and isolation (M = 1,75). Although cases of violence do not show statistical significance, it is noteworthy that the occasional making of degrading sexual remarks (M = 1,63) and non-consensual physical contact (M = 1,63) were ranked the highest. Of this segment of respondents, only 5,3% said someone at their organisation came out as transgender or non-binary (or has undergone a gender affirmation process). At the same time, respondents considered that their organisations frequently ensured the same or not less opportunities to be hired (M = 3,95) and to be promoted (M = 4,03).

Most interview participants to their knowledge had neither directly worked with gender-diverse people nor encountered specific needs they might have when becoming employed. Generally speaking professionals had positive attitudes towards inclusion and towards accommodating gender-diverse people at the workplace. Yet, some were also expressing the quite common societal belief that LGBTQIA+ people have gone “a bit too far” and demand rather exclusive rights and privileges (P1, P6). They found it essential for the community members to meet the majority midway and “less aggressively”. One of the professionals working with various complaints at their workplace expressed discontent regarding the amount of effort their workplace puts in and the continuous dissatisfaction among the community members, giving an example: “*They say, ‘Change my name and surname, it doesn't matter that my documents haven't been changed’, and when you try to say, ‘Look, you're alone, there are 5,000 of us,’ well, maybe you could think not only about your side, but also about our technical capabilities’ [...]* then you understand that they only think about the pain of their minority” (P1).

Thus, experiences of HR and managerial professionals who participated in the research suggest that specific issues or needs that gender diverse people might face at work are not commonly articulated in workplaces. Staff from large international corporations usually make up the exceptions, yet can also be limited to a very general view towards inclusion or affected by the public atmosphere positioning gender-diverse people’s protection and inclusion as exclusive privileges.

5.2.2. Organisational Culture

General tendencies from conducted research, including qualitative and quantitative data, show that having some form of equality or inclusion plan or protocol is not a very common organisational practice in Lithuania, let alone measures directed towards gender-diverse people. In the survey, 34.5% of HR professionals answered that they do have an approved equality plan in place; only 32,1% of which included non-discrimination policies specifically for LGBTQIA+ and transgender individuals, and only 10,7% of the latter had a protocol to support transgender and non-binary individuals. Of this group, 60,7% claimed it does not have measures ensuring access to bathrooms and changing rooms according to one’s gender identity, 51,9% it does not have measures to ensure the use of employee’s chosen name, and 53,6% claimed it does not include measures to promote LGBTQIA+ visibility. The assessment of the implementation of organisational plans, protocols and measures was evaluated as neutral, meaning neither specifically effective nor not effective (M = 3,06). Interview conversations also



showed that professionals support DI in a general manner, yet most do not articulate specific needs related to gender identity.

Survey responses regarding the organisational culture of workplaces show a rather cisheteronormative picture. Respondents believed that employees at their organisations are rather presumed to be heterosexual (M = 3,34); although very few have encountered transgender and non-binary people at work, respondents somewhat agreed that personal topics are not asked to them as naturally as they are for cisgender individuals (M = 3) and somewhat thought there is no equal recognition and visibility of LGBTQIA+ relationships compared to heterosexual relationships (M = 3,19), as well as that inclusive language is somewhat not consistently used in communication (M = 3,04). People also noted that the leadership positions do not quite include openly transgender or non-binary people (M = 4,23).

Larger international corporations tend to have more established equality rules and policies (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), even including protocols addressing support for transgender or non-binary people in transition and other gender identity-specific practices (P1, P3). Some of the practices named by representatives were: internal LGBTQIA+ community, where people can find support and organise themselves, raise inclusion questions in the workplace; voluntary trainings about LGBTQIA+ people and principles of non-discrimination; ability to anonymously report inappropriate or discriminatory cases; LGBTQIA+ friendly family benefit systems, treating gender-diverse families as equal families; newsletters; bias training for recruitment specialists. One non-binary HR participant believed that it is essential to allocate resources and efforts as accepting environments do not develop naturally (T5). On the other hand, one of the professionals positioned these practices as risks for the workplace as in a sense being “outside” the law, because the state does not grant the rights of LGBTQIA+. For instance, the collection of personal data to ensure some of the inclusive practices, instruments of evaluation, and other aspects remain for workplaces themselves to navigate (P1). The same inclusion-positive professional expressed the common societal attitude that *„Inclusion is good up to a certain limit, because, as with all minority issues, [...] there is a danger of going too far, making excessive demands, or attempting to abuse or exploit the company.”* (P1) at the same time believing that *“even if it sounds harsh, from a PR perspective, it [inclusion] is very good.”* (P1), indicating the potential lack of consistency in implementing DI.

Based on the interviews with both research target groups, smaller workplaces often do not have any rules or protocols of non-discrimination of any grounds. One HR manager of such a workplace relied on the assumption of people’s “openness”, where the size, “age” and youthful culture of the organisation are regarded as forms of safety measures against discrimination or unwanted behaviour: *“I work at a relatively young organisation [...] and I get the feeling that we kind of have a similar viewpoint on things, that there is no difference whether a person identifies somehow, he is still valued and welcome [...]. I would say the team is rather liberal.”* (P6) They felt that some protocols or measures would rather create resistance in the team if they did not emerge from the actual need and the culture of the employees themselves.

Both interview and survey results show that generally professionals are aware of potential negative attitudes in their workplaces. While being inclusion-positive, nearly all professionals expressed the belief that despite their best efforts, a fully LGBTQIA+ inclusive workplace is an

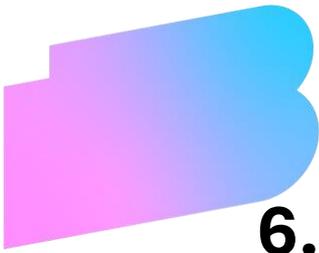
impossible task, meaning that some employees will always have negative attitudes that the workplace is not able to change. It is more realistic, a few professionals expressed, to create “safe islands” or “oases” that would support LGBTQIA+ people, whilst working with people’s behaviour patterns on stereotypes. One participant remembered when raising a rainbow flag by the office was a “final straw” for an employee to quit their job, thus adding that *“what is important in general is that the organization shows that this issue is important, sends a signal, and if you don't agree with it, then you draw your own conclusions or accept it as it is, or choose something else.”* (P5)

5.2.3. Training needs

In the survey, most HR and managerial professionals marked the suggested trainings as necessary (from most to least):

- 1) **Benefits of having an Inclusive Workplace for employee well-being and performance** (M = 4,22).
- 2) **Benefits of having an Inclusive Workplace for business growth and brand reputation** (M = 4,14).
- 3) **Providing training for leadership and management teams on fostering an inclusive workplace** (M = 4,13).
- 4) **Laws related to LGBTQIA+ rights and discrimination prevention at work** (M = 4,07).
- 5) **Good practices for gender-inclusive hiring and onboarding processes** (M = 4,06).
- 6) **Needs and rights of people undergoing gender transition at work** (M = 3,93).
- 7) **Managing subtle and visible discrimination against transgender people at work** (M = 3,93).
- 8) **Handling resistance to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and fostering constructive dialogue** (M = 3,93).
- 9) **LGBTQIA+phobia and transphobia** (M = 3,83).
- 10) **Specific labour rights for transgender people** (M = 3,82).
- 11) **Trans and non-binary workplace experiences: personal testimonies** (M = 3,76).
- 12) **Well-being of transgender people at work** (M = 3,69).
- 13) **Training in Key concepts regarding LGBTQIA+** (M = 3,64).
- 14) **Communication skills and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights within the organisation** (M = 3,59).

The most expressed and essentially the only articulated need by the HR professionals during interviews was the knowledge for themselves on how to best include a gender diverse person in a team (how to behave appropriately for themselves, but also how to onboard the immediate team). As one professional expressed: *“Once we have decided to include diverse and transgender people, it is extremely important to communicate with the team and educate them before that person joins, to make sure that they understand and are aware of the situation.”* (P4)



6. Overall evaluation

- The research findings illustrate that transgender and non-binary people’s experiences in the work area in Lithuania are shaped by the intersection of hostile societal attitudes, insufficient legal protections and unequal socio-economic conditions. While individual experiences range from overt hostility to acceptance, they simultaneously suggest that people’s work choices and career paths are guided by the imperative to avoid hostile environments, thus creating even more precarious conditions for an already marginalised community.
- Workplace culture and conditions emerge as a determinant of safety and wellbeing. The absence of organisational frameworks thus creates conditions for navigating between hostile and less-hostile spaces, necessitating the establishment and reliance on the trust of personal relationships with colleagues or on the unspoken sense of “openness”.
- Despite the articulated limitations of organisational inclusion policies – sometimes perceived as superficial, symbolic or poorly implemented – people consistently highlight their significance. LGBTQIA+ friendly leaning signs or stances are perceived as meaningful signals of safety.
- The current social atmosphere, characterised by intensifying anti-gender rhetoric, further amplifies the role of workplaces and employers. Organisational commitments to diversity and inclusion can serve as broader counterbalances to regressive policies and social trends. Realising this potential to function as accepting and protective environments for transgender and non-binary people in Lithuania requires moving toward more comprehensive and practiced inclusion practices by many workplaces.

The SWOT analysis bellow is used to summarise the evaluation in an accessible format:

<p>Strengths</p> <p>High value placed by trans and non-binary participants on the official inclusion and non-discrimination workplace cultures.</p> <p>Existence of organisational practices protecting gender-diverse people from discrimination and responding to the needs of the community.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Poor legal protection and limited realisation of the rights of gender-diverse people.</p> <p>Lack of organisational support culture for LGBTQIA+ community in many workplaces and general lack of understanding of gender diversity among professionals and other staff.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Identification of training gaps among HR professionals and insights by trans/non-</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Rising anti-gender narratives in the public discourse, pathologising trans people.</p>



<p>binary participants create an opportunity for targeted action.</p> <p>Momentum for workplaces to show progressive leadership with continuous and increasing support within the growing hostile public discourse and negative societal attitudes.</p>	<p>Strong political and institutional resistance for LGBTQAI+ rights advancement and a risk of setbacks in rights.</p> <p>Cisheteronormative organisational structures and experiences of violence by trans people.</p>
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8. Annexes

Annex 1. Demographic profile of the sample

A. Interviews with trans and non-binary people

	Year of birth	Gender identity	Sex assigned at birth	Sexual orientation	Highest finished educational qualification	Legal status	Current employment or Activity status	Sector of work
T1	1996	Trans woman	Man	Heterosexual	High school	Citizen	Warehouse worker	Logistics
T2	2002	Non-binary	Woman	Bisexual	Bachelor's degree	Citizen	Game programmer	IT/arts
T3	1992	Woman	Man	Closest to bisexual	Bachelor's degree	Citizen	Process manager	E-commerce
T4	2001	Woman	Man	Heterosexual	High school	Citizen	Customer service	Warehouse
T5	1999	Non-binary	Woman	Bisexual	Master's degree	Citizen	HR	Finance
T6	1996	Woman	Man	Lesbian	High school	Citizen	Programmer/ IT	Fintech
T7	1994	Non-gender	Woman	Queer	Master's degree	Citizen	Human rights expert	NGO
T8	2001	Trans woman/ gender queer	Man	Bisexual	High school	Citizen	Unemployed	/
T9	2002	Man	Woman	Gay	High school	Citizen	Unemployed	/
T10	2004	Man	Woman	Heterosexual	High school	Citizen	Customer service	Restaurant/ food services
T11	1995	Woman	Man	Lesbian	Bachelor's degree	Citizen	Programmer/ IT	Entertainment
T12	1998	Non-binary/ trans masculine	Woman	Bisexual/ queer	Bachelor's degree	Citizen	Head of marketing	Agriculture/ food production

Table 1

B. Interviews with professionals

	Year of birth	Gender identity	Highest finished educational qualification	Role in the organisation	Years of experience	Work sector	Organization size (number of employees+ local to international)
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P1	1984	Woman	Master's degree	Lawyer	18-20	Finance	5 000 (international)
P2	1986	Man	High school	Team Lead	>2	Finance	4 500 (international)
P3	1987	Woman	Master's degree	Head of Talent Acquisition Department	12	Finance	4 800 (international)
P4	1986	Woman	Bachelor's degree	Head of Organisational Development and Inclusion	>2	Transport	6 000 (national)
P5	1990	Man	Master's degree	Head of Group Diversity, Inclusion and Well-being	>4	Energy	4 700 (international)
P6	1993	Woman	Master's degree	HR Manager	>8	Production	57 (local)

Table 2

C. Survey transgender, non-binary and lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex and queer people

General information:

Variable	Value
Total number of answers LGBTIQ	N = 225
Total number of TNB	N = 146, total 64,9%

Table 3

General information within the TNB group:

Variable	Value
Age	M = 22,68, SD = 5,55
% of employment	64,4% (N = 94)

Table 4

Main categories:

Category	Variable	N	%
Gender identity	Trans man	56	24,9%
	Trans woman	26	11,6%
	Non-binary	72	32,0%
Employment situation	Formal contract	75	48,0%
	Informal work	2	1,3%
	Self-employed	17	11,2%
	Unemployed	29	19,1%
	Volunteer/ unpaid work	9	5,9%
	Student	73	48,0%
Primary work sectors	Arts and Entertainment	21	18,9%
	Service Sector and Tourism	14	12,6%
	Sales	13	11,7%
	Technology (ITC)	10	9,0%
	Education and Training	10	9,0%
Education Level	Primary School	19	12,3%
	Secondary	3	1,9%
	High school	82	53,3%
	Higher (not university)	15	9,7%
	Bachelor's degree	21	13,6%
	Master's degree or higher	6	3,9%
Minority group membership	Racialized (skin colour or ethnicity)	4	2,6%
	Migrant background	6	4,0%
	A religious minority	10	6,6%
	Disability	23	15,2%

Table 5

D. Survey with professionals

General information

Variable	Value
Age	M = 44,61, SD = 8,87
Years of experience	1-10 years, 67,5%
% of respondents/organizations to their knowledge employed trans or non-binary employees	N = 8, 21,1%

Table 6

Main categories:

Category	Variable	N	%	
Gender identity	Man	31	75,6%	
	Woman	8	19,5%	
	Non-binary	2	4,9%	
Role in the organisation*	HR professional Manager, generalist, administrator, HR business partner, recruitment specialist, consultant	25	61%	
	Management Team leader, department head, supervisor, project manager, junior/senior manager	9	21,9%	
	Executive leadership Director	1	2,4%	
	Other	4	9,8%	
	Primary work sectors	Finance and Insurance services	7	17,5%
		Construction and Manufacturing	5	12,5%
Sales		5	12,5%	
Technology (ICT)		5	12,5%	
Highest finished educational qualification	Primary School	/	/	
	Secondary	2	4,9%	
	High school	2	4,9%	
	Higher (not university)	2	4,9%	
	Bachelor's degree	16	39,0%	
	Master's degree or higher	18	43,9%	
Size of the organization	Local	3	7,5%	
	Regional	5	12,5%	
	National	8	20,0%	
	International	24	60,0%	

Table 7

* An aggregated classification has been used to facilitate international comparability across countries. If a significant number of responses fall under "Other," it is recommended to assess whether any of these could be integrated into the current table and analysis as additional categories.