



Inclusive Universities Leading To Inclusive Societies: Research Findings From Greece, Italy And Lithuania



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Foreword

Project INCLUSIES brought together academic institutions (Panteion University, University of Brescia, and Vytautas Magnus University) and LGBTQI+ civil society organizations (Colour Youth - Athens LGBTQ Youth Community, Rete Lenford, Lithuanian Gay League) from three EU member states (Greece, Italy, Lithuania) which worked together with the purpose to promote inclusion and diversity in universities and eventually society, while enhancing the active role of the witnesses of incidents of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics (SOGISC), who have a significant role in the prevention and tackling of such phenomena. INCLUSIES project also aimed at creating an inclusive climate in higher education institutions, and society, and promoting the European democratic values of equality, equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination, to combat the barriers that may hinder LGBTQI+ students' participation and academic performance, as well as the overall well-being of LGBTQI+ people in general.

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This publication aims to provide up-to-date data - based on desk and field research - on LGBTQI+ people's everyday lives in universities (and in society in general) in the aforementioned three countries. The research activities conducted in the three participating countries of the project were focused on the investigation of the intensity, characteristics, and manifestations of the homo/ trans/ biphobia / interphobic phenomenon in universities, assessing the training needs of the academic community in terms of the prevention and tackling of discrimination based on SOGISC in universities while generating new knowledge on the current situation of discrimination on the grounds of the aforementioned characteristics in the academic environment and identifying and record useful learning resources on LGBTQI+ rights protections at EU level. Finally, the publication included a comparative analysis chapter, comparing the data collected from the research in Greece, Italy, and Lithuania.



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The case of Greece

Dr. Konstantinos – Christos Daoultzis

Part A: desk research results

1. The status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment

The status of LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other identities) individuals in the both society and academic environment has evolved significantly over the years worldwide, reflecting broader societal changes towards greater inclusivity and acceptance (Cooper *et al.*, 2020). While progress has been made in many aspects, challenges and disparities still exist, and the experience of LGBTQI+ people in academia especially can vary greatly depending on factors like location, academic institution, and individual identity (Blumenfeld, Weber and Rankin, 2016; Reggiani, Gagnon and Lunn, 2023).

Some of the positive developments in recent years include the increased visibility of LGBTQI+ identities, the anti-discrimination policies, and supportive organizations (Brooks, 2023; World Health Organization, 2019). LGBTQI+ representation in universities has significantly increased over the years as many universities and institutions now have support networks and planning festivals and activities, helping to create a more inclusive atmosphere (Coley and Das, 2020). Numerous universities worldwide and also in Greece in accordance to the National Constitution and European laws have adopted anti-discrimination policies that explicitly protect LGBTQI+ individuals (“Yogyakarta Principles” with the addition of “*Principles and State Obligations on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics*” in 2017; Carpenter, 2021). These policies and laws address issues related to discrimination and harassment which is deteriorating in many parts of the world (Ramos, Burgess and Ollen, 2023). LGBTQI+ issues are now more

widely studied and discussed within academic circles, leading to a better understanding of the experiences and needs of LGBTQI+ individuals (Rand *et al.*, 2021). A large proportion of the literature in scientific fields like Psychology and Sociology concerns findings in students, even though are primarily focused on gay men and lesbians (e.g., Saewyc, 2011).

Despite these advantages, many challenges and disparities are still apparent. First, despite anti-discrimination policies, discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression still occur on some campuses (Falco and Sparrow, 2023). This can negatively impact the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQI+ students, faculty, and staff (Clark and Kosciw, 2022). Even though in most curricula, any sexual identity is explicitly protected, in practice may not be adequately addressed. Therefore, LGBTQI+ students and their allies may feel marginalized and underrepresented.

In Greece, the central guide for the recognition and institutionalization of LGBTQI+ rights is the Report on the National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTQ+, a text¹ that was compiled by an ad hoc committee appointed by the Prime Minister, following the corresponding Action Plan of the European Commission (2020). In supporting this guide, the two most recent annual reports of the Ombudsman (2020; 2021) on equal treatment do not include references to cases of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in Greek academic environments, according to the Eurobarometer on the Social acceptance of LGBTI people in the EU (European Commission, 2019). Nonetheless, apart from Report on the National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTQ+, there is also the Memorandum of the National Human Rights Commission, which summarizes the problems that continue to exist in the legislation and administrative measures, even suggesting ways for the Greek state to solve these issues². It is apparent that while these protection laws have been in place for some time, they remain fragmented, partial, and incomplete. These rights are

¹Available at:

https://primeminister.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ethniki_statigiki_gia_thn_isothta_ton_loatki.pdf

²Available at:

https://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/SexoualikosProsanatolismos/EEDA_Ypomnima_Loatki.pdf

safeguarded through specialized laws, either by restricting certain aspects of liberty, or by failing to entirely encompass certain rights, or by neglecting in essence the constitutional mandate of equal treatment.

An issue that also arises in tertiary education is the process of obtaining legal recognition of gender identity. This process is relevant to transgender individuals (trans) who desire that the representation of their personal data in their legal identification documents align with their personal perception of their gender and the name they utilize in their daily lives. Moreover, the 2014 amendment to the anti-racist law has made it more challenging to prosecute cases of public incitement to hatred or violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals, as evidenced by recent incidents of violence against LGBTIQ+ students (Transphobic incident at University of Patras; NewsIt.gr, 2023). Based on these cases, it appears that the perpetrator must have committed the act in a manner that endangers public order or poses a threat to the life, liberty, or physical integrity of the victim.

These lax laws allow the discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or/and sex characteristics – and, in general, homophobic/ transphobic/ biphobic perceptions and behaviors –in the Greek academic environment. In support of the above, recent studies in Greece from Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019), out of the participants who stated that during the “last 12 months” they had “*personally felt discrimination or had experienced harassment*”, 5% of them stated that this discrimination or harassment came from “school or university staff” and that this had happened to them either “as students or as parents”. Findings like the above are apparent in many cases: for example, the organization Colour Youth, the LGBTQ Youth Community of Athens (2020, January 30), publicly denounced that, on January 23, 2020, graduate students of the Department of Psychology at a Greek university were tested (semester exams) based on outdated and transphobic beliefs according to which the transgender condition is a form of “disorder”.

In summary, the evidence presented suggests that even amidst restrictive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (and also after) and the existence of protective laws and

European and international guidelines, hate crimes –including those targeting LGBTIQ+ individuals– have persisted, taking on various forms, such as online attacks motivated by homophobia, transphobia, or biphobia, or in-person incidents like the recent transphobic incident at the University of Patras³. The ongoing lack of inclusivity and hostility towards LGBTIQ+ individuals in Greek academic environments may also manifest in the perpetuation of outdated beliefs.

2. LGBTIQ+ awareness sessions and good practices

LGBTIQ+ awareness sessions and good practices suggested by relevant literature and participants can play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and cultural competence, challenging stereotypes and preventing discrimination: within educational institutions and universities in particular (European Commission, 2022; Coley and Das, 2020; Rand et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2021; Ward and Gale, 2016; Zapletal et al., 2023). The implementation of these practices is crucial for creating a supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ individuals in universities. Below, there is an overview and analysis of some key suggested practices by the research participants.

2.1 LGBTIQ+ Awareness Sessions

Some suggestions to be implemented include: (a) workshops, (b) sensitivity training, (c) allies training, (d) LGBTIQ+ studies and (e) guest lectures and panels. First, diversity and inclusion workshops can focus on LGBTIQ+ diversity, terminology, and the importance of inclusion. These sessions aim to enhance awareness and understanding, providing participants with the knowledge to create inclusive spaces. In addition, “Sensitivity Training for Staff and Faculty” involves training sessions for university staff and faculty on LGBTIQ+ sensitivity, addressing common stereotypes, and promoting

³On April, 2nd, 2023, a trans woman student at the University of Patras (Department of Educational Sciences) was the victim of a brutal attack by two male students, studying at the same university. The students attacked her, punching and kicking her, and also throwing paint at her.

respectful language. Such training contributes to a more supportive environment by reducing unintentional microaggressions and fostering a culture of respect. Relevant literature also suggests conducting training programs for allies. These programs encourage individuals to become LGBTIQ+ allies, fostering a supportive network within the academic community. The reason for this is that allies play a crucial role in advocacy and these training programs help create a network of support and understanding, contributing to a more inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, incorporating LGBTIQ+ content in curricula (LGBTIQ+ perspectives, history, and contributions into academic curricula across disciplines) not only educates students about diverse identities but also normalizes LGBTIQ+ experiences within the academic discourse. Lastly, one recommendation for maximizing awareness are the guest lectures and panels. Inviting LGBTIQ+ activists, scholars, and community members for guest lectures and panel discussions can work beneficial as they bring real-world experiences, providing students and faculty with valuable insights and promoting dialogue on LGBTIQ+ issues.

2.2 Good practices for implementation

For maximizing inclusivity, some good practices to be employed at universities include: (a) LGBTIQ+ research centers, (b) inclusive policies, (c) counseling services, (d) external partnerships and (e) events and festivals. First, by establishing LGBTIQ+ resource centers (i.e., centers that provide information, support, and a safe space for LGBTIQ+ individuals) on campus, these can act as hubs for support services, information dissemination, and community-building, fostering a sense of belonging. In addition, clear inclusive policies, and non-discrimination statements can signal institutional commitment to inclusivity, reassuring LGBTIQ+ individuals about their rights and protections. Also, by offering counseling services that are knowledgeable and affirming of LGBTIQ+ issues, many discrimination incidents might be avoided, enhancing their overall well-being. Providing mental health support tailored to the unique needs of LGBTIQ+ students can address the mental health disparities often experienced by this community. Another point

of good practice is partnerships with LGBTIQ+ organizations for advocacy, support, and joint initiatives, such as Colour Youth, Pride, Orlando etc. (see next section for a detailed list of the available organizations in Greece). Partnerships like these, extend the impact of awareness efforts and provide additional resources and expertise to university communities. Lastly, regular LGBTIQ+ events and celebrations (could be Pride celebrations, awareness weeks, and visibility campaigns) occurring at campuses create a sense of community, raise visibility, and contribute to a more inclusive campus culture. By incorporating these initiatives, universities and responsible ministries can contribute significantly to creating an environment that respects, supports, and celebrates the diversity of the LGBTIQ+ community within academic settings.

3. Useful contacts

LGBTQI+ organizations in Greece

- Athens Pride (Athens)
Phone: (+30) 6974 18 73 83
Email: contact@athenspride.eu
Website: www.athenspride.eu
Facebook page: www.facebook.com/athenspride
- Colour Youth – Athens LGBTQ Youth Community
Phone: (+30) 6945 58 33 95
Email: info@colouryouth.gr
Website: www.colouryouth.gr
Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ColourYouth
- HerPride (ex LGBTQI+ Crete Pride) (Herakleion, Crete)
Email: herpride2019@gmail.com
Facebook page: www.facebook.com/herpridefest
- G-All - Gender Alliance Initiative (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 6977 092546 & (+30) 211 111 5107

Email: info@g-all.gr

Website: www.g-all.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GenderAllianceInitiative

- Greek LGBT Disabled (Athens)

Emails: info@loatamea.gr & greeklgbtdisabled@gmail.com

Website: www.loatamea.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/loatamea

- Intersex Greek Community (Athens)

Emails: intersexgreece@gmail.com & info@intersexgreece.org.gr

Website: www.intersexgreece.org.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/IntersexGr

- OLKE - Homosexual & Lesbian Community of Greece (Greece)

Phone: (+30) 6931 47 15 67

Email: info.olke@gmail.com

Website: www.olkegr.blogspot.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OLKEorg

- Orlando LGBT (Athens)

Email: contact@orlandolgbt.gr

Website: www.orlandolgbt.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/orlandolgbt.gr

- Patras Pride (Patra)

Email: pridepatras@gmail.com

Website: www.patraspride.blogspot.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/patraspride

- Proud parents (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 6977 83 90 37

Email: proudparentsgreece@gmail.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/proudparentsgreece

- Proud Seniors Greece (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 6973355124

Email: proudseniorgreece@gmail.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/proudseniorgreece

- Rainbow families (Athens)

Email: ouraniotoksofamilies@gmail.com

Website: www.rainbowfamiliesgreece.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ouraniotoksofamilies

- Rainbow school (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 6931 47 15 67

Email: info@rainbowschool.gr

Website: www.rainbowschool.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/RainbowSchoolGR

- Rainbow Seniors (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 694 854 0931

Email: info@rainbowseniors.eu

Website: rainbowseniors.eu

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/RainbowSeniors>

- Thessaloniki Pride (Thessaloniki)

Phone: (+30) 231 1 289320

Email: contact@thessalonikipride.com

Website: www.thessalonikipride.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ThessalonikiPride

- Transgender Support Association (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 210 92 10 697 & (+30) 698 753 9741

Emails:

contact@tgender.gr & transgender.support.association@gmail.com

Websites: www.transgender-association.gr & www.tgender.gr

Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/GreekTransgenderSupportAssociation

National Monitoring and Implementation Body for the Principle of Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination

- Ombudsman (Athens)

Phone: (+30) 2131306600

Submit electronic complaint: www.synigoros.gr/el/anafora/ipovoli-anaforas

Website: www.synigoros.gr

National Social Support Service

- National Center for Social Solidarity (emergency psychological and social support services for individuals in situations of urgent social needs, social exclusion, and crises) 24-hour helpline: 197

Website: www.ekka.org.gr

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Police Services combatting hate crime and/or (online) hate speech

- Directorate for the Prosecution of Electronic Crime of the Hellenic Police

Phone: 11188 (24-hour)

Email: ccu@cybercrimeunit.gov.gr

- Police Service for Combating Racist Violence

Phone: 11414 (24-hour)

Submit an electronic complaint: <https://www.astynomia.gr/ypiresies-antimetopisis-ratsistikis-vias/epikoinonia/katangelies-peristatikon-ratsistikis-vias/>

Part B: field research results

1. Rationale of the applied methods

In this study, photo elicitation and autophotography were employed as qualitative research methods. Photo elicitation involves utilizing photographs to trigger discussions and extract information from participants (Radley, 2010). Researchers presented participants with pre-selected images representing diverse forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and then utilized these images as prompts for individual interviews (Cleland, MacLeod and Ellaway, 2021). Participants elaborated on the significance of the chosen photos and responded to open-ended questions to delve into emotions, experiences, and the meanings associated with the images. The collected data encompassed both the photographs and participants' narratives. The rationale behind the choice of this method was to uncover rich narratives and insights by encouraging participants to reflect on and discuss the images presented (Harper, 2012).

In contrast, auto photography, also known as auto-photography or auto-driven photography, entails participants capturing their own photographs to chronicle their daily lives, experiences, or a specific topic (Cleland, MacLeod and Ellaway, 2021). It is a form of research that empowers individuals to shape the narrative and visually express their identity, surroundings, or social context (Padgett et al., 2013). Participants were tasked with taking photographs that depict their experiences with various forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. After capturing and uploading their photos to Google Forms, participants reflected on each image and provided a small description (200-300 words) for each photo, answering the main question: *“Why did you select this photograph? How do you feel about the context of this photo?”*. This process enables participants to articulate the significance and meaning behind their chosen visuals (see Annex for the photos uploaded by the participants).

2. Social/demographic profile of participants

In the semi-structured online interview conducted for the first study using the photo-elicitation method, a total of 7 participants were enlisted. Among them were four undergraduate students, one postgraduate student, and a doctoral researcher. The last participant had recently graduated. The majority of students fell within the age range of 18-24, while two participants were between 35-45 years old. Most respondents self-identified as “women”, while two participants self-identified as “men”, and one as “trans” in terms of gender identity. All the students disclosed their affiliation with the LGBTIQ+ community, with the majority (five) indicating residence in Athens. Moving on to the autophotography method employed in the second study (auto photography), which was also conducted online, four participants provided responses. The participants comprised one undergraduate student, one postgraduate student, and two university staff members. Age distribution included two participants in the 18-24 age group, one in the 35-44 age group, and one in the 45-55 age group. Regarding gender identity, one participant self-identified as a “woman”, one as “man”, one as “genderqueer”, and one as “trans” (trans man). All participants reported affiliation with the LGBTIQ+ community, with three residing in Athens and one in rural areas. See also Table 1 for the sociodemographic information of the participants.

Table 1*Descriptive statistics of the research participants*

		Students	Academic staff	Total
Gender	Male	2	1	3
	Female	4	1	5
	Genderqueer	0	1	1
	Trans	1	1	2
Age group	18-24	5	2	7
	35-44	2	1	3
	45-55	0	1	1
Residency	Athens	5	3	8
	Other cities	1	0	1
	Rural areas	1	1	2

Note. Numbers are frequencies (f_n).**3. Results from the empirical research**

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As mentioned in previous sections, the pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion has become the focus of attention for universities around the world (Ballard *et al.*, 2020). From the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (García-Peñalvo *et al.*, 2020) to the global outcry against racial injustice, now more than ever, universities must strive for long-term, sustainable change. However, despite the measures being taken to eradicate discrimination, certain groups of students, such as the LGBTIQ+, still face difficulties in expressing their gender. In accordance with relevant literature, this study revealed a spectrum of discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors rooted in Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Sex Characteristics (SOGISC) within the academic environment. Participants in both studies, utilizing photo-elicitation and autophotography, shared their experiences, highlighting various manifestations of discrimination and shedding light on the complex interplay of individual, interpersonal, and institutional factors.

One of the major issues that arose was incidents of **microaggressions and stereotyping**. Many participants frequently recounted instances of microaggressions issues⁴ and stereotyping⁵ based on their SOGISC. Some participants described experiencing subtle yet hurtful comments from peers regarding their same-sex relationship, reflecting underlying heteronormative attitudes, while others recounted encountering assumptions about their academic capabilities and their overall qualities as a person (e.g., one participant stated that he was excluded from some sport activities because he was gay and deemed “incompatible” with these activities), seemingly influenced by stereotypes and prejudice associated with their gender identity. One participant disclosed instances of being misgendered in the university setting, reflecting challenges related to gender identity. Older participants mentioned facing skepticism about their qualifications, not only due to their sexual orientation and gender identity but also due to potential biases related to age, feeling isolated and misunderstood. This concept, called ageism (i.e., stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination against people because of their chronological age; Ayalon and Tesch-Römer, 2017), has been found to be linked with SOGISC-based discrimination: more ageism correlates with greater SOGISC-based discrimination (Lytle et al., 2018).

All the above may help to explain the feelings of **isolation and exclusion** -a recurring theme in participants’ interviews. Discriminatory beliefs often resulted in the formation of cliques or exclusive groups, impeding the integration of individuals with diverse SOGISC identities into the academic community. Additionally, discrimination manifested in professional contexts, affecting opportunities for career advancement and academic recognition (termed as **professional consequences**). Some participants from the university staff reported instances where their SOGISC identity influenced hiring decisions

⁴According to Pierce (1974), microaggressions were initially defined as “black-white racial interactions [that] are characterized by white put-downs, done in an automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion” (pp. 515). Nowadays, the term describes this phenomenon when it occurs between various groups where stigma and/or a power imbalance exist (Sue et al., 2007).

⁵Stereotyping is “a pervasive and persistent human tendency that stems from a basic cognitive need to categorize, simplify, and process the complex world” (Zhang et al., 2022, pp. 1).

and research collaborations. The experiences of isolation, exclusion, and the professional consequences might be attributed to **institutional barriers**, as suggested by some participants. Identified institutional shortcomings, such as the absence of inclusive policies, insufficient support structures, and a failure to address SOGISC-related issues, perpetuated an environment where discriminatory beliefs and behaviors could persist unchecked, thereby contributing to the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes.

One participant also mentioned discriminatory incidents occurring online, often referred to as experiences of cyberbullying and harassment. These incidents frequently targeted individuals based on their identity, contributing to a broader landscape of discrimination facilitated by digital platforms. To elaborate, cyberbullying and cyberhate involve using digital platforms to target an individual with aggressive, intimidating, or demeaning behavior (e.g., Peebles, 2014). Harassment, in the online context, refers to persistent and unwanted actions that may include hate speech, derogatory comments, or any form of discriminatory behavior (Fulantelli *et al.*, 2022). Although the participant did not delve into much detail, opting to avoid an extensive discussion on the subject, these discriminatory incidents online underscore the importance of implementing measures to ensure online safety within academic settings (e.g., cultivation of digital citizenship, support mechanisms).

The negative experiences reported by the participants have an **impact on mental health**, as supported also by relevant literature (for an extensive review, see Pascoe and Smart Richman, 2009). Both studies mentioned in the previous paragraph (photo elicitation and auto photography) illuminated the profound impact of SOGISC-based discrimination on mental health, as one participant characteristically stated:

“I am invisible to some people -they see one face but read a name not compatible with the face they see, and thus they forget about the face. These feelings of invisibility put me in a persistent struggle to assert my authentic self”.

The weight of these societal expectations, coupled with the fear of judgment, appears to take a toll on their mental well-being. Some other participants also shared experiences of heightened stress, anxiety, and, in some cases, depression resulting from the constant need to navigate a discriminatory academic environment. Nonetheless, despite the challenges, instances of **resistance and allyship** emerged within the narratives. Participants described forming support networks outside of the university, advocating for inclusive policies, and actively challenging discriminatory behaviors. These acts of resilience showcased the potential for positive change, which should also be occurring in academic institutions, as one participant emphasized.

Even though they were asked, not many participants reported having addressed these discriminatory incidents, which is essential for fostering an inclusive environment; one participant stated:

“I couldn’t deal with it when it happened; I was feeling frozen, weak, tired, like being of no importance”.

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Some participants stated that they **kept records of the discriminatory incidents**, including dates, times, locations, and descriptions, and then reported them to faculty deans and members of the administration office, but without any success. Some of them **sought professional advice** on navigating discriminatory incidents from LGBTIQ+ advocacy organizations, and some attempted to promote dialogue with classmates and professors about diversity and inclusion within the university. Lastly, one participant mentioned that they sought mental health support (counseling) as the discriminatory incidents took a toll on their well-being and engaged in activities that bring joy and relaxation to maintain **emotional resilience**. These techniques and strategies are supported also by the literature (e.g., Denison, Bevan, and Jeanes, 2021; for a detailed review see Wilson and Cariola, 2020) and they are probably indicative of low representativeness, as reported also by the participants.

Apart from discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors based on SOGISC, the visibility of LGBTIQ+ individuals, issues, and representation within the academic environment was another study goal. The findings reveal a complex landscape shaped by both positive strides and persistent challenges, ultimately emphasizing the need for increased efforts to enhance the visibility and inclusivity of the LGBTIQ+ community within academia.

Regarding **visibility and representation**, although some universities have included courses related to gender studies in their curriculum (e.g., the course “Gender Identity” at Panteion University or at University of Western Attica), participants expressed concern over the limited representation of LGBTIQ+ issues within the academic curriculum. Besides having an entire course dedicated to gender studies, a prevailing theme was that many courses, even those taught in Psychology departments, lack inclusive content and fail to consider the diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics. This representation gap contributes to a broader societal invisibility and a failure to acknowledge the experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community in scholarly discourse.

Another key issue seems to be the **limited visibility in research and publications** regarding the Greek context, as participants mentioned. Despite the existence of a substantial body of relevant literature addressing LGBTIQ+ issues on a global scale, the literature originating from Greece is notably limited. The research conducted on these topics in Greece often takes the form of bachelor’s and master’s theses (labelled as “*gray literature*”). This implies that the knowledge generated through academic inquiry in the Greek context may not be reaching broader audiences through traditional channels like peer-reviewed journals or widely recognized publications. As a result, the insights and findings from this research may not be as accessible or influential within the larger academic and public discourse on LGBTIQ+ issues, both nationally and internationally. These challenges in adequately representing LGBTIQ+ perspectives and related findings in research and publications pertain to the Greek population and reflect systemic challenges that may impede the dissemination of critical knowledge in this field.

Some participants, mostly students, also reported **underrepresentation in leadership and faculty roles**:

“Have you ever seen a dean being openly gay? Or even a professor coming out as lesbian? These ‘things’, even though they might be presented or mentioned in class, exist only in books, never in real life”.

Participants identified a significant underrepresentation of LGBTIQ+ individuals in leadership and faculty roles, including deans, department heads, and university administrators. They noted that the absence of visible role models within academic leadership positions creates a lack of diversity and hinders the formation of supportive networks for LGBTIQ+ students and faculty members. This absence also impacts career aspirations, hinders professional development, and perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation.

To maximize representativeness, according to participants’ responses, two main themes emerged: **“inclusive spaces”** and **“the existence of allies and supportive faculty”**. Participants emphasized the necessity for the establishment of student-led organizations, counseling services to support LGBTIQ+ research centers, and initiatives dedicated to LGBTIQ+ issues. These inclusive spaces will contribute to increased visibility, fostering a sense of community and support for individuals within the academic environment. Although some participants reported positive shifts in the form of supportive faculty members and allies within academic settings, there is a need to maximize these efforts. Participants underscored the necessity for having more faculty members actively incorporate inclusive practices into their teaching, offer mentorship, and advocate for policies that promote the visibility and rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Finally, the INCLUSIES qualitative research aimed to explore the perceptions of participants within university settings regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTIQ+ rights and relevant awareness/ sensitivity activities. The findings provide valuable insights into the attitudes, challenges, and strategies identified by participants in

the pursuit of creating more inclusive and supportive environments on university campuses. First, the proposed **collective actions for advocating LGBTIQ+ rights** include student-led initiatives: student organizations and LGBTIQ+ support groups were identified by all participants as catalysts for raising awareness, organizing events, and advocating for policy changes within the university. Moreover, collaboration with allies, including faculty members and other student organizations, was stated by the participants as crucial for the success of advocacy efforts. Participants highlighted the importance of building alliances to amplify voices, challenge discriminatory practices, and foster a sense of community. For these actions to be effective, inclusive policies and institutional support are also of paramount importance. The first study employed photo elicitation, in particular, underscored the significance of inclusive policies and institutional support for advocating LGBTIQ+ rights, as participants noted the need for universities to adopt and actively implement policies that safeguard the rights of individuals and create a welcoming environment for all. Lastly, participants called for inclusive programming that acknowledges and addresses the diverse experiences within the LGBTIQ+ community, ensuring that initiatives consider factors such as race, gender, and disability (categorized as intersectionality and inclusive programming).

Regarding the suggested **awareness and sensitivity activities**, participants mentioned the educational workshops and training as effective tools for raising awareness and promoting sensitivity. These activities, when integrated into the curriculum or offered as standalone events, were seen as instrumental in fostering understanding and dismantling stereotypes. Also, celebration of LGBTIQ+ could emerge according to the participants as a positive strategy. Participants expressed the importance of recognizing significant milestones, events, and contributions to LGBTIQ+ history as a means of fostering pride, visibility, and understanding. In the same line, visibility campaigns, including awareness weeks, pride events, and artistic displays, can be impactful ways to bring attention to LGBTIQ+ issues. Participants highlighted the potential of such campaigns in challenging stereotypes, fostering a sense of community, and normalizing diverse identities. Lastly,

participants stressed the importance of creating accessible counseling and support services for LGBTIQ+ individuals where students could seek assistance, share experiences, and access mental health support tailored to their unique needs.

Summarizing, the perceptions gathered through this qualitative study provide valuable insights into the varied discriminatory incidents and strategies employed by the participants, as well as the approaches and challenges associated with collective actions for advocating LGBTIQ+ rights and implementing awareness-sensitivity activities at the university level. By recognizing the significance of student-led initiatives, collaboration with allies, inclusive policies, and a diverse range of awareness activities, universities can take meaningful steps toward creating environments that embrace and support the LGBTIQ+ community. Recognizing and addressing the multifaceted aspects of discrimination is essential for fostering environments that are inclusive, equitable, and respectful of diverse identities.

Part C: general conclusions

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In conclusion, the INCLUSIES research employing the techniques of photo-elicitation and autophotography shed light on the diverse and nuanced experiences of LGBTIQ+ students and academic staff within the Greek educational context. The findings indicate that LGBTIQ+ students in Greece often grapple with issues such as discrimination, bullying, and a lack of inclusive policies within educational institutions; although in some cases (e.g., cyberbullying), participants may not have spoken up, perhaps due to feeling uncomfortable. Nonetheless, it seems that in universities located in large cities (Athens, Thessaloniki), the situation is much better than in universities situated in the countryside or rural areas. This is not unexpected as, in general, larger cities tend to offer more diverse and accepting environments. Cities like Athens and Thessaloniki have vibrant LGBTIQ+ communities, supportive organizations, and a more extensive range of resources, including LGBTIQ+ friendly spaces, events, and services. The urban setting provides a greater sense

of anonymity and diversity, fostering an atmosphere that is generally more accepting and inclusive. On the other hand, rural areas and smaller towns have more conservative attitudes, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, including students, may face greater challenges in terms of acceptance and visibility. There might be a lack of support services and fewer opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals. Nonetheless, it is crucial to note that perceptions and experiences can vary widely even within large cities or rural areas, and progress is continually being made to promote inclusivity and acceptance throughout Greece. Additionally, societal attitudes are dynamic, and changes may occur over time, and there is also evidence of resilience and strength within the community, with instances of peer support, allyship, and activism emerging as important factors in navigating the educational landscape, even in universities located in rural areas.

Despite these insightful results, it is important to acknowledge that fewer participants than anticipated were recruited for the autophotography method. We employed various recruitment strategies, including: (a) Posting a call for participants on the Panteion website and Colour Youth's social media accounts, (b) Leveraging personal and professional networks, (c) Promoting the research through specific LGBTIQ+ social media groups and (d) Collaborating with Colour Youth, a well-established grassroots organization. Despite these efforts, we fell short of our recruitment target. Several factors likely contributed to the low response rate, including survey fatigue, demanding research method, unfamiliarity with the method and the social climate. Many LGBTIQ+ individuals have likely participated in past surveys conducted by Panteion and Colour Youth, leading to exhaustion and decreased willingness to participate again. In addition, the autophotography method required significant time and effort from participants, potentially discouraging some from joining, especially when it comes to methods such as autophotography. Compared to traditional methods like focus groups or interviews, the autophotography method was less familiar to potential participants, making them less inclined to engage. Lastly, the current climate in Greece is unfortunately quite negative for LGBTIQ+ individuals, with significant homo/transphobic rhetoric emanating from media,

religious institutions, political parties, and even everyday social media users. This negativity, fueled by the government's decision to support marriage and parenthood equality for same-sex couples, likely made many LGBTQI+ people feel insecure, uncomfortable, and unsafe discussing LGBTQI+ issues, including participating in research projects. Hence, even with the active participation and invaluable support of a well-respected LGBTQI+ NGO like Colour Youth, this experience highlights the inherent challenges of conducting research on LGBTQI+ issues, especially in hostile social environments.

Summarizing, the study underscores the need for comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the unique needs of LGBTQI+ students in Greek schools and universities. The same suggestions were mentioned by the study participants. It highlights the importance of fostering an environment that promotes acceptance, understanding, and respect for diversity. Moreover, the research advocates for the implementation of support networks, counseling services, and educational initiatives aimed at creating a safer and more inclusive space for LGBTQI+ students to thrive academically and personally. By amplifying the voices of LGBTQI+ students and integrating their perspectives into educational policies and practices, Greece can work towards creating an educational system that truly reflects the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

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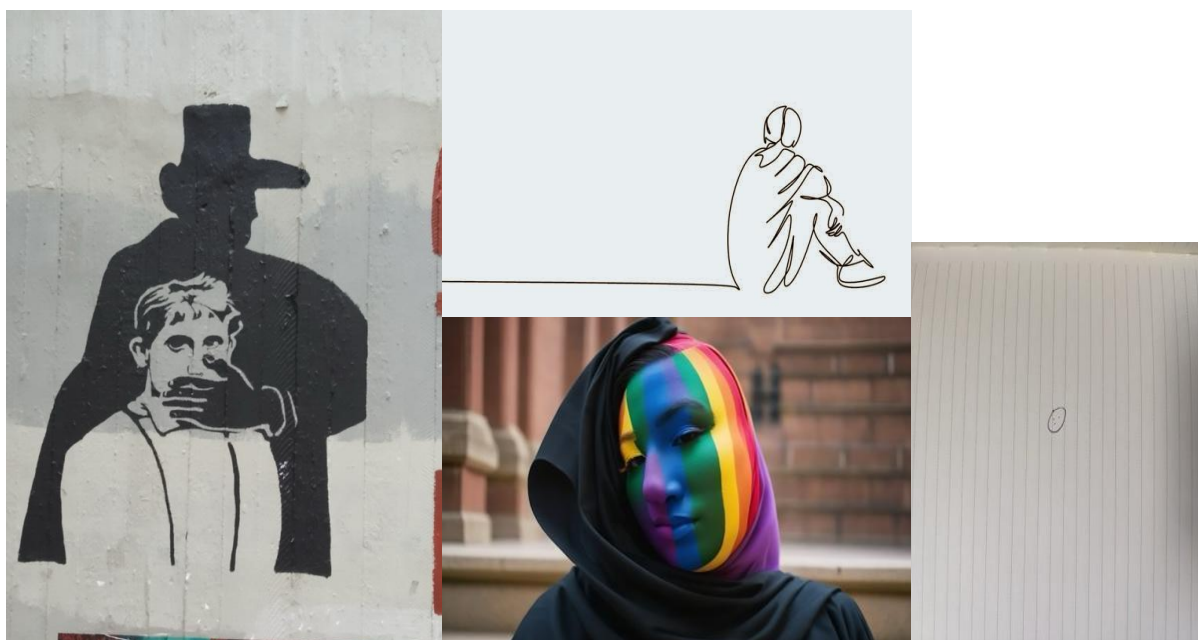
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Annex

This annex features photos submitted by research participants using the autophotography method. Participants were instructed to submit five photos corresponding to five questions. Below, you can view the photos that participants granted permission to include in the research report, all taken in accordance with the research guidelines.

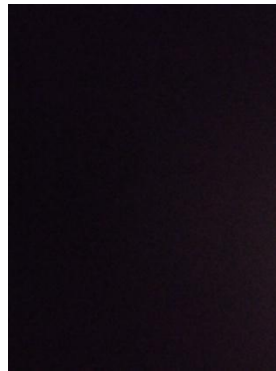
Question 1:

How do you see yourself when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?



Question 2

How do others see you when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?



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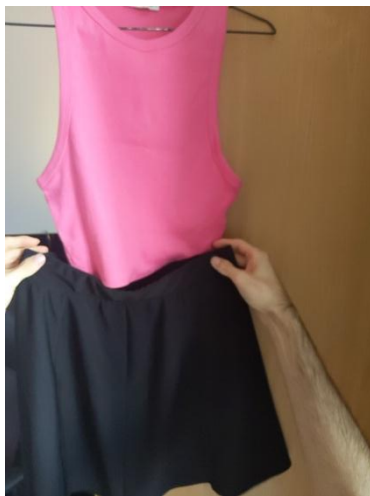
Question 3:

What makes it hard for you to be who you are? What challenges do you face when trying to be yourself?



Question 4:

What helps you be who you are? What gives you strength in the face of challenges?

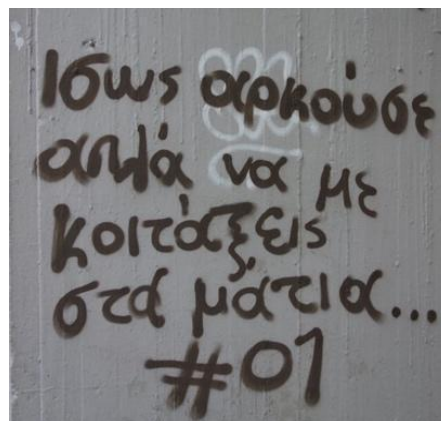
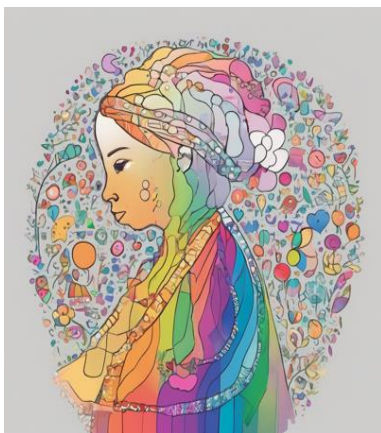


Question 5:

In these experiences of discrimination, what kind of help would you find appropriate from others?



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The case of Italy

Dr. Laura Bugatti (UNIBS), Dr. Elena Togni (UNIBS),
Dr. Carmine Urciuoli (RL)⁶

Part A: desk research results

1. The status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment

At the European level, the existence of discrimination on the basis of SOGISC in the academic environment was reported in the 'FRA survey, A long way to go for LGBTI equality (2020)': 10% of the Italian LGBTI respondents belonging to tertiary education reported feeling discriminated against due to being LGBTI by school/university personnel in the past 12 months.

However, at the national level, among the studies conducted in Italy, there are no comprehensive statistics regarding the inclusion of LGBTI+ people in the Italian academic environment. In some of them, mainly pertaining to Labour Discrimination against LGBT+ people, some data related to the learning environment are included, even if the data concerning discrimination in the academic field are mixed with the data on discrimination in school.

In 2023, UNAR (National Anti-Racial Discrimination Office) and ISTAT (National Statistics Bureau) published the findings of a survey on labor discrimination against LGBT+ people carried out in 2022 and addressing specifically lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, 18 years of age or older, living in Italy and not in a civil union⁷. The aim of this

⁶ The report is the product of a shared reflection and elaboration. However, sections A -1 and A-3 were drafted by Laura Bugatti (UNIBS); section A-2 was drafted by Elena Togni (UNIBS); section B was drafted by Carmine Urciuoli (RL)

⁷ ISTAT-UNAR (2023). Survey on Labour Discrimination against LGBT+ people (not in Civil Union), 2023, <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/05/report-discriminazioni-15maggio.pdf>

project is to provide an informative portrayal of the prevalence and perception of different forms of discrimination, threat, and aggression that LGB people have encountered both in the workplace and in other areas of their social life, including at school/University.

Concerning the degree of discrimination encountered in these areas (data concerning schools and university are aggregated in the report), approximately seven out of ten (71.9 percent) LGB respondents declared to have experienced at least one event of discrimination at school/university (including being disadvantaged in exams or questions, being marginalized, isolated, kept apart, being insulted, made fun of, treated badly, ridiculed). The phenomenon is more pronounced among the male population (77.1% vs. 63.6%), among homosexual people compared to bisexual people (72.8% vs. 68.2%), among younger people (76.4% of 18–34-year-old). With reference to the last event experienced, which for more than half took place in high school, among the reasons for discrimination sexual orientation is indicated by 62.2% of the respondents and outer appearance by 47.2%. In general, about nine out of ten people pointed to schoolmates or students as the perpetrators of such behavior.

A high level of discrimination was also registered in previous survey conducted by ISTAT and UNAR in 2020-2021 on the same topic addressed to LGB people in a civil union or formerly in union (report published in 2022): high percentage (46.9 percent) of responded claim to have experienced at least one discriminatory event at school/university (as “being disadvantaged in exams or questions, being marginalized, isolated, kept apart, being insulted, made fun of, treated badly, ridiculed”)⁸. Taking into consideration the last event (more than 50% of these cases happened in high school) among the reasons of the discrimination suffered, sexual orientation is indicated by 64.5% respondents and outer appearance by 30.7%.

The presence of discrimination against LGBT+ people during the education and training path was highlighted also in the quantitative study *La popolazione omosessuale*

⁸ ISTAT-UNAR. Survey on Labour Discrimination against LGBT+ people (in Civil Union or formerly in union), 2022, https://www.istat.it/it/files//2022/05/REPORTDISCRIMINAZIONILGBT_2022_en.pdf

nella società italiana, carried out by ISTAT in 2011 (ISTAT, 2012). 24% of LGB respondents reported that they experienced discrimination in school or university (the percentage drops to 14,2% for heterosexual respondents).

So far, only a limited number of studies have been carried out at national level specifically analyzing the level of discrimination and inclusion of LGBT+ people in the Italian Academic environment: the EU project *UNIDIVERSITY - Universities Towards Diversity* (2020-2022), the national project *UNIVERSITRANS* (2017-2018) and the *LGBTI+ Inclusive University Index* (2018-2019).

Under the *University - Universities Towards Diversity* project⁹ a desk and empirical quantitative and qualitative research (online Survey (n=506) and semi-structured interviews (n=18)) was carried out in order to assess, with reference to the in the Italian academic environment: 1) discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and behaviors based on SOGISC; 2) levels of visibility of LGBTI+ people and of their rights; 3) characteristics of discriminatory incidents; 4) respondents' training needs. The results of the survey confirmed the existence of some incidents of discrimination and violence in the academic environment, mainly in the form of negative comments or use of LGBT+ terms in an insulting way and unequal treatment. The place where the discriminatory incidents usually occur are the university classrooms (17%) or more generally the common area of the campus – in particular, University halls and yards (66%) and University cafeteria (17%). The perpetrators are most frequently students (58%), while the teaching staff ranks second (27%). 38% and 39% respondents of the online sample believed, respectively, that LGBTI+ rights are not or poorly promoted in academic environments, and that LGBTI+ issues are not or rarely discussed within the universities. According to the survey data, there is also a lack of trainings on LGBTI+ topics; despite the potential interest in these trainings is high,

⁹ The project was co-funded by the European Commission within the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program 2014-2020, Grant Agreement number: 963181, www.university-project.eu. See, *University – Universities Towards Diversity*, National Report, Italy; Stamile, N. and Viggiani G. (2022). *Essere LGBT in accademia: note da una ricerca sul campo*, in Rinaldi C. (eds), *Quaderni del Laboratorio Interdisciplinare di ricerca su Corpi, Diritti, Conflitti*, PM Edizioni.

with particular regards to the following issues: Terminology and general information on SOGISC (64%), National situation of LGBTI+ rights (58%), Teaching strategies to have a more inclusive approach (56%), Ways to integrate inclusive practices in everyday practices (56%); Legal Framework (53%).

The study conducted under the *Universitrans*¹⁰ - aiming at mapping the protection measures for trans students and staff in Italian universities - attested a high degree of exclusion toward trans and gender non-conforming people: gender self-determination tools (Double University Record and so-called Alias career) were present in 38 out of the 68 universities considered¹¹.

In 2019, a research team belonging to the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia¹² has developed the *LGBTI+ Inclusive University Index*, adopting a fuzzy logic techniques, and has applied it to measure the degree of LGBT+ inclusion in 58 Italian public universities considering the academic year 2018/2019: a set of indicators to describe LGBTI+ inclusion was taking into consideration including Services (i.e. all gender bathrooms, services of counseling for LGBT+ people, procedures for reporting LGBT+ crimes), Education and Training (such as seminars, trainings and other activities on LGBT+ issues), Involvement and collaboration of LGBT+ students (CUG and University

¹⁰ Universitrans is a project founded by the Osservatorio Nazionale sull'Identità di Genere (ONIG) e by Movimento di Identità Trans (MIT); for more info see www.universitrans.it

¹¹ Russo, T. and Valerio, P. (2019). Transgenderism and gender identity: from nosographic manuals to contexts. A focus on Italian universities. *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*, VOL. CXLIII, 2.

¹² Russo, T. (2018). La tutela delle soggettività in transizione di genere nelle università italiane. In *Rapporto biennale sullo stato del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca*. ANVUR; 258-259. Russo, T. and Valerio, P. (2019). Transgenderism and gender identity: from nosographic manuals to contexts. A focus on Italian universities. *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*, VOL. CXLIII, 2; Russo, T. (2020). L'inclusione LGBT+ nelle università italiane nel biennio 2018-2020: politiche e misurazione, in Galgano F. and Papillo M.S., *Diversity Management: nuove frontiere dell'inclusione e sfide per i C.U.G. universitari*, FedOA – Federico II University Press, p. 183; Russo T., Addabbo T., Muzzioli S. and De Baets B. (2021). Tools and practices for LGBT+ inclusion in tertiary education: the development of the LGBT+ University Inclusion Index and its application to Italian universities, *Working paper, DEMB WORKING PAPER SERIES, Dipartimento di Economia Marco Biagi - Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia*, https://doi.org/10.25431/11380_1235337; Russo T., Addabbo T., Muzzioli S. and De Baets B. (2020). The development of the LGBT+ University Inclusion Index and its application to Italian universities, *CEUR Workshop Proceedings*, <https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-3074/paper10.pdf>; Russo T., Addabbo T., Muzzioli S. and De Baets B. (2023). The LGBT plus University Inclusion Index and its application to Italian universities. *Soft Computing*.

involvement in LGBT+ inclusion and collaboration between University and LGBT+ student union and allies) - all concurring to create the *Context Index* - and Trans Students' Alias Career and Trans Employees' Alias Career (staff and faculty members), including information about Alias Career - for the *Alias Career Index*.

Five universities in the South of Italy scored zero on a scale 0-100 meaning that they do not provide any protection measures for LGBT+ inclusion (Catanzaro, Cassino, Reggio Calabria, Teramo, Molise). The University of Verona, at the top of the ranking, scored 66,67/100. Only 11 universities have obtained a score equal or above 50/100. Concerning the protection measure for trans students and staff, it is worth mentioning that a growing number of universities have introduced the Alias Career¹³. Nevertheless, most of these Universities provide access to the Alias Career only for Students and not for the employees, including the teaching staff.

2. LGBTQI+ awareness sessions and good practices

As the research projects mentioned in the previous paragraph show, there are no widespread and well-established good practices for LGBTQI+ inclusion in education at the academic level, nor awareness sessions conducted on a regular and extensive basis in Italy.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of Italian universities have signed protocols for the activation of the so-called "Carriera Alias" (Alias Career). The latter refers to the possibility for students, and in some cases also for faculty and administrative staff, to be identified in an alternative gender than the one assigned at birth, and to have this right recognized at the institutional level, regardless of the court's ruling in favor of the legal name change.

Another model adopted to foster inclusivity is the "Operational Protocol for Countering Homotransnegativity and LGBTQI+ Inclusion" dated April 19, 2019, which was signed, among other institutions, by the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

¹³ See also the Linee guida per gli Atenei Italiani sull'implementazione della Carriera Alias della Conferenza Nazionale degli Organismi di Parità delle Università Italiane. <http://www.cpouniversita.it/>

With this agreement, the University sets itself the goal of combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity through a series of intervention actions such as: 1) the use of inclusive and diversity-friendly language in both forms of communication, written and verbal; 2) the introduction of all-gender bathrooms; 3) the adoption of Alias Career and dissemination of this option both in printed form and through the website as well as the adoption of a confidentiality agreement between the University and students who want to make use of Alias Career; 4) the inclusion in the students' welcome package of information on what the University promotes on the subject of protection of sexual orientation and gender identity; 5) the promotion of training initiatives and dissemination on the issue.

Moreover, the CUG (*Comitato unico di Garanzia*- Single Guarantee Committee) of the University of Calabria, in collaboration with the University of Bologna and five other Italian universities, designed and implemented the training model "Actions to counter sexism and homophobia" (ACSO), a diversity training model aimed at Technical Administrative Staff of universities to promote organizational well-being by fighting the effects of sexism and homophobia in the university context. The model is characterized as a training course that aims, inter alia, at offering university workers updated and timely training on the characteristics of sexual identity, with reference to the challenges facing LGBT identities and increasing attention to and awareness of the presence and effects of microaggressions in the workplace.

The model has been tested at the University of Calabria (in 2018), the University of Pisa (2019) and the University of Trento (2020) at the behest of their respective CUGs, which have included in their Positive Action Plans a training course aimed at technical administrative personnel - and at the Province of Pisa, involving the staff of the Municipality of Pisa, the University-Hospital of Pisa, the teachers and technical-administrative staff of the primary and secondary schools in Pisa, the Scuola Normale

Superiore and the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna of Pisa (2019). A total of more than 300 people were trained¹⁴.

Among the meritorious initiatives aimed at improving inclusion in the university environment, as also reported by *LGBTI+ Inclusive University Index* (2018-2019), it is worth mentioning: seminars, conferences and workshops on LGBT+ issues regularly held, often with the collaboration of LGBT+ Associations, at the University of Verona where is also present a counseling service for LGBT+ people; the PhD in Gender Studies, a relevant list of seminars and projects on LGBT+ issues and an obligatory training course for all technical and administrative staff on the promotion of the culture of diversity at the University Federico II of Naples.

Finally, it is worth noting the growing number of student associations that promote equality and also focus on gender identity and sexual orientation.

3. Useful contacts

Contact information of LGBTI and other Human Rights and Equality bodies, organizations, institutions in the country.

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LGBTQI+ organizations

- Arcigay Nazionale
Email: info@arcigay.it
- ArciLesbica
Email: segreteria@arcilesbica.it
- ARCO Associazione Ricreativa Circoli omosessuali
Email: info@arco.lgbt

¹⁴ Luppi E., Bochicchio V. and Scandurra C. (2020). Azioni di Contrasto al Sessismo e all'Omofobia (ACSO): un modello innovativo di diversity training per favorire il benessere organizzativo nelle università, *Genere e re-esistenze in movimento. Soggettività, azioni, prospettive*, <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/779952>.

- Associazione d.e.l.o.s.
Email: info@delosvicenza.it
- Associazione Genitori di Omosessuali AGEDO
Email: info@agedonazionale.org
- Associazione Quore
Email: segreteria@quore.org
- Associazione Radicale Certi Diritti
Email: info@certidiritti.it
- Avvocatura per i diritti LGBTI+ - Rete Lenford
Email: sos@retelenford.it
- Centro Risorse LGBT
Email: centro@risorselgbti.eu
- Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale Mario Mieli
Email: servizi@mariomieli.org
- Coordinamento Torino Pride LGBT
Email: segreteria@torinopride.it
- Di Gay Project
Email: digayproject@gmail.com
- Excellence & Diversity by GLBT Executives
Email: info@edge-glbti.it
- Famiglie Arcobaleno
Email: info@famigliearcobaleno.it
- Fondazione FUORI
Email: fuoriartisti@gmail.com
- Ireos - Centro Servizi Autogestito Comunità Queer
Email: info@ireos.org
- MIT Movimento Identità Trans
Email: mit.segreteria@gmail.com

- Rete Genitori Rainbow
Email: info@genitorirainbow.it
- Consultorio Transgenere
Email: segreteria@consultoriotransgenere.it
- ALFI
Email: info@associazionelesbica.it
- Polis Aperta OdV, Associazione LGBT forze armate e polizia
Email: segreteria.polisaperta@gmail.com
- ONIG – Osservatorio Nazionale sull'Identità di Genere
Email: segreteria@onig.it; info@onig.it

LGBTQI+ Students' Associations

- B.E.St Association (Bocconi University)
Email: as.best@unibocconi.it
- GayStatale (University of Milan)
Email: gaystatale@gmail.com
- B.Rain Bicocca Rainbow (University of Milan-Bicocca)
Email: b.rain.lgbtqi@gmail.com
- Poliedro Association (Polytechnic University of Milan)
Email: info@poliedro-polimi.it
- MoReGay (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) Email:
moregay.unimore@gmail.com
- Iris (University of Udine)
Email: irisudine@gmail.com
- Collettivo Universitario LGBT Pavese (University of Pavia)
Email: info.universigay@gmail.com
- UNICA LGBT (University of Cagliari)
Email: unicalgbt@gmail.com

- UNI LGBT (University of Bologna)
Email: unilgbt@gmail.com
- LUISS Arcobaleno (LUISS University of Rome)
Email: luissarcobaleno@hotmail.it
- Queers as UNICT (University of Catania)
Email: queersct@gmail.com

Equality bodies and other organisations

- Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazione Razziali (UNAR)
Email: unar@unar.it
- Osservatorio per la sicurezza contro gli atti discriminatori (OSCAD)
Email: oscad@dcpc.interno.it
- Rete antidiscriminazione del Comune di Brescia
Email: antidiscriminazione@comune.brescia.it
- Rete RE.A.DY (Rete Nazionale delle Pubbliche Amministrazioni Anti Discriminazioni per orientamento sessuale e identità di genere)
Email: ready@comune.torino.it

Part B: field research results

1. Applied methods

“Photo-elicitation” is an interview technique used in research that incorporates the use of photographs during interviews (Kyololo, Stevens, & Songok, 2023). This participatory-oriented method is applied in various areas, including visual sociology, marketing research, and public health. Its primary goal is to record subjects’ reactions to images, assigning them social and personal meanings and values. The images used can range from photographs to videos, paintings, and other visual media (Elisa Bignante, n.d.). (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Harper, 2002). Six photos have been selected, serving as stimuli for

three main themes: Theme 1 (Psychological abuse): Image 1 (Homonegativity graffiti), Image 2 (Non-binary toilet facilities); Theme 2 (Physical abuse): Image 3 (Sexual harassment), Image 4 (Attack on a lesbian couple); Theme 3 (Protests against and practices in favor of LGBTQI+ people): Image 5 (Protesting against LGBTQI+ rights), Image 6 (LGBTQI+ awareness training sessions at university). In adapting the “photo elicitation” methodology to the Italian university context, the cultural calibration of data collection tools was necessary. Images 2, 4, 5, originally intended as evocative of universal feelings and emotions, were replaced with others more fitting to Italian culture and context (the images used in the Italian research are shown in Annex 2). This methodological change was not merely a concession to cultural heterogeneity but represented an indispensable requirement to ensure the validity and relevance of the collected data . Selecting images that resonated with the cultural and social experiences of the participants increased the likelihood of eliciting authentic and profound responses, making the investigation more incisive in outlining the dynamics of inclusion and discrimination in the Italian academic context.

The other technique used, “auto photography,” is a research method that involves participants in the process of capturing and presenting images, personal or sourced from the internet, that they consider representative of their identity or experiences. The primary goal of auto photography is to examine how subjects perceive themselves and their place in the world through the images they choose to capture or select. In a renowned study by Hawkes (2004), auto photography was used to explore emotional and relational well-being in older women and provided a unique perspective on the richness of experiences and perceptions of older adults, showing how they see themselves and perceive their contribution and impact on the surrounding world.

Auto Photography offers a lens through which we can see how individuals view themselves and their place in the world, providing a deep and personal perspective on their experiences and perceptions.

Auto Photography and photo elicitation are visual research techniques that offer an authentic representation of the lives of the LGBT+ community, countering media stereotypes. These methods promote empowerment, allowing for self-determined representation of identity. Photo elicitation stimulates empathy, raising awareness of the challenges of the LGBT+ community. The images document discrimination, supporting awareness campaigns and activism. Sharing stories in the community strengthens its community solidarity. These techniques educate, combat prejudices, and influence public policies, supporting human rights and promoting equality.

For text analysis, a methodological approach combining modern and traditional techniques was adopted. The T-Lab software, an advanced tool for automatic analysis, was used for a detailed and in-depth examination of the contents. This technological approach was complemented with traditional methods of textual analysis, ensuring a robust and multidimensional analysis. The results are presented below, divided by the technique used.

2. Sample description

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Within the scope of the “Inclusies” project, a convenience sample analysis was conducted across Italy, encompassing a range of demographic and educational variables. Two primary methodologies were employed: photo elicitation and auto photography. The data analysis reveals a multifaceted sociodemographic landscape among the participants.

Tab. 1 - age-relate sample stats

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev.</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>N</i>
Autophotography	29,6	8	21	49	10
Photoelicitation	22,8	3	19	30	25
Both	24,7	6	19	49	35

The sample comprises 35 individuals who responded to the invitation to participate in the survey, which was sent to students through student collectives, institutional channels,

and associations. The mode of questionnaire administration was CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing). In two instances (photo elicitation), the interviews were conducted in person. The average age of the respondents is 24.7 years, with a median age of 23 years. Although the majority of the respondents are young, the age range is broad, varying from a minimum of 19 years to a maximum of 49 years, thereby demonstrating a good generational variety among the participants. In terms of demographic sex, out of the 35 respondents, 19 individuals identified their sex at birth as male. However, when delving into the category of 'gender', a wider variety is observed. The 'male' gender is the most common, with 17 occurrences, but there are six different gender identifications indicated in the sample. Regarding affective/erotic orientation, the data reveal that the 'homosexual' orientation is the most common among the respondents, with 12 individuals identifying as such. However, the dataset presents six distinct orientations represented.

Tab. 2 - Sexual orientation and gender of the sample

Sex. Orientation ⇒							
	Gender ↓	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Bisexual	Queer	Other	prefer not to say
	woman	2	3	2			6
	man	2	8	2			5
	transgender	2					
	gender fluid				1		
	other					1	
	prefer not to say	1			1		
	Tot. (Sex. Or.)	7	11	4	2	1	11
							35

Regarding the university affiliation, “Sapienza University of Rome,” one of the largest in Europe, stands out as the most attended academic institution among the participants, with 23 individuals indicating it as their university. In total, nine different universities are represented in the sample. The role of “Undergraduate Student” is the most

common among respondents (particularly for photo elicitation), with 23 individuals identifying themselves in this category, among seven unique roles (Other Staff, PhD Candidate, Non-Tenure Track Researcher (or contract-based), Master's Student, Undergraduate Student).

The province of Rome is the most represented in terms of residence, indicated by 23 respondents, but the geographical diversity is evident with ten unique provinces indicated by the research participants. In addition to major cities (and their respective universities) such as Turin, Naples, and Rome, smaller cities like Brescia, Messina, Caserta, Salerno, Latina, Viterbo, and Florence are also mentioned, providing quite a wide coverage of the geographical location North/Central/South Italy.

3. Empirical research results

3.1. Discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors based on SOGISC in the academic environment

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Photo Elicitation

The first image (Fig. 1) evoked reactions of dismay and sadness among students, as such acts are seen as manifestations of hatred and intolerance which “should have no place in a civilized society and an academic setting that aims to be inclusive and respectful of every individual” (male, homosexual, 28 years old, Rome, undergraduate student). Harassment (Fig. 2), both verbal and physical, is another concerning aspect emerging from student accounts, especially with regard to power dynamics that can lead to abuse, particularly against women, necessitating decisive action and effective preventative measures. The introduction of no-gender bathrooms (Fig. 3) is seen as a positive step towards recognizing and accepting diverse gender identities, though there remains within the academic sphere a certain resistance and lack of understanding towards transgender and

non-binary individuals, indicating that the journey towards full inclusion still requires continued effort and commitment. Homophobic violence (Fig. 4), whether verbal or physical, is considered a serious and still too prevalent issue, undermining the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ students and conflicting with the values of equality and respect the university strives to promote. Demonstrations against LGBT rights (Fig. 5), such as marches or protests opposing the extension of these rights, were cited as examples of how discrimination can still take root and manifest openly, drawing attention to the need for collective action starting from the university as a social center of culture, to counteract such phenomena. Lastly, training on inclusion (Fig. 6) has been recognized as a vital tool for educating and raising awareness within the academic community, not only to prevent discriminatory acts but also to create an environment where every student feels valued and supported in their individuality.

Auto Photography

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Testimonies provided through auto photography reveal a landscape of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are not explicitly but indirectly discriminatory in the academic environment, particularly in relation to SOGISC issues. Participants shared a series of experiences illustrating the difficulty of authentically living one's identity in a context that should instead be inclusive and protective.



«As I entered, a group of four boys, physically larger than me, sized me up from head to toe and kept their gaze fixed on me until I left. I feared they might attack me as I was smaller in stature and still had feminine features. At that time, I was a commuting student, and to avoid risking such uncomfortable situations, I refrained from using the restroom for as long as 10 consecutive hours» (Transgender man, bisexual, 21 years old, Brescia, undergraduate student).*

Fig. 1 image of a university toilet (see description above).

The incident of rejection experienced in shared spaces, such as the university restroom, illustrates not merely a moment of direct discrimination but also the long-term consequences of such an act, including the alteration of one's daily habits and the fear for personal safety. This underscores the absence of safe spaces and the lack of effective inclusion policies in the university environment. The sentiments of isolation, melancholy, and frustration expressed by the witnesses reflect a pervasive atmosphere of misunderstanding and prejudice, at times subtly, within academic life. The concealment and marginalization of LGBTQIA+ identities and their exclusion from academic discourse and research are indicative of an environment that fails to fully recognize diversity as a value and as the foundation of an advanced and conscious society.



Fig. 2 - Image selected by a 32-year-old MtF woman, Florence, non-tenured researcher

“I have often felt like those houses (Fig. 2), besieged by a stormy sea, vulnerable and isolated. Discrimination has fueled doubts about my identity and my worth as a researcher. However, like the buildings that withstand the impact of the waves, I have strived to remain steadfast, reminding myself of my passion for research and my right to a respectful and inclusive university environment”.

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The metaphor of a building besieged by waves illustrates the violence of the discrimination experienced and the continuous struggle for resilience and affirmation of one’s value in a context that should be supportive and encouraging towards all forms of diversity. Simultaneously, this image symbolizes the determination and inner strength of those who face and withstand such discrimination.

Furthermore, the comparison with the winding path of another image sent reflects the difficult and solitary journey individuals must undertake in an academic environment that is still too often hostile, despite the presence of intrinsic beauty and dignity in the individual’s path.

These narratives, laden with emotions and personal experiences, highlight the necessity for cultural and structural change within universities, so that they may become truly inclusive spaces free from all forms of discrimination.

3.2. The level of visibility of LGBTI+ individuals, issues, and representation in the academic environment

Photo Elicitation

The visibility and representation of LGBTI+ individuals and issues in the academic environment can be analyzed through the experiences of university students. The responses provided by the students highlight a multifaceted reality. On one hand, there are expressions of inclusivity and acceptance, such as the recognition of gender diversity, and the presence of no-gender restrooms, representing a step forward towards equality and the respect of transgender identities. On the other hand, incidents of discrimination and prejudice, such as acts of homophobic vandalism and assaults, although not frequent within universities, reveal a persistent need for a struggle for equality and the safety of the LGBTI+ community. From one perspective, there is a sense of safety and protection within the academic environment, while on the other, there is a perceived need for more information and awareness on these topics, which universities could undertake. Education on LGBTI+ issues is seen as an opportunity for growth and understanding, as well as a means to promote a culture of acceptance and reduce prejudice. However, detecting resistance in society to the recognition of love in all its forms and the fight for equality and acceptance remain significant obstacles. The academic environment, for participants in the photo elicitation, reflects the broader society with its contradictions: progress and inclusivity on one side, discrimination and intolerance on the other. The visibility and representation of LGBTI+ issues in the academic environment are thus perceived as evolving, with ongoing challenges that require constant commitment to promote positive change.

Auto Photography



The analysis of comments submitted with the images reveals a level of visibility and representation of LGBTI+ issues and individuals in the academic environment that is mixed and, in many respects, problematic. A journey of discrimination, misunderstanding, and stereotyping faced by students in an environment that should be one of education and personal and collective growth is narrated.

“I had been at university for just over a semester, but those few friends I had made immediately sought me out after the exam and came to comfort me, others pretended not to hear my deadname, probably in the hope of sparing me one less concern. Other people - who knew me from a previous educational context - used it as a pretext to out me to other classmates” (trans* man, bisexual, 21 years old, Brescia, undergraduate student).

Students describe the experience of “deadnaming,” having to deal with prejudice and ignorance, even teachers and colleagues are expected to act as points of reference and support. These situations indicate an academic environment that is still not sensitive and inclusive enough towards gender and sexual orientation issues.

Fig. 3 - Image chosen by a 22-year-old homosexual woman from Messina, undergraduate student.



Fig. 4 - Image selected by a homosexual man, 23 years old, from Naples, master's student.



“I have chosen the image of ‘Interview with the Vampire’ because, as a member of the LGBT community, I feel akin to it... a group of individuals unable to conform, who are either stigmatized or feared... who must find strength in each other, yet upon closer examination, it is often those whom we considered friends or fellow members of our group who inflict the worst harm... Furthermore, there are those who belittle our struggles, claiming that we have it easy! But where is this ease? There is still so much ignorance and falsehood...” (Anonymous, 22-year-old homosexual woman, undergraduate student from Messina).

This metaphor of the ‘Interview with the Vampire’ poignantly illustrates the sense of alienation and the fear of being ostracized or even betrayed within the LGBTI+ community. Simultaneously, the ‘lighthouse’ analogy implies the guiding role that some individuals find themselves playing, despite personal adversities and discrimination faced.

Some students articulate feelings of being perceived as ‘other’ and treated with pity or sympathy, emotions that serve only to emphasize the gap between them and others, rather than fostering genuine understanding and acceptance.

Descriptions of solidarity and support from some colleagues, act as a counterbalance to these negative experiences, highlighting that, despite adversities, there are individuals ready to recognize worth beyond prejudice.

In summary, the research participants’ comments depict an academic setting where visibility and representation of LGBTI+ individuals are still hindered by numerous barriers, including prejudice and ignorance. They underscore the need for greater education and awareness on these issues to foster a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

3.3 Characteristics of discriminatory incidents and strategies employed for overcoming / subsiding these incidents

Photo Elicitation

The responses bring to light a range of issues related to discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. Students have expressed mixed feelings about the images presented, fluctuating between hope and concern. Within the university academic sphere, students have not reported significant incidents of discrimination. However, particularly among female students, there emerged an accentuated need to maintain constant vigilance to prevent and counter any environment permeated by a misogynistic culture that may tolerate or justify harassing behaviors. A specific case was reported by a transgender student in relation to a philosophy lecture. During this lecture, the topic of transition was inappropriately and insensitively addressed by the professor, leading the student to feel not only victimized but paradoxically almost guilty of the situation.

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This incident further highlighted the absence, within the university institution, of adequate and specific channels through which students can report such situations or simply find a place for listening and support. It is essential, therefore, that universities equip themselves with clear mechanisms and protocols to address and prevent such situations, ensuring an inclusive and respectful study environment for all. Training and raising awareness of the faculty on issues related to diversity and inclusion are fundamental steps in this direction. Students underline the crucial importance of training in breaking down prejudices and radicalizations. Reacting to images of anti-LGBT+ protests, they highlight that ignorance fuels intolerance. They therefore call for a university education that promotes understanding and respect towards diversity.

3.4 Perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness/ sensitivity activities at university

Photo Elicitation

Faced with the image of homophobic graffiti, many research participants express feelings of dismay, pain, and concern for the persistent discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. This reaction, however, highlights the students' need to combat homophobia and to promote values of welcome and respect.

“Universities, in particular, should be places of enlightenment and progress, where diversity is celebrated and protected. It is essential that academic institutions undertake initiatives to raise awareness among students and staff about LGBTQI+ rights, through seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns” (Man, 20 years old, homosexual).

The visibility of LGBTQI+ people in the media has certainly helped to challenge stereotypes and promote greater acceptance. However, media representation is not sufficient.

“Universities have a duty to go further, encouraging research and studies that explore the challenges faced by the LGBTQI+ community. In addition, there should be created moments or spaces where students can share their experiences and promote constructive dialogue” (Woman, 20 years old, bisexual).

As society progresses in understanding and accepting diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, educational institutions must reflect and guide this change. The creation of LGBTQI+ clubs and associations within universities can provide a safe haven for students and a place for discussion and activism. These groups can also collaborate with the university administration to ensure that policies and practices reflect an inclusive environment.

Discrimination and alienation can have serious repercussions on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQI+ individuals. Universities must recognize this reality and

provide adequate resources and support. In addition to counseling services, institutions can organize events and activities that educate on differences and promote solidarity.

“Education is a powerful weapon against ignorance and fear. Universities, as pillars of knowledge, have the responsibility to educate our and future generations on the richness and complexity of the human experience” (Man, 24 years old, homosexual).

Courses and study programs dedicated to LGBTQI+ issues can not only provide a deep understanding but also challenge and change stereotypes.

Auto Photography

The statements of the research participants (it should be reiterated, not only students), outline a series of experiences and perceptions that reveal the complexity of the social fabric within a university environment. These testimonies reflect the diversity of experiences related to gender identity and sexual orientation and indicate the need for an empathetic, educational, and inclusive approach.

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“In the engineering lobby in 2022, booths were set up for the elections. The day I went to vote, one of the teaching collaborators in charge of recognizing students and subsequently handing out the CNSU ballot could not find a match between my badge and the lists. In the voter lists, I was listed as ‘deadname’, so after initial confusion, then frustration, I was asked to communicate ‘my real name’, also in front of other colleagues” (trans man, bisexual, 21 years old, Brescia, undergraduate student).*

The trans* student’s experience in the engineering lobby highlights the importance of sensitivity and precision in managing personal data, especially regarding LGBTQI+ identities. The episode underscores the urgency of protocols that respect privacy and individual identity, as well as the importance of a university environment that prevents similar situations through inclusive design of procedures.



Fig. 5 - Image chosen by a 34-year-old gay man from Turin, non-tenure researcher.

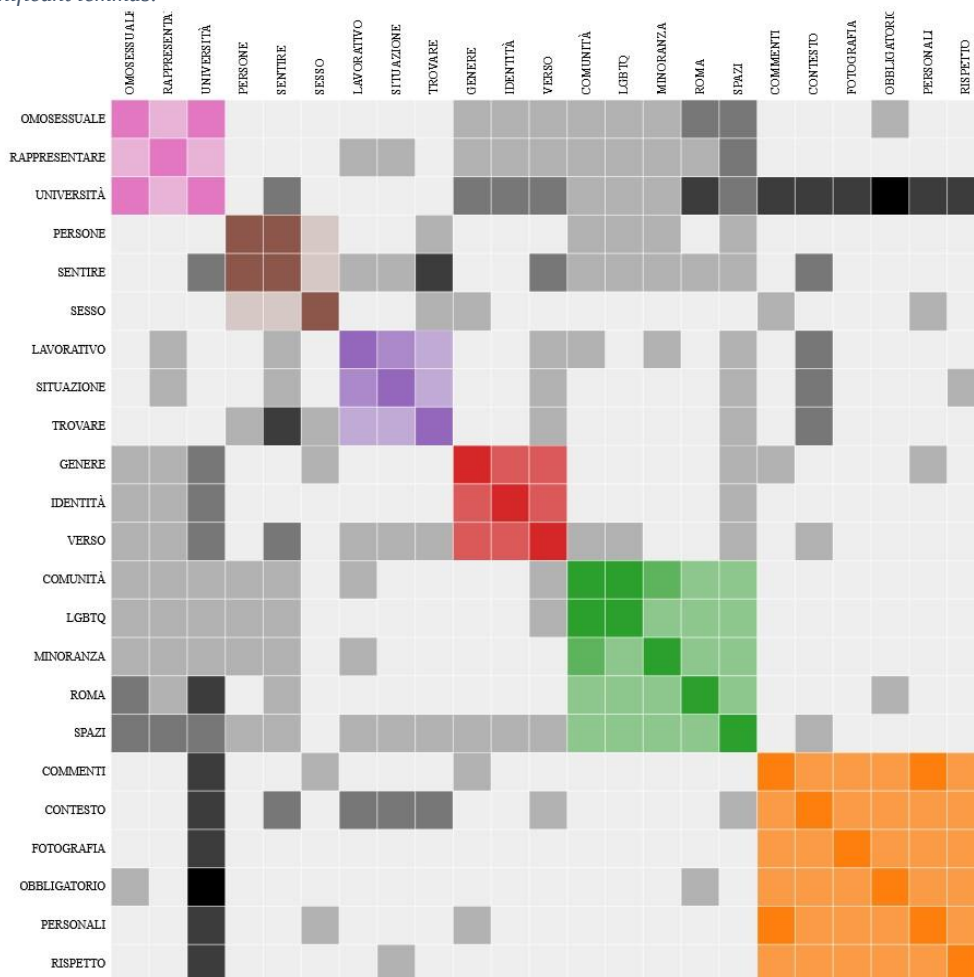
Students express a desire for support that is more intrinsic and less declarative, a form of understanding that does not require proclamations but manifests through daily support and a normalization of reactions to diversity. Solidarity and unity are emphasized as essential in combating discrimination and promoting inclusion within the university context.

Furthermore, testimonials highlight the importance of inclusive spaces, active listening, solidarity, education, and active intervention against discriminatory behaviors. The image of hands of various ages and styles lifting books symbolizes unity in diversity and the strength of knowledge as a tool against discrimination.

These statements reaffirm the principle that strength of a community lies in its ability to recognize itself in diversity, to suspend judgment, and to unite in mutual support, promoting an academic environment that accepts and values every individual. In summary, there is an essential need to educate and raise awareness within universities to ensure that everyone can express their identity freely and without fear, in a context that embraces diversity as a resource rather than a barrier.

4. Co-occurrence matrix with clustering

Tab. 3 - Co-occurrence matrix with clustering (the colored areas indicate the identified clusters, the more intense color indicates a higher frequency of co-occurrence). The data refers to a corpus that reports the sample of the most significant lemmas.



The co-occurrence matrix visually presents the analysis of qualitative data as the result of a thematic analysis performed on a set of responses provided by students following the viewing of stimulus images concerning discrimination against the LGBT community¹⁵.

¹⁵ The colored areas indicate the identified clusters, the more intense color indicates a higher frequency value of co-occurrence. The data refers to a corpus that reports the sample of the most significant lemmas. Here follows the translation of the terms present in the matrix: Homosexual, Represent, University, People, Feel,

Each cell of the matrix indicates the frequency with which two terms appear together in the students' responses. Darker shades denote a high frequency of co-occurrence, while lighter shades indicate a lower frequency. It is possible to identify the major "clusters" or groups of words that emerge from this data set, revealing the cognitive associations and prevailing themes perceived by the students.

The first significant cluster appears in shades of pink and concerns terms such as "homosexual" and "represent". This relationship indicates that students have discussed or thought a lot about the idea of the representation of homosexuality. It might reflect a discussion on the visibility of sexual minorities in media, society, or educational contexts.

Another significant cluster is highlighted in red, including terms like "find", "gender", and "identity". Here we can interpret an accentuated reflection on the search for one's gender identity, a crucial theme in conversations about rights and discrimination of LGBT people. Students might have expressed the complexity and challenge in affirming and finding acceptance for their gender identity in various social contexts.

In green, we note a co-occurrence between "community" and "LGBTQ", which is unsurprising, as it denotes the discourse around cohesion, support, and solidarity within the LGBT community. This connection might also touch on themes of belonging, inclusion, and the struggle against exclusion and marginalization. Point 4 of our co-occurrence matrix stands out for its vivid orange hue, indicating a strong association between the concepts of "personal" and "respect". The intense frequency of this co-occurrence is not to be underestimated, as it reveals a key aspect of the students' thinking in relation to the stimulus images presented, against LGBT discrimination.

The term "personal" suggests an emphasis on the individual dimensions of human experience, implying an awareness of the intrinsic subjectivity of each person, with their uniqueness and distinctive characteristics. This aspect touches on the chords of individualism, the right to self-determination, and the freedom of expression of each

individual. Students have probably recognized and emphasized the importance of understanding and respecting individual narratives, lived experiences, choices, and personal identities, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“Respect”, on the other hand, is a fundamental principle of civil coexistence and interpersonal ethics. It embodies consideration for the other that should transcend differences and prejudices. In its essence, respect is the recognition of the intrinsic value of every person, the dignity that should never be trampled or questioned by discriminatory attitudes or prejudices.

The interweaving of these terms highlights a moral stance, a marked ethical sense among the students, reflected in their unequivocal condemnation of every form of discrimination. Respect for personal choices translates into a call for tolerance and acceptance of the other, indispensable qualities in a society that aspires to be fair and inclusive. This association suggests that students have discussed the intrinsic value of each individual and the need to protect personal spaces from unjustified intrusions, discrimination, and unsolicited judgments.

Furthermore, the respect for personal experiences is intimately linked to the concept of “listening”. Listening means welcoming the other, trying to understand their experiences without prejudice and without the presumption of superimposing one’s own perspective. Active, empathetic listening is a communicative skill that is valued in this relationship of terms, as it is fundamental to overcoming the barriers of discrimination and building bridges of understanding.

This analysis reveals some evidence suggesting a reflective maturity of the students, an appeal to dialogue as a tool for personal and collective growth, and a recognition that the path towards tolerance and inclusion passes through the understanding and respect of personal stories. Their discussion reflects a desire to go beyond the surface and touch the core of shared humanity, an invitation to consider each person not as a representative of a group, but as a unique individual with their own complexity and dignity.

The presence of such a cluster highlights the students' awareness of the themes of respect and individuality within the debate on LGBT rights, underscoring that the fight against discrimination begins with the recognition and celebration of individual differences in a framework of universal respect.

Part C: general conclusions

In the scope of this investigation, the textual and sentiment analysis conducted on the text have yielded data of considerable scientific interest for the debate on the inclusion of LGBT+ individuals in the Italian university context. The observations derived from this research highlight a diversity of feelings and attitudes, ranging from indignation and anxiety to concern and moderate optimism.

The specific nature of the university context, which serves both as an educational and a workplace environment depending on the activity being carried out, becomes evident, positioning itself as a sphere in which the dynamics of inclusion and discrimination tangibly display their complexity. Particularly, the data analyzed seem to support the hypothesis that, despite normative and cultural advancements, significant barriers to the social inclusion of LGBT+ persons persist.

The participants have shown themselves to be particularly informed about the social issues pertaining to minority rights. This awareness is manifested through a language that evokes a sense of gravity and urgency, suggesting that the issue of inclusion is not merely a theoretical discussion topic but a tangible reality that demands immediate and thoughtful action.

The findings from these analyses underscore the need for well-considered university regulations and policies that go beyond mere rhetoric of inclusion, systematically and empirically addressing the challenges posed by discrimination and exclusion. The path toward social inclusion is still long and requires a consistent commitment from all involved institutions. This study contributes to outlining a framework

that, although not exhaustive, constitutes an indispensable starting point for further research and interventions in this field.

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Annex 1

This annex features photos submitted by research participants using the autophotography method. Participants were instructed to submit five photos corresponding to five questions. Below, you can view the photos that participants granted permission to include in the research report, all taken in accordance with the research guidelines.

Question 1:

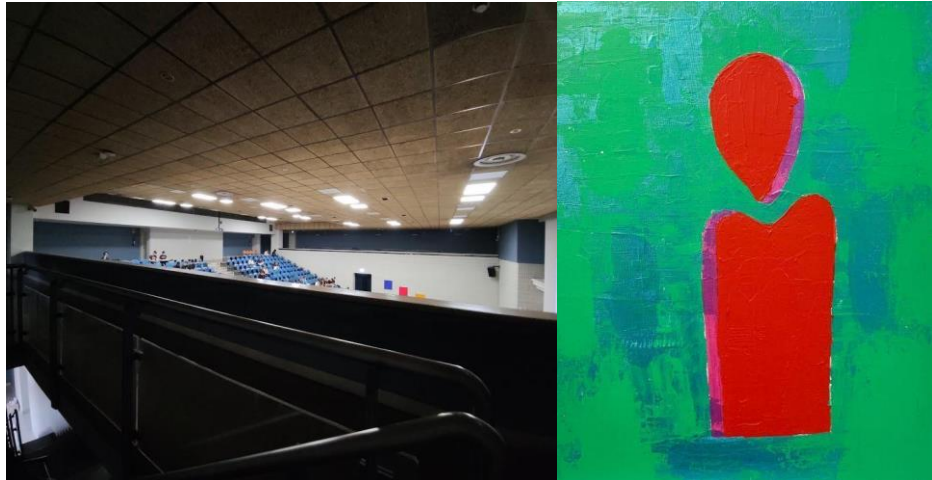
How do you see yourself when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?





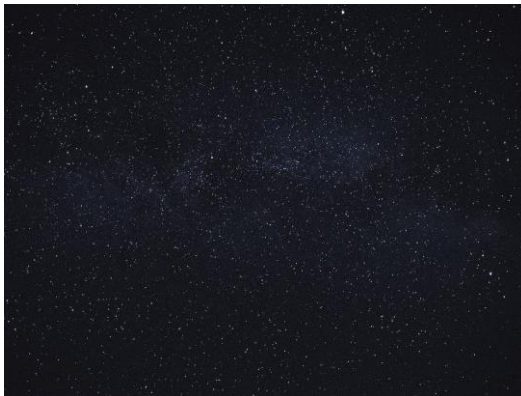
Question 2

How do others see you when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?



Question 3:

What makes it hard for you to be who you are? What challenges do you face when trying to be yourself?



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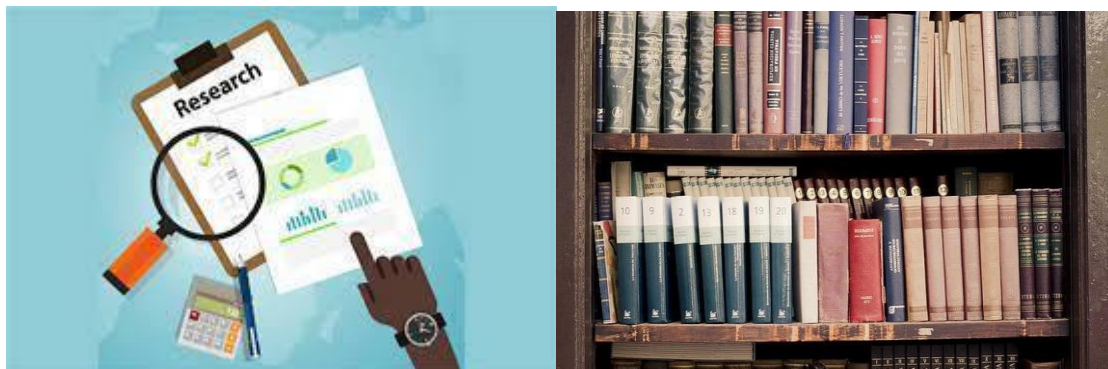


Question 4:

What helps you be who you are? What gives you strength in the face of challenges?

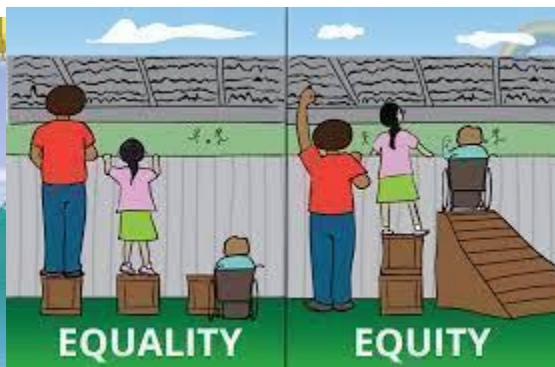


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Question 5:

In these experiences of discrimination, what kind of help would you find appropriate from others?



Annex 2

The images used in the photo-elicitation for the research carried out in Italy.

SLIDE 1



SLIDE 2



SLIDE 3



SLIDE 4



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SLIDE 5



SLIDE 6



The case of Lithuania

Dr. Gintarė Pocė & Professor Milda Ališauskienė

Part A: desk research results

This section will provide information on the status of LGBTQI+ people in the Lithuanian academic environment, LGBTQI+ awareness sessions, good practices implemented in Lithuanian universities and useful contacts of organisations working on LGBTQI+ and Human Rights issues in Lithuania.

1. The status of LGBTQI+¹⁶ people in the national academic environment

Statistical data, analysis, and scientific articles on the status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment are almost non-existent. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the public attitudes towards LGBTQI+ and the situation regarding equal rights and discrimination in Lithuania, this part will present key findings from the European Union and Lithuanian reports presenting statistical data and analyses of the situation.

The Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania aims to ensure the individuals' equal rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania are implemented and to prohibit any direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief. Article 4 of the Law also states that educational, research, and study institutions must implement equal opportunities regardless of age, sexual orientation, disability, racial or ethnic origin, religion, or belief. However, neither the Constitution nor the Law do not mention discrimination on the

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¹⁶ LGBTI is the official acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. Source: The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA) website https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_l (accessed 05 11 2023). The project also uses the broader term LGBTQI+. While different sources also use different formulations of this acronym, this document also uses terms such as LGBT, LGBT*, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA+, and LGBT+, depending on the source in question.

grounds of gender identity and sex characteristics. It is worth mentioning that Lithuania is one of the six EU member states that do not have legal recognition for same-sex couples (European Commission 2020). However, public attitudes are changing in favour of supporting same-sex partnerships. A survey conducted by the news portal delfi.lt in 2022 showed that 49.6 percent of Lithuanian respondents supported same-sex civil unions (Delfi.lt 2022). The lawmakers introduced the latter term in 2022 to reduce the tensions in society related to the same-sex partnership law.

Nevertheless, various studies and statistics show that discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender characteristics, as well as homophobic attitudes, still prevail among Lithuanians. In 2020 the EU LGBTI Survey II, prepared by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, revealed the prevalence of homophobic attitudes and a lack of tolerance in Lithuania. 73 percent of survey respondents avoid often or always holding hands with their same-sex partner in Lithuania, and 55 percent felt discriminated against in at least one area of life in the year before the survey. It is essential to mention that only 16 percent of respondents are now often or always open about being LGBTI in Lithuania, and only 14 percent in Lithuania believed that their national government effectively combats prejudice and intolerance against LGBTI people. This data shows that LGBTQI+ people in Lithuania cannot feel free to express their sexual identity and feel safe in the country. When it comes to the secondary education area, the statistics are mainly lower than the EU average: only 12 percent of LGBTI teenager respondents (15-17 years old) in Lithuania said that their school education at some point addressed LGBTI issues positively or in a neutral way (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2020).

According to the Public Attitudes Survey, 35.9 percent of respondents would not want to live in a neighborhood with LGBT individuals, and 24.2 percent would not want to work in the same workplace. 57.8 percent said their attitudes towards homosexual individuals had even worsened (Lietuvos socialinių mokslų centras, Diversity Development Group 2022). According to a Global Europe 2021 report, only 53 percent of

Lithuanian respondents would agree that gay, lesbian or bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual individuals. Although sexual orientation is regulated in equality legislation beyond employment, Lithuania does not have an approved LGBTQI+ Equality Action Plan, and, as mentioned before, gender identity and gender characteristics are not included in the equality legislation (Fitzpatrick 2021).

The Rainbow Rankings, which consider how laws and policies affect the lives of LGBTQI+ people, show that Lithuania ranks 22nd out of 27 countries in equality and non-discrimination, 15th in hate crime and discrimination, and 20th in legal recognition of gender (Rainbow Europe n/a). Lithuania is listed among nine European countries in 2021 that are experiencing growing resistance or regression in the area of transgender rights, including the right to recognition of gender identity in relation to gender equality (ILGA Europe 2021).

According to ILGA Europe Annual Review 2023 of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people in Europe and Central Asia, concrete cases also showed various gaps in the implementation of equality. For example, during the migration crisis in 2021 in Lithuania, there were cases when several LGBTQI+ asylum seekers went on a hunger strike because of poor living conditions, medical care, and anti-LGBTIQ bias (ILGA Europe 2023). The latter data discloses that Lithuania remains a country where a certain amount of ignorance of human rights and discrimination based on SOGISC continues to be visible.

Public debates about the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) also touched LGBTQI+ rights in Lithuania.¹⁷ According to conservative politicians and religious actors, the term gender used in the text of the Istanbul Convention could demolish the ‘natural’ roles of men and women, bring confusion to society and promote LGBTQI+ rights and acceptance (Pocė, Skulte 2023). Thus, public debate has

¹⁷ The Istanbul Convention was signed by Lithuania in 2013 and was not ratified yet when the report was prepared.

highlighted the prejudice against LGBTQI+ rights and equal opportunities among certain groups in Lithuanian society.

Discrimination based on SOGISC and its reporting in Lithuania is another essential aspect to discuss. Official statistics are limited to the number of criminal offences registered, i.e. the number of criminal proceedings initiated by law enforcement authorities. For example, the 2022 report of the Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson states that there have been four complaints about possible discrimination based on sexual orientation (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba 2023). However, this does not reflect the actual number of hate crimes in cases where the victim does not want to initiate legal proceedings or simply does not want to report the incident to law enforcement authorities. The 2019 Qualitative Study of Communities Vulnerable to Hate Crimes in Lithuania study revealed that the actual number of hate incidents may be higher than the official statistics showed. This can be explained by the fact that reporting a hate crime itself can be complicated and highly sensitive, as reporting a hate crime can, in many cases, also mean 'outing' oneself for victims, making victims with LGBTQI+ identities particularly vulnerable, but it can also be relevant for victims with other characteristics, or victims with intersecting identities as well. Under-reporting of discrimination and hate crimes is a persistent problem in Lithuania, especially when it comes to incidents related to homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia (Morou et.al. 2023). According to a study carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2013, 61 percent of Lithuanian LGBT respondents reported discrimination or harassment based on their sexual orientation, while only one in ten reported such crimes to the relevant authorities (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2013).

National Report on Hate Speech and Euroscepticism 2022 showed that verbal insults were the most common hate incident in Lithuania. The report highlighted that the majority of research participants seek to be unrecognisable and invisible: “Therefore, the LGBTQI+ community tends to live in a “social bubble” and distrusts outsiders. The interviewees claimed that they are most hurt by degrading and insulting comments spread

by public figures in the media, online, and through social networks. This group also experiences negative attitudes expressed towards them by their families and close relatives. They also often encounter institutional discrimination and harassment, for example, in the workplace. Especially vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks are transgender people, as it is more difficult for them to hide their identity. The research also found that the more open and visible members of the LGBTQIA+ community were, the more vulnerable they were to verbal insults and even physical attacks” (Adutavičiūtė, Jurevičiūtė 2022, 15).

What is more, this report showed that discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals is still prevailing: the survey showed that 48 percent of the respondents stated they experienced hate speech; among them, 65.5 percent said it was because of their gender, and 26.3 percent said it was because of their sexual orientation (Adutavičiūtė, Jurevičiūtė 2022). Qualitative research on hate crimes against vulnerable communities (Labanauskas 2019) showed that interviewees encountered hate speech and hate crimes in schools, universities, public institutions, social circles, public spaces, the media, and online (Adutavičiūtė, Jurevičiūtė 2022). Also, the research conducted in 2022 showed that LGBTQI+ individuals felt insecure and in precarious positions in the Lithuanian academic environment. Students, lecturers, and administration staff reported various forms of discrimination based on SOGISC and experienced intolerance within the academic environment. Research also highlighted an existing gap between the declarative openness to LGBTQI+ people within many Lithuanian universities and persisting stereotypes towards them (Ališauskienė et.al. 2023). To sum up, the above presented data allows to conclude that the official statistics usually do not correspond to the actual situation of LGBTQI+ people and the extent of their discrimination in Lithuania.

According to the National LGBT Rights Organisation Lithuanian Gay League report in 2022, the Lithuanian Government still has not prepared a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Action Plan for Promoting Non-discrimination 2017–2019 and Action Plan for Promoting Non-discrimination 2021-2023 did not include LGBTQI+-related issues,

measures and specific recommendations (National LGBT Rights Organization Lithuanian Gay League 2022).

2. LGBTQI+ awareness sessions and good practices

Currently, there are no unified national regulations on the prevention, monitoring and regulation of incidents of discrimination on SOGISC grounds in the Lithuanian academic environment. Most Lithuanian higher education institutions follow the principles of prevention of discrimination on the grounds of SOGISC and equal rights management enshrined in national and EU legislation. Lithuanian higher education institutions are guided by a code of academic ethics or ethical guidelines, which, among other grounds, contain a definition of discrimination from the 2003 Republic of Lithuania Law on Equal Opportunities, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The 2016 Republic of Lithuania Labor Code obliges organizations to implement equal opportunities policies. Universities and other organizations are encouraged and obliged to implement equal opportunities and gender equality policies according to Article 26 of the Labor Code, which stipulates that employers with more than fifty employees are obliged to implement the principles of gender equality and nondiscrimination on other grounds and to develop and communicate to their employees the equal opportunities policy and the measures for its implementation and supervision.

Since 2022, most Lithuanian higher education institutions have adopted Gender Equality Plans, which is a mandatory document for public bodies, higher education establishments, and research organizations planning to participate in the Horizon Europe research program. For example, Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) was among the first universities in Lithuania to develop and implement a Gender Equality Plan in 2021 based on the methodology developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Also, VMU adopted the Equal Opportunities Policy and its Implementation Programme in 2017, which forbids discrimination on the grounds stipulated in the Law on Equal Opportunities (including SO), and safeguards equal opportunities for all people.

What is more, a special reporting mechanism (Trust line) has been established for academic personnel and those seeking employment in cases of discrimination on various grounds, including SO. VMU implements various EU-funded projects to educate both the public and academic members about LGBTQI+ experiences of discrimination, equal rights and the need for inclusive practices (e.g. Universities towards Diversity - (UniDiversity); Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research (SPEAR).

Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020-2025 aims to create a learning and working environment at the University that fosters individual, social and cultural diversity and ensures equal opportunities for members of the University community. The University therefore aims to promote diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs or opinions, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, marital status, intention to have a child(ren) or any other discriminatory grounds. In 2021 Vilnius University adopted Gender Equality Plans for its departments and Gender-Sensitive Language Guidelines, a document defining the variations in the use of gender-sensitive language in written and spoken language at the University. These guidelines were treated as a starting point for discussion and attention to important issues of discrimination, inequality and disrespect between genders or other identities.

The first and only organization in Lithuania that unites LGBTQI+ students, staff, alumni, and their supporters – the University LGBT+ Group - was established by Vilnius University academic community members in 2018. This group aims to promote equality among the members of the VU community and to help instill societal respect towards them to foster the culture of respect for people and their views, promote the protection of human rights as well as tolerance towards the members of the LGBT+ community, and encourage the integration of minorities and to unite the LGBT+ people of VU and the supporters of the organization for joint action, strengthen mutual cooperation and assistance, promote international and national cooperation, organization and initiative. Vilnius University also

has a Trust line where experienced or observed sexual harassment, discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or any other discriminatory grounds could be reported. Kaunas University of Technology has also adopted a 2022–2025 Gender Equality Plan to promote gender equality and diversity, it touches on activities focused on work-life balance, organizational development, organizational culture, recruitment and promotion, and gender representation in management positions and participation in decision-making governing bodies.

Both VMU and VU have developed Gender Equality Plans in the context of the Horizon 2020 project Strengthening and Implementing Gender Equality in Academia and Research 2019-2022 (SPEAR). The actions of the Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) Gender Equality Plan 2022-2025 are in line with the European Union's requirements regarding the European Horizon Programme.

Initiatives that are not directly related to academia but promote the idea of inclusion include Pride events such as Baltic Pride, Vilnius Pride, and Kaunas Pride, which attract not only the LGBTQI+ community but also their supporters. These events encourage public institutions, universities, and various businesses to support the LGBTQI+ community (Adutavičiūtė, Jurevičiūtė 2022).

3. Useful contacts¹⁸

Contact information of LGBTIQ+ and other Human Rights and Equality bodies, organizations, and institutions in Lithuania:

- *Lithuanian Gay League* - www.lgl.lt/en/

The national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights association LGL is the only nongovernmental organization in Lithuania exclusively representing the interests of the local LGBT* community. LGL is one of the most stable and mature organizations

¹⁸ Descriptions of organizations are taken from their websites and in some cases translated to English.

within the civic sector in the country as it was founded on 3 December 1993. The main principle that characterizes the activities of the association is that of independence from any political or financial interests, with the aim of attaining effective social inclusion and integration of the local LGBT* community in Lithuania. Based on its expertise in the fields of advocacy, awareness raising and community building, accumulated during twenty years of organizational existence, LGL strives for consistent progress in the field of human rights for LGBT* people.

CONTACT: office@gay.lt

- *Tolerant Youth Association* – www.tja.lt/apie-tja

Tolerant Youth Association was founded in 2005. It aims to foster public respect for people, their choices and attitudes. To promote respect and tolerance for different social groups, the protection of human rights and the integration of minorities. To unite tolerant young people and all other tolerant individuals in common activities, to strengthen mutual cooperation and assistance, and to promote international cooperation, political activism, organization and initiative.

CONTACT: info@tja.lt

- *The University LGBT+ Group* - www.universiteto.lgbt/en/

A Vilnius University association that unites LGBT+ students, staff, alumni, and their allies. It is a voluntary, non-profit, public youth organization that strives to bring together the VU LGBT+ community as well as the supporters of LGBT+. This organization also aspires to promote equality among the members of the VU community and to help instill societal respect towards them. All students, auditors, alumni, exchange students, and present or past staff members who agree with the goals of the University LGBT+ Group can become members of the association.

CONTACT: info@universiteto.lgbt

- *The platform “išgirsti”* - www.isgirsti.lt

“išgirsti” (which means “to hear” or “to be heard”, depending on where you put the stress) is a concise and systematic resource on many topics relevant to LGBT+ community, their

family members, friends, teachers, psychologists and support providers. Understanding that LGBT+ experiences are too varied to be entirely covered by a single source, we hope that the information presented here can serve as an introduction and a gateway to further exploring the issues you might care about. “išgirsti” is also a physical cultural-social space in Vilnius devoted to small cultural and social happenings and psychological support. It is also open for other queer initiatives and meetings. The initiative started in 2015, and since 2020 been supported by the Active Citizens Fund, EEA Grants.”

CONTACT: info@isgirsti.lt.

- *Center for Equality Advancement - Vilnius-based NGO carrying its work since 2003 – www.gap.lt/en/*

Center for Equality Advancement – Vilnius-based NGO carrying its work since 2003. For almost 20 years, it has changed stereotypes for individuals to feel safer. This organization implements informational campaigns, advocacy, provides training courses and seminars, publishes articles, manuals and other publications, carries out research, and provides expertise on the themes of gender equality, diversity and human rights. Organization’s vision – women* being safe and free (*Considering themselves women and/or socialized as women). Organization’s mission – to identify and address gender inequalities

CONTACT: info@gap.lt

- *Vilnius University Student Representation Programme "Without Labels" - <https://beetikeciu.lt/about/>*

Vilnius University Student Representation Programme "Without Labels" were founded in 2010 and are active in various fields such as LGBTQ, emotional well-being and the photo project "VU Faces". The core values of this organization are equality, openness and respect for the individuality of each person. This organization hopes that the activities of their programme will encourage the university community to develop its own level of tolerance towards different groups of people - everyone from people of different races to people who suffer from depression. This organization wants to break the myths that surround members of the LGBTQ+ community, and the beliefs that follow people who suffer from various

psychological illnesses. Their vision is a Vilnius University community where everyone is accepted for who they are. The organization hopes to work towards this utopian idea!

CONTACT: vadovas@beetikeciu.lt

- *Human Rights Monitoring Institute* – www.hrmi.lt/en/about-us/

The Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HRMI) is a non-governmental, non-profit human rights organization. Since its establishment in 2003, HRMI has been advocating for full compliance of national laws and policies with international human rights obligations and working to ensure that rights are effective in practice. The team of HRMI's social, humanitarian, and health sciences experts conducts research, drafts legal and policy briefings, compiles reports to international human rights bodies, undertakes strategic cases before domestic and international courts, engages in various national and international projects, conducts educational activities, delivers training and e-learning courses for professionals.

CONTACT: hrmi@hrmi.lt

- *The Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights* – www.ztcentras.lt/

This organisation focuses on monitoring the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities, recognition and reduction of domestic violence and violence against women, equal rights for LGBTI persons and the right to register family relationships, recognition of hate crimes and promotion of support mechanisms for victims, and reduction of Romaphobia. These areas are priorities for their work. The organisation works in the fields of human rights advocacy, education and public information and comments on laws and legislation, and has established and continues to develop the human rights portal manoteises.lt - the largest and most important source of information on human rights in Lithuania.

CONTACT: info@lchr.lt

- *The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson* – www.lygybe.lt/en/about-office/

The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson is a budgetary institution financed from the state budget. Ombudsperson, by proposal from the Speaker of the Seimas, is assigned for a term of five years by secret voting in Parliament. Ombudsperson is accountable to Parliament and is responsible for the enforcement of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Equal Treatment. Competence of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson: investigates complaints, carries out investigations on his/hers own initiative; performs independent researches, related to discrimination, and independent surveys on the discrimination state, provides conclusions and recommendations on any issue related to discrimination; carries out preventive and educational activity, secures equal opportunities mainstreaming; controls the implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provisions, related to securing equal opportunities; exchanges information with various institutions and agencies from Lithuania and foreign countries, international organisations.

CONTACT: lygybe@lygybe.lt

Part B: field research results

This section will present the main findings of the “INCLUusive universities leading to inclusive Societies (INCLUSIES)” research that was addressed to members of the Lithuanian academic community (university teaching staff and undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students). In line with the general scope of the INCLUSIES project (investigating, tackling, and making national-wide visible homo/ trans/ biphobia phenomena in universities), the research aimed to uncover the forms of discrimination, using two innovative qualitative methodological approaches (photo-elicitation and autophotography). The participation of students and university teaching staff in research helped increase the comprehensive awareness of LGBTQI+ individuals’ situation in Lithuanian universities.

In more detail, the research attempted to map the existing situation in LGBTQI+ individuals' everyday lives in universities and outside of them in terms of discrimination according to SOGISC and the need for inclusive practices.

This information about the project and invitation to participate in the research was shared with various youth and LGBTQI+ organizations and representatives of Lithuanian universities who were asked to share it with the wider academic community, including students and teaching staff. Also, the invitation to participate in the research was shared with various LGBTQI+ social media groups. The research was implemented in Lithuania from May to December 2023.

1. Rationale of the applied methods

The “INCLUusive universities leading to inclusive SocietIES (INCLUSIES)” research used two innovative qualitative methods – photo-elicitation and autophotography – to understand the LGBTQI+ individuals' experiences and the need for inclusive practices in an academic environment.

Photo-elicitation (researcher-driven photos that are selected by the researchers) constitutes a simple method of enriching participants' data along a qualitative interview with the use of photos (Radley 2010). Photos communicate symbolic representations that cannot be expressed through text, as happens in a classical qualitative interview, and according to some researchers (e.g., Harper 2002), they provide a different type of information than verbal communication. Under this approach, photos were used as cues for discussion within a qualitative interview with the participants, akin to a set of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview (Cleland, MacLeod 2021).

During this research, the photo-elicitation method used six photos representing relevant LGBTQI+ topics: 1) homophobic attitudes, discrimination, hate speech and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC; 2) the level of visibility of LGBTI+ individuals, issues and support in an academic environment; 3) incidents, experiences related to sexual harassment; 4) incidents, experiences related to violent behavior; 5) questions about

Lithuania as a safe and open society for LGBTQI+ people; 6) perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness, sensitivity activities in academic environment. During the interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on what they saw in the photos and to share what associations and examples the images evoked. The researcher also asked several additional questions related to the topic of each photo to discuss the topic and issues more deeply.

The second method used in this research was autophotography, which allowed the receipt of photos provided by the participant (participant-driven; for a detailed review, see also Cleland, MacLeod 2021). Regarding the first type, researcher-driven, the images are selected by the researcher, who determines the content of the photos (theme, scene settings, physical properties such as luminance and combination of colors) and their potential significance in line with research goals. In autophotography, the control of photo selection and, therefore, of data collection is being given to participants who freely gather the photos most salient to them again in agreement with the study goals. In total, five questions were presented to research participants who were asked to submit photos related to these five questions and describe the photo's choice and their experiences: 1) How do you see yourself when you experience/observe different forms of discrimination at university? 2) How do you think others see you when you experience/observe different forms of discrimination at university? 3) What makes it difficult for you to be yourself? What challenges do you face when trying to remain yourself? 4) What helps you to remain yourself? What gives you strength in the face of challenges at university? 5) What kind of help from others would you consider appropriate in different experiences of discrimination? What kind of help could this be?

To sum up, the photo-elicitation and autophotography methods, which used researcher-driven and participants-driven photographs, allowed researchers to grasp the most common forms of discrimination and inappropriate behavior in the Lithuanian academic environment and the need for various inclusive practices.

2. Participants' social-demographic profile

The “INCLUsive universities leading to inclusive SocietIES (INCLUSIES)” research gathered opinions, stories, and experiences from 17 individuals studying or teaching in Lithuanian universities. To be more precise, a total of ten students from Lithuanian universities participated in the photo-elicitation interview. The students' age varies between 20-40; five students are studying bachelor's studies, two are studying master's studies, one is a PhD candidate, and two interview participants have just graduated from bachelor's and master studies. Two research participants were students from Russia and Georgia who currently study at Lithuanian universities. The students who participated in the research studied social sciences (sociology, psychology, regional studies, and public governance). Additionally, six students (aged between 19-27, four women, one man, one trans man) and one teacher (woman, age 52) from Lithuanian universities participated in the autophotography survey.

3. Results from the empirical research

This part will present key results of the “INCLUsive universities leading to inclusive SocietIES (INCLUSIES)” research with university students and teaching staff implemented in Lithuania. The results extracted from the empirical research are presented in four main topics, which are 1) discrimination, hate speech and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC in the academic environment; 2) the level of visibility of LGBTI+ individuals, issues and support in the academic environment; 3) strategies employed for overcoming and or subsiding discriminatory incidents; 4) perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness, sensitivity activities in the academic environment.

3.1. Discrimination, hate speech and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC in the academic environment

When asked about discrimination, hate speech and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC, most research participants stated that they had not experienced or observed evident, active incidents of discrimination in an academic environment. Several participants noted that their academic environment (teachers, peers, teaching materials) is supportive, safe and inclusive for LGBTQI+ persons. One student even gave an example of how one person's gender transition was very well managed and accepted at their university.

All participants in the study expressed that they had never experienced violent behavior and sexual harassment in their academic environment. However, they had heard of one or more cases when students experienced sexual harassment, and the perpetrators were teachers. Several participants said that they felt that gender power is still pervasive in academia, with men in a position of power and women as victims.

It is important to note that most of the research participants said that they have created their own “*safe bubble*” in the academic environment, so they often don't notice discrimination or bad language. According to the participants, a “*safe bubble*” is a circle of people who do not have homophobic attitudes, with whom the research participants feel safe and can be themselves.

Moreover, most participants acknowledged that their academic environment is safe because they study social sciences, which include LGBTQI+ issues in one or other of their courses, and that teachers are more open and committed to creating a safe and inclusive learning and research environment. They feel that the environment in social science departments is safer and more inclusive than in the natural and technology sciences. Most research participants believe that stereotypical mindsets and even homophobic attitudes are still prevalent in natural science departments. Several students said they had heard of several incidents where teachers from natural sciences and technology departments had spoken negatively about sexual minorities. One participant in the study shared that both

teachers and students from Catholic Theology Faculty have very strong homophobic attitudes and that it is not nice to interact with them.

Although the research participants said they have not experienced or observed evident discrimination in the academic environment, they identified the lack of inclusive language, inclusive practices and knowledge about them as one of the biggest problems in the Lithuanian academic environment:

“<...> often, due to a lack of knowledge, others do not notice, or because of a negative opinion, ignore, and sometimes because of their image, accept various forms of discrimination” (Participant 11).

According to research participants, a lack of understanding of the situation of queer people, insensitivity, ignorance to the difficulties they face, and homophobic attitudes still exist in the Lithuanian academic environment. As most participants stated, forms of discrimination in the academic environment are often not open, discrimination is not active, and at the same time, not everything that could be done in terms of introducing and promoting inclusive practices is done. Research participants identified the following examples of inappropriate language, ignorance about inclusive practices, and discrimination in academic settings: 1) feeling uncomfortable when other people start talking about their partners:

“It's like you have to do that coming out of the closet thing every time and it's very exhausting and painful and frustrating, and you don't know how people are going to react to it” (Participant 3);

2) light jokes with no bad intentions from students and lecturers on LGBTQI+ issues; 3) lack of use of inclusive language and gender-neutral pronouns, and lack of knowledge on how to use them (one participant said that lecturers address students using the word “*girls*”). 4) Several participants in the study have heard university staff speak offensively about LGBTQI+. For example, one student said,

“In one seminar, a lecturer equated homosexuality with zoophilia and pedophilia”
(Participant 15);

5) dead-naming; 6) focus on heteronormative attitudes, for example, the emphasis on heterosexual love:

“If it's about love, relationships, family, then it's first and foremost about the relationship created between a man and a woman. It feels like... I wouldn't say it's discrimination. I don't know what it is, but maybe it is discrimination” (Participant 6);

7) failure to address sensitive topics, for example, in one lecture, students were asked to debate whether to allow medical gender confirmation services or puberty blockers for trans minors; 8) One participant, a transman, told that he constantly experiences discrimination due to the use of name-calling and negative comments:

“More common is the silent discrimination, which I can only report from the transgender side: the use of legal names and pronouns, the unwillingness to address people as they are asked to be addressed (both by students and lecturers), and the mild, “uneducated” comments about a person's appearance or experiences”
(Participant 12).

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Coming out as an LGBTQI+ in an academic environment is also one of the most challenging aspects, according to several research participants. Some students said that they had come out in their academic environments and were accepted, but some said that they had not done that because they feared certain reactions from others and of ruining friendships:

“You bury yourself for the sake of a friendship... You always think that you will have to tell at some point because it's not polite to lie either” (Participant 3);

“In the sense that it is always better not to talk widely and loudly about your sexual orientation. That is always a better strategy. A safe strategy. And of course, it makes it harder to be yourself” (Participant 13).

The fear of coming out is related to the homophobic attitudes. Several participants expressed the idea that although some members of academia have homophobic attitudes, they can't express them out loud for fear of social stigma or even legal misconduct. These thoughts expressed by research participants suggest that there is a kind of “*hidden*” homophobia existing in the Lithuanian academic environment, which also affects the assurance of a safe and inclusive milieu.

Also, the research participants highlighted examples of discrimination, hate speech and inappropriate behavior that were very visible in Lithuanian society, such as 1) the rainbow-colored pedestrian crossing in Vilnius being painted over and over; 2) social media being full of homophobic, offensive and threatening comments against LGBTQI+ people; 3) negative public reactions and resistance and threats to LGBTQI+ events; 4) public backlash during Pride events; 5) discrimination against LGBTQI+ people by the Lithuanian legal system, which does not recognize same-sex partnerships; 6) inability to be oneself in a public space:

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“When you think about heterosexual people kissing on the trolley, nobody says anything because it is the norm. But if I take my partner's hand, old ladies are watching, people coming up to say some things” (Participant 8).

In summary, most research participants expressed that they had not experienced or noticed active, evident discrimination in academia, except for a transgender person who experiences discrimination regularly because of dead-naming and inappropriate comments about their looks. Also, according to the participants, “*silent, hidden*” discrimination is still prevalent in the Lithuanian academic environment, manifested in internal homophobic attitudes and a lack of knowledge about inclusive language and practices. Participants stated that they want a safe and inclusive environment, which members of the Lithuanian academic community still lack the knowledge to provide:

“I need a safe environment that is ready to accept me as I am” (Participant 7).

3.2 The level of visibility of LGBTIQ+ individuals, issues and support in the academic environment

When asked about the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, the research participants said that the situation in Lithuanian society is improving and that many steps have been taken to ensure the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. However, there is still a strong conservative attitude in Lithuania, a legacy of the Soviet mindset, which, according to the participants, influences the societal resistance against equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people and their legal enforcement. According to the research participants, the openness of the academic community and the affirmation of equal rights for LGBTIQ+ in an academic environment is determined by the situation at the state level, and as long as the problems are not solved at the national level, it is difficult to talk about the openness of the academic community:

“As long as the state as a state is not safe, the academia is not safe either” (Participant 2).

It is also important to note the importance of context in understanding and assessing a safe and open environment. Several participants said that Lithuania still has a lot to do to ensure that the environment for LGBTIQ+ people is like that of Western countries, Denmark, Belgium or the Netherlands. At the same time, several participants said that LGBTIQ+ people have more rights in Lithuania than in countries such as Russia, China or Georgia.

Thus, when discussing specifically the visibility of LGBTIQ+ people in an academic environment, the opinions of the research participants were divided. Some participants shared their experiences that LGBTIQ+ topics were discussed in the courses they study and that it was not forbidden to prepare a research paper on LGBTIQ+ related topics. While the participants had different experiences and said that LGBTIQ+ topics were not discussed much in their studies and were simply kept untouchable by teachers to prevent political discussions during lectures. Research showed that the teacher was the key actor deciding if the course curricula included the LGBTIQ+ related topics.

Also, most of the research participants identified the lack of strategic documents promoting equality as one of the most important problems – they did not know whether documents on inclusion in their academic environment existed, how these documents were systematically monitored, or if they were monitored at all, and how planned actions are implemented in practice. Various guidelines, according to the participants, are often a matter of choice and not necessarily relevant for all members of the academic community:

“Guidelines are a document where you read it, and it is up to you: you can use it, and you are also able not to use it. It shows that documents are created, but adherence to them is not exemplary. I don't even know if they exist in our university” (Participant 1).

In summary, research participants found it difficult to discuss equal opportunities for LGBTIQ+ in an academic environment, as they do not have comprehensive information on the documents promoting equality and measures implemented in their universities. Also, it is hard to speak about equal rights as some are not out and are not sure if it is worth the price:

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“As some of them do not come out, including me, we have the same rights as the others. <...> The thing is, I don't have any idea what happens if I speak up <..> Should I really try it? I am not so sure” (Participant 4); “Queer people are not very visible in academia, both in the sense that we are not discussed very much and in the sense that there are very few out people at university” (Participant 16).

Thus, this shows that the Lithuanian academic environment is not safe and open for LGBTIQ+ people, as they are uncertain about coming out and what equal opportunities and rights they can have and claim to have:

“<...> LGBTI people sometimes do not have their basic needs met. <...> It's sad and angry that we even must think about it” (Participant 8).

3.3 Strategies employed for overcoming and or subsiding discriminatory incidents

Research participants were also asked about individual strategies employed for overcoming and subsiding discriminatory incidents. There was a wide range of responses on how they had reacted or would react to discriminatory incidents, but most said that it is difficult for both the victim and the witness to react appropriately:

“At that moment you react in the way you think is best” (Participant 2); “When you are a victim it is difficult to speak up” (Participant 6).

Most research participants had tried or thought they would try to create social pressure and shame on the person who initiated the incident. Others had tried or thought they would try to warn the person who is using non-inclusive language. Most research participants explained that in the event of such an incident, they would contact their departmental administrators or deans and try to find out what action they should take next. Only one participant, a teacher, explicitly stated that the victim or the witness should contact the University Ethics Committee. Another important point is the ability to react, the adoption of fear and the courage to react during a discriminatory incident. As several participants in the study said, the most important thing is to react, to help and not to be indifferent:

“Probably the first thing and the most important thing is to react, because not everybody understands what has happened, whether it is discrimination or inappropriate language” (Participant 13).

It is important to mention that most of the research participants believe that some victims of discrimination and hate incidents would not even seek help because they simply do not know their rights, procedures, or actions and do not want to invest time because they know that they will not be able to prove anything:

“They try to resolve everything personally. It usually stays on a personal level. I think people are afraid, and they think that it is not worth starting, that they will not prove anything, that they will lose, that they will only waste time, and they rest their hands because they feel that they are not worthy enough and they do not appreciate their own possibilities, that they are right in the case of discrimination” (Participant 3).

Fear of reporting an incident of discrimination is also, according to the research participants, one of the important factors that encourage them to keep silent about an incident of discrimination or ill-treatment:

“So, first of all, this “insensitivity” to details and the fear to “report”, that is left from the Soviet era, should disappear” (Participant 16).

They also feel that LGBTQI+ people would receive little help from the public in the event of incidents:

“The public is not inclined to intervene in such cases. And that is the saddest thing” (Participant 6).

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In summary, we can say that the research participants would or thought they would use different strategies to manage a discrimination incident and to help themselves or another victim. However, as the study shows, the participants are not aware of the appropriate procedures and actions that they could take in their academic communities to try to report an incident of discrimination, try to help a victim - all of them would use the strategies that they have come up with. The above discussed data allows us to conclude that the Lithuanian academic environment usually does not provide accurate, concrete information on what to do in the case of discrimination, or inappropriate behavior and where to report if a discriminatory incident is experienced or observed.

3.4 Perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTIQ+ rights and relevant awareness, sensitivity activities in the academic environment

All research participants agreed that there was a lack of inclusive practices in the Lithuanian academic environment, a lack of signs and actions that would show that there is a support and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people's human rights. Most of the research participants have not heard or noticed any activities aiming at more inclusivity of LGBTIQ+ people in their universities.

Research participants shared some ideas that could be implemented in the Lithuanian academic environment to make it safe and open for all members: 1) separate recreation areas for LGBTIQ+ people; 2) counselors who could advise LGBTIQ+ people and provide them with all kinds of support during their studies; 3) lectures and seminars, round-table discussions on LGBTIQ+ challenges, inclusive language which could be conducted by professional teachers as well as by students themselves; 4) training on inclusive teaching methods for teachers; 5) development of equality plans, anti-discrimination campaigns and strategies, and appropriate communication about them among members of the academic community; 6) non-binary toilets and separate changing rooms; 7) use of LGBTIQ+ merchandise in university premises that would allow LGBTIQ+ people to be seen and accepted:

“It says that I see you, that I know you are here and that you are welcome. That you are not excluded, that you are not alien. You are just welcome” (Participant 4);

8) social events on LGBTIQ+ issues; 9) university participation in Pride events; 10) the usage of preferred pronouns and the usage of inclusive language (for instance: using gender neutral nouns; using non-offensive language); 11) communicating without relying on heteronormativity (e.g. talking about relationships, family and love as not only just heterosexual relationships, family or love); 12) trainings for the members of academic community on how to notice and combat the hate speech and microaggressions against LGBTIQ+ individuals; 13) advocacy actions carried out by LGBTIQ+ people themselves;

14) a regular Lithuanian scientific journal dedicated to gender studies research, also a reflection of a broader view of gender, deeper analysis of queer topics in research.

In summary, as this research showed, LGBTQI+ awareness raising (on LGBTQI+ issues, inclusiveness, inappropriate language, etc.) would be the key factor for the promotion of a safe and inclusive academic environment. Constant communication and collaboration between LGBTQI+ individuals and the rest of the academic community and listening to the needs of LGBTQI+ individuals are essential too. And, finally, the proactive activities by the university community, active messages that would publicly demonstrate the existence of, and the pursuit of, an inclusive academic environment could make a real change:

“<...> there is no public declaration of that acceptance or that active message. <..> I don't doubt that all universities have in their regulations, in all those papers, that it says anti-homophobia, pro-homophobia, pro-this, pro-that, but the point is that there is no such direct vision or vocalization. <...> I think the clear public message is important” (Participant 6).

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Part C: general conclusions

Various studies, reports, and statistics show discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender characteristics, as well as homophobic attitudes, still prevail among Lithuanians. The Republic of Lithuania Government still has not prepared a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Currently, there are no unified national regulations on the prevention, monitoring, and regulation of incidents of discrimination on SOGISC grounds in the academic environment in Lithuania. Most higher education institutions in Lithuania are guided by the principles of discrimination and equal rights management provided by the European Union and national legislation. Lithuanian higher education institutions are guided by codes of academic ethics or ethical guidelines, which, among other grounds, contain a definition of discrimination from the 2003 Republic of

Lithuania Law on Equal Opportunities, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As the above discussed research showed, there is a *hidden* discrimination based on SOGISC in the Lithuanian academic environment, which manifests with internal homophobic attitudes, inappropriate language, and lack of knowledge about inclusive language and practices. The insecurity within the academic environment is reflected in the uncertainty experienced by LGBTQI+ people about their coming out. The insecurity of LGBTQI+ people in the academic environment manifests with the fear of reacting to discriminatory incidents and reporting them. As the research showed, participants were unaware of the appropriate procedures and actions they could take in their academic environment to report a discriminatory incident to try to help a victim - all of them would use the strategies they had devised. The research findings also suggest that the Lithuanian academic environment does not provide accurate, concrete information on what to do, how and where to report if a discriminatory incident is experienced or observed.

According to the research participants, the most important aspects of promoting a safe and inclusive academic community are awareness raising, constant communication, and cooperation between LGBTQI + people and the rest of the community. It is also of utmost importance that the universities disseminate an active message that publicly demonstrates support for promoting a safe and inclusive environment and the processes and actions of reporting discriminatory incidents.

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Annex

This part represents photos submitted by research participants (autophotography method). Research participants were asked to submit five photos related to five questions. Below you can see the photos that the research participants were allowed to publish in the research report, and which were taken according to the research guidelines.

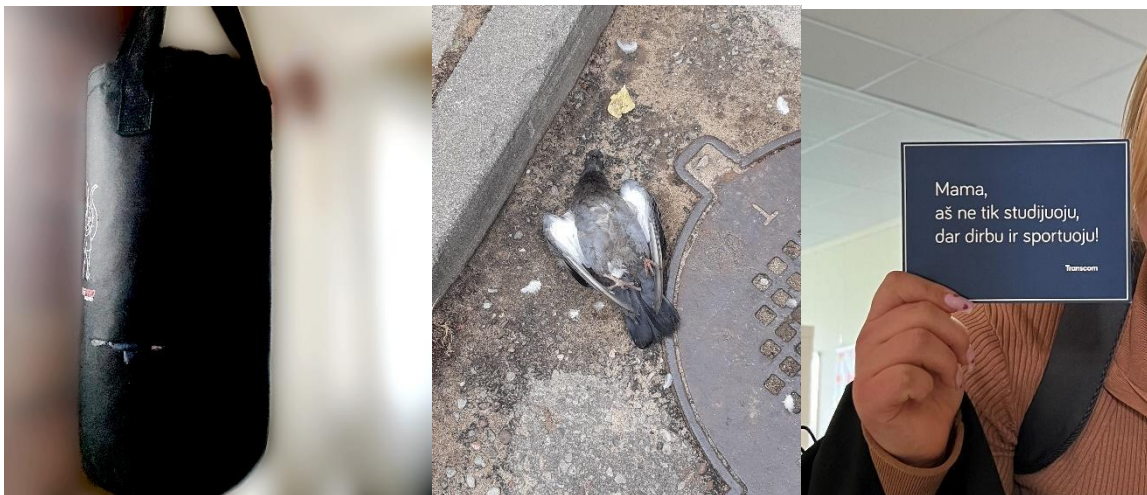
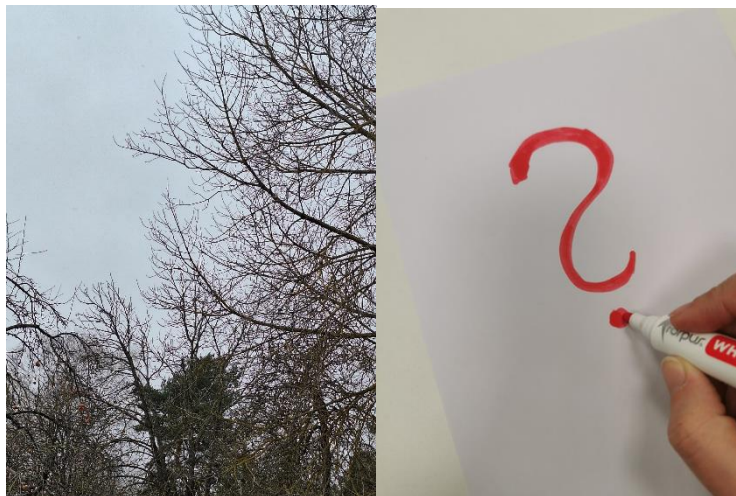
Question 1:

How do you see yourself when you experience/observe different forms of discrimination at university? What forms of discrimination have you noticed in the academic environment, and in society?



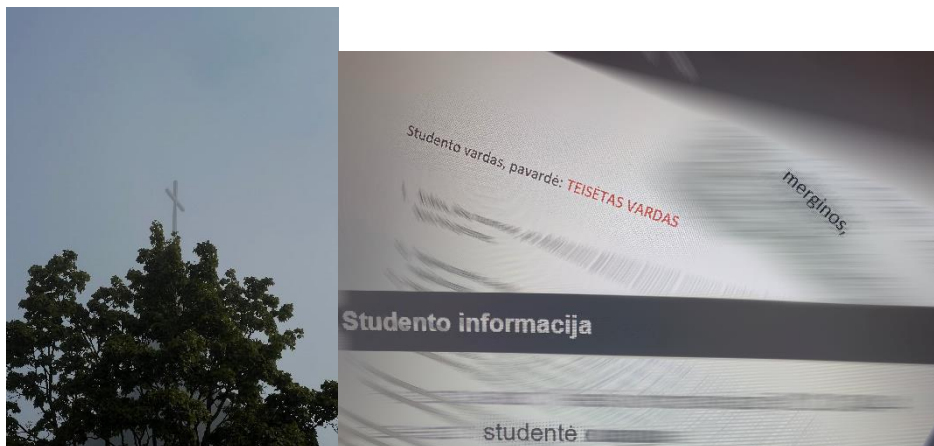
Question 2:

How do others see you when you experience/observe different forms of discrimination at university? Do you react and how do you react when you see discrimination, and inappropriate language at university, or in society?



Question 3:

What makes it difficult for you to be who you are? What challenges do you face when trying to be yourself? What challenges do you think LGBTIQ+ people face in an academic environment?



Question 4:

What makes you who you are? What gives you strength in the face of challenges at university? What do you think could create an inclusive and safe academic environment for LGBTIQ+ people?

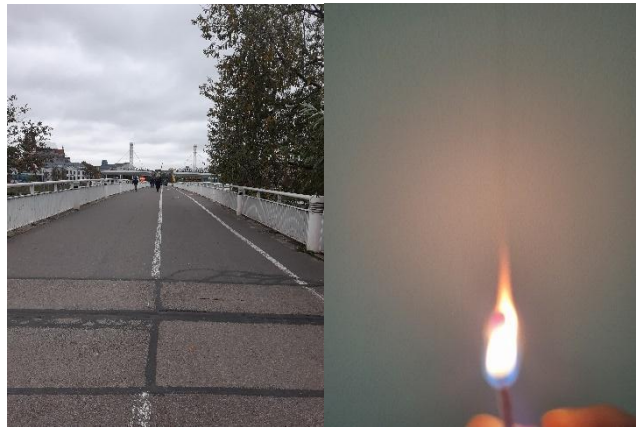


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Question 5:

What would you consider to be appropriate assistance from others in different experiences of discrimination? What kind of help could this be?



Comparative analysis: lessons learned from Greece, Italy and Lithuania

Dr. Konstantinos – Christos Daoultzis

Introduction

In this transnational analysis chapter, the status of LGBTQI+ individuals in the academic environments of Italy, Lithuania, and Greece are examined. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the experiences and challenges faced by this community across these countries, encompassing various facets. Specifically, this chapter delves into the academic landscape, drawing upon statistics, surveys, and secondary data to provide a nuanced understanding of prevailing attitudes towards LGBTQI+ individuals within higher education institutions. The project gathered up-to-date data on the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people in universities and society, using the methods of photo elicitation (Harper, 2002) and autophotography (Hawkes, 2004; see also Appendix for sample photos of each country).

As a comparative chapter, it aims to offer a detailed analysis of the distinct contexts within each country, providing insights into the prevalence of discrimination, the level of awareness regarding LGBTQI+ issues, and the implementation of good practices in their respective academic environments.

The chapter for Italy leveraged diverse sources, including ILGA-Europe and the Institution of International and European Affairs, to paint a comprehensive picture. Textual and sentiment analysis of the Italian university context reveals a range of emotions and attitudes among stakeholders, spanning from indignation and anxiety to concern and cautious optimism. Additionally, data from the ISTAT and UNAR in 2020-2021 highlights the presence of discrimination, particularly among Italian LGBTQI+ respondents in tertiary education. The chapter for Lithuania provided valuable insights through the lens of

17 individuals, studying or teaching in Lithuanian universities. By gathering opinions, stories, and experiences, it offers a firsthand account of the lived experiences and social-demographic profiles of participants. The chapter for Lithuania highlighted issues of securing equal opportunities for LGBTQI+ individuals in Lithuania and the existing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Also, the research reveals the crucial challenges faced by LGBTQI+ people in the academic environment and the lack of inclusive practices in Lithuanian universities.

Lastly, leveraging a multidimensional approach, the chapter for Greece delved into the Greek academic context to understand the status of LGBTQI+ individuals. Drawing from academic articles, surveys, and reports, the analysis explores prevailing attitudes, societal perceptions, and legal frameworks impacting LGBTQI+ individuals (Carpenter, 2021; European Commission, 2022). Notably, the chapter for Greece served as a critical resource, presenting an analysis of challenges and progress made in fostering inclusive and supportive academic environments for the LGBTQI+ community in Greece. Overall, this transnational comparative chapter synthesizes a comprehensive understanding of the status of LGBTQI+ individuals in the academic environments of Italy, Lithuania, and Greece, offering valuable insights for policymakers, academic institutions, and advocacy groups.

Part A: desk research results

1. The status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment

Studies conducted in Italy, Lithuania, and Greece offer crucial insights into the prevalence of discrimination, the need for inclusive practices, and the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in their national academic environments.

In Italy, the status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment is characterized by the existence of discrimination and challenges. According to the ISTAT quantitative study *La popolazione omosessuale nella società italiana*, (ISTAT, 2012), 24%

of LGB respondents reported that they experienced discrimination based on SOGISC in school or university (the percentage drops to 14.2% for heterosexual respondents). Despite this, there is a noticeable increase in the visibility of LGBTQI+ identities, along with the adoption of anti-discrimination policies and supportive organizations in Italian universities (e.g., the *University - Universities Towards Diversity* project; Stamile and Viggiani, 2022). However, there is still a prevalence of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression on some campuses, as highlighted by the source mentioning deteriorating discrimination and harassment issues in many parts of the world. Additionally, the available support networks and planning of festivals and activities in Italian universities contribute to creating a more inclusive atmosphere.

On the other hand, the status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment of Lithuania appears to have limited statistical data, analysis, and scientific articles available. However, the Lithuanian report cites various EU and Lithuanian studies and statistics confirming that discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender characteristics, as well as homophobic attitudes, is still prevalent among the Lithuanian population. Moreover, the report presents research conducted in 2022 that showed that LGBTQI+ individuals felt insecure and in precarious positions in the Lithuanian academic environment. Students, lecturers, and administration staff reported various forms of discrimination based on SOGISC and experienced intolerance within the academic environment. The mentioned study also highlighted an existing gap between the declarative openness to LGBTQI+ people within many Lithuanian universities and persisting stereotypes towards them (Ališauskienė et al. 2023). The Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania aims to ensure the implementation of individuals' equal rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. However, the Lithuanian report stresses the inherent challenges of conducting research on LGBTQI+ issues in hostile social environments, indicating a complex and potentially difficult situation for LGBTQI+ individuals in the academic environment.

Regarding Greece, the status of LGBTQI+ people in the national academic environment showcases both positive developments and remaining challenges. Positive developments include increased visibility of LGBTQI+ identities, the adoption of anti-discrimination policies, and supportive organizations in accordance with the National Constitution and European laws (Carpenter et al., 2021). Moreover, there has been a noticeable increase in the representation of LGBTQI+ individuals in universities, with the establishment of support networks and the organization of festivals and activities promoting inclusivity. However, despite anti-discrimination policies, discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression still occur on some campuses in Greece. The study suggests a need for comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the unique needs of LGBTQI+ students, including the implementation of support networks and educational initiatives to create a safer and inclusive space for these individuals to thrive academically and personally (Cooper et al., 2020; Ramos et al., 2023).

In summary, Italy, Lithuania, and Greece each present their own unique set of circumstances for LGBTQI+ individuals in their national academic environments. While Italy is making strides in creating a more inclusive atmosphere, it still faces prevalent challenges such as discrimination and harassment. The Lithuanian situation is characterized by limited data on the situation of LGBTQI+ people in the academic environment. Still, the statistics and research results show the high level of hostility in Lithuanian society towards equal rights for LGBTQI+ individuals and highlight the challenges that LGBTQI+ people face in the Lithuanian academic environment. Greece, on the other hand, shows both positive developments and remaining challenges, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive and inclusive policies and initiatives to support LGBTQI+ individuals in academia.

2. LGBTQI+ awareness sessions and good practices

In terms of LGBTQI+ awareness sessions and good practices, the three countries - Italy, Lithuania, and Greece - have taken different approaches based on the available information.

In Italy, despite the absence of a national standard, an increasing number of Italian universities are implementing initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive environment. Some of the steps that several universities are taking include “alias career” (originally: “Carriera Alias”), which allows students and staff to be identified by their chosen gender regardless of their legal name. Additionally, these universities are adopting inclusive language, providing all-gender bathrooms, and promoting training on LGBTQI+ issues (as part of the Anti-discrimination protocols) and ACSO (Actions to Counter Sexism and Homophobia) training. ACSO training is a program designed for university staff to address sexism and homophobia, including the recognition of microaggressions. Other university initiatives include seminars, counseling services, and mandatory diversity training aimed at combating discrimination based on SOCSIG (Luppi et al., 2020) and student associations that advocate for LGBTQI+ equality.

Currently, there are no unified national regulations on the prevention, monitoring, and regulation of incidents of discrimination on SOGISC grounds in the academic environment in Lithuania. Most higher education institutions in Lithuania are guided by the principles of discrimination and equal rights management provided by the European Union and national legislation. However, desk research highlighted various initiatives that support LGBTQI+ equal opportunities and promote the creation of a safe and inclusive academic environment (e.g. EU-funded projects *Universities towards Diversity - UniDiversity* and *Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research -SPEAR*; also University LGBT+ Group that unifies LGBTQI+ students and academic staff; and Pride events).

Greece emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive environment within educational institutions and universities through various good practices (European

Commission, 2022; Rand et al., 2021; Ward and Gale, 2016; World Health Organization, 2023). This includes the establishment of LGBTQI+ research centers on campus, which act as hubs for support services, information dissemination, and community-building (Ramos et al., 2023). Clear inclusive policies and non-discrimination statements signal institutional commitment to inclusivity. Counseling services affirming and knowledgeable of LGBTQI+ issues can help in preventing discrimination incidents and enhancing overall well-being. Moreover, partnerships with LGBTQI+ organizations for advocacy, support, and joint initiatives, as well as regular LGBTQI+ events and celebrations on campuses, contribute to a more inclusive campus culture.

In summary, while only the first initiatives to promote LGBTQI+ inclusion in academia are underway in Lithuania, Italy focuses on the celebration of LGBTQI+ milestones and visibility campaigns, and Greece emphasizes the importance of LGBTQI+ research centers, inclusive policies, counseling services, partnerships with LGBTQI+ organizations, and LGBTQI+ events and celebrations to foster an inclusive academic environment. Each country has implemented distinct strategies to promote LGBTQI+ awareness within educational settings.

Part B: field research results

1. Sample Description

The sample characteristics for each country are presented separately in the following subsections.

Italy: The sample in Italy consists of 35 individuals with a broad age range, varying from 19 to 49 years, indicating good generational variety. In terms of sex, 19 individuals indicated their sex assigned at birth as male, and when exploring the category of ‘gender’, a greater assortment is found, with the ‘male’ gender being the most common. There are six different gender identifications indicated in the sample. Regarding sexual orientation, the data reveal that the ‘homosexual’ orientation is the most common among the

respondents, with 12 individuals identifying as such. However, the dataset presents six distinct orientations represented. The mode of questionnaire administration was CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing), and the interviews were also conducted in person in two instances.

Lithuania: In the case of Lithuania, a total of ten students from Lithuanian universities participated in the photo-elicitation interview. Participants aged between 20-40; five students were bachelor's students, two were master's, one was a PhD candidate, and two interview participants have just graduated from bachelor's and master studies. Two research participants were students from Russia and Georgia who were studying at the time of the study at Lithuanian universities. The students who participated in the research studied social sciences (sociology, psychology, regional studies, and public governance). Additionally, six students (aged between 19-27, four women, one man, one trans man) and one teacher (woman, age 52) from Lithuanian universities participated in the autophotography survey.

Greece: The study included participants affiliated with the LGBTQI+ community, and they were a diverse group with various demographic characteristics. Most of the participants, five out of the total, indicated residence in Athens, while one participant resided in rural areas. This suggests a concentration of participants in urban areas, specifically in Athens, which is the capital city of Greece. The study also detailed the age distribution of the participants. There were two participants in the 18-24 age group, one in the 35-44 age group, and one in the 45-55 age group. This distribution signifies a mix of younger and middle-aged individuals, reflecting a diverse age range within the participant pool. Regarding gender identity, the participants exhibited a range of self-identifications. One participant identified as a “woman”, one as a “man”, one as “genderqueer”, and one as “trans” (specifically as a trans man). This demonstrates gender diversity within the participant group, encompassing individuals with different gender identities and expressions. Furthermore, the study included participants from various educational backgrounds, as evidenced by the composition of one undergraduate student, one

postgraduate student, and two university staff members. This suggests a varied educational profile among the participants, including both students and professionals.

2. Results from the empirical research. Discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors based on SOGISC in the academic environment

The empirical research results from Italy, Lithuania, and Greece provide insights into the experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals in the academic environment. In Italy, the key findings included discrimination, hate speech, and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC in the academic environment. The study highlighted the importance of visibility, issues, and support for LGBTQI+ individuals in Italian universities. This empirical research sheds light on the challenges and experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals within the academic setting in Italy. Participants reported various forms of discrimination, including:

- *Harassment*: Both verbal and physical harassment emerged as a major concern, particularly impacting women due to power dynamics.
- *Limited inclusion*: While initiatives like gender-neutral bathrooms are seen positively, resistance towards transgender and non-binary individuals remains.
- *Homophobic violence*: This is a significant issue undermining student safety and well-being, despite the university's values.
- *Open discrimination*: Demonstrations against LGBTQI+ rights highlight the need for universities to counter such actions.
- *Importance of inclusion training*: Identified as crucial for raising awareness and creating a supportive environment.
- The study also emphasizes the importance of inclusion training to raise awareness and create a supportive environment for all students.

Furthermore, personal narratives through auto-photography reveal the subtle and indirect ways discrimination manifests in the academic sphere, making it difficult for students to express their authentic selves. Participants shared personal experiences highlighting the difficulty of living authentically due to subtle and indirect forms of

discrimination; examples included feeling unsafe in restrooms and experiencing isolation due to a lack of understanding and prejudice. These narratives call for a cultural and structural shift towards genuine inclusivity and freedom from discrimination within universities.

In Lithuania, the study presented key results on discrimination, hate speech, and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC in the academic environment. Additionally, the research highlighted the level of visibility of LGBTQI+ individuals, issues, and support in Lithuanian universities. The findings provide valuable insights into the experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals and the challenges they face within the Lithuanian academic environment. One of the most common responses is limited overt discrimination, as most participants reported not experiencing or witnessing overt acts of discrimination in their academic environment, but covert ones. In addition, some participants even highlighted supportive and inclusive experiences, particularly in social science departments. However, despite the lack of open incidents, participants identified subtler forms of discrimination and bias which they called “hidden” discrimination. These included a lack of inclusive language and practices, such as discomfort with open discussions about LGBTQI+ identities, limited use of gender-neutral pronouns, and offensive jokes by students and staff. Also, a heteronormative focus within the university was noted, with curriculum and discussions often emphasizing heterosexual relationships, potentially alienating LGBTQI+ individuals. Apart from that, participants reported fear of coming out due to potential negative reactions and loss of friendships. Lastly, a transgender participant specifically mentioned experiencing ‘silent’ discrimination in the form of misgendering, dead-naming, and negative comments regarding their appearance.

Participants also cited broader societal homophobia as impacting the academic sphere. They noted societal discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals, including legal limitations, public backlash, and negative portrayals of LGBTQI+ identities in the media. All of these factors underline the need for improvement. Participants emphasized the importance of increased awareness and education on LGBTQI+ issues within the

university community, calling for the creation of a truly inclusive environment where individuals feel safe and accepted regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In Greece, the research presented key findings on discrimination, hate speech, and inappropriate behavior based on SOGISC in the academic environment. This included:

- Microaggressions and Stereotyping: Participants faced frequent subtle but hurtful comments and assumptions, reflecting prejudice and societal bias.
- Exclusion and Isolation: This discrimination led to feelings of exclusion, both socially and professionally. Older participants also felt the impact of ageism alongside SOGISC-based discrimination.
- Institutional Barriers: Lack of inclusive policies and support structures within academia allowed these discriminatory practices to thrive.
- Cyberbullying and Harassment: Participants even experienced targeted online discrimination, highlighting the need for digital safety measures within academic environments.

Participants also mentioned some important consequences of these discriminatory incidents. First and foremost, they mentioned the negative impact on mental health, reporting that these experiences contributed to anxiety, depression, and a struggle for self-acceptance among participants.

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2.1 The level of visibility of LGBTI+ individuals, issues, and representation in the academic environment

Overall, the visibility and representation of LGBTQI+ individuals remain uneven within academia based on all three reports. While progress has been made, systemic prejudice, ignorance, and lack of education hinder full inclusion. This underscores the need for continued efforts to create a truly welcoming and affirming academic environment.

In the Italian study, student experiences reveal a complex picture of LGBTQI+ visibility and representation within academia. While they mentioned that progress has been made, many challenges remain. Participants suggested that certain inclusive steps, like

gender-neutral restrooms, coexist with incidents of discrimination and homophobic acts. This reflects both advancements and persistent struggles towards equality. Students reported feeling safe in some academic spaces, yet they perceive a lack of awareness and education on LGBTQI+ issues. This calls for broader efforts toward inclusivity. Student experiences included narratives highlighting 'deadnaming,' prejudice from peers and even educators, and the alienation that comes with being perceived as 'other.'

The visibility and representation of LGBTQI+ individuals and issues in the academic environment are indicated through personal experiences and struggles, as mentioned by a 32-year-old non-tenured researcher. The researcher expressed facing discrimination and doubt about their identity as a researcher due to prevailing discrimination. The emphasis is placed on the need for a cultural and structural change in universities to create truly inclusive and discrimination-free spaces. Additionally, the document acknowledges some progress towards inclusivity and acceptance, such as the recognition of gender diversity and the presence of gender-neutral no-gender restrooms within academic settings. However, incidents of discrimination and prejudice, like acts of homophobic vandalism and assaults, point to the persistent need for concerted efforts to promote equality and safety within the LGBTQI+ community in the academic environment.

The Lithuanian academic environment seems to have made some progress toward LGBTQI+ acceptance, yet systemic challenges remain. The lack of clear policies, lingering conservative attitudes, and fear of coming out highlight the need for further change to create a truly safe and inclusive academic space. Participants acknowledge improvements in LGBTQI+ rights within Lithuanian society. However, they highlight persistent conservative attitudes, influenced by a Soviet legacy, that hinders full equality and legal protections. They believe progress in academia depends on changes at the national level, stating that *"As long as the state as a state is not safe, the academia is not safe either."* Participants note that, while Lithuania may be safer for LGBTQI+ people compared to some Eastern countries, there's still significant progress needed to match the standards of

Western nations. Within academia specifically, participants' experiences are mixed, as some participants report open discussion of LGBTQI+ topics in their coursework, while others find it avoided by educators. The willingness to include such topics seems heavily dependent on individual teachers. Also, many participants were found to be unaware of any university-level inclusion policies or their implementation. This leads to uncertainty about the rights and opportunities available to LGBTQI+ individuals in academia. Lastly, the lack of openness and clear protections makes coming out a risky decision for some participants, creating a climate where LGBTQI+ individuals feel invisible and unsure of their basic rights.

Greek academia shows signs of progress toward LGBTQI+ inclusion, but significant challenges persist in representation across curriculum, research, and leadership. To foster a truly inclusive environment, a concerted effort is needed to address these issues and amplify LGBTQI+ voices within the academic community. In the following paragraph, the key issues and proposed solutions for increasing LGBTQI+ visibility and inclusion within Greek academia are highlighted. While some gender studies courses exist, participants find a lack of LGBTQI+ topics across various disciplines, even in Psychology. This reinforces invisibility and gaps in understanding diverse experiences. Participants also reported research gaps: despite international studies on LGBTQI+ issues, research specific to Greece is less visible. Much of it exists as theses, not in widely circulated publications. This limits accessibility and impact. Lastly, participants noted the absence of openly LGBTQI+ faculty and leaders. This hinders representation, mentorship, and sends a negative message about career possibilities. To overcome these challenges, participants proposed solutions including the establishment of inclusive spaces like student groups, counseling services, and dedicated LGBTQI+ research centers to build community and visibility. They also emphasized increasing the number of supportive faculty who actively champion inclusivity in teaching and research, serving as mentors and advocates for LGBTQI+ rights.

2.2 Characteristics of discriminatory incidents and strategies employed for overcoming / subsiding these incidents

The Italian participants who reviewed images for a photo elicitation project reported varying reactions to discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. While they haven't personally witnessed significant discrimination on campus, female students expressed the need to remain vigilant against potential harassment within a misogynistic culture. A transgender student experienced a particularly upsetting incident as their transition was insensitively discussed in a philosophy class. This highlights the lack of support channels and procedures within the university to address such events. To ensure a more inclusive environment in the university, the Italian report recommends:

- Establishing clear protocols for reporting discrimination incidents.
- Providing training and awareness for faculty on diversity and inclusion issues.
- Promoting education within the university fosters understanding and respect for diversity and combats prejudice.

The Lithuanian academic environment lacks clear guidance on how to handle discrimination incidents. This leads to uncertainty for victims and witnesses, who often rely on less effective individual strategies. Firstly, both victims and witnesses face challenges in reacting appropriately to discrimination. Common strategies include pressuring the perpetrator or warning them about their language. Secondly, reporting barriers exist. While most participants would report incidents to administrators, few are aware of formal channels like University Ethics Committees. Participants believe many victims wouldn't seek help due to unawareness of their rights and procedures, or fear of not being able to prove the incident. According to research participants, this lingering fear presumably stems from the Soviet era, which discouraged reporting discrimination. Finally, participants expressed a sense of public indifference. They feel the public is unlikely to help LGBTQI+ individuals facing discrimination.

In the Greek chapter, despite being surveyed about their responses to discrimination, few participants reported actively addressing such incidents. This hinders

creating a more inclusive environment. One participant described feeling powerless and unimportant when facing discrimination. Some attempted to address the issue by: (a) keeping records of incidents and reporting them to faculty, but without success, (b) seeking advice from LGBTQI+ advocacy groups, (c) promoting dialogue on diversity and inclusion within the university and (d) seeking mental health support and engaging in relaxing activities to cope with the emotional toll. These strategies are supported by research, but the low response rate from participants suggests these incidents are likely underreported.

2.3 Perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness/ sensitivity activities at university

While the Italian study focuses on specific incidents and strategies within the academic environment, the Lithuanian and Greek studies delve into the perspectives and experiences of the individuals involved, shedding light on the challenges they face in seeking support and addressing discriminatory incidents in their respective settings. Each research study provides valuable insights into the discriminatory incidents and the strategies employed for overcoming and subsiding these incidents in the academic realm in their respective countries.

In Italy, perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness/sensitivity activities at the university are driven by the need for inclusive practices and support for the LGBTQI+ community. Participants in Italy emphasize the importance of visible signs and actions that demonstrate support and acceptance of LGBTQI+ people's human rights. There is a call for the implementation of various initiatives such as separate recreation areas for LGBTQI+ individuals, professional counselors to provide support, lectures and seminars addressing LGBTQI+ challenges, and inclusive language training for teachers and students. Additionally, there's a focus on developing equality plans, anti-discrimination campaigns, gender-neutral facilities, and the use of LGBTQI+ merchandise in university premises to promote visibility and acceptance. Further, participants highlight the significance of social events, university participation in

standalone events, visibility campaigns, and the celebration of LGBTQI+ milestones and contributions to foster pride, visibility, and understanding.

It should be noted that in Italy, a co-occurrence matrix with clustering was used to analyze qualitative data from student responses after viewing images related to LGBTQI+ discrimination. The matrix visually represented thematic analysis, showing how often two terms appeared together in student responses. Darker shades indicated higher co-occurrence, while lighter shades indicated lower. This analysis identified major clusters of words, revealing cognitive associations and prevailing themes perceived by students. The study used a convenience sample across Italy, encompassing diverse demographic and educational backgrounds. Photo elicitation and auto-photography were employed as methodologies. Data analysis revealed a multifaceted sociodemographic landscape among the participants. The Italian investigation yielded data of significant scientific interest for the debate on LGBTQI+ inclusion. The research highlighted diverse feelings and attitudes, ranging from indignation and anxiety to concern and moderate optimism. It suggested that despite progress, significant barriers to inclusion and discrimination persist in the university context.

In Lithuania, the perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness/sensitivity activities in the academic environment reflect a similar need for inclusive practices. Research participants in Lithuania express the lack of inclusive practices in the academic environment, as well as the absence of activities aiming at inclusivity for LGBTQI+ individuals. To address this, participants share a range of ideas for implementation, including separate recreation areas, professional counseling, training for teachers on inclusive teaching methods, development of equality plans and anti-discrimination campaigns, gender-neutral facilities, use of LGBTQI+ merchandise, social events, and university participation in standalone events. Moreover, visibility campaigns, artistic displays, and accessible counseling and support services tailored to the unique needs of LGBTQI+ individuals are emphasized. Overall, the perceptions underscore the

necessity for significant actions to create a safe and open environment for all members of the academic community.

In Greece, the perceptions regarding collective actions for advocating LGBTQI+ rights and relevant awareness/sensitivity activities at the university emphasize the multifaceted strategies employed to foster understanding, dismantle stereotypes, and normalize diverse identities within the academic setting. The insights from the research in Greece highlight the significance of student-led initiatives, collaboration with allies, inclusive policies, and a diverse range of awareness activities. Participants stress the importance of celebrating LGBTQI+ milestones, events, and contributions to foster pride, visibility, and understanding. Furthermore, visibility campaigns, including awareness weeks, pride events, artistic displays, and accessible counseling and support services tailored to the unique needs of LGBTQI+ individuals, are emphasized. The perceptions from Greece reflect a comprehensive approach to advocating LGBTQI+ rights and implementing awareness-sensitivity activities at the university level, recognizing the diverse needs of the LGBTQI+ community.

Part C: general conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the investigation into the inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals in the Italian university context suggest a diversity of feelings and attitudes. For Italy, the research conducted focused on discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors based on SOGISC, as well as the visibility of LGBTQI+ people and their rights in the academic environment. The survey results highlighted the existence of discriminatory incidents in the form of negative comments, the use of LGBTQI+ terms in an insulting way, and unequal treatment. These incidents point to an environment where LGBTQI+ individuals face prejudice and discriminatory behavior, affecting their experience within the academic setting. In terms of strategies for overcoming or subsiding these incidents, the report emphasizes the training needs of respondents. It is suggested that

providing education and raising awareness among faculty and staff members on diversity and inclusion is fundamental. Reacting to discriminatory incidents is also addressed, with participants mentioning creating social pressure and shame, warning individuals using non-inclusive language, and seeking guidance from departmental administrators or deans. The responses also reflect the need for clear mechanisms and protocols within universities to address and prevent discriminatory situations, ensuring an inclusive and respectful study environment for all.

The research conducted in Lithuania and Greece primarily focuses on the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the academic environment. In Lithuania, the study indicates that academic communities do not provide accurate, concrete information on what to do in the case of discrimination, inappropriate behavior, or where to report discriminatory incidents. Participants express difficulty in knowing their rights, procedures, or actions and feeling that they are not worthy enough to seek help or report incidents of discrimination. Fear of reporting incidents and the belief that seeking help would be futile are also highlighted. Additionally, there is an acknowledged lack of public inclination to intervene in such cases. In Greece, research participants' reactions to images of homophobic graffiti reflected feelings of dismay, pain, and concern for persistent discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. However, this also showcased the participants' strong desire to combat homophobia and promote values of welcome and respect. The need for a safe and open environment for LGBTQI+ individuals is emphasized, as participants express uncertainty about coming out and facing discrimination. It should be noted that conducting research on LGBTQI+ issues in Greece presents unique challenges, particularly in environments with social hostility. This became apparent in the auto photography study where, despite recruitment efforts, the response rate was lower than expected. Several factors likely contributed to this, including survey fatigue among LGBTQI+ individuals, the demanding nature of the autophotography method, and a general lack of familiarity with this approach. Additionally, the current negative climate

in Greece towards LGBTQI+ individuals, fueled by homophobic rhetoric, likely creates a sense of insecurity and reluctance to engage in LGBTQI+ related research.

Overall, the conclusions from Italy, Lithuania, and Greece each reflect the unique challenges and efforts concerning the inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals in their respective academic and societal contexts. While Italy indicates a complex interplay of inclusion and discrimination, Greece demonstrates a focus on providing support services, and Lithuania highlights the need for more comprehensive statistical data and insights on LGBTQI+ challenges in academia and more initiatives focusing on creating a safe and inclusive academic environment.

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Annex

Samples of photos provided by the participants for the autophotography method of each country.

Question 1:

How do you see yourself when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?



Italy



Lithuania



Greece

Question 2:

How do others see you when experiencing different forms of discrimination at the University?



Italy



Lithuania



Greece

Question 3:

What makes it hard for you to be who you are? What challenges do you face when trying to be yourself?



Italy



Lithuania



Greece

Question 4:

What helps you be who you are? What gives you strength in the face of challenges?

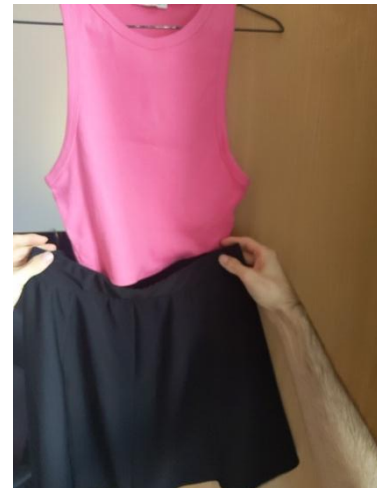
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Italy



Lithuania



Greece

Question 5:

In these experiences of discrimination, what kind of help would you find appropriate from others?



Italy



Lithuania



Greece

Contributors' CVs

Dr. Milda Ališauskienė (author) is a Professor of Sociology at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania. Her research areas include religious diversity, gender, sexuality, religion, and politics in post-communist societies, as well as non-belief and nones. She has published more than 40 scientific publications and contributed to collective monographs on secularization, social exclusion, and religious diversity in Lithuania. In 2021-2023, she led the international Baltic research program project „Religion and Gender Equality: Baltic and Nordic Developments.“ Since 2021, she has been a chair of the COST Action 20107, “Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity.” From 2020 to 2022, she coordinated the implementation of the UniDiversity project in Lithuania. Since 2022, she has been one of the coordinators of the INCLUSIES project implementation in Lithuania.

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