



D2.3 National Report Greece

“Look Wide - Developing a working method to support LGBTI victims of GBV by integrating gender and sexual diversity”

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1. National Situation

1.1 Definitions

The European Institute for Gender Equality defines gender identity as “each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms”. Sexual orientation is defined as “each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender” (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009).

Colour Youth – Athens LGBTQ Youth Community¹ provides an online terminology guide for concepts regarding gender identity and sexual orientation. According to that, a Lesbian is “a person that identifies as a woman and experiences emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same gender. Some women prefer to identify as gay or gay women”. A Gay person is “someone that experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of the same gender. The term gay in Greece is used mainly by men, although there are women that use this term to describe their sexual and/or romantic orientation”. A Bisexual is a “person that is attracted to two genders or more. It is often used as an umbrella term to describe various forms of polysexuality”. A Transgender is “someone whose gender is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. Some trans people undergo gender reassignment procedures, however it must be noted that -contrary to common belief- not all trans people wish to undergo such procedures”. Queer “is a term

¹ Please visit: <https://www.colouryouth.gr/en/terms/>



often used by people that do not accept traditional concepts of gender and sexuality and do not identify with any of the other terms of the LGBTQI acronym. It is also used as an umbrella-term for all LGBTQI people”. ILGA-Europe mention that “intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category”.

According to UNESCO², “discrimination is the selection for unfavourable treatment of an individual or individuals on the basis of: gender, race, colour or ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social class, age (subject to the usual conventions on retirement), marital status or family responsibilities, or as a result of any conditions or requirements that do not accord with the principles of fairness and natural justice”.

“Gender based violence is”, according to the European Commission³, “violence mainly committed towards women and girls, including rape, harassment and female genital mutilation”. As was agreed in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, in 2011 in Istanbul, gender based violence concerns female victims; article 3, paragraph d: “gender-based violence against women” shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.

Greece follows the women-centred approach to gender based violence. As Kakepaki (2015) states, “gender based violence is a form of domination, as an outcome of gender based inequalities found in the formation of societies, that contributes to the reproduction of such inequalities. Violence against women is connected to the inferior place they hold in society, community and family.

² Please visit: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/discrimination/>

³ Please visit: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en



Gender based violence violates human rights and also has consequences to their capability to fully participate in occupation, social life and welfare”.

1.2 Legal framework

Despite the binding European legal framework on LGBTQI rights, each country needs to assess the provisions and incorporate them in the national law. When it comes to the Greek framework, there is limited legislation concerning that matter, usually leaving LGBTQI persons unprotected and without support.

Some fundamental rights are shield by the Constitution of Greece. To be more specific, article 2/paragraph 1 concerning the respect and protection of the value of the human being constituting the primary obligations of the State, article 4 and article 20 focusing on the equality before the law and legal protection respectively, article 5/paragraph 2 referring to the free development of personality, as well as article 25/paragraph 1 on the protection and exercise of fundamental rights. The aforementioned articles refer to the protection of people in general and do not specifically mention the LGBTQI community.

The European Commission (2016) underlines that there is only one law regarding equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation in the workplace (no.3304/2005), which is the first law passed specifically against discrimination, following the European directives. As clarified in article 2 of the aforementioned law, any act of direct or indirect discrimination or discriminatory treatment is banned, including any form of harassment or insulting act due to the above reasons. However, the provisions of this law are restricted to protecting victims of discrimination in the workplace.

In 2014, the use of verbal violence based on gender identity and sexual orientation was banned by the law 4285/2014 for combating some forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia via the penal law. In fact, any public verbal expression intending to cause, incite, stimulate or provoke actions that may lead to discrimination, hate or violence against the groups that are



mentioned in the law, is incriminated. Noteworthy is the fact that, according to article 2 of this law, any action aiming, inciting, causing, stimulating or provoking to damage the possessions of these groups is also incriminated.

In 2013, Gregory Vallianatos sued the Greek State for violating the right to private life and the relevant provision regarding the protection against discrimination, since there was no provision permitting same-sex civil partnership (European Court of Human Rights – ECtHR, 2013). In 2015, in a period of intensity and oppositions, the law 4356/2015 was passed, establishing the right of same-sex couples to civil union. Even though same-sex marriage is not legally acceptable, the relationships between the two parts of the union follow the provisions of the law that applies on married couples.

Still same-sex marriage is not considered to be legal, neither is child adoption. Nonetheless, current legislation approves child fostering by same-sex couples. In May 2018, a modification in the article 8 regarding the requirements of becoming foster parent was passed, permitting child fostering, not only by married couples or individuals, but also by couples that have contracted a civil union.

Until recently, same-sex couples were not protected by the law 3500/2006 on combating domestic violence, since it was clarified that it protected the ‘family or community consisted of spouses or parents, as well as first and second degree relatives’. Thus, violent acts in a civil union could not be dealt with as domestic violence and the perpetrator would receive the penalties described at the provisions of the common penal law. In April 2018, a modification was made, following the articles contained in the European Council convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, in 2011 in Istanbul. After the abovementioned modification, people that have contracted a civil union are also protected by this law.

In March of 2018, the Greek Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights proceeded to the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Istanbul of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against



women and domestic violence. As analysed in the Explanatory Report of the Law Plan, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality was designated as the sector in charge of the implementation of the provisions. The ratification of the Treaty introduced further measures for the protection of gender-based violence and strengthened the woman-centred approach of the phenomenon in Greece, as mentioned above.

A research conducted by the International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation (ILGYO), in January 2018, indicates that Greece is one of the five countries with the least awareness on matters like sexual orientation, gender equality, and relevant subjects. More specifically, as mentioned in the report, Greece has no anti-discrimination law applicable to education, no policies and action plans, no inclusive national curricula, no mandatory teachers training on LGBTQI awareness, no data collection of bullying and harassment, support systems, or information and guidelines about the matter. The past years, Greek society has made some progress concerning LGBTQI rights. More specifically, in the year 2006 (Eurobarometer, 2007), 84% of Greek people were against the marriage of homosexual couples, while the rates of objections on their right to adopt were even higher. A more recent survey (Eurobarometer, 2015), indicates that in that year, that percentage has dropped to 67%. However, as the same research reveals, there is a lot to be done, since only 62% of Greek population seem to believe that LGBTQI people should have the same rights as heterosexual people and only 42% agreed that there is nothing wrong with being in a same-sex relationship.

1.3 Good practices and services

In June 2018, the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, along with the Ministry of Health announced the initiative to include the promotion of essential gender equality, equal treatment, combat violence against women, gender stereotypes, sexual orientation, identity and gender characteristics as parts of the messages of social content that should be



transmitted by the television and radio stations (Official Government Gazette, Issue B', Sheet No. 2037). As the law underlines, the aforementioned provision pertains to the need for public information regarding vital issues of general public interest and strengthening of social solidarity amongst citizens.

According to the law 3304/2005, the Greek Ombudsman is the public sector responsible for the promotion of equal treatment when a person receives discrimination by the public services. When the actor is a natural or legal person other than the ones mentioned above, the Labour Inspectorate (SEPE) is the service responsible.

Since the state does not provide an adequate number of services addressing the issue of gender-based violence and LGBTQI rights, NGOs usually try to fill the gap.

Thessaloniki and Athens Pride, OLKE and Positive Voice have created the helpline *11528-next to you*, addressing to gay, lesbians, bi, trans and their families, as well as educators of all levels and the general public. The project provides support and information about hate speech, homophobia and transphobia, social exclusion, school bullying based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as well as the discreet silencing of these phenomena. Positive Voice also provides informative material on HIV, along with Prevention and Examination Centres (“Checkpoints”), where the public may address to be examined on HIV. *Checkpoints* refer to the best practice of the World Health Organisation guidelines of July 2015. They run harm reduction activities, including syringe administration to drug users, working groups with released people from Agios Paulos Hospital of Korydallos prison, publication of legal manuals and a “Survival Manual” for citizens of vulnerable social groups. Last but not least, the organisation includes street work, aiming at the approach of social groups vulnerable to HIV, as well as their information and sensitisation on matters regarding prevention, examination, sexual health and harm reduction.



The Centre for Research on Women’s Issues-Diotima has implemented a programme aiming at the prevention and dealing of GBV against refugee women and girls. They provided training seminars to professionals, camp authorities and NGOs on the measures of prevention and protection of gender-based violence in refugee populations. Another training took place addressed to sectors working with abused women. Free legal aid and psychological support to female sexual and gender based violence survivors with an emphasis to the refugee population in Attica and Northern Greece was also promoted.

KETHI (Research Centre for Gender Equality) has founded advisory centres in several regions of the country for the tackling of violence against women. Moreover, the organisation currently runs a programme for the prevention and tackling of sexism and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) discrimination. In context of this project, gender trainings on the prevention and combatting of sexist stereotypes and behaviours were implemented, addressed to media professionals, while institutional interventions for the promotion of SOGI diversity were also organised.

Colour Youth- Athens LGBTQ Youth Community has implemented several programmes. “Tell us” (April 2014-November 2015) is a project aiming to record incidents of violence and/or discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation (collaborating with the RVRN), provide victims with professional legal and/or psychological support, train associates of LGBTQI+ organizations in managing such incidents, train and raise awareness of law and police academy students, as well as professionals of the Justice system and raise awareness in Greek society.

1.4 Associations/NGOs

NGOs are more active and try to make interventions in order to claim the rights of the community and raise awareness of the victims and the public. A summary of these organisations is presented in the following table:

| Name | Link | Topic and actions |
|------|------|-------------------|
|------|------|-------------------|



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Colour Youth Athens | http://www.colouryouth.gr/en/ | LGBTQI |
| Rainbow School | http://rainbowschool.gr/ | LGBTQI |
| Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) | https://kethi.gr/ | Prevention and Fight against sexism and discrimination on gender identity issues |
| Athens Pride | www.athenspride.eu | LGBTQI |
| Thessaloniki Pride - HOMOphonia | www.thessalonikipride.com | LGBTQI |
| SYMPRAXI – Partnership for the Social Gender | http://lgbtg-iff.gr/en/home/ | LGBTQI |
| Lesbian Group of Athens | http://loa.gr/ | LGBTQI |
| Greek Transgendered Support Association | http://www.transgender-association.gr/ | LGBTQI |
| Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece (OLKE) | http://olkegr.blogspot.gr/ | LGBTQI |
| Bisexual and Solidarity group | https://bisparkle.blogspot.gr | LGBTQI |
| QueerTrans forum | https://queertrans.espiv.net/forum/ | LGBTQI |
| Rainbow Families | http://ouraniotoksofamilies.blogspot.gr/ | LGBTQI |
| Good As You(th) in Thessaloniki | http://goodasyouth.com/ | LGBTQI |
| Blender – Community of LGBTQI Youth in Patras | http://koinonikokentro.gr/category/blender-blog/ | LGBTQI |
| LGBTQI Larissa | http://lgbtqi-larissa.wixsite.com/lgbtqi-larissa | LGBTQI |
| Lesbian Community of Thessaloniki | https://lothess.weebly.com/ | LGBTQI |
| KMOP | https://kmop.gr/index.php , https://livewithoutbullying.com/ , http://combatbullying.eu/en/ , http://divercity.ub.edu/ , http://www.epsilonproject.eu/ | "Live without bullying" platform; Greek partner in the EU projects "ComBus", "DIVERCITY"; EpsiLon; Power Action. |
| Thetiki Phoni (Positive Voice) – Greek Association of HIV positive people | http://positivevoice.gr/ | LGBTQI – HIV Positive |

(Adapted from Combating homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools-HOMBAT, National Report: the case of Greece, KMOP)⁴

A large number of NGOs have issued articles to inform not only professionals working on GBV, but also the public. *Colour Youth – Athens LGBTQ Youth Community* has published a book setting some informative guidelines for someone to familiarise with the notions of gay, bi, homophobia, heteronormativity, etc., addressed not only to professionals, but also to every citizen that wants to get informed (Theofilopoulos, 2015). The community also aims to support its members and assert their rights. Since 2011, the community has implemented several projects, such as *Tell US* (as described above), the *School Climate Survey* and *Transcending Youth – Supporting Trans Youth*.

⁴ Please visit: https://www.hombat.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/HOMBAT_NATIONAL_REPORT_EL_English_Left_Aligned.pdf



Their main demands revolve around legal gender recognition, civil marriage and parenthood, LGBTQI+ refugee rights, domestic violence towards LGBTQI people, tackling homophobia and transphobia in schools, access to health care, financial coverage –public or private- for gender reassignment procedures, along with the general addition of the terms of gender identity and sexual orientation to all the provisions needed.

Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece (OLKE) focuses on the training and awareness raising of lesbians, gay, bi, female and male trans in matters of self-definition, development of collective identity, activism etc., on the confrontation of violent phenomena targeting this group of people, the tracking of messages appearing on mass media that may disdain sexual orientation with equivalent interventions, as well as on the advocacy of same sex marriage legal recognition and the general defence of the group's rights.

The *Greek Transgendered Support Association* promotes equality and equal treatment of transgender people, the ban of their discrimination based on gender identity, the development of a solidarity network and the creation of an international network connecting local and foreign actions.

Athens Pride is a non-profit registered partnership mainly focusing on the organisation of the Athens Pride festival and parade in order to elevate the visibility of LGBT people and raise awareness. *The Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI)* promotes gender equality in all sectors of everyday life, aiming at the elimination of gender discriminations and inequalities, conducts research and carries out national and European action plans on these issues.

Rainbow School is a voluntary, non-profitable scientific collectivity concentrating on the formation, adaptation and updating of the legal and educational institutional framework, the development of guides for the mapping, sensitisation and training of the stakeholders (educators, parents, religious councillors, etc.), the implementation of educative seminars for their empowerment, as well as the development of a material base and an educators'



network for the organisation of educational activities in the school units. They also provide relevant information addressing to children, parents and education professionals on LGBTQI rights, along with a list of useful references of relevant organisations.

As described, NGO's advocacy focuses on the defence and claim of basic LGBTQI rights, sensitisation and information of the public, research and training seminars to promote equal treatment.

1.5 Available Data

According to the statistics of the 'Tell us' project, run by Colour Youth- Athens LGBTQ Youth Community, 101 incidents of discrimination based on gender identity and expression and/or sexual orientation were reported during the year of implementation (2015-2016). What is remarkable is the fact that, even though the services of the project covered the region of Attica, the vast majority of the recorded cases were of people living outside this region. Overall, there were 140 victims and at least 194 perpetrators. Only five incidents were reported by witnesses, while all the others were reported by the victims themselves; 96.03% of the cases were violent incidents, whereas the other 3.96% were cases of discrimination.

Over half of the incidents (51.48%) took place in public areas/spaces, 13.86% in private places, 8.91% in public transport and in the victim's residence (same percentage), while 7.92% happened in a public carrier; 1.98% of the incidents included heavy physical harm, while the same percentage included mild physical harm.

In 69 cases, victims believed they were targeted because of their sexual orientation, 23 because of their gender identity and 6 because of both. The average age of the victims ranged at 25.45 years (Theofilopoulos, 2015).

Regarding homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools, it is important to note that it is not always initiated by students, but also by the school staff, especially in secondary education. As the results of a research conducted by



KMOP in 2018, in the context of the EU funded project HOMBAT (Combating Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools), verbal harassment is the most common form of manifestation of the phenomenon (Ioannou, 2018). More precisely, it is often expressed with the use of sexual orientation and gender identity terms as insults, or with intentional misgendering. Noteworthy is also the fact that 38% of the educators that participated stated that they have heard colleagues making such comments.



2 Methodological framework

Six interviews with experts on GBV and four with professionals of GBV against LGBTI people were conducted in Athens and Thessaloniki, to map the function of the services provided by these professionals, the definitions they use for GBV and the role of gender identity and sexual orientation in these.

| Expert | Description of organisation |
|---|--|
| Psychologist | NGO providing psychosocial support and empowerment // helpline providing psychosocial support and information to LGBTI people, their families and educators // NGO for the psycho-social support of torture victims (including LGBTI people) |
| Psychologist | Helpline providing psychosocial support and information to LGBTI people, their families and educators // NGO providing psychosocial support and empowerment |
| Neurologist- psychiatrist | NGO providing medical services to vulnerable populations, including LGBTI // NGO providing psychosocial support |
| Lawyer and racist crime trainer of minors | NGO providing medical services, legal support and sometimes legal representation |
| Social worker | NGO recording incidents of discrimination and defending vulnerable groups' rights |
| Informant | NGO providing information and testing on HIV and some other STD's |
| Psychologist | Private practice (with some of their clients being LGBTI people) |
| Psychologist | Private practice (with some of their clients being LGBTI people) |
| Social worker | Social services of a Municipality |
| Psychologist (Counsellor and Informant) | NGO providing information and testing on HIV and some other STD's |

Seven interviews were also conducted in order to investigate the forms of violence LGBTI people have experienced, whether they are directed to any



services and if they were satisfied with the provided support. The interviews took place in Thessaloniki and the organisations, to which participants refer, exist in this area. Four of the participants were transgender men, two were gay males and one was a transgender female. Their age ranged from 20 to 35 years old.



3 Theoretical and methodological principles of services

3.1 Definitions and characteristics of violence

Some of the participants that work in the field stated that their organisations use the European woman-centred definition for gender-based violence. Some gave their own definitions: *“For me, the term refers to violence towards a person, due to their gender or their sexual orientation and gender identity”*. Others were more specific; *“The violence people experience and has to do with gender characteristics. Sexism constitutes the base of homophobia, so we cannot separate the terms. Homophobia is a term, in the base of which there is sexism and misogyny”*. There was no specific definition generally used by all organisations; however, all participants associate it with gender and sexual orientation.

The belief that all LGBTI have been, at least once in their life, victims of gender-based violence was underlined by more than two participants. One participant stated, *“it is shocking that I do not know an LGBT person that has not been a victim of GBV, whether it is emotional or physical violence, and the perpetrator was either an acquaintance or not”*.

The majority of the participants agreed that the needs of LGBTI victims of GBV differ from the needs of a straight female victim of such violence, as this form of violence towards people of the community has itself different characteristics. One participant explained that this is due to the LGBTI victims' identity, as *“it may constitute an additional identity that can cause discrimination and violence”*. To elaborate, it may take the form of an unprovoked attack in the street or the use of expletives in all aspects of their everyday life. The main difference lies on the fact that such violence towards the community is based on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Nevertheless, one participant characteristically pointed out that in the case of GBV victims, each individual has their own needs, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, while



some others did not consider members of the community to have different needs.

It should also be underlined that LGBTI victims of GBV may not perceive themselves as victims, or may be unable to define and understand their own needs. As a professional explained, the root of this issue may be found in *“minimisation. It is the way we perceive the forms of discrimination against ourselves. It might include a part of internalisation, internalised homophobia or transphobia. But also, if someone is part of a population that constantly undergoes many forms of discrimination, including violence, cannot integrate all of them because they will not be functional. Therefore, from one point they accept this situation and continue their life”*.

Straight female victims of GBV are also more likely to receive better treatment from the public, the media and other sectors, or in other contexts of everyday life, comparatively to LGBTI victims. Violence against straight women is more easily identified and understood. Furthermore, homophobic and patriarchal perceptions still prevail in modern society, often leading people to adopt the view that LGBTI people cause the violence they suffer. It was agreed that LGBTI people need more support, than victims that are not members of the community. Transgender people were thought to be in need of more specialised healthcare services. A minority could not answer the relevant question.

3.2 Gender and sexual diversity as central elements of the organisations

Almost all professionals stated that gender identity and sexual orientation affect their work field, while they constitute central elements of their organisation. Since all of the participants work with LGBTI people, these terms are indivisible to their general identity. One of the interviewees characteristically pointed out that *“a great amount of the cases has to do with forms of discrimination they experience, based on these identities – of sexual orientation and gender identity*



– *so I cannot say that it only has a great effect. It is an indivisible part of the job. It cannot exist without it, let's say*".

One participant explained that gender and sexual orientation might change their approach, as they may conduct group interventions for LGBTI people, as they feel more comfortable talking with people that share the same experiences.

For the experts working individually, providing psychological support, and some other participants, gender and sexual orientation did not seem to have a vital role in their work; one of them stated, *"I would rather say that these aspects affect me as a professional, in the sense that I have to show some kind of sensitiveness and respect on these issues and also show that I am open to LGBTIQ people"*. Another participant clarified that *"gender and sexual identity do not affect my work, because we treat all people the same way"*.

3.3 Services provided

Some of the participants work in a helpline that provides psychological support, over the phone and face-to-face and information addressed to LGBTI people, their families, educators and other professionals that interact or cooperate with people of the community.

Medical services, consulting and psychosocial support are also provided by the NGOs at which some participants work, along with guidance regarding the organisation to which victims can address their concerns. Some of them also target LGBTI migrants, while others provide victimisation certificates, which can be used in the Asylum Service or an asylum interview. Psychological and legal support, accommodation and food to LGBTI people in need or social empowerment, namely house and job placement are also provided. One of the organisations was reported to provide legal representation under certain circumstances. Participants also named some programmes focusing on the empowerment of these people regarding the matters of sexual orientation and gender identity.



An expert works in an NGO project aiming to record incidents of discrimination and assist in the elimination of social and economic exclusion of vulnerable social groups, as well as the defence of their personal and social rights. Another organisation was also mentioned, which provides information regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as free testing on HIV and Hepatitis B & C.

Some of the interviewees work individually, providing psychological support, including counselling and therapy, to LGBTI people and other vulnerable groups. There was also an expert working in a public social service that supports victims of violence, providing help at home and meetings with psychologists and social workers. As they explained, they have various cases *“some persons are addressed directly as LGBTIQ, some who ‘come out’ later and those who avoid ‘coming out, because they are very hesitant”*.

Some of the participants mentioned an unofficial networking system; namely, even though there is no official referral system, organisations direct people to the relevant NGOs, in case their needs are not covered. Participants briefly mentioned the cooperation with health care services, social services, mental healthcare services, welfare, other NGOs providing free services and individual-working lawyers. Some were more specific and mentioned their cooperation with the Offices of Combating Racist Violence of the Police and the European Anti-Violence Network. However, individual professionals and public services do not cooperate with other sectors or NGOs. It was also pointed out that the existent referencing system is not official or strong ‘enough’.

When asked for organisations working with LGBTI victims of GBV, participants referred to Thessaloniki Pride, *“the Offices of Combating Racist Violence of the Police”*, the Transgender Support Association, Colour Youth and Praksis. Solidarity Now and Diotima were mentioned as experienced organisations which can provide legal representation to victims of such violence.



3.4 Peer to peer support

The majority of the participants underlined that LGBTI people work in their organisations. In fact, many of them have policies to hire people of the community, while one of them promotes the service provision from *“LGBTIQ staff to LGBTIQ clients”*. This may be effective when dealing with victims of GBV, as they may share common experiences and feelings. One participant stated, *“whoever is a part of a specific social group can understand the people of the group better. However, this might be dangerous; experts may identify themselves with a case or get competitive. Again, education, training and empowerment is needed for their personal experiences, since most of them are also victims of discrimination”*. There was only a case of public local services that did not include people of the community in their staff, due to the aforementioned identity.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that experience itself can be sufficient. Experts also need to be trained and to have explored their own feelings and attitudes regarding their personal experiences, to *“have ‘worked’ with themselves”*. An expert explained: *“a common identity is not enough when working with LGBT people, victims of GBV or not, or LGBT issues. Like it is not enough to be a woman to work on sexism [...] a set of tools is needed too”*.

Some reported that people of the community working at their organisation have formerly been victimised, verbally, psychologically or physically.

Nonetheless, it remained evident that the inclusion of experts who are also part of the community is crucial. A participant stated that *“[...] in order for the stigma of the continuous separation of any community or group to be eliminated. There is an existent pathologicalisation that there are some experts working for some people or group, that are considered to be unfortunate, presuming that there are no experts inside the group. I can see this stigma, which is prominent in Greece, both as an expert and as a member of the LGBT community”*. An expert, who is also a member of the community explained *“it is very important*



for me, because I have been in the position of my clients, I have faced and still face same problems and challenges with them, so using my personal experiences, I believe that I am more helpful to them”.



4 LGBTI people going through forms of violence

4.1 Types of violence supported in services

The Greek Transgender Support Association was reported to provide psychological support, including group sessions that may assist in socialisation. One participant referred to Thessaloniki Pride to have helped them improve their relations with their parents and underlined that the NGO provides host services for LGTBI people that are not welcome by their families. Another participant was hosted in these accommodation services, after they left their house due to the disapproval of their parents and their victimisation because of their gender identity. The organisation also supported them with their gender transition and hormone therapy.

Some participants did not opt to from contacting any available services, or a psychologist that did not work at an NGO, while others were not aware of the existence of such services. A gay young man reported not having contacted any services because he felt embarrassed and did not believe he would get the necessary support that a child needs.

Many participants explained that, apart from the support they received by the NGO services, they were also encouraged by their family and close friends or significant other.

4.2 Types of violence experienced by LGTBI people

Psychological and verbal violence seemed to be quite common amongst participants. Many of them reported their parents to be unable to understand their preferences and disapprove of them; for example, there was a case of a transgender man who reported their mother's inability to accept their preference for 'male' and neutral clothes. Another similar case was reported, that of a transgender young man whose parents referred to him as "she. Verbal street violence, initiated by strangers was also mentioned.



Another young transgender man has experienced verbal, psychological, physical and sexual violence. He narrated a traumatic incident, when he was beaten by his mother, due to his gender identity.

Incidents of school bullying, with the form of humiliation and, less frequently, sexual harassment on the basis of gender identity, were also mentioned. One participant talked about incidents of verbal and physical violence taking place at the school environment, because of their sexual orientation. However, they underlined that after they confided to some of their classmates that they were homosexual, children were more friendly. A gay young man reported, *“at primary school, kids used to humiliate me, before even I realized that I was a gay. I was very isolated as a student.”*. Another transgender man described to have been physically abused by other girls, during primary school, because he preferred to play with boys.

Social discrimination is also quite common. One participant stated that the victimisation they had to undergo during their school years continued to their adult life: *“I have even faced discrimination regarding my career progression, which I believe is related to my sexual orientation”* and another one confirmed to have experienced problems with employability too; *“When I grew up, I faced some kind of discrimination and racism when I was looking for a job or in general, in public spaces”*.

Some GBV victims referred specifically to transphobic violence. Namely, one transgender woman was victimised by a health expert, after she had a breast surgery; the doctor did not refer to her with female pronouns, but used the pronoun of the gender that was assigned to her at birth.

Violence towards LGTBI people is also expressed by public sectors, like banks and airports, while their gender identity may cause employability problems and general social discrimination. One of the experts described a case of an employer threatening an LGBTI employee that they would reveal their sexual orientation to their colleagues.



Experts confirmed that GBV can take many forms: *“it may take the form of an unprovoked attack in the street, or the use of expletives due to these characteristics that might be vivid and bold in their social life and workplace [...] obvious physical abuse and humiliation are other forms of violence often used towards LGBTQI people. They might throw dirty water, or even bleach at them”, “In Greece, this form of violence ranges from homophobic/ transphobic bullying to discrimination of any form, like physical violence. We have even come across corrective rapes. I think that each organisation has to deal with one case of corrective rape. It is certain that if we include LGBTQI refugees in the discussion, we will find multiple vulnerability”.* Another one described *“the throw of a bottle towards two people holding hands, or an attack towards someone that was identified as gay and, therefore, weaker to defend themselves”.*

A psychologist working individually stated that some of their clients were *“victims of physical violence, hate speech, gender based violence and xenophobia, in each context of the public and private sphere”.* Another one working at a helpline gave more detailed information: *“about 50% of the calls we receive pertain to a form of abuse. Most of the cases are gender-based violence incidents. We have received more than 1000 calls and almost all have been children reporting a form of abuse. For us, this is gender-based violence. It constitutes a form of violence based on homophobia, sexual orientation and gender identity”.*

Other participants referred to cases of LGBTI refugees, who faced discrimination in their origin country due to their identity; it usually led to incarceration, extreme violence or exclusion.

Another participant mentioned cases of intimate partner violence, namely *“cases of verbal and/or physical violence by their partners, mainly by persons of the same sex”.*

Members of the community generally face discrimination in education, workplace, family, private and public life. Noteworthy is the fact that *“in cases of emotional violence... basically, when the victim is someone under 18, the*



violence they undergo comes from people close to them- especially from the family or the classmates; the perpetrator is not usually a stranger”, as an expert illustrated.

4.3 Experiences/opinions of LGBTBI people about the support received.

All participants seemed to be satisfied with the services to which they were directed. They reported the organisations to be supportive and to have helped them understand themselves and create a more supportive context. They recommended for more people contact these services, in order to be supported and to feel part of an inclusive environment.

One of the LGBTBI participants worked voluntarily in Colour Youth and recommended that people of the community in need of support should contact the specific organisation.



5 Deficits and proposals for improvement

As underlined by some of the experts, one major difficulty regarding the LGBTI victims of GBV is their identification. Victims of such violence are not easily recognised as such, not only by the experts, but also by themselves. Many of the experts reported that they do not feel adequately trained regarding the issues of the community; many of the people that interact with people of the community do not understand their needs. Moreover, there are very few sufficient training programmes and no financial recourses to support their participation, while sometimes it seems impossible to attend such seminars, due to workload, which leads to lack of expertise. A participant reported: *“sometimes, these trainings are provided by trainers who may have a theoretical knowledge about LGBTIQs, without taking into account the real needs of the community”*. The nonexistence of an official referral network was also pointed out as problem.

A deficiency that was also addressed was the lack of visibility regarding the forms of violence these people undergo. It was underlined that LGBTI people’s rights and violence is less visible *“in the public speech, institutional approaches, organisations’ plans”*.

Furthermore, the lack of a clear legal framework regarding the rights of the community makes things difficult when it comes to the protection of these people’s rights. A supportive legal framework is needed in order to combat social discrimination.

Further training was widely proposed as a way to familiarise with the needs, the feelings and the mentality of these victims. It was also proposed that experts working in the field to be trained on practices used by other –EU or not– organisations and exchange opinions, views and experiences. All participants were open to receive further training on issues associated with the community.

One of the participants proposed that sex education and gender issues should be a part of the Greek educational curriculum, in order to promote acceptance,



respect and tolerance towards diversity. Experts, the community and the public should also be trained on the current legislation regarding LGBTI's rights, while the notions of gender and gender identity should be added in the relevant provisions, in order for the public to understand that discrimination based on these characteristics should be eliminated.

It is of great importance that the GBV definition does not include only female victims; for example, young boys, men and women identifying themselves with one or more of the LGBTQI sexual orientations or gender identities should also be included. Furthermore, homophobic and transphobic bullying should be separated from the other forms of GBV and these issues should be more visible, while information regarding them should be promoted by the media.

One of the participants also referred to the needs of the professionals at a more personal level. It was explained that there are not many experts working with the community, or performing the trainings; therefore, a safe space along with *“protection from the burn-out syndrome and secondary victimisation”* are essential.

The need of an official network amongst the organisations related to the community was highlighted by many. It is evident that the organisations need to know what services are provided by others and where a potential victim can refer to, if they are unable to cover their needs. One of the professionals added that *“a usual obstacle is that, since the experts are limited, it is uncertain whether the needs can be covered”*.

They also proposed that a specialised organisation should address each form of violence, *“specifically for homophobic and transphobic bullying, for domestic violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, specialised services for psycho-social support”*.

The collaboration with the community seems to be the cornerstone for a successful intervention, because when experts work from their *“safe zone, without participating, lead to a model of pathologicalisation that was mainly used and has led to stigma, marginalisation, increase of discrimination etc.”*.



It should be noted that even though some of the participants reported having worked with LGBTI victims of GBV, only a few of the organisations are specialised in GBV towards the community.



6 Opinions of the experts about the political and legislative framework

Participants stated that there has been an improvement regarding LGBTI people's rights, however further measures need to be applied for equal right to be achieved. Some also expressed doubts about the practical use of existing laws. Although the common law comprises of provisions protecting citizens' rights, including this population, it does not refer specifically to them.

One of the experts expressed their concern regarding this desuetude of law. In fact, they explained that this continuous lack of punishment may lead to insecurity and cultivate the perception that discrimination will continue to exist. They added that *"this intensifies a feeling of institutional discrimination"*, and it might affect people's health as well, both physical and psychological.

During the past few years, several provisions were passed, including the one introducing the gender recognition, which allows transgender people *"to change their legal gender freely without undergoing any medical interventions"*, the civil partnership of same-sex couples and the permission of child fostering by same-sex couples.

Experts working individually and some other participants did not recall or were not aware of any laws or provisions protecting LGBTI people from gender-based violence.

Many experts focused on the anti-discrimination law, which includes the racist, homophobic and transphobic motive. One of the interviewees stated *"there is still nothing further in any law for other forms of violence. There is no provision for homophobic and transphobic bullying"*. Some of them mentioned the recent case of Metropolitan Ambrosios, who used hate speech against the community, along with incitement to violence and was led to court, but was not found guilty, as a case of the existing provisions not being used. The provisions regarding hate crime and hate speech were also mentioned.



A lawyer that participated in the research mentioned that there is a variety of laws protecting LGBTI people. They referred, amongst others, to the intention of the terms ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’ to be included in provisions that, until recently, held a neutral outlook towards the matter. They underlined that the inclusion of gender identity in the existing laws, along with the civil partnership, *“may lead to a decrease of relevant incidents”*. They, lastly, highlighted the introduction of new provisions regarding the expressions used when referring to LGBTI people in the public sphere. On the other hand, they explained that many lawyers and judges that do not work in the field, are not familiar with these provisions, leading to the provisions not being used that often. To their opinion, the greatest problem is that the public is not aware of the existence of these provisions.

It should be noted that many participants doubted that the Greek society is ready to accept, understand and adapt in all these changes. They also highlighted the exclusion these people have to undergo, especially in small cities.

To conclude, the legal framework should include separate provisions for each form of violence triggered by sexual orientation and gender identity; whether it is domestic, public, verbal, physical, psychological, etc., which will also contribute to social tolerance.



7 Training needs of professionals

As mentioned in the previous section, all participants agreed that further training is necessary, and even if they are satisfied with their education level they are willing to attend seminars *“to get new information and methods, and approach other aspects of this issue [...] to learn about these people’s psychological condition and ways to empower them”*. It is vital for police officers, lawyers, judicial authorities, social workers, psychologists, etc. to be further educated and psychologically empowered.

The current needs of the professionals working in the field are presented as indicated by the participants:

- Education and trainings to approach these people’s needs, mentality, feelings and psychological state
- Trainings to understand how they feel towards this population, deal with their own stereotypes and prejudices
- Trainings on how to identify and distinguish GBV against LGBTI people
- The terms of homophobic and transphobic bullying needs to be separated from other forms of such violence
- More information and understanding of the knowledge experts are missing
- Further trainings regarding LGBTI terminology
- To examine and analyse real cases of LGBTI victimisation
- To be trained on GBV and the forms it could take (e.g. discrimination in the workplace or in the providing services, physical abuse, humiliation)
- To educate on the provisions that protect these people’s rights
- To understand how GBV is connected to sexual orientation and gender identity

8 Good practices



As was pointed out by an expert, the field of GBV against LGBTI people has many aspects and can take the form of *“school bullying, domestic violence, discrimination or violence in the workplace or any other environment, street violence, violence towards sex-workers, trafficking, violence towards refugees. It might seem as a specific field, but it is huge”*, thus good practices need to be specified regarding the context and the form of violence.

The ‘11528 – By Your Side’ Psychological Support Helpline was mentioned as a good practice for the psychological support of LGBTI victims. Additionally, the ‘Tell us’ project implemented by Colour Youth was also suggested for providing psychosocial support, recording of violent/ discriminative incidents based on gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation, as well as the organisation of trainings addressing to *“doctors and psychologists that work with sexual gender-based violence victims”*.

Some of the professionals providing services to this population could not specify any service that could be considered as a good practice.



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