



Strengthening LGBTQI+'s Voice in Politics Policy Report

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WP2_D2.8_Policy Report



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1. Introduction

The United Nations' Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (United Nations, N.D.) and the EU Strategy on Gender Equality (European Commission, 2020) stress the need for investing in LGBTQI+'s¹ right to political participation as an essential step to achieve social, economic and political inclusion for all and subsequently global gender equality, human rights and sustainable democratic governance. The project 'VoiceIt: Strengthening LGBTQI+'s Voice in Politics' aims to contribute to the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in political decision-making processes in Greece, Cyprus and Italy, by creating a shared vision regarding LGBTQI+ inclusion in politics; increasing LGBTQI+ people's participation in political decision-making; strengthening national/international networks for LGBTQI+ individuals interested in participating in such processes; raising the awareness of stakeholders and the public about misconceptions regarding LGBTQI+ rights, experiences of discrimination and the importance of including minorities in political decision making processes; and by creating an action plan for policy change for an LGBTQI+ inclusive society.

Even though the levels of acceptance of LGBTQI+ people might have increased in recent years, discrimination, harassment, violence and hate crimes are still prevalent. As depicted in the first EU survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on the perceptions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons (2014), 47% of the total 93,079 participants felt discriminated against or harassed because of their sexual orientation during the 12 months preceding the survey. The FRA survey conducted in 2019, revealed that the numbers have decreased, as 38% of participants reported having been harassed due to their LGBTQI+ identity during the year preceding the survey. Results indicated that trans people²

¹ LGBTQI+: A common abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and other identities not included in the acronym (+).

² Trans: Is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. It may include, but is not limited to: people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, gender non-conforming, or with any other gender identity and/or expression which does not meet the societal and cultural expectations placed on gender identity.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_t



(48%) are more affected by such behaviours, followed by intersex people³ (42%) and lesbian women⁴ (41%).

As presented in the FRA survey (2016) on the views of public officials for LGBTQI+ equality, negative views are publicly expressed by public servants as well. Many indicated that such public attitudes of intolerance and an unfavourable political climate, expressed by their colleagues, undermine their work towards equality for LGBTQI+ people. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA, 2017) has expressed that *'democracy is dependent on the participation and representation of all citizens in democratic institutions and processes'*; *'every citizen, regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group, culture and ethnic or religious background, should have an equal right and opportunity to engage with and contribute to the functioning of these institutions and processes'*.

The research conducted in the context of the VoiceIt project constitutes the basis of transnational cooperation amongst the participating countries and the development of national action plans to promote the needs and rights of LGBTQI+ people, as identified by key stakeholders. Furthermore, an LGBTQI+ Rights Information and Empowerment Programme will be developed, aiming to empower civil society, state/government officials and political party representatives with knowledge about gaps in the perception of the national situation of LGBTQI+ rights in each partner country, the experience and perceptions of LGBTQI+ individuals regarding the situation, and the importance of including the community in the political discourse, as well as to enrich the discussion on human rights, equality and priorities.

The aim of the present report is to provide insights on the national situations, as depicted by the VoiceIt research results, and the existing legal frameworks of LGBTQI+ rights in Greece, Cyprus and Italy. Based on the

³ Intersex: A term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical ideals of male and female. 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.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_i

⁴ Lesbian: A woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

Definition by ILGA-Europe Glossary. Retrieved from: https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/glossary/letter_l



findings of the research it also introduces recommendations for EU and national policy reform. The involvement of LGBTQI+ people, government officials, representatives of political institutions and the general public allows a more cohesive mapping of the national situations, while their inputs inform the recommendations on policy reform, providing different views and perspectives.



2. Methodology

Desk and quantitative research was conducted in Greece, Cyprus and Italy to map the current situation of LGBTQI+ rights, the obstacles and frequency of different forms of discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people, as well as the needs for policy reform. Former research was studied to provide insight into the European and national contexts around LGBTQI+ rights, the existing legal framework and the perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights, as expressed by the LGBTQI+ community, government officials, representatives of political institutions and the general public. In addition, desk research examined existing information on discriminatory behaviours against the LGBTQI+ community, obstacles faced by LGBTQI+ individuals with minority ethnic and cultural background, as well as the forms of LGBTQI+'s participation in politics and the potential needs for policy reform, as expressed by the four target groups.

An online survey, designed for this project, researched the perceptions and experiences of the four target groups on the above-mentioned topics, as well as discrepancies in the perceptions between the groups. KMOP - Social Action and Innovation Centre, as WP leader, developed the questionnaire with the contribution of all partners, which included closed and open-ended questions, informed by former research and available tools. The data was collected through LimeSurvey, an online tool ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, as the IP addresses of respondents are protected and undetectable. The introduction of the survey clarified that by answering the questions, respondents provided their consent to the analysis of their data.

The online survey ran from January to April 2020 and was available in English, Greek, Turkish and Italian. The intended sample size was 1,200 in total (400 per country). After removing the incomplete responses, the total sample reached 1,282 fully completed surveys; 442 were LGBTQI+ individuals, 690 were general public, 67 were representatives of political institutions and 83 were government officials. Each participant had to choose one of the above categories but government officials and representatives of political institutions could answer a follow-up question on whether they identify as LGBTQI+. The questionnaire was disseminated via the project's website, partners' websites, social media and targeted emails.



3. Legal Framework⁵

The current legal framework in each partner country was studied in the desk research to map the established rights of LGBTQI+ people in terms of, amongst others, marriage equality, protection from discrimination in different aspects of everyday life and hate speech.

Greek Law No. 4285/2014 (Articles 1-5, Amendment of Law 927/1979) on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law punishes all public acts that have the intention to cause, incite, stimulate or provoke actions, verbally or through the press and the internet or other means, that may lead to **discrimination, hate** or **violence** against a person or a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI), or disability in a way that endangers public order or is a threat for the life, freedom or the physical integrity of the aforementioned people. It also incriminates all relevant acts with the intention to cause, incite, stimulate or provoke actions that will damage possessions that are in use by the abovementioned person(s), in a way that endangers the public order. If the provocation, incitement, stimulation or instigation leads to a criminal offence, or if it is committed by a public servant or employee during the exercise of their duty, the penalty or punishment is higher. The criminal acts protected by Law No. 4285/2014 follow the ex officio prosecution and during the file of the complaint, the victim does not pay the relevant fee in favour of the State (Official Government Gazette, 2014).

A section of the *Cypriot Criminal Code* 134 (I) of 2011 regulates **hate speech**: the Law incriminates the incitement of violence or hatred against a person or group based on race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin (Cyprus Government Gazette, 2011). Following its amendment in 2015⁶, the Law

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