



Awareness of Anti-LGBT Hate Crime in the European Union

Edited by
Piotr Godzisz
and Giacomo Viggiani

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Editors: Piotr Godzisz and Giacomo Viggiani
Responsible Statistician: Jacek Mazurczak
Proofreading: Marta Kuczevska and Selina Eagney
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FOREWORD

 **Piotr Godzisz and Giacomo Viggiani**

Despite the efforts of many scholars, international actors, civil society organisations and some governments to tackle violence targeting lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, the understanding of anti-LGBT hate crime in Europe remains limited. The problem is further exacerbated by the low level of reporting of hate crime, as many victims remain distrustful of the system and feel that reporting will not change their situation. The inaction of bystanders often leaves victims of hate crimes feeling alone and vulnerable.

Lack of research coupled with lack of reports renders hate crime invisible for the public and – in some cases – for the authorities. This in turn results in insufficient resources being put into policing, prosecuting and sentencing, victim support, awareness-raising, and outreach.

Our philosophy for countering hate crime is based on addressing **three key needs**: the need to build infrastructure and improve the capacity of professionals to work with victims; the need to raise awareness among the general public and empower victims and witnesses to react; and the need to further our understanding of hate crime to inform all advocacy and policy activities. Building the capacity of professionals (e.g., police, prosecutors and victim support centres) to effectively recognise anti-LGBT hate crime and support victims is the first step to tackle the problem. Once the infrastructure for reporting and victim support is put in place, we may start to raise awareness of anti-LGBT hate crime among victims and witnesses, encouraging both of these key groups to call out hate crime. For campaigns to be effective, we need to make sure that they are evidence-based and target well-defined groups.

The above principles guided two international, interdisciplinary, intersectional and intersectoral projects led by University of Brescia (Italy) and the civil society organisation Lambda Warsaw (Poland): *Come Forward* (2016-2018) and *Call It Hate* (2018-2019). With complementary sets of activities, the two actions, both co-funded by the European Union, directly contributed to countering anti-LGBT violence in 12 EU countries.¹⁰⁶

In the *Come Forward* project, we focused on understanding and addressing gaps in the infrastructure which create barriers in the access to justice for victims of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Legal and policy approaches to hate crime, systems to support victims, raising awareness and collecting data were documented in the book *Running Through Hurdles*:

¹⁰⁶ *Come Forward* was implemented in 2016-2018, and *Call It Hate* was implemented in 2018-2019.

Obstacles in the Access to Justice for Victims of Anti-LGBTI Hate Crimes in Europe (Godzisz and Viggiani 2018). Based on the findings of that research, handbooks on working with victims of anti-LGBT hate crimes¹⁰⁷ and a training manual (Stoecker and Magić 2018) have been developed. Next, we created a pool of trainers, who then delivered capacity-building sessions for over 800 professionals across 10 EU member states. This has helped to improve the availability of inclusive facilities where victims of anti-LGBT hate crime may receive professional, confidential and effective advice, protection and support.

As the next step after building the infrastructure, we started to work on outreach and campaign activities. The first steps included the development of info packs for victims of anti-LGBT hate crime – in most countries the first such publications.³ Over 15,000 info packs were distributed during outreach activities by *Come Forward* partners. Next, we started to work on the *Call It Hate* campaigns targeting, on the one hand, witnesses, and, on the other, members of the LGBT communities. Before doing so, we ensured that our country campaigners received bespoke training in how to communicate and frame equality issues. A special training session was organised in September 2018 in Sofia in cooperation with ILGA-Europe. Following the training, country-specific campaigns were developed, which separately targeted both members of the general public and members of the LGBT communities. While the tools and methods in each country were different, all partners had the same goals: to encourage witnesses to intervene on behalf of victims and to empower victims to respond.

To inform the campaigns, we generated original data on reactions to hate crime, empathy for victims, awareness of hate crime and support for hate crime laws. Specifically, we conducted 20 focus group interviews with members of the LGBT community and undertook a large-scale survey (n = 10,612) polling the representative samples of populations in ten EU states. The responses we received were used to inform the country campaigns. The results of the quantitative research are now presented in the form of a report to additionally serve as inputs for broader policy and research activities.

We believe that the philosophy behind the *Come Forward* and *Call It Hate* projects can be, and should be, replicated in other actions aimed at tackling anti-LGBT hate crimes in Europe. To inspire future efforts, sets of good practices on countering underreporting and supporting victims gathered throughout the projects have been published. They may be downloaded from the website LGBThatecrime.eu, which serves as a repository of all publications developed during both projects.

While the combined efforts of the *Come Forward* and *Call It Hate* projects come to a close, the need to counter anti-LGBT hate crime should become

¹⁰⁷ The handbooks are available for download on <http://lgbthatecrime.eu/resources/handbook>. Prints may be obtained from respective project partners.

³ The info packs are available for download on <http://lgbthatecrime.eu/resources/infopack>. Prints may be obtained from respective project partners.

a priority for both the EU and the national governments. For that, changes in the law, policy and practice are needed, and resources need to be made available to ensure that victims receive the protection and support they need and perpetrators are brought to justice.

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