

NATIONAL REPORT

(ITALY)

**Gathering data of good practices in Europe on
LGBTI teacher training and inclusive school policies;
country policies, good practices and
recommendations**

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Table of Contents

ITALY	3
1. METHODOLOGY	3
2. DESK RESEARCH	4
2.1 School System	4
2.2 Legislation	10
2.3 Case Law and Good Practices	15
3. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2. Analysis of perspectives and knowledge of professionals regarding legislation and policy .	19
3.3. Concrete cases and internal procedures	21
3.4. Identified good practices	22
3.5. Understanding current expertise and training needs	23
3.6. List (up to 3) main strategies/activities/programmes/recommendations that could be relevant to next project activities	24
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
REFERENCES	28
ANNEX 1 – INTERVIEW ANALYSIS	32
ANNEX 2 - IDENTIFICATION OF BEST PRACTICES	33

Italy

1. Methodology

Since this project aims to increase knowledge of teachers on how to include LGBTI topics in classes and how to react to LGBTI bullying in school, providing a more systematic and evidence-based approach on how schools can achieve an LGBTI inclusive educational and institutional environment, also through the elaboration and development of a school cycle with a school-inclusion scan, the whole methodology of the research phase has been informed to the target objectives, which can be ultimately resumed in the purpose to create safer and more inclusive LGBTI schools, where LGBTI students are more open to report harassment and bullying they have experienced and where sexual orientation and gender identity will not be discriminating factors anymore.

The research phase used mostly qualitative methods of inquiry and desk-based research of primary and secondary sources, mapping of relevant institutions and organizations, legislation and policies, good practices already in place and in-depth interviews.

As the first step in the research, in December 2020, a mapping of the national legal frameworks regarding the school system, bullying and cyberbullying, with a broader view on legislations concerning LGBTI people's rights has been done.

Following this legal analysis, in January 2021 primary research was conducted to explore and further facilitate the identification of concrete obstacles and limits to an appropriate inclusion of LGBTI students in the education system and to allow the recognition of some protocols that can be considered good practices or, at least, starting points to develop them. Guidelines on policing and preventing bullying and cyber-bullying, as well as other relevant public policy documents have been considered. Relevant case-law has also been object of specific attention, in order to highlight the main criticalities in the current approach to harassment or bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity and to identify if some protocols to tackle LGBTI issues

The first on-field activity, taking place in February 2021, then, consisted in structured, in-depth, individual interviews with key stakeholders (professors, policy makers, deans) who deal with the school system and have a direct experience of its criticalities as far as safety and

inclusivity are concerned. To this purpose, a standardised semi-structured interview model was created and shared with all partners, also to ensure that the same guiding themes were covered and increase comparability of results.

The 4 guiding themes covered were¹:

- Legislation and policy
- Concrete cases and internal procedures
- Good practices
- Training and training needs

The 4 respondents of the structured interviews were recruited using personal contact of the researcher in charge for the pilot interviewed, taking into consideration the responsibilities of the interviewees, the gender, and the diversity of their experiences. Interviews were conducted in national languages, using video-conferencing tools (skype and google meet), since limitations connected to the COVID19 pandemic impeded face-to-face meetings. To ensure that all participants understood the nature of the research, its goals, confidentiality, the voluntary character of their participation and the possibility of withdrawal at any time, an information sheet and consent form were developed, translated to all partners in national languages and distributed before the interview took place.

All data were stored and processed for the purpose of analysis using the highest available standards of data protection and the anonymity of participants will be ensured by the usage of codes to identify interviews in the report.

Additionally, some other stakeholders have been contacted/heard to gather qualitative data, but they were not targeted with the whole structured interview.

2. Desk research

2.1 School System

¹ Fuller information about the guiding themes is provided in the Methodology Guide.

Introduction to the school system in Italy

In Italy, the right to education has a direct constitutional foundation: art. 33 of the Italian constitution defines the principles according to which a) the State is obliged to provide a State-school system accessible to all young people; b) organisations and private individuals are entitled to set up schools and colleges of education at no cost to the State; whereas art. 34 affirms that «Schools are open to everyone. Primary education, given for at least eight years, is compulsory and free of tuition. Capable and deserving pupils, including those lacking financial resources, have the right to attain the highest levels of education. The Republic renders this right effective through scholarships, allowances to families and other benefits, which shall be assigned through competitive examinations».

The exclusive legislative competences on the general organisation of the education system (e.g. minimum standards of education, school staff) belongs to the State, but the education system is organised according to the principles of subsidiarity and of autonomy of institutions. At Governmental level, The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research are the main political figures that can be considered responsible for the general aspects and shape of the school and education system at national level. Local autonomies (Region and Province “autonome”) can take some autonomous decisions in some fields such as school calendar, distribution of schools in their peculiar territory and right to study after diploma. The single institution and, schools in general terms, have a high level of autonomy in defining offered curricula, shaping their educational offer, organising teaching activities, school times and offer plans.

Concerning school services providers, it can be observed that the Italian education system is mainly a public State system: since the State itself ensures the right to education, it also provides schools institutions, directly financing public schools. However, private bodies and public entities can establish non-public education institutions: these realities can either be *paritarie*, that means that they are formally to be considered equal to State schools and whose right to receive some public fundings depends on yearly criteria established by the Ministry of education, or merely private schools². In the latter case, students must take specific exams proving the acquisition of the expected competences in order to achieve national titles.

² Cfr. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-private-education-39_en#PrivateEdu, precisating that «Although the Italian Constitution of 1948 provides for the institution of non-State schools, a specific law has been approved only in 2000. In fact, law 62/2000 contains 'rules for school

Implementing art. 34 Cost., art. 109 ff. of the legislative decree n. 16 April 1994, 297³ provides a legal regulation for compulsory education. In general terms, education is only compulsory for ten years and between 6 and 16 years of age, but compulsory education covers three different levels of the Italian education system: primary education, lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary education (according to law n. 27 December 2006, n. 296). Anyhow, the final two years of compulsory education, between 14 and 16 years old, can be achieved either through secondary education, or through the regional training system, offering 3- or 4-years training courses (according to law 6 August 2008, n. 133). Additionally, minors who are 15 years olds can decide to spend their last year of compulsory education on an apprenticeship, following specific protocols fixed at legislative level (law 4 November 2010, n. 183).

Compulsory education can be attended at either a State school or at a *paritaria* school. During compulsory education, home education is a possibility which is limited upon certain documented health reasons or to students who are in detention centres for minors.

Law 28 March 2003, n. 53 also established that everyone has the right/duty (*diritto/dovere*) to receive education and training for at least 12 years within the education system or until they have obtained a three-year vocational qualification by the age of 18.

The education system is structured as follows (Fracchia, 2008; Gaburro, 2005):

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) - for children aged less than 3 years there is the possibility to access ECEC through educational services (*servizi educativi*), organised by regional autonomies; whereas for children from 3 to 6 years ECEC is available at pre-primary schools (*scuole dell'infanzia*), which is under the competence of the Ministry of education.

- First cycle of education – for children from 6 years of age. The first cycle of education is compulsory and is made up of primary (*scuola primaria* – lasting 5 years) and lower secondary education (*scuola secondaria di I grado* – lasting 3 years).

equality and provisions concerning the right to study and education'. Independent schools, both public and private, with equal status are called *scuole paritarie*».

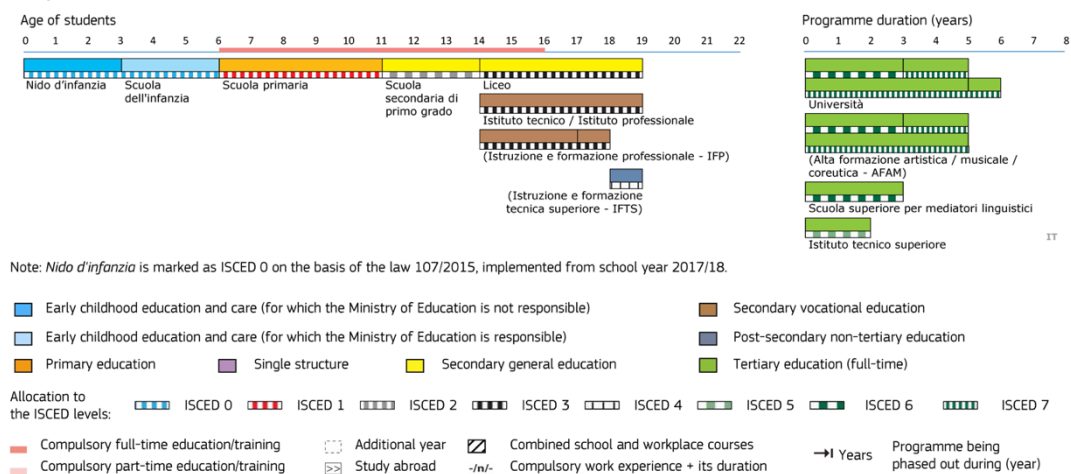
³ <https://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1994-05-19&atto.codiceRedazionale=094G0291&atto.articolo.numero=0&qId=&tabID=0.6047735174807608&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto>

- Second cycle of education – starting at the age of 14. The second cycle is compulsory for the first 2 years and can be articulated in different ways:

- the upper secondary school education (*scuola secondaria di II grado*), that includes both technical and vocational programs and general theoretical programs, lasting 5 years, terminates with a final exam after which a certificate of diploma is produced in order to allow the access to higher education;
- the regional vocational training system (IFP), which offers 3- or 4-years training and mostly practical courses, at the end of which trained students receive a professional qualification that enables the access to second-level regional courses or some short-cycle courses in the higher education system.

- Higher education – offered by Universities and High-level institutes -, the access to which is reserved to people with an upper secondary education diploma or certificate and, for some faculties, conditioned to admission tests.

Italy – 2020/21



Struttura del sistema scolastico nazionale in Italia - Source: Eurydice 2020/21

Inclusion

All levels of education must be open and accessible to everyone, regardless if Italian citizens or not, if coming from EU or non-EU countries; compulsory education is free. The principle of inclusion in the school system mainly takes into consideration citizenship, social and economic disadvantages, health issues and disabilities, since for all these circumstances

there are adaptive mechanisms focusing on the possibility to make the educational offer more flexible and/or customized, as well as to introduce supportive measures (Bellacicco et al., 2019; Canevaro et al., 2011; Canevaro et al., 2009). Indeed, «inclusion in education is a challenge to the operation of the school system. Systems must be put in place to enable students with disabilities to attend their local school, where they are provided with additional resources and staff as needed (see D'Alessio, 2009, 2011; D'Alessio and Cowan, 2013). Authorities must provide funding for specialist teachers and technological devices and other learning tools (e.g. Braille keyboard; laptops) in each school.

Personalization of teaching and learning must be provided via individualized educational plans (IEPs) for students who need support» (D'Alessio, 2018)⁴. The attention paid to by the legislator to students with some 'special educational needs' led to approve policies and guidelines to promote change towards an inclusive education system, «by supposedly making school settings more responsive to the diversity of the whole student population» (D'Alessio, 2018). The goal of an inclusive and responsive environment for the whole student population, which has moved steps forward in the field of students with disabilities, especially with the legislative decree 13 April 2017, n. 66 and legislative decree 7 August 2019, n. 66, through the introduction of an innovative and more relational model of intervention for students with a disability (lanes et al., 2020), still appears far away from being reached at 360° in making schools real inclusive learning communities (D'Alessio, 2018)⁵.

⁴ The author also observes that the concepts of Special Educational Needs (SEN) currently includes three sub-categories of needs:

- «• Learners with severe physical or intellectual impairments diagnosed by the local health units and according to the school integration policy (or Framework Law 104/1992);
- Learners with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyscalculia, certified by a public or private clinical diagnosis according to the Law 170/2010;
- Learners with cultural, linguistic and socio-economic disadvantages, who are identified according to the new SEN directives and policies».

⁵ According to which «it is time to develop and enact transformative inclusive policies that challenge education systems and schools to become inclusive learning communities» and who believes that «inclusive education is about changing the way in which regular schools are currently structured. Inclusion goes beyond including former marginalized minorities into mainstream settings. It encapsulates the process of making education systems responsive to the entire student population. Inclusive policies should address what needs to be changed in attitudes, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and school organization. They need to ensure that barriers are identified and removed. It is about instructional improvement including the use of universal design for learning

Italian schools are not specifically working on LGBTI people inclusion: according to the results of a research study titled “Be Proud! Speak Out!”⁶ – led by Centro Risorse LGBTI, in collaboration with Il Progetto Alice e supported by GLSEN and Teachers College – Columbia University (NY) and ILGA-Europe – Italian schools are not aligned with the common perceptions about gender and homosexuality: the research conducted on experiences of LGBTQI teenagers in Italian schools revealed that schools in Italy sadly cannot be considered sufficiently inclusive for LGBT teenage, since at least a 50% of them has received anti-LGBT injuries at school, in the 21% of cases also coming from professors and school’s staff, whereas the 8% of respondents declared to have experienced a physical assault.

Similar worrying results in England (where «nine in ten secondary school teachers (86 %) and almost half of primary school teachers (45%) surveyed say pupils in their schools have experienced homophobic bullying. The vast majority of teachers – nine in ten in secondary schools (89%) and seven in ten in primary schools (70%) – hear pupils use expressions like, ‘that’s so gay’ or ‘you’re so gay’. Two thirds of secondary school teachers (65%) and a third of primary school teachers (32%) have heard pupils use terms like ‘poof’, ‘faggot’, ‘dyke’ and ‘queer’») led to the publication of some guidelines contained in «Made in God’s Image, Challenging homophobic and biphobic bullying in Catholic Schools», edited by the Catholic education service, where it is observed that «It is difficult enough for a young person coming to terms with his or her sexuality to navigate their school years well. Whether someone is homosexual or not, to be subject to homophobic and biphobic bullying is to suffer psychosomatic wounding which time may not necessarily heal. The DfE is clear when it states ‘Pupils do not necessarily have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual to experience such bullying. Just being different can be enough’».

The Italian NGO Arcigay pointed out that, sadly school is a place where LGBTI teenage have difficulties and troubles in finding educational models, where they are often exposed to anti-LGBTI bullying or other kind of pressures addressing their personal attitude and victimizing them, with negative impacts on wellness and school results. In order to tackle the problem, the NGO has activated some activities aimed at preventing anti-LGBTI bullying and at training

⁶ Centro Risorse LGBTI; in collaboration with Associazione Il Progetto Alice; supported by GLSEN, Teachers College, Columbia University (NY), and ILGA-Europe, *Be Proud! Speak Out! The 2017 Italy National School Climate Survey Report - 2016/2017*, available at <http://risorselgbti.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/REPORT-CENTRO-GLSEN-ENG.pdf>

schools, such as the program «SchoolMates», among whose objectives there is the will to create and implement a permanent monitoring and reporting system for cases of homotransphobic hate at school, creating synergies with programmes such as StayAPP! and #MaQualeGender⁷.

Some other initiatives have been launched at national level in order to prevent anti-LGBT bullying or discrimination at school (e.g. Project Geco⁸; Project Bye Bye Bulli⁹), but the overall impact still cannot be defined and a lack of inclusion for LGBTI people, as well as the lack of preparation of teachers are still persisting issues.

Overall, when LGBTI inclusive protocols are adopted and implemented, they come from individual-based choices of the single institution and services are provided by private actors. At local level, for example, University of Brescia, has developed a project below the activities of the “Third Mission”, led by Dr. Giacomo Viggiani, which is aimed at activating anti-bullying activities in schools, offering legal and psychological perspectives; other initiatives especially in an awareness-raising and training dimension have been undertaken by “CFS Coordinamento Formazione Scuole” for LGBTI people respect, which is also engaged in forms of inter-agency cooperation (eg with the Municipality of Brescia, office for Gender Equality).

2.2 Legislation

In order to have a better understanding of the issues arising from the goal of making the school system inclusive for LGBTI people, which is directly addressed by our SOT project, it is useful to sketch a first background of the legislation surrounding LGBTI people’s rights in Italy. Despite Italy has signed international treaties and human rights declarations prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (hereafter SOGI), including the EU Framework Directive 2000/78/EC and the UN Rights Declarations on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, in Italy acceptance of LGBT people score nearly 3 on a 1- to-10 acceptance scale, two points below the average OECD score (OECD, Society at a Glance, 2019). On the civil law side, the Italian still conservatory approach towards family law entails inequalities in respect to LGBT people: art. 29 Cost. establishes that family is a natural society founded on

⁷ See the project portal http://www.arcigay.it/cosafacciamo/scuola/schoolmates/#.X_ePYC1aY_U

⁸ <https://www.gecoonlus.org/progetto-scuola/>

⁹ www.byebyebulli.it

marriage. No constitutional provisions impose to the Italian legislator to recognize the right to same-sex marriage. Anyhow, the right of same-sex partners to “family life” has been affirmed by the Court of Cassation even before a legal regulation of same-sex unions (Court of Cassation, 15 March 2012, No. 4184), but their constitutional protection seemed to rely on art. 2 of the Italian constitution, protecting social formations (Ferrando, 2017; as well as Constitutional Court 14 April 2010, No. 138). Same-sex marriages are not allowed in Italy, but l. 20 May 2016, n. 76, has offered a legal regulation for same-sex Unions, which are similar to marriages for many aspects, but still not placed on an equal footing by the law (e.g. adoption in same-sex unions is not legally recognized and it is object of vigorous debates and judicial controversies, depending on which, for the present research, it can be pointed out that the relationship between same-sex parents and school settings appear a critical node to be detangled – see Selmi, Sità, de Cordova 2019).

In Italy non-binary genders are not officially recognized. In relation to binary-genders, the recognition procedures require individuals to apply to their domestic courts in order to have their gender officially acknowledged (van den Brink & Dunne 2018). In 2017, the Italian Constitutional court stated that gender recognition can't depend solely on the will of the applicant (Italian Constitutional Court, 13 July 2017, No. 180): even if surgery is no longer considered by the courts as precondition for gender recognition, a medical diagnosis and medical and psychological treatments are necessary.

As far as protection of LGBTI minors is concerned, it is interesting to notice that in 2016, a draft of law (N. 2402)¹⁰ has been presented by a group of Senators, aiming at impeding the so-called «Conversion Therapies» on minors, which are considered a real threaten for their physical and mental health. Even if no legislative proceeding followed the proposal, it is significant that the need to protect LGBTI minors have been felt at legislative level and that some initiative in this sense in Europe have already taken place, such as the recent introduction in Germany of a law – *Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen* – criminalizing such therapies on minors and subordinating their execution of adult LGBT people to a sort of «informed consent»¹¹ (Bertelli, 2020; Scaroina 2020).

Bullying and bias-motivated violence and discrimination at school

¹⁰ <http://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/00982593.pdf>

¹¹ Bundesgesetzblatt Teil I 2020, Nr. 28 vom 23.06.2020; Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen 12.06.2020

Bullying and cyberbullying are certainly a problem to be faced in Italian education system and a cause of concern for the Italian legislator, especially considering that data emerging from ISTAT 2019 analysis¹² concerning number of children/teenagers experiencing violence at school shows an increasing trend. Several initiatives against bullying have been undertaken in the past two decades. An important measure was the Law 28 August 1997, n. 285, dedicate to the regulation for promoting rights and opportunity in childhood and adolescence, whose adoption led to the creation of a series of public-funded initiatives oriented at promoting the rights of children and adolescents, also targeting bullying and cyberbullying. In 2007, a Ministerial Directive (dir. 5 February 2007, n. 16 of the Ministry of Education) providing a framework to bullying also intervened, offering guidelines to tackle the problem and suggesting the introduction of disciplinary sanctions against bullies.

In 2015, guidelines of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) invited schools to actively prevent bullying and provided financial resources for teachers' training. In 2016 a National Plan of Action for the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying at school has been approved. Through this Action Plan, specific actions such as the National Day against Bullying at School; trainings for teachers within the National Training Plan for teachers; as well as awareness-raising initiatives have been promoted.

Finally, Law 29 May 2017, n. 71, has been introduced and specifically addresses the problem of cyberbullying against minors.

More concretely, several anti-bullying programs and initiative have been carried out in Italy in the last decade, both at governmental level and at Regional or local/single-institution

¹² <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2019/03/Allegato-statistico-bullismo.pdf>

level (see tables below, collected in the report “Anti-bullying intervention mapping”, Pregliasco and Bernacchi, 2016).¹³

Table 1 Number of screened and eligible programs retrieved from each source

	Scientific Databases		Italian Database	European Funding Databases			Other Sources			
	Scopus Web Science	and of	Law 285 database	Daphne	Erasmus Plus	CORDIS	No-profit Organ.	Regional School Offices	Ministry of Interior	MIUR
Number of papers/programs found	267		30	15	65	3	7	3	5	2
Number of papers/programs screened by abstract	236		-	-	6	1	-	-	4	
Number of papers/programs screened by text	3		7	3	3	1	-	-	-	-
Number of duplicates	23		9	1	13	0	-	-	-	-
Number of papers/programs retained	5*		14	11	43	1	7	3	1	2
Total number of programs retained : 87-2=85 (Three scientific papers were about the “NoTrap!” program. Therefore, we included only one of them)										

¹³ drafted for Istituto degli Innocenti by Mazzone and Palladino under the scientific supervision of Prof. Menesini and with the coordination of

Table 6 Programs evaluated (and included) retrieved from other sources

Program Title	Source
1. Bulli di Sapone, Un approccio Ironico al bullismo e Bulli di sapone - La pubblicità (Soap bully: An ironic approach to bullying, in continuity with Soap bullies: Advertisement)	Regional School Offices
2. "Io bullo? No, io ballo!" ("Me a bully? No, I dance!")	Regional School Offices
3. Sofia della 3B – (Sofia from the third grade)	Regional School Offices
4. Centro Giovani Online (Online Youth Center)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
5. Io proteggo i bambini (I protect Children)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
6. Internet: Be happy, be safe!	Main Italian No-profit organizations

22

7. Fermiamo il Bullismo (Let's stop bullying)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
8. Giovani ambasciatori contro il bullismo e il cyberbullismo per un web sicuro (Young ambassadors against bullying and cyberbullying for a safe web)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
9. Progetto Scuole: Stereotipi e Bullismo (Schools Program: Stereotypes and Bullying)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
10. Progetto Giovani Protagonisti (Young Protagonists Program)	Main Italian No-profit organizations
11. Abbandono scolastico e bullismo: Quali rischi tra i giovani? - Discobull (School drop-out and bullying: What are the risks among youth?)	Ministry of Interior
12. Generazioniconnesse - Safer Internet Center	Ministry of Education, University and Research
13. Una Vita da Social (Living social)	Ministry of interior and Ministry of Education, University and Research

Table 3 Eligible Programs retrieved from the Law 285 database

1. Prevenzione del bullismo giovanile (Preventing bullying among youth)
2. PreDisco Giovani Fuori classe - Lecosecambiano@Roma (Outstanding youth - Things change in Rome)
3. Servizio gratuito di ascolto di mediazione dei conflitti e la cura del disagio del minore - sportello anti-bullismo (Free Service for counseling, conflict resolution and children care - anti-bullying service)
4. M.V.B. Mi voglio bene (I love myself)
5. Azioni di prevenzione della dispersione scolastica (Preventing school drop-out)
6. Centro di consulenza per la famiglia e la scuola (Counseling center for family and school)
7. Su la testa (IV P.I.), Milano (Raise your head)
8. Interventi innovativi volti alla gestione del conflitto e sostegno vittime di bullismo (Innovative intervention for managing conflict and supporting victims of bullying)
9. Socializzazione, integrazione, benessere. I giovani in relazione al mondo straniero (Socialization; social inclusion and wellbeing. The relationship between youth and foreigners)
10. Verso la scuola [Towards the school]
11. Bullismo e disagio sociale (Bullying and social distress)
12. Centro di quartiere finalizzato alla socializzazione e all'aggregazione giovanile (Neighborhood center for socialization of youth)
13. Silenzio in Aula (Keep silent in the classroom)
14. Servizio educativo assistenziale semiresidenziale (Educational semi-residential

Neither a specific criminal law tackling the problem of bullying exist, nor specific protocols to create an inclusive environment for LGBTI people at school, despite many LGBT NGOs have been encouraging intervention in this sense for many years, nor provisions protecting against bullying based on homotransphobic hate, but this latter profile shouldn't surprise considering that the provisions of the Italian criminal code dedicated to hate-crimes currently only consider ethnicity, race, nationality or religion as protected factors of discrimination and don't include SOGI¹⁴ (Parolari and Viggiani, 2018). Considering that the so-called problem of under-reporting probably affects also anti-LGBTI bullying, the estimated number of victims in Italian schools appears quite worrying: indeed, a study conducted on a sample of roughly 1000 students of secondary schools from different regions, revealed that 1 student on 20 has been victim of anti-LGBT bullying (Prati et al., 2010; see also Report Arcigay 2010 on homotransphobic bullying¹⁵)¹⁶.

Law 20 August 2019, n. 92, has recently introduced a mandatory module of 33 hours of «civic education» minimum from s.y. 2020/2021 for primary and secondary school cycles, in which issues regarding fundamental rights and citizenship will be supposedly tackled and where the introduction of anti-discriminatory modules could be a successful strategy.

2.3 Case Law and Good Practices

The situation of bullying based on SOGI characteristics in Italian schools is an almost unknown phenomenon: there is not a national wide research on bullying that speaks clearly about bullying based on SOGI and it leaves the data mainly ignored. The few research that worked on this topic were led by LGBTI organizations and were, mainly, addressed to LGBTI students in order to raise up their voices. But all of this doesn't mean that bullying based on SOGI is irrelevant in Italian schools: it means it's more difficult to highlight and to address it in a mainstream point of view. Even the national projects implemented by the Ministry of Education, done to raise awareness about bullying and support both students and teachers, are usually not focusing on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as

¹⁴ A reform is, however, under Parliamentary debate

¹⁵ Available here https://www.arcigay.it/wp-content/uploads/ARCIGAY_BullismoOmofobico_Report.pdf

¹⁶ On the importance of education to inclusivity towards LGBTI students, see also <https://www.stateofmind.it/2019/02/bullismo-omofobico/>

possible bullying characteristics. SOGI based bullying hits both LGBTI students and people that might look like LGBTI or just non fitting the gender norms': gender stereotypes are the hidden framework that define who is acceptable and who is possible to discriminate. And, due to the fact that gender norms are everywhere and everyone is influenced by them, it's not easy to see something so common.

Be Proud! Speak Out! Research (2017), shown that the most common acts of discrimination reported by LGBTQI+ students are verbal and physical harassment, exposure to bias language and being purposefully excluded by peers and being the target of mean rumours or lies: all examples of discriminatory acts that are difficult to highlight in the school system and to the society. In fact, the number of cases that are object of media attention, is usually low and the gravity is extremely high: in 2012 everybody was shocked by the case of a young boy that committed suicide because of bullying, addressed by pairs to his not so strong masculinity shown with the habit of wearing pink trousers. In addition, the lack of a specific law about hate crimes based on homotransphobia makes even more difficult for LGBTQI+ students to report crimes or discrimination they might face because there is no protection and come out to teachers or other relevant adults in the school system might lead to a worse situation as shown by Hate Crimes No More Report (2020).

Fortunately, things are changing and more and more schools are aware of the phenomenon and get involved in projects with the aim of preventing LGBTI students to be bullied. On this topic a very good example is the increased interest in the activities of the network Rete Educare alle Differenze: it's done by a group of NGOs in different areas of Italy that works on education in different ways and they all share the common ground of preventing gender-based violence that include bullying based on SOGI characteristics and support of LGBTI identities. Every year the network organizes a national event with workshops, lectures, debates and it's followed by teachers, principals, educator, counsellors that want to make their schools better places for LGBTI community.

Another interesting example is the increased number of LGBTI organizations or "preventing gender-based violence" organizations that organize projects and lessons for students in schools: courses, activities with classrooms and teachers, participation in school assemblies, workshops and so on are done all over the country in different contexts and with

different ages of students. All of this is leading to a clearer awareness on this topic and an increased interest in teachers and principals in order to include the prevention of bullying based on SOGI characteristics in everyday school life. In this framework a few can be named in order to show the diversity of offers lead by NGOs and/or institutions.

- Tracce Arcobaleno (www.traccearcobaleno.it): it's website collecting either LGBTQI in schools narratives and teachers suggestions to make the school more inclusive.
- CFS – Coordinamento Formazione Scuole: it's a network of NGOs based in Brescia that proposes an interesting course for teachers and educators on how to include LGBTQI+ students.
- Municipality of Turin, LGBT inclusion Office: the officers offer trainings, events, conferences on different topics connected to LGBTQI+ inclusion in services, offices, schools, workplaces. The office is also the coordinator of READY Network, the network of public institution willing to support LGBTQI+ community in Italy.

An uncommon, but interesting good practice, is a case happened in a High School, in Ravenna:¹⁷in January 2019 somebody wrote with spray paint on the school wall “The principal is gay!” and the principal decided not to erase it and make it a symbol of acceptance of LGBTI people of school because, as he said: “Being gay is not a bad thing and neither writing it has to be considered an insult.”

Even though there are some good examples of teachers or principles dealing with LGBTQI+ inclusion, media generally covers terrible cases and usually with big issues in using the right language about people involved. For example in September 2020 a young woman died after an accident caused by her brother who couldn't support her having a relationship with a transgender boy: a great number of journalists had mistaken noun and pronoun of the transgender boy creating a loop of misunderstanding about gender identity, sexual orientation and homophobia.

¹⁷See the news on a national newspaper https://www.corriere.it/cronache/19_gennaio_20/ravenna-scrivono-preside-gay-muri-scuola-gianluca-dradi-non-cancellero-cd10a340-1cbe-11e9-abf6-3879de3c5581.shtml

3. Qualitative interviews and analysis of collected data

3.1 Introduction

The decision to target specific categories of stakeholders with the interviews has been agreed with during January 2021 partners' meeting, so as to ensure uniformity from the perspectives under which the information should be collected. The particular synergies with other ongoing projects protecting LGBTI people's rights (LetsGoByTalking for Italy),¹⁸ as well as the specific criticalities highlighted during the desk research revealed the opportunity to collect qualitative data from some other stakeholders who could enrich the analysis with some information (religious members working with Schools; NGOs working with RJ in and in the of juvenile system; policy makers). 3 structured full-interviews have been conducted with digital tools (google meet; zoom) and have involved 1 face-to face interview with a counsellor working with different schools, also and conflicts mediator and who experienced different approaches in anti-bullying strategies; 1 face-to-face interview with the responsible of a local office providing victim-offender mediation services for the juvenile justice, whose point of view has been collected in order to analyse if and to what extent bullying cases (especially if motivated by bias concerning sexual orientation or gender identity – SOGI factors) are reported to public authorities and how they are managed; 1 focus group with 2 high school professors – 1 of them also member of LGBTI community -, one of which is in charge to organize anti-bullying activities for classes. Additionally, a Professor whose research field is connected to psychology of education and psychology of deviance; a priest who is a teacher of religion and who has worked with students of different ages. Interviews have not been recorded to avoid the issues connected to storage of personal data during the pandemic and after it, but a significant part of the answers have been transcribed and the main quotes and outputs reported in a factsheet document that helped to summarize stakeholders' views in order to complete the qualitative analysis. The main obstacles encountered during the data collection were connected a) with the general lack of awareness in schools' operator of what kind of acts and omissions

¹⁸ LetsGoByTalking brings together a partnership with expertise in hate crimes, LGBT-phobia and restorative justice to enhance the rights of the victims of anti-LGBT hate crimes. Using an ethnographic approach, LetsGoByTalking gathers and analyses the experiences and needs from the ground to implement actions that promote LGBT victims' rights through innovative paths of restorative justice. See the official website: <https://www.lets gobytalking.eu>

qualifiable as bullying can be considered as discriminating against LGBTI people or motivated by gender/sexual stereotypes; b) with some prejudice toward the reluctancy of institutions of the education system in including LGBTI themes due to the cultural barriers they can meet in professors/families/religion and that highlight the need to discuss about gender equality from a perspective which is not ideological but first and foremost focused on the common value of human dignity and equality, in order to overcome ideological obstacles and facilitate a true inclusion of minorities.

3.2. Analysis of perspectives and knowledge of professionals regarding legislation and policy

According to the different perspective offered by the stakeholders involved in the qualitative research, some major issues can be highlighted regarding the overall level of inclusivity of the school system and the attention paid to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI factors) as grounds for discrimination underpinning episodes of bullying/cyberbullying.

On certain aspects, the involved stakeholders offered a common view that will be presented as a general remark; whereas on some other profiles of detail were treated or experienced differently by the interviewed and, when relevant, will be indicated as stakeholder-specific.

The first guiding theme of the interviews was aimed at ascertaining the level of knowledge and awareness of key stakeholders regarding both the legal framework surrounding protection of LGBTI people and regulating bullying/cyberbullying at school, with specific regard to the inclusion of SOGI factors as potential grounds for discrimination to be considered in a preventive phase and/or when tackling the single episode. The second purpose of the guiding theme was, more specifically, targeted on gathering information about the internal protocols and policies adopted by the institutions where the interviewed work/cooperate with specific regard to inclusion of LGBTI people and advocacy of their rights.

The answers given by participants to the question concerning general provisions existing at country level to ensure the equality of LGBTI people were quite vague and based on a general principle of non-discrimination and/or on the policy debate which is currently covered by media attention about the opportunity to introduce a provision in the criminal code punishing anti LGBT-hate crimes, thus motivated by hate motives based on SOGI, with the application of an aggravating circumstance making the sanction harsher than common crimes.

The LGBTI professor had a broader view on legislation covering LGBTI rights and their status, for example, in family law.

On the other hand, the degree of awareness about legislation and policies addressing bullying or cyberbullying within the education system was definitely high: participants showed a good knowledge of existing guidelines coming from the Ministry of education and their evolution and highlighted the increased attention paid to bullying and cyberbullying at policy level. Participants also pointed out that sexual orientation, gender identity or intersexuality are not taken in consideration protected grounds by the existing framework and that the decision to include LGBTI issues and themes within the activities organised by each institution to prevent bullying and train teachers and staff are made on individual bases and according to the different sensitiveness of the principal to the problem of inclusivity. From stakeholders view, the issue of inclusion of LGBTI people, therefore, is not addressed at legislative level, nor at policy level and, in many cases, not even at institutional level: some good practice or protocols adopted in order to train teachers to tackle cases of discriminations based on SOGI have been mentioned, but their extension appeared quite limited and, most important, related to their promotion by some actors (single professors, local NGOs) proposing activities to address the problem and include in bullying prevention activities LGBTI topics or offering specific modules for teachers.

The stakeholders working within the education system agreed affirming that the opportunity to introduce LGBT topics at school is perceived as very delicate by principals, since there is a strong fear for family-social reaction toward the theme and a cultural prejudice that still associate the inclusion of LGBT equality policies to the dissemination of gender theories as an ideological belief. In this perspective, the need to overcome cultural and social obstacles highlights the opportunity to adopt a dialogic approach in order to establish communication channels between the main actors involved in the education system. The fact that, according to a recent study (Selmi, Sità, de Cordova 2019) a high rate of same-sex parents «have not felt they were accepted when attending school events or activities, and that they have overheard or witnessed a teacher or school management figure use homophobic language or act in a discriminatory manner», strengthens the belief that cultural obstacles and biases are the first problem to be tackled.

3.3. Concrete cases and internal procedures

All the interviewed stakeholders have had experiences with cases of bullying and cyberbullying but, in a first moment, they believed that none of them could be connected to anti-LGBT episodes or reconducted to homotransphobic hate motives. Only one of the two professors participating in the focus group reported a case of a lesbian student who experienced a so-called light form of bullying, meaning a 'social exclusion' from her classmates probably connected to her sexual orientation and who also reported to the interviewed that she felt also discriminated or judge by professors in several occasions and that these episodes lead her to a more introverted attitude and to show her relationship with a girl as little as possible inside school.

The school counsellor reported another interesting case, in which prejudices existing at family level toward sexual orientation and gender identity were especially relevant: during his activities, the counsellor met a girl who was having problems in facing her sexual orientation, perceived as 'non conformed to the mainstream'. With the help of the counsellor, the girl started feeling more self-confident and accepting her homosexuality without feeling "wrong". No particular problems emerged with classmates or professors, who already knew about the difficult situation experienced by the girl and who found she was feeling better after her official coming out and with a good self-acceptance. Conversely, parents of the girl were upset and claimed that the school counsellor didn't help their daughter to "heal", but rather destroyed her. It has also been reported that after some conversations with the counsellor, parents' perspective changed and they started to understand that their daughter didn't need to recover from her sexual orientation but, instead, supported and helped in accepting it as a part of her identity.

After sharing some reflections on the stereotypes and unconscious bias revealing homotransphobic attitudes and surrounding anti-LGBT hate crimes, the interviewed admitted that in some cases there was a component of discrimination based on the victims' sexual orientation or gender identity – effective or perceived by the class as something 'different'. Difficulties in qualifying anti-LGBT bullying as such, therefore, are self-evident: if the offences to the victim don't involve direct expressions of hate toward being gay/lesbian/transsexual, but the homotransphobic motive relies at the roof of aggressive behaviours, the episodes are not immediately considered ad anti-LGBT episodes.

Common procedures to treat these cases cannot be identified, whereas there is a common approach to prevent and treat bullying at schools, which appears to be strongly anchored to a retributive vision and to the punishment of the offender, almost regardless of victim need and without a prevention strategy that tackles specific factors of discrimination.

Teachers and staff don't seem confident with LGBTI topics: some initiatives aimed at raising awareness and at promoting a more inclusive school environment (e.g. the discussion of topics connected to sexuality and gender identity after projecting movies or videos treating stories of LGBTI people during schools festival or other cultural initiatives; as well as a pilot project with training modules for teachers on LGBT inclusion) have been mentioned, but they don't have a follow-up plan to evaluate if they are somehow successfully working for LGBTI inclusion and they are not planned at systemic level but always led to single initiatives.

3.4. Identified good practices

With general reference to good practice to tackle bullying at schools, there are various protocols which are currently under implementation.

Indeed, remote activities connected to the pandemic has created some difficulties in carrying on the undertaken activities to prevent bullying and cyberbullying, that often involve external counsellors or professionals meeting classrooms and offering support services to schools. E-learning and the massive use of digital tools following the pandemic, therefore, represents a new challenge to take into consideration when developing strategies for the education system.

Only one specific activity addressing the topic of LGBTI inclusion has been mentioned, on which information material has been provided by the involved stakeholder: a local NGO has started offering training activities for teachers offering an educational and awareness raising for teachers and ensuring the coverage of many topics related to LGBTI question, aimed at enhancing the level of their acceptance and inclusion offering to teachers and staff appropriate tools and knowledge to deal with LGBTI people and students.¹⁹

Considering the lack of systemic or particularly effective actions aimed at enhancing LGBTI inclusion, two other good practice deserve to be mentioned in order to their transferability to the project purpose and their adaptivity to challenge discriminations: a) the

¹⁹ See CFS – Coordinamento Formazione Scuole

introduction of a restorative approach and of a counsellor/trainer/mediator of conflicts; b) the possibility to use laboratories of auto-biographical writing in order to discuss and approach some themes leading to bullying episodes and conflicts in the school system.

For sake of clarity, this is a resume of the findings from the qualitative research:

- initiatives/projects on LGBTI inclusion in schools exist, but they are not mandatory and in general they come from LGBTI NGOs or from the specific teacher/principal sensitiveness

- teacher training courses about LGBTI are not carried out. Some training activities promoted by LGBTI NGOs have started, but they are leopard spot on the Italian territory and don't ensure a follow up

- LGBTI inclusive school policies have not been mentioned

- Anti-bullying policies and school initiatives (evidenced based) have been mentioned and evidence of good results in prevention measures are reported, but there is not a numeric control on the variations of rates and it looks like underreporting of bullying or cyberbullying doesn't allow a global view on the phenomena

- E-learning modules targeting training on LGBTI issues have not been mentioned

3.5. Understanding current expertise and training needs

As far as training and training needs are concerned, the main gap that needs to be filled is certainly connected to SOGI factors as possible sources of discrimination and to the need to remove the ideological obstacles toward LGBTI topics. Currently, when trainings about LGBTI issues are delivered to teachers, they are provided by LGBTI NGOs or other kind of NGOs working in the field gender equality, but they always come from external sources and are not essential for teachers' education, nor object of a specific regulation by the Ministry of education.

The interviewed stakeholders agreed that training initiatives/projects on LGBTI inclusion in schools would be useful, but they also suggested a careful approach because some schools and families could feel threatened by the introduction of LGBTI issues at school. Since Catholic religion has powerful roots and influence on schools, especially on private schools that are often characterized by a religious administration, the involvement of religious representatives who are sensitive to the importance of ensuring inclusion, equality and brotherhood could play an important role in stimulating a dialogue on the importance of making human dignity the

common priority and thus in facilitating the creation of an inclusive and dialogue-based school system.

3.6. List (up to 3) main strategies/activities/programmes/recommendations that could be relevant to next project activities

Type	Title	Organiser	Target Group	Terms of usefulness
Activity	Civic Education Lessons on Fundamental Rights + Teachers Trainings	The introduction of mandatory hours of civic education has already been established at Governmental level; specific programs could be discussed with the pilot institutions	Students and Teachers	The possibility to approach the theme of inclusivity starting from fundamental rights and from the mandatory introduction of hours of civic education at school could be useful to understand that human dignity is the main value that should inspire the conducts of everybody in the school system (and outside of it) and could be a first way to discuss about sexual orientation and gender identity as potential factors of discrimination
Strategy	Global Restorative Approach to Civic Education	Ministry of Education, whenever possible, but also district of schools to begin	Facilitators, Teachers, Staff, Students, Families, Communities	The active involvement of all the involved parties, based on a dialogical approach could promote the cultural transformation and move away LGBTI issuer from the ideological ground

Activity	Group works (group conferencing, circling, autobiographical writing in group) on equality and inclusion	Schools	Teachers, Students, Facilitators (plus Families, Communities, if wanted)	Group working and dialogue are the main activities that could ensure the implementation of inclusion strategies that, with regard to the Italian panorama, need to overcome prejudices and cultural barriers
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Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the main findings of the desk research and qualitative analysis showed that:

- The Italian framework regulating anti-bullying school policies is not underdeveloped and demonstrates an increasing sensibility for the problem by legislators and policy-makers;

- At institutional level, schools adopt anti-bullying policy and manage them at internal level; in some circumstances trainers/counsellors are engaged in the implementation of anti-bullying policy, but the concrete ways in which bullying is challenged and bullying cases addressed depend on the single institution. At general level, a retributive perspective still looks prevalent and the approach mixes prevention activities, mostly with frontal lessons + repression and punishment of the bully;

- Protocols and practices aimed at increasing the inclusivity of the school system with specific focus on LGBTI people are not institutionalised at Governmental level. If and where they exist, trainings for teachers and are provided by NGOs or independent training-service provider;

- Cases of bullying-cyberbullying motivated by homotransphobic hate are certainly frequent and LGBTI components appear as intersectional factors increasing the risk of being victim of bullying;

- According to d.p.r. 21 November 2007, n. 235, some schools must introduce a 'Patto educativo di corresponsabilità', a document listing values and principles, signing which parents and students, at the time of school's enrollment, undertake the obligation to cooperate in its respect. The agreement, on paper, includes under several points the importance of respecting

fundamental rights and human dignity, but the implementation of the agreement is not effectively enforced and, in most cases, it only represents a kind of 'aspirational' statement;

- In general terms, there is a gap in teachers' knowledge about LGBTI issues, and sometimes it looks surrounded by more or less conscious biases;

- The average professor is not trained and/or ready to deal with LGBTI topics or to tackle cases of discrimination based of SOGI factors;

- Cultural and social prejudices/stereotypes are the main obstacles to the realization of a really inclusive school environment and they are widespread among different stakeholders. Indeed, students in general bring to school what they learn from the social and cultural context where they grow;

- Training and raising awareness activities would be useful for next WP, but they need to take in consideration the fact that specific focuses on LGBTI could encounter forms of hostility and be hindered at different level since many actors are worried that they could be an occasion to promote gender theories from an ideological point of view;

- The most urgent need, therefore, appears to overcome cultural barriers, unhooking the theme of LGBTI people equality from an ideological perspective and establish a dialogical approach between the actors involved in the school system, including professors, staff, principals, families, religious bodies, NGOs. The approach would be useful at systemic level, involving public authorities, but could also be implemented with specific regard to the single school or district of schools;

- The role of school counsellor/professors of religion as well as the introduction of the mandatory hours of civil education and the higher degree of sensibility for the theme of gender equality (if compared to a broader LGBTI equality) in institutions could represent a facilitator in the dissemination of messages and values based on the idea of a common dignity, equality and respect, regardless of gender, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities, affiliation to other minorities;

- There are not specific good practices that could be identified, except from some awareness raising and training activities promoted and carried out by some NGOs (the main case found at local level was organized by 'Centro Formazione Scuole per il rispetto delle persone LGBTQI+', which plans various activities to promote LGBTI people equality in the school system);

- Despite this, two undertaken initiatives in schools and one pilot idea, which are mostly aimed at a) preventing bullying and b) re-thinking some key concept of education, establishing a dialogical approach and enhancing the role of civic education in the promotion of a message of substantial equality and universal brotherhood on the ground of the common value of human dignity, can be considered as successful strategies in reason to their adaptivity and transferability to the project purpose and, hence, recommended.

Conclusively, on the basis of the collected elements and results, in order to maximize the impact of next WPs and to conceive an inclusive school cycle that could be implemented in the Italian school system without encountering stakeholders hostility based on cultural prejudices, the following assessment can be done:

The lack of equality affecting the condition of LGBTI people can be perceived also within the educational system, where stigmatization of sexual and gender minorities at school is a persisting problem (Valfort, 2017).

According a US survey (Grant et al., 2011) conducted on roughly 8,500 LGBT students between 13 to 20 years of age, LGBT youth experience higher rates of harassment. Indeed, 63% of respondents had experienced a serious act of discrimination or gender-based violence impacting on the quality of life and ability to self-sustain financially or emotionally, including school bullying, teacher bullying or harassment so bad the respondent had to drop out and the rates of mistreatments increases when other intersectional factors, such as race, intervene. Despite schools, overall, adopt anti-bullying policies, their success is not monitored and there is a lack of data collection regarding the follow-up of the results of their implementation in creating a safe and inclusive school environment.

Furthermore, the first qualitative research conducted in the preliminary stages of the EU funded project Schools Out reveals a general reluctance in reporting cases of homotransphobic bullying, accompanied by a wide difficulty of teachers and staff in qualifying it as such and a tendency to minimize the problem. Regardless of their belonging to (sexual) minorities, students have the right to a safe and supportive learning environment, where they can feel welcomed and accepted and schools, starting from primary and secondary education, but for the entire duration of the education cycle can play a key role in developing and implementing policies that protect youth from discrimination and in promoting a cultural change that, going far beyond a remedial approach to the advocacy of LGBTI people rights, educates younger generation to mutual respect on the basis of human dignity, solidarity and equality which are

protected and guaranteed by the Italian Constitution and worldwide affirmed as common values (eg Apostoli, 2016 e 2019; Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; ONU Human Rights Declaration). Overall, gender stereotypes and sexist culture are not eradicated in Italy (EU Gender Equality Index 2020 ranks Italy 14th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index; see also Viggiani, 2020) and the school system is not free of them nor flawless in challenging inequalities, especially with respect to the inclusion of LGBTI students. Up to now, some raising awareness and gender sensitive leopard-spot initiative to sensitize teachers and students have been undertaken, but they appear insufficient to stimulate the necessary transformation that is, first and foremost, a cultural one, that can be reached only through a dialogic approach to establish between the key stakeholders involved in the education system: teachers and students, but also families as well as religious representatives and policy-makers. The political and ideological connotation that the topic of LGBTI inclusion still assumes and the «fears» preventing the fruitful discussion of arguments related to sexual orientation and gender identity at school show that the most urgent need is to overcome cultural/social/religious barriers and tackle the problem on the neutral ground of fundamental rights. For this purpose, the adoption of a Restorative Approach in the education system (eg Hansberry, 2016) could be a successful strategy both to prevent discrimination and to tackle existing cases (Hopkins, 2002) shifting the focus from the need to punish the bully to the need to repair the harm created by the misconduct to victim and community; to comprehend the wounds generated by the hate-motivated conduct and the prejudices underpinning it and, thus, to understand that they threaten universal human rights (see eg Patrizi's Co. Re. Model; Patrizi, 2020). To this purpose, a wide range of restorative practices (community conferencing, circles, VOM, autobiographical restorative writing) could be introduced and implemented in schools, for example during hours of civil education, religion, as well as during anti-bullying activities and represent the occasion to start re-shaping education in order to make schools and society more inclusive and Just.

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Annex 1 – Interview Analysis

Name of the stakeholder	Name of the organisation	Place of the organization	Service provided	No. of people working or studying in the organisation	Role of the person interviewed	Reported cases of discrimination based on SOGI (Y/N)	Reported good practices (Y/N and type)
FV	Caritas	Bergamo	Counselling/Training/Awareness raising	/	Counsellor; Mediator	Y	Y
LC e DC	Liceo Arnaldo	Brescia	Professors	1000	Professors	Y but not qualifying as such	Y
AS	Office for Juvenile Criminal Mediation	Brescia	RJ services/Mediation	3	Coordinator	Y but not qualifying as such	N
MS	Liceo Leonardo	Brescia	Professor	1000	Professor	/	Y

Annex 2 - Identification of best practices

Organization	Description of the good practice	What are the results of the practice?
<p>Centro Formazione Scuole per il rispetto delle persone LGBTQI+</p>	<p>Training modules for teachers</p>	<p>Increased awareness in teachers and staff; better understanding of LGBTI topics; more inclusive approach toward LGBTI students.</p>
<p>NGOs</p>	<p>Preventing Bullying with autobiographical writing</p>	<p>Better understanding of each other perspective; better communication in classrooms; building a respectful environment</p>
<p>NGOs/Counsellors Private Body</p>	<p>Restorative Justice in Schools</p>	<p>Better communication; instruments for managing conflicts; responsibility and care.</p>
<p>NGOs/Private Actors</p>	<p>Anti-Bullying strategies (besides classical frontal lectures)</p>	<p>Increased knowledge about bullying and its consequences</p>



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