

DON'T LOOK AWAY: OVER HALF OF LGBTI STUDENTS IN EUROPE REPORT HAVING BEEN BULLIED IN SCHOOL

PARIS, 17 May - Today, on the International Day Against Homophobia Biphobia and Transphobia, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report and the International LGBTQI Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) have released findings from research and surveys on the situation of LGBTI students in education entitled *Don't Look Away: No place for exclusion of LGBTI students*.

Fifty-four percent of LGBTQI people have experienced bullying in school at least once based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or variations of sex characteristics, according to a survey of more than 17,000 children and young people aged 13 to 24. The survey also showed that 83% of students had at least sometimes heard negative comments towards LGBTQI students, and 67% had been the target of negative comments at least once.

'I'm quite angry at the system because everyone says you can be whoever you want, you can be free, you can express yourself at school. And then if you try to be different, you get backlash. So, it's not true,' said a 19-year-old, pansexual, non-binary intersex student participating in the IGLYO survey.

Interventions by teachers and other school staff upon hearing negative remarks and bullying are vital to an inclusive education system. But many teachers lack the confidence and knowledge to support LGBTI learners. The majority of students (58%) never reported bullying incidents to any school staff and fewer than 15% of respondents systematically reported their experiences of bullying to any school staff. But fewer than one in ten trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming respondents reported that their gender identities were always respected in school-related documentation, and eight in ten reported problems accessing gendered spaces in line with their identities.

"Despite changes in many countries' national discourse, many LGBTI students still feel unsafe and unwelcome in school. LGBTI young people, especially trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming and intersex learners, are experiencing unacceptably high levels of discrimination and harassment and urgently need robust and explicit protections in laws, policies and practices, especially within education," said Jonathan Beger, Interim Executive Director of IGLYO. *"There is a real fear that the isolation and permanent shift to online interactions this past year will have turned the dial up on bullying and marginalisation as well."*

The accompanying analysis by the Global Education Monitoring Report at UNESCO confirms that discrimination against LGBTI students is a global phenomenon. In the USA, 12.5% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students reported not going to school at least once in the previous 30 days because they felt unsafe at or on their way to and from school, compared with fewer than 4.6% of heterosexual students. In New Zealand, LGBTI students were three times as likely to be bullied as their peers. In Japan, 68% of LGBT persons aged 10 to 35 experienced violence in school. In seven Latin American countries, LGBTI students could identify at least one supportive teacher or school staff member, but most students had a negative experience of teacher attitudes to sexual orientation and gender expression.

Curricula and learning materials either ignore entirely or misrepresent and pathologize LGBTI identities. Fewer than one in five respondents to the survey reported having been taught positive representations of LGBTI people in school. A recent review found that nearly half of the 47 Council of Europe member states did not address sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or variations of sex characteristics in the curriculum, 7 made it optional and only 19 made it compulsory.

“Education is about more than just maths and reading,” said Manos Antoninis, Director of the GEM Report, UNESCO. “Schools have to be inclusive if we want society to be inclusive. If children are being taught that only a certain type of person is accepted, that is going to affect the way they behave towards others”.

Providing a safe learning environment is a crucial step in achieving inclusion for LGBTI learners, which was recognized in the commitment made by 56 countries in 2016 under the UNESCO-convened [Call for Action by Ministers](#) for inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from discrimination and violence.

In line with that Call for Action the report contains recommendations for policy makers to ensure inclusion for all learners. The criminalization or pathologizing of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and variations of sex characteristics and the denial of equal rights to LGBTI learners must end to tackle the threats and bullying they face.


UNESCO and IGLYO also call on governments and schools to roll out the teaching of human rights education and other subjects, including history and social studies, to introduce LGBTI people, their history and experience in teaching programmes. These efforts must be complemented by training and empowering teachers to deliver inclusive curricula so they can impart knowledge and address incidents and threats effectively.

Note to Editors:

The findings are being launched at a high-profile event in Paris on 17 May co-hosted by the *Mouvement d’Affirmation des Jeunes Gais, Lesbiennes, Bi & Trans* (MAG), Out Right Action International, the Mairie de Paris and the Austrian Government, and attended by Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, as well as Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs (France), Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister of National Education (France) and Élisabeth Moreno, French Minister Delegate for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities (France), as well as Wendy Morton, Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas (UK).

In 2019, UNESCO published a technical brief on monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in national and international surveys. The report is called: [“Bringing it out in the open”](#).

About IGLYO



The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO) is a member-based youth and student network, with over 100 members in 40 Council of Europe countries. IGLYO's vision is a world where we, young people in all our diversity, can express and define our sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and variations in sex characteristics, and are able to participate fully in all aspects of life, rise to our full potential, and enjoy respect and positive recognition. IGLYO strives to ensure the voices and experiences of LGBTQI young people are present and heard by decision-makers at European and international levels by implementing and designing research and policy work in areas such as inclusive education. To create an influential collective of young activists, IGLYO also builds the confidence, skills, and experience of LGBTQI youth through cross-cultural exchange and peer learning activities.

About UNESCO's GEM Report

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It has the official mandate of monitoring progress in meeting the Sustainable Development Goal on education, SDG 4.

Read the report

Watch the video with the preview of the survey results [here](#)

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