

LGBT EDUCATION

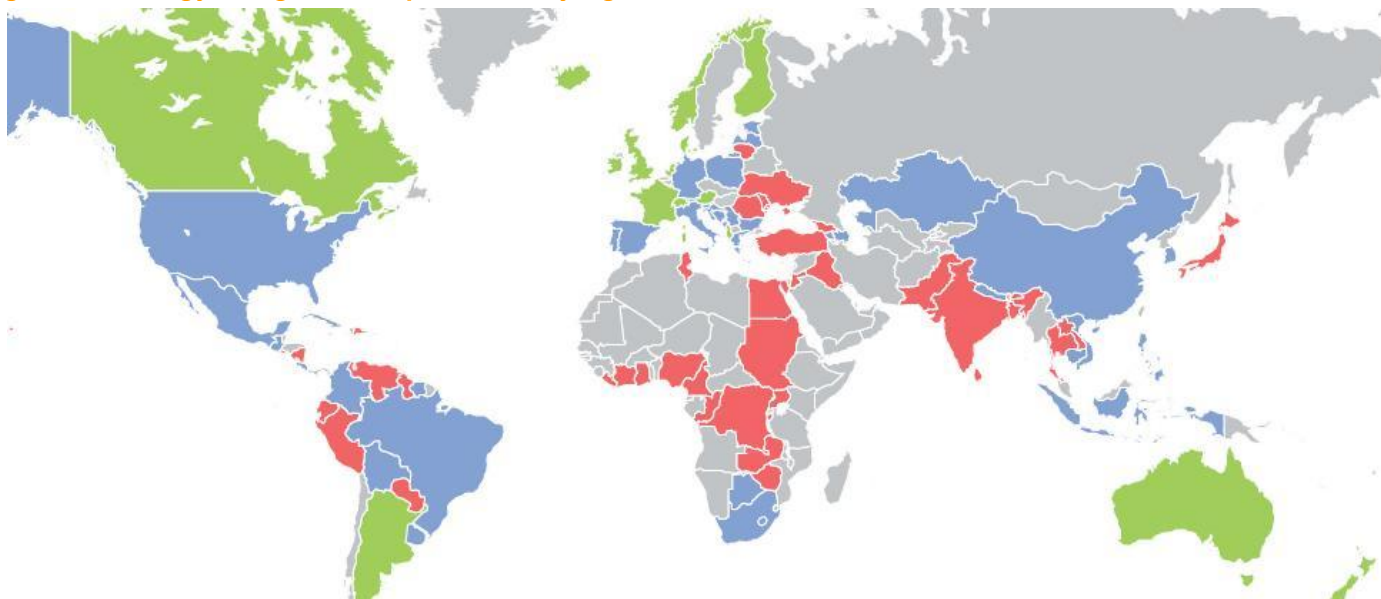
In this issue:

- GALE presents first world map on LGBT education [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- UNESCO announces High Level Conference on homophobic bullying [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- GALE calls for creation of national strategic education committees [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Finnish experts downgrade Finnish education policy to ambiguous [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- New European project on e-teacher training to combat homophobia [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)

ALLIANCE NEWS: WORLD MAP

GALE presents first world map on LGBT education

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, GALE presented the first world map on the implementation of the right to education for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. The map was presented at a UNESCO symposium in Paris on the progress of the global strategy to fight homophobic bullying.



Of the 96 countries surveyed, 21% were scored as "denying" for the rights of LGBT students, 19% of the states was scored as "ambiguous" and only 9% of the states could be scored as "supportive."

"Supportive" does not mean that the situation of LGBT students is ideal or even moderately well, but that

the government is systematically trying to improve both the legal rights and social situation of LGBT students (and of other students who are excluded because they do not meet stereotypical traditional expectations of gender and sexuality).

GALE succeeded to get feedback for the map from 96 out of the 198 countries in the world. In many countries, even the collection of information on education for LGBT students is dangerous for those who provide the information. In other countries it may be very difficult because there is no information available. GALE suspects that the situation is mostly very negative for LGBT students in 51% of the countries that still need to be explored.

The presentation of the GALE world map was well received at the UNESCO meeting, where more than 100 government representatives and activists were present. The official representative of Brazil argued for the inclusion of sexual diversity in the new wording of the Millennium Development Goal for education and for naming specific LGBT indicators in monitoring the progress of the implementation of this goal.

The map can be downloaded here:

Front Page: http://www.gale.info/doc/gale_products/worldmapfront.pdf

Backpage: http://www.gale.info/doc/gale_products/worldmapback.pdf

GLOBAL NEWS: UNESCO

UNESCO announces High Level Conference on homophobic bullying

At a symposium celebrating World Tolerance Day, UNESCO announced it will organize a Global High Level Conference of Ministers of Education to discuss strategies to combat homophobic bullying in 2016.

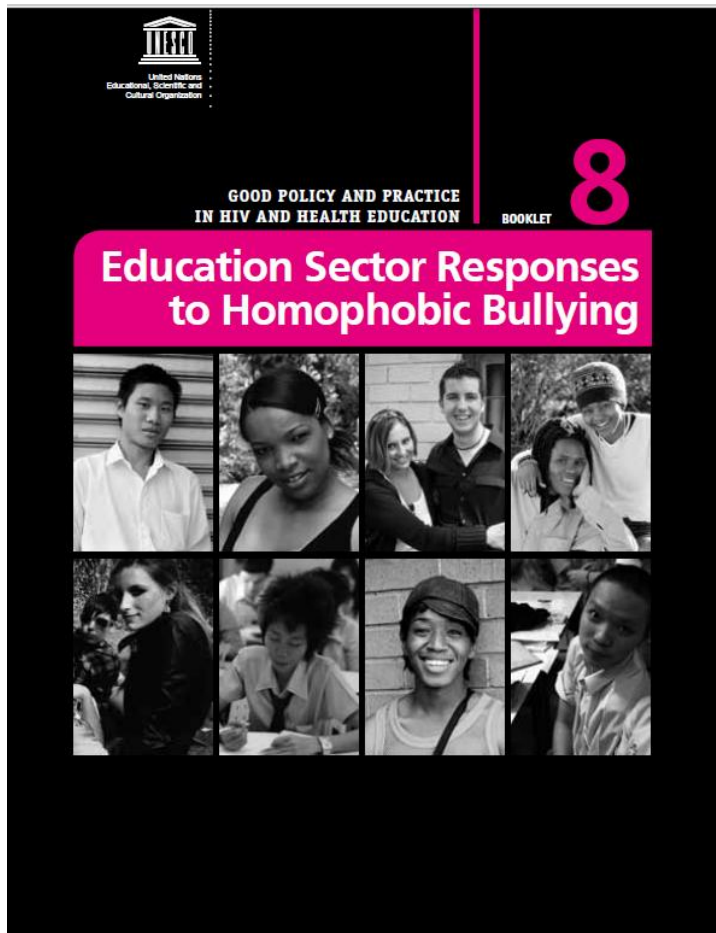
UNESCO agency strategy

Christophe Cornu, coordinator of the UNESCO project to combat

homophobic bullying in educational institutions, explained the UNESCO strategy as it has been developed



until now. Stimulated by the conclusions of the AIDS World Conference in Mexico in 2008 and subsequent advocacy by GALE, UNESCO organized a consultation and a global expert meeting on homophobic bullying in 2011. In 2012, the consultation was concluded with the publication of a state of the art report "Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying" (http://www.lgbt-education.info/doc/unesco/UNESCO_Homophobic_bullying_2012.pdf).



This publication is the most translated and disseminated publication by UNESCO ever.

The Dutch government, which had supported the cooperation of GALE with UNESCO, decided to grant UNESCO half a million euro's for a 3-year project to make sure the consultation will have a sustainable follow-up. This 3-year project consists of 3 strategies.

The first strategy is to train and support regional UNESCO offices to make staff aware of homophobic bullying and support them to extend this awareness to their political contacts in National UNESCO Committees.

The second strategy is to stimulate and financially support research on homophobic

bullying in schools. Because the budget is limited, the research for this project period is limited to a small number of countries in Asia, Southern Africa and South America. The aim of these researches is to have solid proof that homophobic bullying also exists in States that have not done research on this and would not do such research on their own.

The third strategy is to collect up to date information on the state of the art of homophobic bullying in educational institutions worldwide. This should lead to a world report which will be discussed at the global conference in 2016.

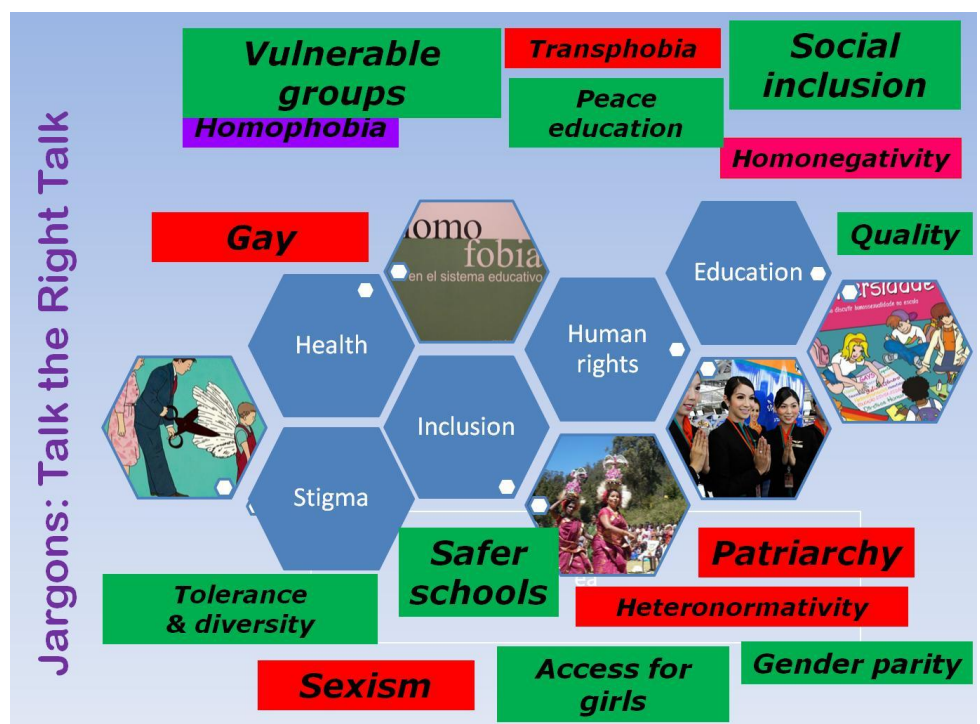
UNESCO needs help

Peter Dankmeijer, director of GALE, comments on the strategy: "UNESCO needs help to make their effort work in more than the few countries where they are able to do research. This is a unique opportunity for LGBTI organizations and mainstream educational allies to engage in a strategy that enables a far more wide reach than we could do on our own as activists. I urge LGBTI organizations to create national strategic education committees and join in this global strategy. I know many LGBTI organizations, especially in "ambiguous" countries engage in developing their own interventions, like peer education, gay/straight alliances, websites, LGBT curricula and teacher training workshops, but we also see how limited their impact is without proper cooperation with the ministry and the education sector. We need to develop a more solid strategy now in order to improve our impact. Cooperation with the government is the core of any high impact strategy. In January, GALE will publish a guide on how to successfully create a national strategic committee like that."

How to contact your UNESCO Committee

One of the activities a national strategic committee can undertake is to contact the UNESCO Committee. UNESCO Committees are the formal State representations to UNESCO as a State organization. Usually, the Committee members are representatives from the Ministries of Education and of Foreign Affairs, and often there are representatives from the education field itself. Most UNESCO Committees have a small supporting staff.

Peter Dankmeijer gives some suggestions on how to engage with the UNESCO Committees. "It is a great opportunity to create good relations with the UNESCO Committee in your country. The "Education Sector Responses.." report offers a reason to contact them. A first simple question can be to discuss it, and when the representatives or staff is open to dialogue, ask for a translation in your



language(s). However, I would caution against too much enthusiasm and overt activism in contacting this Committee. It is likely that the members or staff have never considered homophobia and do not know activist jargon. An overt activist approach may put them off, resulting in a worse rather than a better situation. I suggest activists think about which grounds there are for a joint strategy. How do you link LGBTI activism to the interests of the Committee? Issues they are concerned with may be inclusive education, bullying, citizenship and education to function better in a competitive world market. All these issues have link to LGBTI emancipation, but you have to be careful in how to frame them as a joint interest."

GLOBAL ALLIANCE: STRATEGY

GALE calls for creation of national strategic education committees

After two years of facilitating strategic workshops in 9 countries, GALE director Peter Dankmeijer calls upon activists, governments and allies from the education sector to create national strategic education committees to enhance the implementation of the right to education for LGBT and other students.



Interventions by activists only often do not work

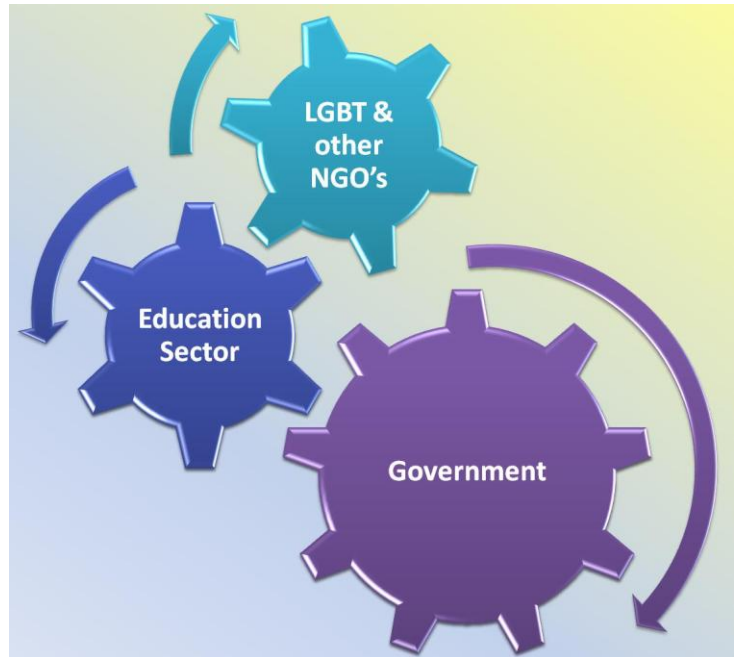
Dankmeijer says: "Without cooperation between activists, the education sector itself and the government the quality and impact of the strategy will remain extremely limited. For example, we have seen countless campaigns and curricula resources being developed by LGBT NGOs. But the materials do not reach the schools. The LGBT sector does not have the budget or position to ensure a wide dissemination or use".

"Another major obstacle is that resources by LGBT organizations are usually sender oriented, giving visibility of issues that are close to the heart of LGBT people themselves. But receiver-oriented resources

are much more likely to be usable for teachers and interesting for students. High quality educational resources cannot only cater for needs of LGBT, but also need to link into interests of students who identify as heterosexual. Such resources can only be made in close partnership with (heterosexual) teachers and schools themselves".

Partnership requires seeing each other's perspective

"It turns out that the core of the strategic workshops is almost always learning how to look at emancipation and improving the quality of schools through the perspective of the other. So government officials have to learn to better understand the perspective of teachers and LGBT activists. Teachers and schools need to better understand how they can strategically improve their school policy and ask help of government and of LGBT service providers. And LGBT activists can only get into a real partnership with mainstream organizations by being empathic to the views of schools and government officials. Even though such views may sometimes feel homophobic and threatening."



Move from ad hoc projects to ongoing strategic approach

Instead of relying on periodic project endowments and ad hoc partnership with individual teachers or some interested schools, our efforts should now start to focus on real sustainable change. National strategic committees consisting of allied representatives from the government, the education sector and from LGBT NGOs can aim on cooperation and a high impact strategy. Such committees can be areas of reflection and to learn from each other's perspectives and working methods. But they can also be motors of action and laboratories of leadership."

"I think such committees should not limit themselves to developing a new campaign of curriculum only. The core of their activity should be to assess the situation, make strategic choices, stimulate or coordinate efforts to improve the situation, monitor the progress and learn from this whole process. "

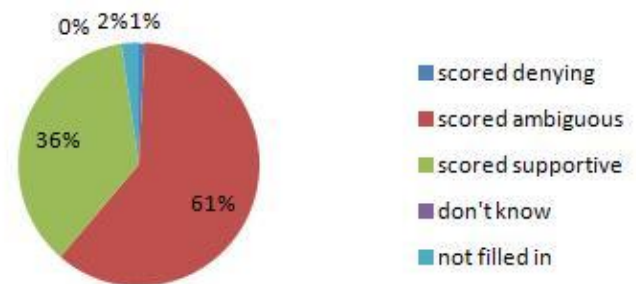
"This process will be different in every country due to different cultures, different starting situations and different education systems. GALE already outlined some major differences between processes and strategies that may be relevant in denying, ambiguous and supportive States. The concept of a real

partnership between LGBT NGOs and mainstream organizations is relatively new. We are working on a guide on how to do this, using our extensive experience in different countries and cultures. We hope the guide will be available in the end of January".

LOCAL NEWS: FINLAND

Finnish experts downgrade Finnish education policy to ambiguous

During the GALE strategic workshop, 10 Finnish experts on education and LGBT issues downgraded the rating of Finland from "supportive" to "ambiguous". Online Finnish respondents had rated Finland as "supportive", but the workshop participants were considerably more doubtful about the pro-activeness of the Finnish government and schools.



From 82% supportive to 61% ambiguous

The workshop was organized on 4 December by the national LGBT organization SETA and was hosted by the Ministry of Education. The attending experts were representatives of SETA itself, a minority organization, UNICEF, a student union, several trainers and teachers and one grandmother of a transgender child. There was also an observer from Estonia.

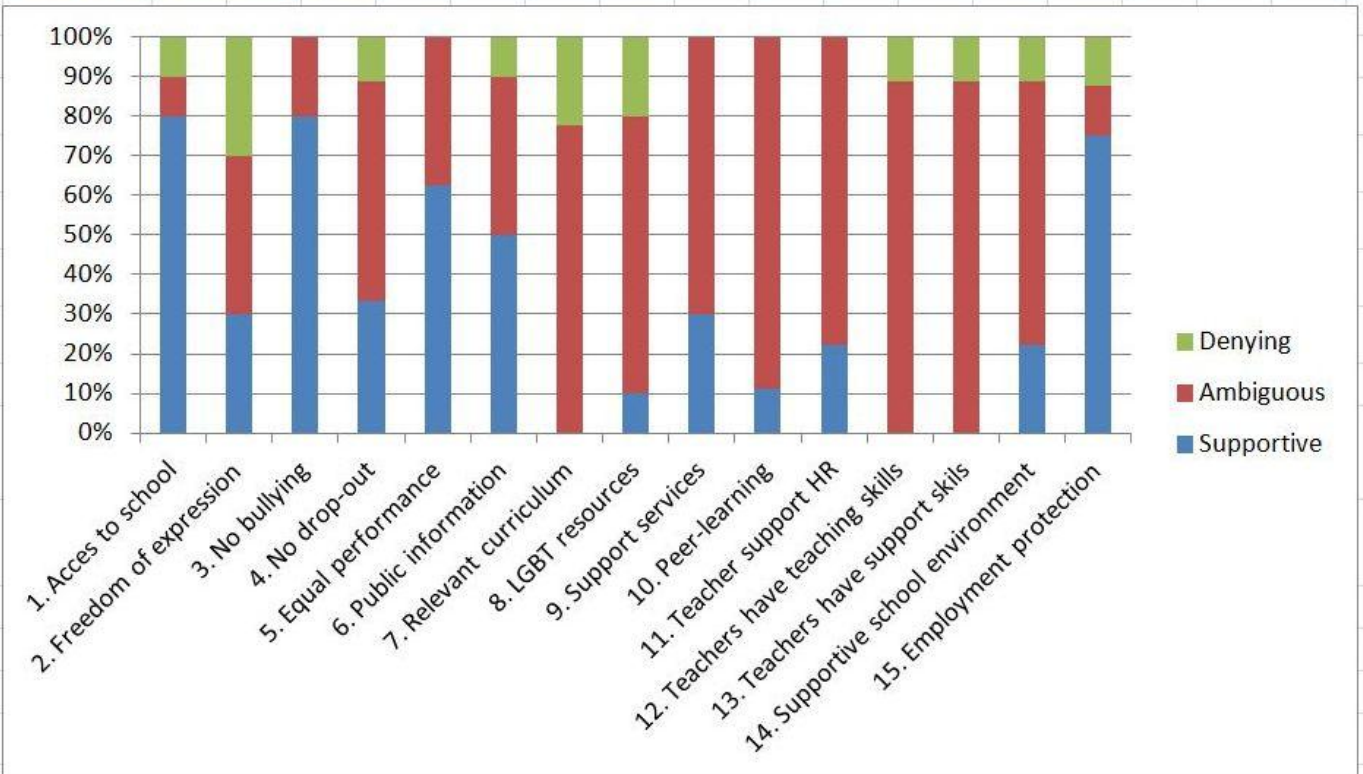
The workshop started by filling in the GALE Checklist, and a presentation of the previous scores of 8 online respondents. From this comparison, it became clear the online respondents were considerably more positive about Finnish LGBT education policy than the workshop participants. Of the only respondents, 82% scored Finnish policy as supportive and 18% as ambiguous. However, of the workshop experts 61% scored Finnish policy as ambiguous against 36% as supportive.

General policies that are not really implemented

The difference between the online respondents and the workshop participants is probably due to the fact that the workshop participants were experts on LGBT and discrimination issues in education. During the workshop, numerous examples were given about the ambiguity of Finnish policy. A common exclamation

was: "Yes, there are some policies, but they are formulated in a very general way and implementation is lacking. It is up to the schools to implement them."

Overview assessment Finland



Assesment of the implementation of the right to education for LGBT student in Finland by 10 workshop respondents. The average score is 36% supportive, 61% ambiguous and 1% denying. (GALE, 4 December 2014)

Gender, not transgender policy

For example, the Finnish government is currently reviewing the national curriculum and there will be a strong focus on gender. While this is well intended, the suggestions of SETA to clarify that attention to gender includes attention to transgender issues and that sexual orientation should also be specifically mentioned, were not rewarded.

The grandmother of the transgender child told a horrific story about the continuous bullying of her child because of its gender expression. The school itself was not willing or able to help and it is unclear to which authorities the mother can appeal to improve the situation. The grandmother, being of American origin, was even considering moving to New York to save the child she is caring for from continued bullying and unwillingness of school authorities to change the situation. It was a clear example of failing policies.

Next steps

Still, the review of the national curriculum offers some opportunities. The new law is nearly adopted and cannot be improved legally right now. But it still has to be worked out to a concrete curriculum by the National School Institute. Input by the LGBT movement may still be possible. A challenge is that the National School Institute does not seem to be very accessible.

There are also other developments that could support next steps. The equality law will be improved. From 2017 on, every school will be required to make a plan how to tackle discrimination of minorities. The question is whether this will only be required for cultural minorities or also for sexual minorities.

In both cases, a key question is how to adequately implement these policies. In Finnish society, the older generations and schools are not used to discuss sexuality or controversial issues. While younger people tend to be more open, Finland is traditionally a consensus society. Any strategy that focuses on diversity needs to help create more openness in Finnish society and especially in schools.

LOCAL NEWS: EUROPE

New European project on e-teacher training to combat homophobia

In November, a new European cooperation project started which includes the development of an e-course for teachers to combat homophobia. The course will be tested in the Netherlands, Italy and Basque country (Spain).

Experiment

The project, named "Learning good practices in European countries" or LeGoP, is a partnership between 2 schools in Bari (Italy) and San

Sebastian (Basque country), 2 organizations working with special needs students and GALE. The partnership intends to experiment with e-learning to better integrate special needs students in regular



school environments and to have special attention on combating homophobia. The focus for special needs will be on deaf students.

Course weeks

The backbone of the project activities consists of 3 course weeks, one in April 2015, one in October 2015, and one in April 2016. During these weeks a number of teachers and students will visit Bari, Amsterdam and San Sebastian. They will partly be educated and trained, and partly test and co-develop several products. The Italian team will develop a toolkit, the Basque team a curriculum and GALE will develop the anti-homophobia e-course.



The e-course

A first outline of the course has been developed already. It will start with a quiz testing the knowledge, attitudes and skills of teachers, and have 5 additional modules on knowledge of sexual diversity, knowledge of school innovation, didactic and pedagogic skills, and skills to sustain a continuous learning process about teaching in a heteronormative context.

It is expected that the course will become publicly available in the second half of 2016. But it may be that GALE will also make it available before as a beta-version.

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[Rejoignez axe membre de GALE](#). L'adhésion est gratuite!

Colophon

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