

LGBT EDUCATION

In this issue:

- ARES project recommends improving teacher skills [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Mixed feelings at the 29th Human Rights Council session [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Thai university fires trans lecturer with vague reasons [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- European meeting education officials [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)
- Criticism on Dutch tolerance [\[español\]](#) [\[français\]](#)

LOCAL NEWS: EUROPE

ARES project recommends improving teacher skills

After two years of discussion about combating LGBT discrimination by using film, the partners of the European ARES consortium recommend their countries and to the European Community to increase efforts to make sure trainers and educators can deal with discussions about sexual diversity properly.



Image: the ARES team at their last meeting in Brighton, UK

Films are excellent triggers but need a quality follow-up

Today, the European ARES consortium with partners from Italy, Netherlands, Estonia, Poland and the UK published their project report after two years of non-formal learning activities on the relationship between film, and other cultural media to start discussions and analysis about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)

issues with young adults. The ARES partnership concluded that cultural medias are excellent triggers for a high quality discussion, but need to be followed up with a similarly high level of debriefing. It was noted that many teachers and trainers are not prepared to deal with the often negative, and sometimes harsh, responses of young people. Therefore, the consortium recommends to the educational authorities in their countries and to the European Community to increase efforts to make sure trainers and educators can deal with discussions about sexual diversity properly.



Image left: discussion on criteria for a good educational film In Florence, 22 May 2015

Films and debriefings need to be tailored to different groups

Stefano Bini of Enfap Toscana (Florence), the Italian coordinator of the project, stated: “the ARES partnership organized several non-formal learning sessions with cultural media and discussion afterwards, reaching an estimated 150 young adults, educational experts and authorities. Our partners

have been working around 150 films (both long and short) and plays (novels, poems, theatre etc.) and some of these have been evaluated within 10 case studies. It is clear how cultural medias can trigger different kind of discussions, and that the type of discussion needs to vary in each region and should be tailor made to different target groups. For example, not any film can be used for both LGBT people and heterosexuals, for rural young people and city-dwellers, or for non-religious or orthodox Christian or Muslim young people. Some criteria may be universal; the Dutch developed a list with 14 draft criteria for good educational films about LGBTI issues.”

Image right: commercial for "Pilvede all", an Estonian soap which was analyzed to deconstruct its heteronormative tendencies

Embarrassed teachers should be trained to initiate a good dialogue

“But it also became very clear during our project that our trainers had to be of exceptional quality to deal with some of the comments, whether the learners were embarrassed, highly negative in an emotional way, or ‘plain disinterested’. Trainers, teachers and educational authorities need to be aware that sexual diversity cannot be discussed only in an emotional disconnected way like other forms of discrimination. The lack of knowledge, the prejudice and the level of anger and fear many young adults feel when discussing this topic is qualitatively different. We learnt to deal with this by dealing with it in practice and we still have a long way to go. We urge the authorities to



integrate this explicitly in their teacher competence frameworks to delivery in schools. We also recommend the European Community to prioritize this in the upcoming Road Map to combat LGBTI discrimination.”

More information can be found on: the ARES Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/aresnetwork> and the YouTube channel: [youtube.com/aresnetworkvideo](https://www.youtube.com/aresnetworkvideo) or mail the partners in their respective countries. The most recent newsletter, with an elaborate summary of the learning experiences, can be found here: <http://www.gale.info/doc/aresproject/ARES-Update-No-4.pdf>.

GLOBAL NEWS: HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Mixed feelings at the 29th Human Rights Council session

In June, at the 29th Human Rights Council (HRC) meeting, an important report was tabled on SOGI issues. The report contain 24 recommendations, of which 7 are relating to education. However, most of the attention of the meeting was directed at a conservative resolution on "protection of the family", which eventually was passed.

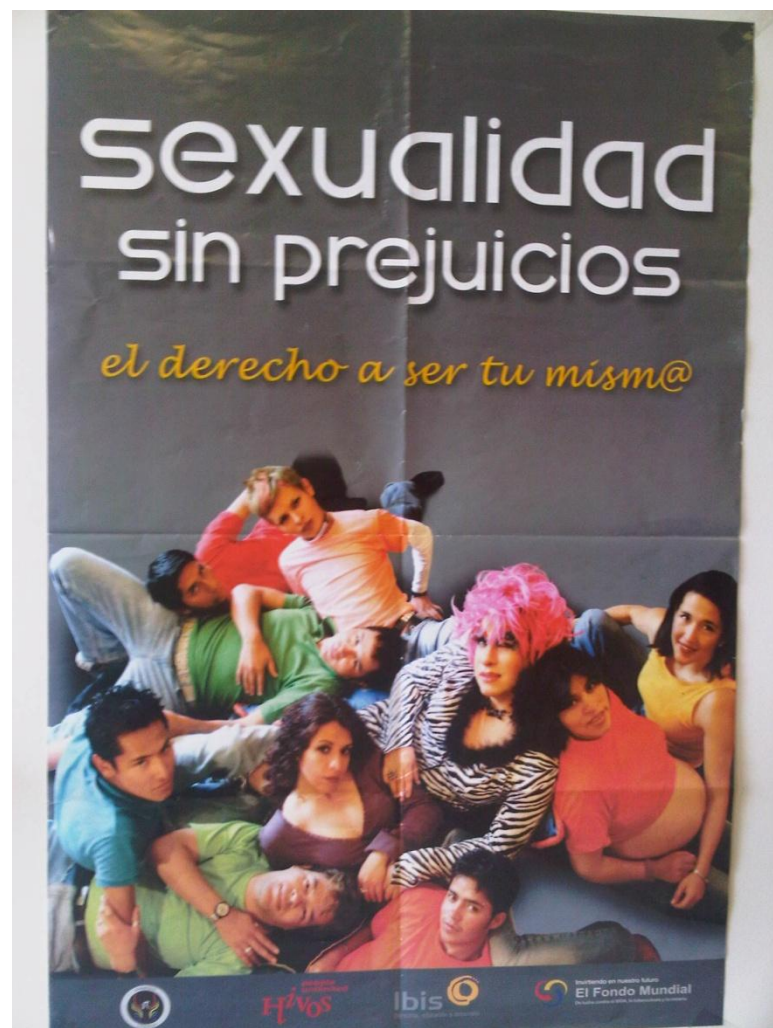
Remarks on education

The report was a result of earlier pressure to give attention to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). The report gives an overview of the world situation and makes 24 recommendations. About education, it says:

"Many children and adolescents perceived as LGBT or gender non-conforming experience discrimination, harassment and, in some cases, violent abuse both in and outside of school. Such abuse can force students to skip or drop out of school, and can lead to feelings of isolation and depression, even suicide.

Image right: Mexican poster (2008) aimed to combat discrimination of gender non-conforming youth

High levels of bullying have been recorded in all regions. A European Union study found that 80 per cent of school-age children surveyed heard negative comments or saw negative conduct directed at schoolmates perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.



A survey conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of students in Thailand found that more than half of LGBT respondents had been bullied in the previous month, and more than 30 per cent had experienced physical abuse.

These findings mirror those of studies conducted in other countries.

Limiting or obstructing information related to sexuality or using materials that contain stereotypes and prejudices can contribute to violence and expose young LGBT persons to health risks.

Comprehensive sexuality education is part of the right to education and can be a tool for combating discrimination.



Image left: police training in Surinam, 2012

Seven recommendations

The seven recommendations related to education are:

1. Train police and judges to understand LGBTI issues. Make sure prison officers know how to protect LGBT prisoners.
2. Scrap 'gay propaganda'

laws – like the one in Russia.

3. Train doctors and nurses so they understand the health needs of LGBTI people, including sexual health and suicide prevention.
4. Fight homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools. Provide help lines for vulnerable LGBTI kids.
5. Give age-appropriate sex education to all.
6. Educate the public to combat homophobic and transphobic attitudes.
7. Tackle negative, stereotypical portrayals of LGBT people in the media.

Strategic questions

The question is now how to take this a step forward. The sponsors of the resolution, the so-called LAC-4 (Brazil, Uruguay, Columbia and Chile) have a strategy aimed at making the report more visible and building broader support for it. For example, they organize side events at the HRC. the Report. At the 29th session, they also made a statement in the General Debates. But this statement was rather weak. This was done to get more states to sign up.



Image: the representative of Egypt introduces the resolution on the "protection of families"

Protection of the traditional family

Later during the session, the attention turned towards a new threat. Egypt, Russia, China, Bangladesh took the lead in proposing a resolution on the protection of the family. This resolution aims to protect the traditional family, even when families are a source of violence against women or LGBT people. To the horror of progressive States and activists, the resolution was adopted. An amendment to change the definition of family beyond the most traditional view did not get a majority. Four UN Special Rapporteurs sent a strong letter to the President of the Human Rights Council to criticize the resolution.

Image: Egypt proposing the family resolution at the HRC

Sources:

Report: http://www.gale.info/doc/human_rights_council/INT-2015-HRC-29th-session-LGBT-report-G1508842.pdf (if this link does not open, cut and paste the link in your browser)

Voting on the Protection of the family resolution: <http://webtv.un.org/watch/ahrc29l.25-vote-item3-45th-meeting-29th-regular-session-human-rights-council/4336313483001>

Blog by ISHR: <http://www.ishr.ch/news/protection-family-resolution-increases-vulnerabilities-and-exacerbates-inequalities>

Letter by 4 UN Special Rapporteurs:

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/JointLetterPresidentHRCProtectionFamily.pdf>

Thai university fires trans lecturer with vague reasons

Thammasat University in Bangkok has fired a transgender lecturer Kath Khangpiboon for what they call "inappropriate behavior in the media". The university did not explain what they meant. They may have been annoyed by the activism of Kath Khangpiboon, who is co-founder of the Thai Transgender Alliance and is one of the most outspoken LGBTI voices in the media.



Kath Khangpiboon, 28, is a social work lecturer at the university. She was notified of her dismissal in early March after she lectured for 10 months. Khangpiboon has replied specific rules for media appearances were not mentioned in her contract, and she criticized the university for not explaining which behavior they think is not "appropriate" for a lecturer. She has written to the university asking whether the decision to fire her was related to her gender. The university has not answered.

Image left: Kath Khangpiboon

She told a local newspaper: "We never know who likes or dislikes us, but the decision-making process must have standards and be fair to me. I think that it is possible that they used gender issues as part of the criteria".

Khangpiboon was a regular guest lecturer at Thammasat for five years. When she got a full-time employment in June 2014, this caused a stir on social media. Many Thai were questioning whether it was appropriate to hire a transgender person as an educator.

Sources: <https://prachatai.org/english/node/4988>; <http://www.gaystarnnews.com/article/thailand-university-fires-trans-lecturer-unspecified-inappropriate-behavior040515>

European meeting education officials

On 25-26 June, officials from education ministries across the European Union met with a number of ILGA-Europe member organizations in Lisbon. ILGA-Europe was organizing the meeting. It was the third meeting of this kind. This meeting focused in particular on good practices in Ireland and Malta.

Ireland: support for stand up week

Ireland adopted a national Action Plan on Bullying in January 2013. This action plan included support for the annual BeLongTo "Stand Up against homophobic bullying week" and included teacher training and changing stereotypes in publications. Although the action plan is generic in nature it mentions homophobic bullying specifically. It acknowledges that homophobic bullying is prevalent and that LGBT pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behavior.

Students leaving school...



Will have qualities of self confidence, high self esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment as a foundation for their potential life roles as family, community and employees.



Will have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of ethical and social judgements.

Image left: slide from the presentation of the Maltese representative

Malta: integration in wider policies

Malta adopted a "Respect for all" framework in 2014. This strategy frames LGBT issues in an even broader context of quality assurance of schools and the general education strategy "to succeed in work and society 2014-2024". It highlights what can be done and why, it

acknowledges the school culture and the school climate without it being constraining and prescriptive. The Ministry of Education specifically went into the needs and policies focused on transgender and intersex students.

Source: ILGA Europe, <http://ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/education-meeting-lisbon-2015>

Criticism on Dutch tolerance

The director of EduDivers, the Dutch expertise centre on schools and sexual diversity has criticized the myth of Dutch tolerance in a blog on the US website: "Not in our town". He analyzes that Dutch tolerance is not more than a disinterested tolerance "at a distance" and calls for a rethinking of how to promote basic competences and social structures to become more tolerant at a distance "nearby".

Image right: Peter Dankmeijer.

The poster behind says "With my teacher you cannot speak about LGBT issues".

Don't bother me

Dankmeijer offers a historical analysis, which comes down to one bottom line: Dutch tolerance is great "as long as people feel not bothered" by others. In practice this means that any non-heteronormative behavior is

strongly rejected. In schools and on the political level, he notices an "organized disinterest".

He says "We could better label this *heterosexism* than homophobia and transphobia, because it is not gays, lesbians or transsexuals in general that are excluded, but "just" the ones who do not fit into the (hetero)norm."



Challenging skin-deep tolerance

Dankmeijer asks the question how to challenge such "tolerance at a distance". He thinks it is too great a task to structurally change the entire Dutch culture, on which this type of tolerance is based. He suggests to link into the pride of the Dutch. Even when real tolerance is skin-deep, they are still very proud of it. However, this pride of tolerance is now confronted with severe challenges. Dutch people deeply worry about how to deal with religious and political extremism. According to Dankmeijer, this concern is an opportunity for schools and politicians to rethink which basic competences and structures the Dutch need

to be not only "tolerant at a distance" but also from nearby. Such a better understanding could be a first next step to mainstreaming a deeper level of tolerance.

Source: <https://www.niot.org/blog/dutch-tolerance-revisited>



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPF_voZk09k



Images from the Amsterdam Canal Parade 2015: famous Dutch artists and officials nowadays insist to be part of it, including several government ministers

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Colophon

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