This is the first newsletter of the SENSE-project. The project aims to integrate sensitivity for sexual diversity (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex – LGBTI - issues) in vocational training. In this project we focus most on vocational training in the social domain.

The project will run from January 2019 until December 2020. Products are prepared early 2019 and tried out in the school year 2019-2020. Late 2020 will be devoted to dissemination of the results and a discussion on needed student and teacher competencies.

SENSE-project: highest scoring VET-proposal in the Netherlands

In 2018, GALE (the Global Alliance for Education) made a proposal to develop a method to integrate sexual diversity sensitivity in VET studies in the social domain. With sexual diversity we refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) issues.
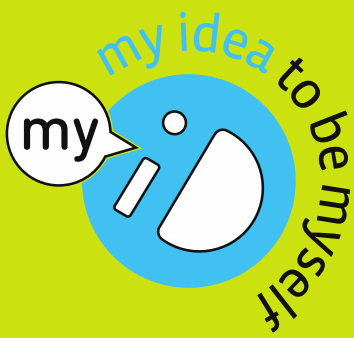
Three modules

The "My-ID" method used has 3 modules. The first is an artistic "trigger", like a theatre performance, to get students to talk about sexual diversity. This is a key module because many students and most teachers find it difficult to start a dialogue on this sensitive topic. The second module is a teacher training, which focuses on how to deal with insecure, aggressive or disinterested reactions from students, and on how help student to change their attitudes in a more tolerant direction. The third module is a manual on how a VET-course can develop a tailor-made spiral curriculum.

The project also aims to create a discussion on how the VET-sector deals with diversity and sexuality.

Competence framework

To guide this discussion, the project develops a competence framework that shows how generic and already implemented skill-building is links to diversity and how more controversial issues like sexual diversity fit into the already accepted frames. In the Netherlands, the Erasmus+ VET Agency got 30 proposals in 2018, of which 17 reached the minimum score of 60 out of 100 to be eligible for funding. The SENSE-proposal got 84 points out of a possible 100. This was the highest score of the 13 projects that were granted. The partnership looks forward to making the high expectations true.

The partnership

In this first newsletter, we take the opportunity to present our partnership. We have 7 partners.

GALE
GALE is the coordinator, the expert on LGBTI issues and inspirer of the "My-ID" method. GALE is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

the development of the "trigger technology" and Villa Montesca will take care of the spiral curriculum development manual.

DEFOIN
In Spain (Málaga), DEFOIN is an organization specialized in vocational education and it supports VET-institutes and companies. DEFPIN will develop the competence framework.

ROC of Amsterdam
In the Netherlands, the project also has a VET-institutional partner, ROC of Amsterdam. This is a very large VET-institute which worked before with the My-ID method.

Villa Montesca and CESIE
Villa Montesca (Città di Castello, middle Italy) and CESIE (Palermo, Sicily) are Italian NGOs working on a wide range of social issues. They have worked before with GALE on antibullying and prosocial behavior in high schools. CESIE is responsible for coordinating
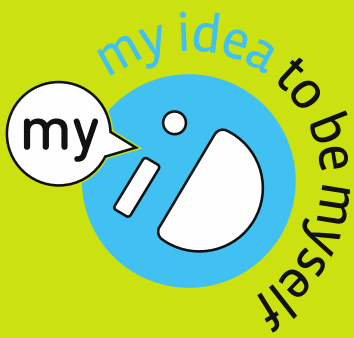
EUROTRAINING
In Greece, EUROTraining (Athens) is also specialized in vocational education, but it offers also vocational courses to students itself.
EUROTraining will develop the teacher training.

EfVET
Finally, EfVET is a leading European-wide professional associations which has been created by, and for VET providers. EfVET represents 192 VET-providers in 31 countries and is therefore perfectly positioned to

coordinate and dissemination and to initiate the European level discussion on the need to include attention for sexual diversity in VET-competences and institutes.

SENSE kicks off with international training

Values of some become norms for all

In January, the SENSE project kicked off with a teacher training in Palermo. In the training, the core of the diversity teaching by GALE was introduced to the other partners. The underlying theory GALE developed describes a vicious circle of exclusion which starts with values of some being used as norms for all. This creates a basis for exclusion of people who don't conform to the values of the dominant view.

Fight or flight responses

The theory describes how deviations from the norm can result in negative "fight or flight" emotions, which in turn can lead to negative attitudes. It is likely that negative attitudes predict negative (exclusionary) behavior. Social exclusion then leads to not knowing excluded people and forming stereotypes based on biased perceptions. GALE advocates to develop school policies that include a change of norms, pedagogic ways to deal with
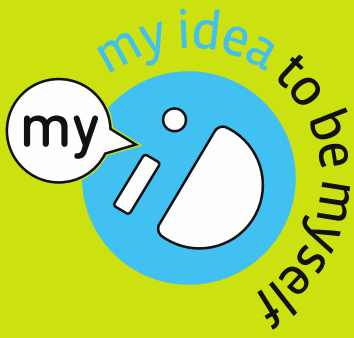
emotions of fear and anger, education and dialogue to diminish intolerant attitudes and to promote support for democratic and non-violent solutions, adequate measures to stop violent behavior and stimulate prosocial behavior and avoiding bias and prejudice. The key in all these process is the ability of both teachers and students to learn to deal with the emotions which come up when they feel threatened by unusual people or situations.

Deep diversity

In the kick-off training, the partners both worked on their own emotions and attitudes and on how they could educate students and training teachers in this. The in-depth approach to "deep diversity" which goes beyond correct terms, visibility of LGBTI or rainbow flags, created great enthusiasm among the participants.

However, in countries like Greece and Italy, it still may be a challenge to start a dialogue specifically about sexual diversity.

Choice of a logo

The partnership does not have a budget for PR or materials. Partly because of this, GALE suggested to develop an international version of the Dutch "My-ID" design. This is a smiley which doubles with the letters
i-D. It stands for "My IDENTITY" but also for "My IDEA to contribute to my environment". The logo is circled by a pay-off: "my idea to be myself".
In the Netherlands, ta Dutch version of this logo was used with much success for a national campaign to introduce sexual diversity to schools and currently it is being used to develop the method that is also proposed in the SENSE-project.

The partnership adopted the logo and both the logo and designs for lessons activities, brochures and publications were developed, all in 4 colors. In the future publications, we will not refer to the "SENSE" products, but to the "My-ID" products.

Dealing with homophobia and bullying in Greece

According to recent research in Greece, nine out of ten LGBTI adolescents have suffered at the school environment some kind of abuse related their sexual orientation. Four out of ten have suffered physical abuse, while three out of ten have opted to skip a day at school as a result of fear. A survey conducted in high schools showed that almost half of students (48.9%) have witnessed an incident (discrimination, mockery, inappropriate comments, etc.) during the past week. There is no doubt that children and teenagers can be harsh on anything "different" from them, being sexual identity, nationality, or appearance.

Ministry attempt to integrate LGBTI-issues in sex education

During the academic year 2016-2017, the Ministry of Education attempted for the first time to integrate sex education on LGBTI issues in the school curriculum This happened at first as part of a Thematic Week of "Body and Identity" at schools. This attempt was passionately attacked by conservative political parties, mass media and members of the Church. Despite the opposition, the project was implemented, but with no centralized organization. As a result, while some schools

successfully collaborated with parents' associations and actually raised awareness on LGBTI issues, others were limited to addressing gender equality, avoiding reference to gender identity, homophobia, transphobia, etc.

IGLYO recommendations

If no organized attempt is made to deal with such incidents at school, how can teachers help? The following recommendations are part of the "Teachers' Manual for Inclusive Education", elaborated by IGLYO (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organization) and translated in Greek by the NGO "RainbowSchool":

Prepare yourself

Evaluate the school environment: are your colleagues, the parents and all other members of the school community familiar with LGBTI issues?
Assess your previous experiences: can you improve the way you handled incidents before?
Contact LGBTI organizations and communities: they can provide further training instead of just some brochures, which of course are very useful for approaching students at the beginning

Create a safe environment

Ensuring every student feels and actually is safe at school is the first step for bringing out their best selves and exploiting their full potential. Create an inclusive school environment where every student feels safe and confident to express themselves and

dream on a bright future is the ultimate objective of every teacher. For many students, the role of the teacher is more than just an individual who teaches them math or physics; it is another parent, a best friend or a role model. This is way teachers should realize their unique position in shaping happy, ambitious and open-minded adults through education.

Strategies against bullying and training

A concrete, zero-tolerance strategy against homophobic bullying and gender-based violence, should be adopted and efficiently implemented at school.

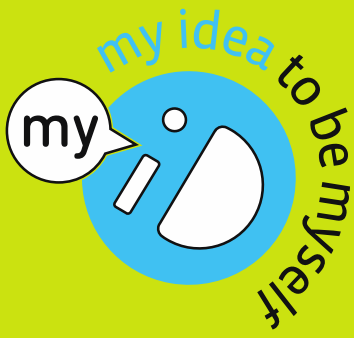## Raise awareness among students

Schools can organize campaigns to inform students on their rights. Meetings of all members of the school community can take place in order to promote and inform on school strategies against bullying and relevant behaviors

Integration of LGBTI issues in the school curriculum

LGBTI issues could be integrated in sexuality education, but also in citizenship or social skills. Take care it does not become a "special" topic. Because of this, it could also be possible to integrate "matter-of-fact" attention in other subjects like language or even technical subjects like computer science. Did you know the electronically programmable computer was invented by a gay man, who helped win WWII with it? (Alan Turing)

Respect the students' personal life

You have no right to disclose any information on sexual orientation that a student has confided to you, neither to your colleagues nor to the student's family. Only if he/she asks for your help you can proceed with caution and always according to the advice of an expert.

Participation in diversity

Column by Francisco Javier Morales Luque, DEFOIN

Every day, in our educational centers we see groups of girls and boys, adolescents and young people who are learning to love each other. They learn to relate, to say and decide what they want or what they prefer.

This student often falls in love for the first time in our classrooms, they face illusions and fears, insecurities or disappointments in relationships with their peers or even with their referents. They are defining their identity or they go through search processes that lead them to doubt.

The challenge of sexuality education

Addressing sexuality in our classrooms is a challenge for the educational community, which is not solved by denying it or making it invisible, but, on the contrary, it must be part of the integral formation of the educational system.

Students need time to reflect and debate about emotions, love, desires and ultimately about sexuality. Discussions must take into account and make visible all the sensitivities. It should challenge the stereotyped ideas of what love and relationships should be.

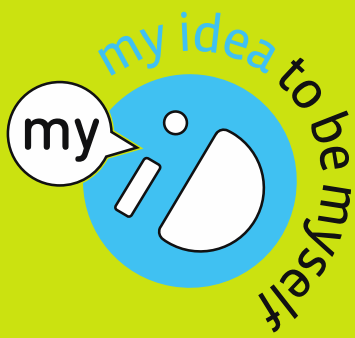## WHO: Sexuality central part of our lives

The World Organization of Health (WHO) says that: "Sexuality, it is a central part of all people throughout our whole life and that includes sex, gender identity, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, reproduction and sexual orientation. Sexuality sees and expresses itself through thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and interpersonal relationships".

The right to live without fear

There are many taboos in relation to sexuality. This makes it difficult to speak about it in a natural way or to it express diversity in sexuality calmly in the classroom. However, it is essential that students can live their sexuality in freedom and without fears, taking into account the existing diversity.

It is a right and we must guarantee it.

The educational community and we all have a key role to support to students to learn to be free. And also, the responsibility that the rights of workers are respected of teaching, as well as of diverse families. Sexuality requires the fulfillment of sexual rights and reproductive some of these rights are: have information and education about sexuality, the right to one's own body, the desire, the identity, the orientation and the way of expressing them.

Have the right to have sexual relations or not and to choose with who.

Privacy

It is very important to also emphasize that you have to teach the right to privacy so that nobody makes our privacy public without your permission.

Don't limit yourself to tolerance

Diversity management is about learning and understanding that all people are special and different. We have to build spaces in which we can live without feeling afraid to say what we think, what we want or what we like, we cannot limit ourselves to teach to *tolerate* who is different, because in short, all of us are.

In addition to making issues of LGBTI visible, school staff needs to recognize and role-model the different ways that we have "to be" and to understand love, desire, relationships and families. We must work to create classrooms free of homophobia and transphobia. We do not need to build a physical infrastructure for this, but if we want our work to improve we need to be sensitive to ways we address this in the educational community.

Dialogue and curriculum integration

Work for and in sexual diversity and gender education requires making classrooms that are safe and open to diversity. In such classrooms we educate with trust, responsibility and by using dialogue.

DEFOIN proposes integral affective sexual education in the different educational stages as part of the training of students and teachers. We demand initial and continuous training of the teaching staff. The design of proposals and didactic materials should integrate sexual visibility in the curriculum.

Diversity throughout school policy

The curriculum should reflect reality, including how people live together. The curriculum is not the only place where inclusion is needed. LGBT rights should also be part of labor agreements, as well as in school protocols and procedures.

We commit to continue working on the sensitivity for sexual diversity so that vocational education institutions become spaces of freedom and security where all the people can be and express themselves and participate in diversity.

Colofon

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