

# The SENSE-project

## Sexual Diversity in Social Domain Vocational Training



The SENSE project was granted by the Dutch Erasmus+ authority to a partnership of GALE (Global Alliance for LGBT Education, Netherlands), Villa Montesca (Italy), CESIE (Italy), DEFOIN (Spain), EUROTraining (Greece), ROC of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and EFVET (European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The project will run from January 2019 until December 2020.

The goal of this project is to improve job opportunities of VET students in the social domain by improving their skills to deal with diversity in general and with sexual diversity (= *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex* issues, **LGBTI**) specifically. For VET teachers we aim to improve their skills to educate students on this. For VET managers we aim that they include sexual diversity in the curriculum and school policy.

### **Why we focus on sexual diversity in vocational training**

Research (2014, Netherlands) found that between 15 and 30% of the students were negative towards LGBTI clients. Teachers find it difficult to deal with students who bring a street culture into the school (Redde et al, 2009). Their macho and rude behavior is not in line with VET competence profiles. Sexual diversity is less visible than religious and cultural diversity because LGBTI students can choose to hide it (Goffman, 1963). Because of this, teachers

may even lack basic knowledge and willingness in this area (FRA, 2016). VET teachers in the Netherlands expressed a high need to be trained, but also uncertainty about how raise the topic (Dankmeijer, 2014). Current competence profiles of VET students commonly do not explicitly include diversity skills but only generic client friendliness. The influx of non-tolerant social sector practitioners is already visible in the Netherlands: LGBTI elderly people are forced to go back in the closet when they make use of social services (Leyerzapf, 2013).

### What we develop

The project is based on 7 years of research and development in the Netherlands. In this period, a method has been developed that has been evaluated by the Radboud University and found to be effective. In this project we redevelop the method to be even more “owned” by VET providers themselves and to adapt it to situations in different countries.

There will be five main products of the project:

1. **Trigger Technology:** A manual on how to choose and develop “triggers” to facilitate dialogue with VET students on sexual diversity. We are thinking of developing short theatre plays for students, with an educational debriefing afterwards. But triggers can also be other forms of art like movies or a series of rap songs.
2. **Teacher training:** manuals for teacher trainers and VET teachers on how educate and support students.
3. **Spiral Curriculum Consultancy:** A manual to support VET teachers and managers to develop a sustainable spiral curriculum.
4. **A Competence Framework:** for VET students and teachers on how to deal with sexual diversity within the larger context of diversity competences will have been developed and the way has been prepared to include such competences in formal qualification frameworks.

### Planning

**Needs assessment:** From January until July 2019, a needs assessment research will be done in VET institutions. This partly a survey research, but partly also a series of interviews with students by students. These interviews also form the basis for developing a theatre play, or a short film which is going to be used as a trigger for dialogue with other students.

**Development of draft products:** From May until December, the 4 products will be developed. This will be done by the partners but the VET institutions (teachers and students) will be able

**Try-outs:** to review them before there are used.

From October 2019 until June 2020, the products will be tested in participating VET training courses. From May 2020 until October 2020, the products and their use will be evaluated.

**Presentation:** In October 2020, there will be an international review of the method in Amsterdam and in Brussels. During this phase, there will also be a discussion about the competences we expect from VET students and the competences VET teachers need to stimulate and support such student's attitudes and skills.

### International exchanges

An important aspect of the project is international exchange of experiences and feedback on what we develop and experience.

**PALERMO:** Exchange 1 is a 3-day kick-off training and introduction in the method. It takes place in February or March 2019 in Palermo, Italy. There is funding for travel and subsistence for two VET institution teachers or managers per partner.

**ATHENS:** Exchange 2 has two parts: one for teachers and partners, and one for students. Both take place between July and October 2019 in Athens, Greece.

The *students* will have a 5-day meeting to explore what "triggers" for discussion about sexual diversity are and discuss with each other ideas for triggers. There is funding for travel and subsistence for three students per partner.

The teachers and partner trainers have a 3-day meeting to explore what constitutes a good teacher training and a good spiral curriculum for them, and what elements should be part of the competence frameworks of students and teachers. There is funding for travel and subsistence for two VET institution teachers or managers per partner.

**MÁLAGA:** Exchange 3 is a 3-day meeting of teachers and partners to review the final products and to evaluate the project. It takes place between May and July 2020 in Málaga, Spain. There is funding for travel and subsistence for two VET institution teachers or managers per partner.

### **More information schools may need**

Each project partner is looking for one VET course, and its team leader, teachers and students to participate in this project.

In each VET institution the project partners will work with one teacher team (about 15 teachers or more) focusing on the social domain. We expect a small team like that will teach and involve at average about 100 students.

Of the teacher team, 2 teachers or managers will get free travel and subsistence for the training and exchange activities. The teacher team will decide who will be the persons to take part in the training/learning activities.

In each VET institution, the course team will also involve between 3 and 10 students to develop the trigger performances or trigger films under the guidance of project partners and possibly of their own teacher. Three of these students will be involved in the international exchange in Athens, also with free travel and subsistence. To make sure that the target group of LGBTI is represented, each partner will attempt to recruit at least one lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex student among the three travelling. This may be difficult in some of the participating countries, but we do ask you to make this attempt.

What does this project offer and require of VET courses?

We offer:

- a needs assessment of how your students view sexual diversity
- a free training for teachers (one day)
- free coaching to help you implement a tailor-made spiral curriculum on social skills, diversity and LGBTI-inclusion
- travel and accommodation for the participants in international exchange meetings

We require:

- that participating schools are committed to combat bullying and exclusion and support that students should learn diversity skills which include sexual diversity
- to take care of the logistic planning of the training, visitation and participation in exchanges

- that in between the exchanges, some staff and students offer feedback on the products we develop in the project

Note:

The project does not have staff costs/salaries for VET participants, only travel and subsistence costs.

We would like to formalize the school commitment by writing down our cooperation in a cooperation agreement. To be able to get the funding for the travel and accommodation of the VET staff and students, we need to make volunteer contracts between the VET staff and students and the project partner.

### Questions?

We are happy to visit you and discuss the project with you in detail. See also:

<https://www.gale.info/en/projects/sense-project>. The international coordinator of the project is Peter Dankmeijer, director of GALE, [p.dankmeijer@gale.info](mailto:p.dankmeijer@gale.info). If you are interested in participating, please contact **{local name and address}**.