

UNDER THE RAINBOW

A BOOKLET ABOUT LGBTQI+ INCLUSION



Erasmus Student Network

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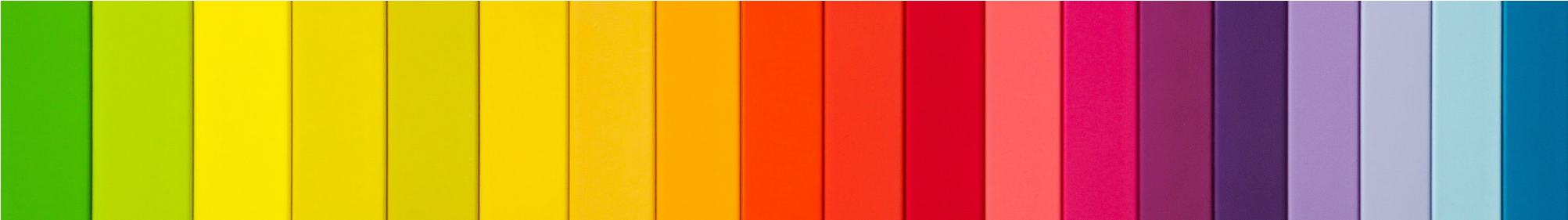
This booklet was produced as a result of a Study Session and it does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.



Index

Introduction	04
LGBTQI+ Basics	06
LGBTQI+ in Europe.....	10
The Role of ESN.....	14
Leadership.....	18
Activities	20
FAQ	22
Conclusion	24
Resources & Bibliography	25

Be aware that some of the given recommendations may not be fully welcome and safe to implement in some countries with specific socio-political situation. The booklet is meant to inspire you, but we would still like to invite you to be aware of the risks that some actions may cause and advise you to avoid creating conflicts or dangerous situations on a personal or institutional level.



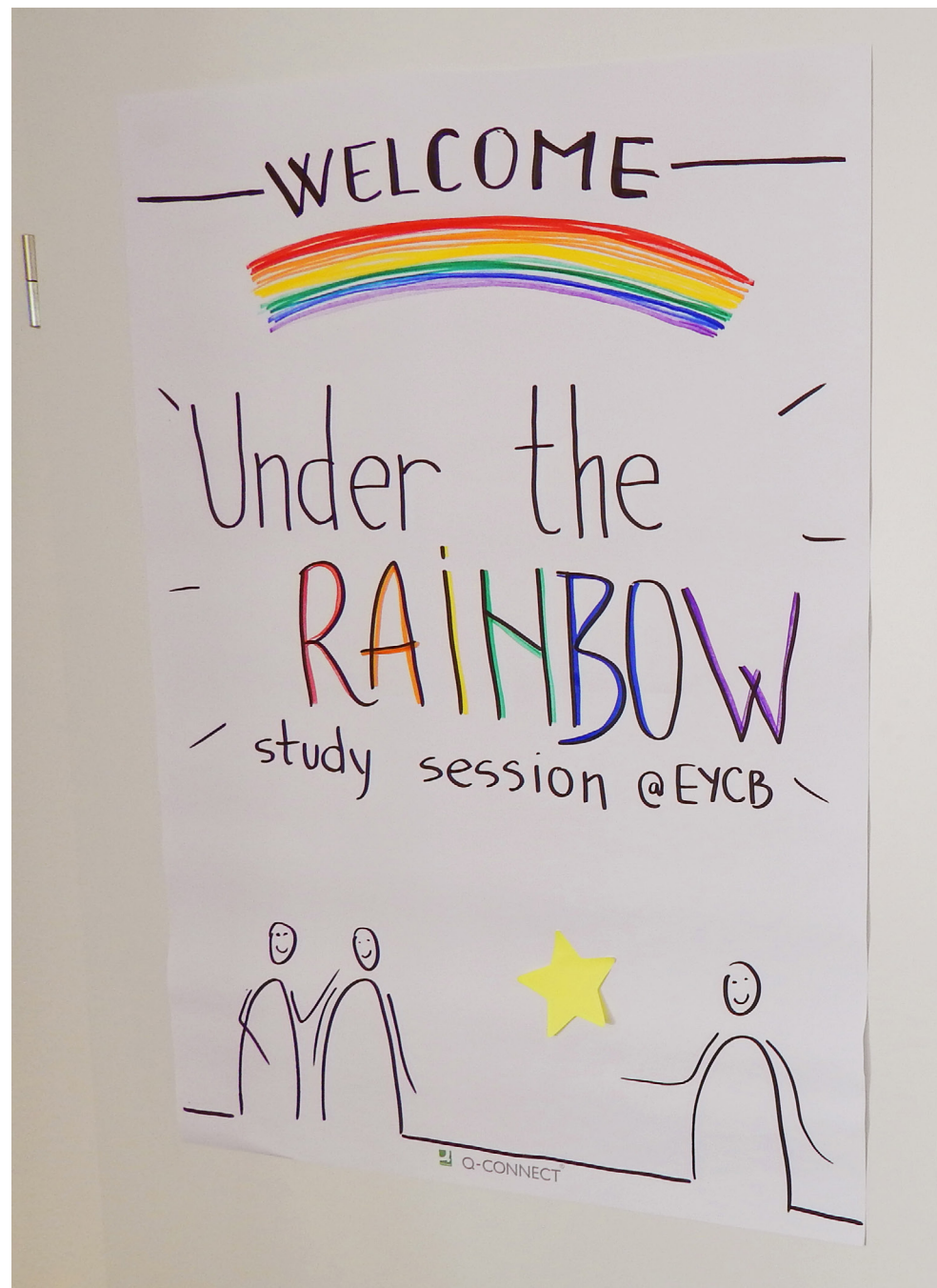
Introduction

This booklet is the result of the Study Session “Under the Rainbow - LGBTQI+, Volunteers and International Students” in partnership with the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe (CoE) held between the 8th and 15th April 2018 in Budapest. As part of the Council of Europe’s Youth for Democracy Programme, this event aimed at equipping ESN volunteers with the relevant knowledge about LGBTQI+, social inclusion and intercultural differences. This knowledge will allow them to implement quality measures within their local organisations, which will promote a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQI+ international students and ESN volunteers.

During the 6-day programme, the participants explored, discussed and created an open, safe(r) and inclusive environment for people with different backgrounds and identities.

The 40 participants included 34 ESN volunteers from 29 countries, 5 facilitators, 1 participant from European Educational Exchanges - Youth For Understanding ([EEE-YFU](#)), an external guest speaker from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation ([IGLYO](#)), and an Educational Advisor from the Council of Europe’s Youth Department.

Within these guidelines, basic information about sexual orientation and gender identity was introduced, as well as the role of our network in this topic and how to articulate student mobility and social inclusion in the field of LGBTQI+ and education.



Objectives

To have a basic understanding of social identity and intersectionality, with a focus on gender, sex and sexuality.

To have a basic understanding of terms commonly used in and related to the topic of LGBTQI+.

- To understand the concept of social inclusion and its implementation within ESN.
- To face the challenges and difficulties faced by LGBTQI+ students when moving abroad for a period of study or internship.
- To have a set of best practices and practical tools aimed at creating more inclusiveness at ESN events and during ESN activities, particularly when it comes to the topics of gender, sex and sexuality.

As the situation in the different countries of the network is very diverse, please take this into consideration while organising and/or promoting a LGBTQI+ friendly activity. We understand and support every activity towards a more inclusive network but be aware of the laws of your country. Always put your section and your international students' safety first.



LGBTQI+ BASICS

Gender basics

Sex is seen as classifying a person as male, female or intersex, assigned at birth and written on a birth certificate. Sex has been and is still seen as binary and based on external anatomy. However, it has been shown that sex is actually a combination of sex characteristics. These include chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics (such as pubic and facial hair, enlarged breast or hips, etc.)



Sex assigned at birth can be:

- male,
- female,
- intersex.

Gender identity is how you, in your head, experience and define your gender, based on how much you align (or do not align) with what you understand the options for gender to be. It may or may not correspond with the sex you were assigned at birth. It implies a system of gender roles in society.



Gender identity can be:

- man/boy/male,
- woman/girl/female,
- genderqueer.

Gender expression is how you (re)present gender (through your actions, clothing, and demeanor, etc.), and how those presentations are viewed based on social expectations. It may or may not correspond with the sex you were assigned at birth.



Gender expression can be:

- man/boy/male,
- woman/girl/female,
- genderqueer.

Attraction is how you find yourself feeling drawn (or not drawn) to other people, in sexual, romantic, and/or other ways (often categorised within gender).



A person can be physically attracted to:

- men,
- women,
- other gender(s).



A person can be romantically attracted to:

- men,
- women,
- other gender(s).

Intersex signifies someone who is born intersex is born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are a combination of female and male, or neither fully female nor fully male, or neither female nor male. There is not one single category of intersex.

Cisgender means that your sex and gender identity align. A cisgender woman is someone who was assigned female at birth and today identifies as a woman.

The term '**trans**' is an umbrella term for all of the people whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from the gender associated with their birth - assigned sex. For instance, a trans woman was born as a boy but defines herself as a woman.

Non-binary is an umbrella term, and the people identify with this term in various ways. Some of them identify with some aspects of the binary identities, while others reject it completely. The thing they all have in common is that they do not recognise their gender as "typical" man or woman. A good example is to imagine being a 'man' or 'woman' as two boxes. Being non-binary is choosing to step out of the box you were put in at birth.



LGBTQQIAAP meaning

Lesbian

A woman who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to women.

Gay

A person who is sexually and/ or emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Commonly used to refer to a man that is sexually and/ or emotionally attracted to men.

Bisexual

A person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to both male and female genders.

Transgender

A person who was assigned to a sex at birth but identifies as another gender.

Transexual

An outdated term for transgender people. It is generally considered offensive.

Queer

This term was used in the past as a derogatory term for LGBTQI+ individuals. The term has been reclaimed by people who identify beyond traditional gender categories and heteronormative social norms.

Questioning

A person who is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It does not mean that it is a “phase”.

Intersex

A person who is born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are a combination of female and male, or neither wholly female nor wholly male, or neither female nor male. There is not one single category of intersex.

Ally

A person who would identify themselves as straight and/or cisgender, who supports the LGBTQI+ Community.

Asexual

A person who does not feel sexual and/or emotional attraction with the same intensity as sexual people. It is also defined within a continuum.

Pansexual

A person whose sexual and/or romantic attraction is not limited by sex or gender. Often described as a person who is attracted `to people and not genders´.

LGBTQI+ IN EUROPE

Organisations

[ILGA-Europe](#)

ILGA-Europe is an independent, international non-governmental umbrella organisation. They are part of the wider international ILGA organisation. They advocate for human rights and equality for LGBTQI+ people at European level. They also strengthen the LGBTQI+ movement in Europe and Central Asia by providing training and support.

[Rainbow Europe](#)

Rainbow Europe is a website, linked to ILGA-Europe, that brings together both legal index of LGBTQI+ equality, which they base on their Rainbow Europe Map, and an overview of the social climate for the LGBTQI+ people in each country, which they base on the Annual Review that ILGA-Europe publishes. It has an interactive map where you can have a overview of the situation in all European countries, and a ranking.

[IGLYO](#)

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+) Youth & Student Organisation is the largest LGBTQI+ youth and student network in the world, with over 95 members in 40+ countries. As a youth development organisation, IGLYO builds the confidence, skills and experience of LGBTQI+ young people to become leaders within the LGBTQI and human rights sectors.

[Organisations in your country](#)

On the website of ILGA-Europe you can also find a list of organisations, which are members of ILGA-Europe, for each country. If you want to get to know some organisations back home to have a better overview of the situation in your country, head to their website.



Overview of Europe

“Rainbow Europe ranks all 49 European countries on a scale between 0% (gross violations of human rights, discrimination) and 100% (respect of human rights, full equality). We rank the countries on the basis of laws and policies that have a direct impact on the LGBTI people’s human rights in under 6 categories: equality and non-discrimination; family; bias motivated speech/violence; legal gender recognition; freedom of assembly, association and expression; and asylum.”

Source: [Rainbow Europe](#)

About EU countries:

- Same-sex sexual activity is legal in 28/28 countries.
- Same-sex civil unions are legal in 22 countries.
- Same-sex marriage is legal in 14 countries.
- Laws and policies concerning gender identification or expression exist in 27 countries.
- Policies on anti-discrimination laws are present in 28/28 countries.

Non-EU countries in Europe:

- Same-sex marriage is legal in 2 countries.
- Policies on anti-discrimination laws are present in 75% of the countries.
- Same-sex sexual activity is legal in all the countries (with regional exceptions).



Via Getty Images

RAINBOW EUROPE MAP 2021

REFLECTING THE LEGAL AND POLICY HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX (LGBTI) PEOPLE IN EUROPE

100% RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, FULL EQUALITY

95% MALTA 94

90%

85%

80%

75%

70%

65%

60%

55%

50%

45%

40%

35%

30%

25%

20%

15%

10%

5%

0%

RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, FULL EQUALITY

MALTA 94

IRELAND 53

FINLAND / SWEDEN / SPAIN 65

DENMARK / UNITED KINGDOM 64

MONTENEGRO 63

NETHERLANDS 61

FRANCE 57

ICELAND 54

IRELAND 53

GERMANY 52

AUSTRIA 50

GREECE 47

CROATIA 46

SLOVENIA 42

BOSIA & HERZEGOVINA 40

SWITZERLAND 39

ESTONIA 38

KOSOVO* / ANDORRA 35

ALBANIA / HUNGARY / SERBIA 33

CYPRUS 31

SLOVAKIA 30

NORTH MACEDONIA / GEORGIA 27

CZECHIA 26

LITHUANIA 23

ITALY 22

MOLDOVA / BULGARIA 20

UKRAINE 18

LATVIA 17

SAN MARINO / POLAND 13

BELARUS 12

MONACO 11

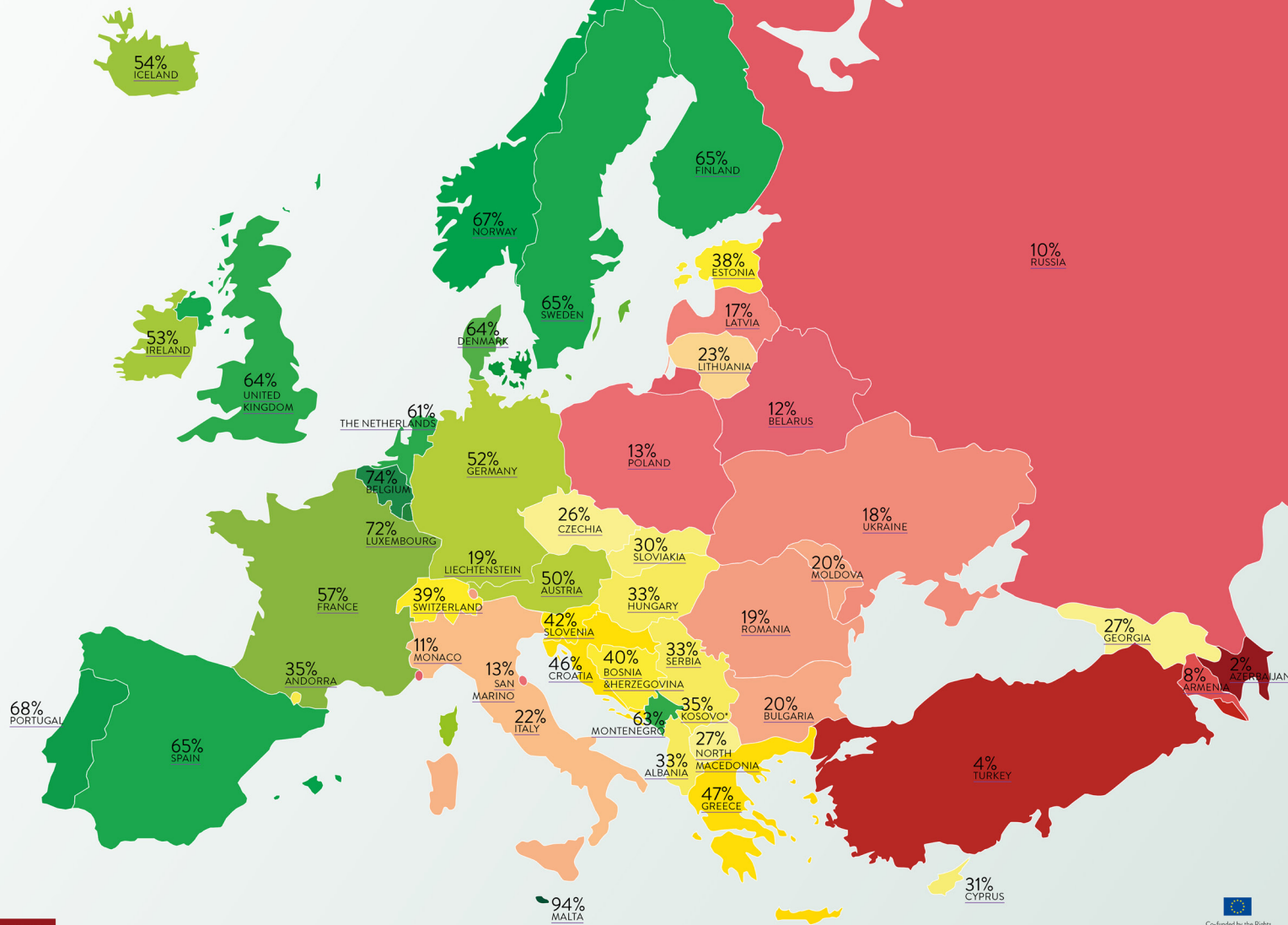
RUSSIA 10

ARMENIA 8

TURKEY 4

AZERBAIJAN 2

GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DISCRIMINATION



Co-funded by the Rights Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme 2014-2020 of the European Union.



HOW DID WE CALCULATE THESE SCORES? HAVE A LOOK AT WWW.RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG



THE ROLE OF ESN

Making our internal structures LGBTQI+ inclusive

Website & forms

- Gender: avoid just binary options (male and female) and include an agender option or “other” option.
- Pronouns: some people who identify as transgender or genderqueer prefer to be addressed differently than the binary pronouns (he or she). Ask for preferred pronoun (if needed).
- Always make the gender question optional (ex. include option of “prefer not to say”).

Safe space

- Do not assume someone’s gender. Ask for their preferred pronoun to communicate with them in a respectful way.
- Be aware of the cultural diversity in your group before making jokes about sexual orientation or identity.
- Put up a LGBTQI+ friendly symbol in your office to mark that it as a safe space.
- Make sure the space remains safe and intervene when someone is insulting. Refer to the [code of conduct](#) for further information.

Events

- Choose LGBTQI+ friendly venues (ones that have gender-neutral toilets).
- Make sure the venues have security
- Avoid binary symbolism and stereotypes for all your events, media, promotional material and visual representation.
- Use pronouns along with name tags in order to comfortably address people the way they prefer.
- During trips let students choose their roommates, whenever it is possible.



Recruitment

- Make sure LGBTQI+ people feel safe when they join ESN.
- Have criteria when selecting new members. Homophobic attitude should be considered as a red flag of a candidate member.
- Interview potential members in order to know if they are eligible to join the team and if they are willing to respect ESN's diverse environment.
- ESNers who develop/have a homophobic attitude: First, have a polite discussion with them and try to familiarise them with inclusion. If the attitude continues, remove them from the section. Always prioritise the safety of the Erasmus students and ESNers.
- Make sure your section's members are informed and educated by organising regular trainings and discussions on an LGBTQI+ thematic.



ESN actions and future plans

Following the study session in 2018, Erasmus Student Network volunteers worked on the first edition of the Under the Rainbow booklet to facilitate more LGBTQI+ friendly activities in the network across Europe.

The joint efforts towards bettering activities by making them more inclusive continued the following year in September 2019 with another Study Session “[ESN Gender Check up](#)”. While focusing primarily on gender, participants had an opportunity to touch upon gender roles and gender as a social construct.

Additionally, in 2021 a training for trainers on the topic of “[LGBTQI+ Community & Youth](#)” took place. Over a few weeks, in the online environment, ESN volunteers had the opportunity to learn about the challenges that LGBTQI+ students and youth face and how they can build LGBTQI+ friendly organisations that contribute to the creation of more inclusive international communities.

Furthermore, ESN took more actions to make sure LGBTQI+ youth is included in the network, activities organised by volunteers, and mobility by releasing the first-ever LGBTQI+ focused survey for former and current exchange students.

If you want to know more about the topic, go to [ESN.org](#) and read about our most recent activities regarding all students’ rights regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.





LEADERSHIP

Leadership by level

To increase inclusion in the LGBTQI+ field, ESN sections could connect the LGBTQI+ cause to the position of the Social Inclusion Coordinators, on the local or national level. Being LGBTQI+ inclusive is a task that will require some pre-existing knowledge about the reality of the LGBTQI+ community and the social stigmatisation it often experiences.

On the right hand side of the page are some of the tasks that could be added to the existing tasks of the coordinators.



Local level

- Plan rainbow events in order to attract local LGBTQI+ students and promote inclusive mobility to them.
- Make sure your section is inclusive. (see page 15 for further information).
- Be in contact with relevant LGBTQI+ local organisations and cooperate with them.
- Advise any Erasmus student who feels lonely/threatened/confused to visit the counselling centre of the university.

National level

- Make sure the [code of conduct](#) is respected in all aspects of ESN in your country.
- Approach relevant LGBTQI+ national organisations and associations.
- Modify the survival guide for Erasmus students and include helpful information for LGBTQI+ students.
- Organise trainings for the local coordinators.

International level

- Could be part of the Social Impact Team.
- Conduct research on the topic of LGBTQI+ inclusion.
- Provide TSOs for and facilitate workshops related to LGBTQI+ topics.

ACTIVITIES

Inclusive actions

- Participate in pride events, such as parades, movie screenings, exhibitions, etc.
- Cooperate with LGBTQI+ organisations for open lectures, parties, workshops, etc.
- Partner-up with companies who are inclusive and LGBTQI+-friendly.
- Provide information on STI/HIV testing.
- Organise training events for ESNers and International Students.
- Organise a Human Library event. It aims to address people's prejudices by helping them to talk to those they would not normally meet. A library analogy of lending people rather than books is used. Invite people from relevant LGBTQI+ organisations.





FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is the LGBTQI+ community related to ESN?

A: ESN is an association that follows a set of values, in which social inclusion belongs. “ESN stands to promote multicultural, non-discriminatory and inclusive education and citizenship values in university curricula and in education in general.”

(General Policies of ESN International adopted by AGM Warsaw 2016).

Q: Are there any LGBTQI+ students coming to my country or ESNers in my section?

A: According to [research](#) by Dalia Research, based on a census-representative survey of 11.754 people across the EU conducted in August 2016, it was discovered that 6% of europeans openly identify as LGBT.

Q: How should I deal with homophobic ESNers and Erasmus students?

A: Talk to them in a kind and patient way. Let them know what the problem is. Be patient. Respect and try to empathise with them. Try not to be defensive and don't accuse them of being homophobic. Educate them and explain why their opinions may be hurting other people.



Conclusion

The situation for LGBTQI+ people over the 39 countries where ESN has an impact is very different. Therefore, it is important to have access to this information when it comes to helping international students arriving to our city/country.

The topic is indeed very wide and there is a lack of consensus around terminology, which sometimes raises more questions than answers.

Our role in LGBTQI+ is to help the international students reach important information about their safety and well-being and to make our activities inclusive to everyone.

In conclusion, ESN advocates for inclusive mobility and our role is to make sure everyone feels welcome and safe during their mobility exchange. Thus, we have to include everyone in our activities and we have to make sure none of our international students feels discriminated.

Some key ideas out of this booklet:

- We do not need to understand all the terms to be inclusive and open with our international students.
- ESN is a student organisation that helps students going abroad and therefore, we can give them access to important information about their exchange country.
- This topic is related to our cause, Social Inclusion, and we advocate for a more inclusive Erasmus programme.
- We do not tolerate discrimination towards other people, based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or appearance.

“Diversity is about all of us, and about us having to figure out how to walk through this world together.”
– Jacqueline Woodson

Resources & Bibliography

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