

UNIVERSITIES TOWARDS DIVERSITY

TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

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UNIVERSITIES TOWARDS DIVERSITY

TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

As depicted in the latest EU Survey on the perceptions and experiences of LGBTI persons that was conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA (2020), discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGISC) is prevalent in European academic environments. Out of the total 139,799 participants, 19% reported to have felt discriminated against due to their LGBTI identity by school or university personnel, during the 12 months preceding the survey, which was implemented in 2019. At the same time, 9% of the respondents indicated that the perpetrator of the most recent incident of physical or sexual attack they have experienced during the five years preceding the survey, was someone from school or university (FRA, 2020).

The **Greek** Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) recorded three hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation that took place in universities or schools, during 2019. As indicated in the Network's relevant annual report, the perpetrators of these incidents were the victims' classmates or teachers, while it was evident that transgender people *"face great challenges in terms of acceptance in the school or university environment", "for which even teachers themselves are responsible, either as perpetrators or due to their reluctance to protect the victim"* (RVRN, 2020).

The reporting mechanism in Vilnius University in **Lithuania**, the Trust Line, received one report on disrespectful commentary about homosexual persons during 2020, while a survey indicated that 2% male and 2% female personnel experienced discrimination and/or bullying based on sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the observed lack of reports indicates low awareness about the reporting channels or a lack of courage and sensitivity to report it, rather than an absence of incidents (Vilnius University, 2021).

The quantitative study *La popolazione omosessuale nella società italiana*, carried out in 2011 by the **Italian** National Statistics Institute (ISTAT, 2012) shows that past discrimination of respondents involved, amongst others, education and training. Moreover, in 2018 some researchers belonging to the University of Modena developed the LGBTI+ University Inclusion Index (Russo, 2019), which was built along five macro-sectors, including education & employees' training, and students' alias career. Five universities in the South of Italy scored zero (on a scale 0-100) in the academic year 2018/2019 in the above dimensions. However, the University of Verona, which was at the top of the list only received a total score of 70, while only eight Universities out of 58 were ranked equal or above 50.

UniDiversity is a ground-breaking initiative aimed at making the academic environment more inclusive towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex (LGBTI+) individuals, by targeting discriminatory incidents based on SOGISC and by training the whole academic community (permanent staff, researchers, students and other staff) in the use of inclusive language and behaviour as well as in conflict resolution, in order to identify, combat and ultimately prevent SOGISC based discrimination in Greece, Lithuania and Italy.

In the context of the project, desk research and an online survey were conducted in the three participating countries, in order to explore the current situation of LGBTI+ people in the academic environment. Specifically, the desk research examined the current legal framework, good practices and useful contacts. The online survey aimed to explore existing discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and behaviours on the basis of SOGISC and discrimination

against LGBTI+ people, the levels of visibility of LGBTI+ people, the characteristics of discriminatory incidents and the training needs of the participants. The online survey addressed students, university staff (teaching, research and administrative), civil society members, as well as individuals not belonging to the above groups.

The anonymous survey ran from March to July 2021 in **Greece** and **Italy**, and during March and April 2021 in **Lithuania**. The sample was random and the survey was disseminated through the partners' websites, social media and personal emails and it was hosted on LimeSurvey (<https://www.limesurvey.org/>), an online tool that protects anonymity, as the IP address of the respondents is undetectable. SPSS was used for the measure of discrepancies amongst the four groups in the common sets of questions.

The present report encompasses the collection of the research results, in terms of the existing legal framework and the UniDiversity survey findings, while it provides a set of EU recommendations, based on the findings of the research implemented in the three participating countries.

1. Existing legal framework in the participating countries

Although progress has been made during the past decades in terms of the protection of LGBTI+ rights, there is a lot to be done for LGBTQI+ people's inclusion and protection in all aspects of everyday life. The latest ratification and amendments of laws in Greece, Lithuania and Italy illustrate this progress, however there is a lot to be done in order for the legal framework to be more inclusive and for the laws to be effectively implemented in order to protect LGBTI+ people's rights.

Hate speech is criminalised in Greece and Lithuania. Specifically, the **Greek** Law N. 4285/2014 (which constitutes an amendment of Law N. 927/1979) criminalises the behaviour of any person *"who intentionally, publicly, orally or through the Press, the Internet or any other means, incites, provokes, induces or urges, acts or actions that may cause discrimination, violence or hatred against a person or group of persons or a member of such a group who are defined based on (...) sexual orientation, gender identity in a way that puts public order into danger or if it includes threat against the life, the freedom or the physical integrity of the above mentioned persons"*. Sex characteristics were included as an aggravating factor with the Article 7 of the Greek Law N. 4491/2017 on gender recognition. In addition to the incitement to hatred and the establishment of the motive of hatred as a criminal qualifying characteristic¹ and aggravating circumstance², the **Lithuanian** Criminal Code also criminalises hatred-motivated jeer and contempt (Art. 170). Nonetheless, gender identity is not included in the aggravating factors. On the other hand, the **Italian** Penal Code and its specific section that criminalises hate speech and hate crimes - "Crimes Against Equality" (artt. 604-bis and -ter) – does not include sexual orientation and gender identity in the aggravating grounds. After two attempts in integrating the abovementioned characteristics in the protective grounds, a new Bill –DDL Zan- has been prepared and is at the stage of approval. The absence of relevant provisions in Italy leads to anti-LGBTQI+ crimes not being registered as such and, consequently, to the lack of relevant data.

Article 21 of the **Greek** Law N. 4356/2015 (on the Article 81A of the Penal Code) foresees harsher penalties (imprisonment) if the described crime is motivated by prejudice against the victim's SOGISC. Article 82A of the new Penal Code, that was ratified with the Law N. 4619/2019, foresees harsher penalties (imprisonment) for people who have committed hate crimes on the grounds of SOGISC.

In terms of equal treatment in employment on the basis of SOGISC in **Greece**, it is protected by the Law N. 4443/2016. The aforementioned Law also prohibits discrimination *"during sales of goods or provision of services to the public"*, while it encompasses definitions of discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination,

1 Article 129(2) 13p., 135(2) 13p., 138(2) 13p. of the Lithuanian Criminal Code

2 Article 60(1) 12p. of the Lithuanian Criminal Code

harassment and discrimination on perceived characteristics, i.e. the belief that a person is LGBTQI+ regardless of whether they actually are. The **Italian** Legislative Decree 9th July 2003, no. 216 includes the abovementioned definitions and protects equal treatment on the basis of SOGISC in employment. In addition, the law on occupation and labour market (Legislative Decree 10 September 2003, no. 276) prohibits discriminatory treatment on the basis of sexual orientation for labour agencies and other public and private entities which intermediate on job placement, while the Law 20 May 1970, no. 300 (general law on worker's rights) grants the protection from coercion, redundancy and discrimination based on, amongst others, sexual orientation (Article 15).

Article 23 (2) of the **Lithuanian** Law on Education (Lietuvos Respublikos Aukščiausioji Taryba - Atkuriamasis Seimas, 1991) describes the objectives of education, the principles and structure of the education system, the basis for educational activities, and the obligations of the state in the field of education. Upon its amendment in 2016, the Law stipulates that students can report cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation on the website www.draugiskasinternetas.lt. The Law also states that schools should ensure the implementation of the principles of inclusive education by providing an equitable access to all persons in full respect of any diversity.

Nonetheless, Article 4 of the **Lithuanian** Law on the Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002) states that *"public information shall be attributed to information which has a detrimental effect on minors [...] which expresses contempt for family values, encourages the concept of entry into a marriage and creation of a family other than stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania"*, adding a censorship on the provision of public information regarding LGBTQI+ issues.

In terms of higher education institutions, Article 6 of the **Lithuanian** Law on Equal Treatment stipulates that educational, science and academic institutions must ensure equal conditions for all persons regardless of, amongst other grounds, their sexual orientation (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003). A code of academic ethics or ethical guidelines, prohibiting discrimination on the basis, amongst others, of sexual orientation, is established in Lithuanian universities, which follows the stipulations of the above law. For example, Vytautas Magnus University adopted the Equal Opportunities Policy and its Implementation Programme in 2017 (Rector of Vytautas Magnus University, 2017). Furthermore, Vilnius University, has adopted Vilnius University Diversity and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2020–2025 (Vilnius University, 2020a), targeted at students and personnel. The first strategy implementation plan for 2020–2022 (Vilnius University, 2020b) includes in its objectives the development of measures to reduce discrimination on all the prohibited grounds, enshrined in the legal framework, and to foster an organizational culture which values diversity and respects each member of the academic community.

Italian universities are mandated by law to have a *Comitato Unico di Garanzia* (CUG), a committee that oversees the worker's wellbeing. However, some, such as the University of Modena, have established a specific committee tackling homo/transphobia (*Tavolo Interistituzionale di Contrasto all'Omotransfobia*). The Law N. 4589/2019 established the Commission for the Equality of Genders in each **Greek** university. The tasks of the Committee pertain the mediation *"in cases of complaints of discrimination or harassment"* and the provision of support *"to victims when they report discrimination"*; the development of *"action plans for the promotion and assurance of substantial equality in the educational, research and administrative procedures"* of the University; the provision of recommendations on *"measures to promote equality and fight against sexism"*; the provision of information and training on gender and equality addressed to the academic community; and the implementation of seminars and studies on gender issues. However, there is no particular focus on LGBTQI+ issues.

Reporting of anti-LGBTQI+ crimes in **Italy** can be done either with the submission of a written report to the prosecutor's office, or by reporting the incident to the police station. Such incidents can only be reported by the victims

themselves, whilst no official guidelines are established for the procedures that need to be followed by police officers. Apart from the emergency line of the **Lithuanian** police (112), victims can report incidents of hate crimes and hate speech via the website www.ePolicija.lt. In **Greece**, such incidents can also be reported to the Hellenic Police Service on Combatting Racist Crime via the special telephone line 11414, or via the online form available in the website of the Hellenic Police; in the case of online hate crimes, the aforementioned services cooperate with the Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police. At the same time, if victims do not wish to file an official report, but the crime experienced to be recorded, they can report it to the Greek Racist Violence Recording Network, as well as to the Greek Ombudsman/Ombudswoman (Greek Ombudsman, n.d.b.). Nonetheless, there is a variety of reporting options for hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination in the two latter countries.

As described in Article 8 of the **Greek** Law N. 4485/2017, the approved 'Rules of Procedure' for each University determine, amongst others, *"the disciplinary offenses, the penalties, the bodies responsible for the control of the observance of the established rules by the members of the academic community"*, the responsibilities of the mentioned bodies, as well as the disciplinary procedure. Moreover, the Presidential Decree 160/2008 defines the members of the Disciplinary Board for Universities' teaching and scientific staff, as well as the members of the Disciplinary Board for relevant offenses committed by the rest of the staff members. The Law N. 4777/2021 foresees that disciplinary bodies are responsible for disciplinary offenses committed by students, while it is prescribed that these offenses may include, amongst others, *"any misdemeanour or felony as long as it is related to student status"*. Nonetheless, apart from the foreseen offenses and procedures, according to Article 32, more disciplinary offences may be included based on the University's Rules of Procedure as well as additional provisions regarding *"the disciplinary inquiry and procedure"*.

The Student's Ombudsman/Ombudswoman, established in each university in 2011 in **Greece** with the Law N. 4009/2011, is, amongst others, responsible for *"the observance of law in the context of academic freedom, the treatment of maladministration and the preservation of the proper functioning of the [academic] institution"*. In case the law is not observed, the Student's Ombudsman/Ombudswoman draws a report addressed to the *'professor to whom it concerns or the competent administrative service and the student who submitted the report'* in order to mediate for the resolution of the issue, while if *"there are indications of a disciplinary misconduct"*, then they *"forward the case to the competent disciplinary body"*.

In 2021, special police forces for the security of universities and their staff were established with the **Greek** Law N. 4777/2021. The Law foresees that *"the staff of the Protection Teams of University Institutions (OPPI) cooperate with the rector or the competent vice-rector, as well as with the competent services and bodies of the [academic] institution"*, while their mission is to protect the safety of people in the University premises.

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in **Lithuania** is responsible for, amongst others, the investigation of complaints, research related to discrimination, the development of conclusions and recommendations, the implementation of preventive activities and the monitoring of the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 1998) and the Law on Equal Treatment (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003). Individuals may file a complaint in case their rights have been violated, within three months from the date of the decision or action against which the complaint is filed.

Furthermore, the mobile app 'UNI-FORM' and the respective website provide people the opportunity to inform the police and a responsible CSO about a relevant incident. The CSO can intervene to provide psychological and legal support to the victim if needed, after the pre-trial investigation is complete³. Online reporting in Lithuania

3 More information: <https://uni-form.eu/welcome?country=LT&locale=lt;>

is also available via the website www.manoteises.lt/pranesk/, by the CSO Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Police, the Human Rights Monitoring Institute and the European Foundation for Human Rights⁴.

Specifically for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in academic environments in **Lithuania**, reports of victims and witnesses in Vilnius University and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre can be submitted in the Trust Line (trust@cr.vu.lt and pasitikejimolinija@lmta.lt respectively)⁵, while employers of the Vytautas Magnus University can report discrimination to the existing mechanism⁶.

2. The UniDiversity research findings

2.1 Social/demographic profile of participants

The questionnaires were filled in by a total of 1.079 respondents from all partner countries. Explicitly, the Greek participants were 251, the Lithuanian participants were 575 and the Italian participants were 253.1

In terms of the distribution of participants amongst the target groups per country, it is presented in the following chart. Due to the low percentages of civil society members and the 'other' group in the **Lithuanian** sample, the results presented in the following chapters concern students and academic staff.

51% of the **Greek** students, 29.3% of the staff members, 51.9% of the civil society members and 41.7% of the 'other' group identified as LGBTI+. Out of the total number of students and academic staff from **Lithuania**, 24,9% and 9,4% identified as LGBTI+, respectively. Almost half of the **Italian** sample (45.9%) self-identified as LGBTI+.

In terms of hours spent in the university per week, the most frequently selected options for **Greek** students were 8 hours or less and 9-16 hours, whilst 17-27 and 9-16 hours were the ones for university staff. The majority of **Lithuanian** students spend 8 or fewer hours and 9-16 hours at the university, while the most selected options for academic staff were 28-40 and 9-16 hours. 27.2% of the **Italian** respondents expressed that they spend between 28 and 40 hours at the university and 21.3% spend between 9 and 16 hours, while the same number spends more than 40 hours in the academic environment.

2.2 Discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, based on SOGISC in the academic environment

Although a great percent of respondents from all three participating countries reported to perceive that the frequency of several discriminatory incidents in academic environments is low (rarely happen), it should be noted that this prevalence does not mean inexistence. Discriminatory incidents, ranging from negative comments because people behave in a different manner compared to the one expected from their perceived gender to sexual attacks because of people's SOGISC, are still prevalent in Greek, Italian and Lithuanian academic environments.

Greek students found that negative stances and less favourable treatment because people do not behave as expected on the basis of their perceived gender are expressed significantly less often compared to people who did not belong to any of the three groups (students, staff, civil society). The same applied to people's exclusion from events and verbal harassment because of their SOGISC. In terms of sexual attacks, students and staff members

⁴ More information: <https://manoteises.lt/pranesk/>;

⁵ More information: <https://www.vu.lt/en/about-vu/equal-opportunities> & <https://lmta.lt/lt/lmta-pradedas-veikti-pasitikejimo-linija/>

⁶ More information: <https://www.vdu.lt/lt/kontaktai/praneskite-apie-diskriminacija/>

believed that they happen less often, compared to respondents belonging to the 'Other' group, who found that they take place rarely to sometimes.

Italian survey respondents seemed to believe that negative comments and less favourable treatment because people's behaviour does not comply with their perceived gender, the use of derogatory terminology, and the experience of prejudices on the basis of SOGISC are the most frequent discriminatory incidents in academic environments, taking place 'sometimes'. Deadnaming, misgendering, verbal harassment and people not being heard because of their SOGISC were identified to take place less often.

Most university students and staff members' responses from **Lithuania** indicated that they believe that discriminatory incidents in academic environments are rare to inexistent. Nonetheless, students found that deadnaming and misgendering take place significantly more often, compared to university staff. The same applied to people not being equally heard, being excluded from events, and being physically and sexually attacked because of their SOGISC.

2.3 The level of visibility of LGBTI+ individuals, rights, issues and representation in the academic environment

University staff members from **Greece** were significantly more likely to believe that LGBTIQ+ people are accepted in universities, compared to the 'Other' group; nonetheless their mean answers were neutral to 'maybe yes'. Most **Lithuanian** students and staff had a positive image in terms of the acceptance of the community in the academic environment; professionals were more likely to have this view. Most of the **Italian** sample remained neutral, while approximately similar percentages believe that LGBTIQ+ people are and are not respected in universities.

Greek university professionals were also more positive, compared to the other three groups, in terms of open LGBTIQ+ staff members in academic environments, whereas no discrepancies were found in terms of the existence of open LGBTIQ+ students; the same applied to **Lithuanian** professionals in terms of open LGBTIQ+ staff members, in comparison to students. The majority of students and almost half of professionals from the two aforementioned countries reported to be unaware of open LGBTIQ+ academic staff members. Approximately two thirds of the **Greek** and half the **Lithuanian** sample found that there are open LGBTIQ+ students in their academic environment. The answers of **Italian** participants were polarised, with similar answers in terms of knowing and not knowing open LGBTIQ+ staff members, while more respondents believe that there are open LGBTI+ students.

Greek professionals appeared to be more positive for the potential discussion of LGBTIQ+ issues in universities, compared to civil society and the 'Other' group, with their answers ranging from 'neither yes, nor no' to 'maybe yes'. Approximately half of the students believe that there are classes that LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed, while this applied to two thirds of professionals. Half students indicated to have participated in such classes, where LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed positively or neutrally. In terms of academic staff that participated to the survey, almost half of them suggested to have taken part in such classes, where relevant issues are never discussed negatively. One third of **Lithuanian** students and staff believe that LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed in universities, with professionals being slightly more positive, and more than half did not find that there are classes where such issues are discussed, while the majority has not attended lectures that included relevant topics. Nonetheless, participants who have attended relevant classes reported that LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed in a positive or neutral way. The majority of the **Italian** sample remained unsure or reported that LGBTIQ+ issues are not discussed in academic environments, but almost half the sample identified classes where LGBTI+ issues are discussed, as well as relevant events. More than half of the **Greek** students reported that no relevant actions have taken place in universities during the past years, whereas half the academic staff had the opposite view. The relevant percentages of the **Lithuanian** sample were higher.

2.4 Characteristics of discriminatory incidents

One of the most common forms of discrimination respondents have heard of or witnessed in universities of all participating countries is the use of LGBTQI+ terms in an insulting way, while negative comments and prejudices constitute other common forms in **Greece** and **Lithuania**, compared to other discriminatory incidents. **Greek** university students and staff stated to have also heard of or witnessed less favourable treatment due to a person's SOGISC and misgendering of trans people. Violence has been reported to take place less often in **Greece** and **Lithuania**, with verbal harassment being the most prevalent form of violence. However, the percentages of the frequency of discrimination in **Lithuania** were much lower compared to those reported by **Greek** participants.

In terms of the respondents' perceptions on the prevalence of discriminatory incidents, they are in line with their experiences. **Greek** and **Lithuanian** students and professionals believe that the most common discriminatory incidents in their university are negative comments against an LGBTI+ person due to their SOGISC and the use of LGBTQI+ terminology in an insulting way against an LGBTI+ person. Less favourable treatment, comments/referrals to LGBTI+ people because of their SOGISC, misgendering and deadnaming were perceived to take place less often in **Greek** respondents' universities, while exclusion from events was believed to occur less frequently. It should be underlined that at least two thirds of the **Lithuanian** participants believe that the incidents described above never happen in their universities. Despite the low percentages, verbal harassment against an LGBTI+ person was believed to be the most frequent form of violence in the two countries. It should be noted that **Greek** participants indicated higher percentages of verbal, physical and sexual violence, in comparison to **Lithuanian** students and staff, the vast majority of which found that physical and sexual violence never occurs in their universities. The Italian report did not include relevant data.

According to the **Italian** and **Greek** survey respondents, the most common identity of the perpetrators is students, followed by research/teaching, administrative and other staff members. On the other hand, the **Lithuanian** sample could not specify the identity of the perpetrators; nonetheless, university staff are more likely to believe that their colleagues are usually the perpetrators of such incidents, while students are more likely to believe it is their peers. Most **Greek** civil society members elaborated that the gender of the perpetrator is usually male, the victims are usually students and their gender is usually male or non-binary.

In terms of the areas discriminatory incidents often take place, **Italian** and **Greek** participants found that these most often occur in the open areas of the campus, such as the halls, the yards and the cafeterias, followed by the university classrooms. **Greek** students further reported that these are the areas they have most often experienced discrimination, while less reported to have experienced such incidents in the staff board offices, during online group work and staff board meetings. Additionally to halls, yards and the cafeteria, professionals reported to have experienced discrimination in the staff board offices and less mentioned the classrooms, or during staff board meetings and group work. On the other hand, although the **Lithuanian** sample appeared to be unsure regarding the most common areas discriminatory incidents take place, academic staff was more likely to identify staff board offices as the most common place, whilst students are more likely to believe that they most frequently occur in classrooms, the cafeteria and during online group work.

2.5 Identified training needs for the academic community

The majority of **Italian** and **Lithuanian** university students and staff members have not participated in any training regarding LGBTQI+ issues during the five years preceding the survey; almost half of the **Greek** respondents of each of the aforementioned groups stated the same. On the other hand, the majority of **Italian** and **Greek** participants from both groups were interested in participating in training for the integration of inclusive practices in their everyday life, while half of the **Lithuanian** students and approximately one third of the university staff reported

the same. Some **Lithuanian** and **Greek** participants indicated that the training they have attended took place in the university, school or other organisations.

Greek respondents that have participated in relevant trainings explained that they pertained terminology, forms of discrimination and violence, intersectional identities that increase the possibility for an individual to face discrimination, LGBTQI+ rights, social inclusion, SOGISC, inclusiveness and the representation of the community in the media. **Lithuanian** respondents elaborated that the topics of the relevant trainings included tolerance, gender stereotypes and sexuality education, emotional support for LGBTI+ people, LGBTQI+ rights, important contacts, terminology and the “Baltic pride” event. Moreover, training also helped to communicate with LGBTI+ people without insults, ways to work with LGBTI+ clients and their family members (addressing psychologists and social workers) and ways to come out.

In terms of the topics of such a training, **Greek** students were more interested in terminology, the psychological effects of SOGISC-based LGBTQI+ discrimination, the national situation of LGBTQI+ rights, the different forms of discrimination and the legal framework. University staff from **Greece** appeared to be more interested in existing good practices, ways to integrate inclusive practices in everyday practices, terminology and teaching strategies for a more inclusive approach. Students and academic staff from **Lithuania** included good practices implemented in other countries, terminology and ways of integrating inclusive practices in their everyday practices in the topics that such a training should focus on. Other mentioned topics included ways to change the negative attitude towards LGBTI+, and what psychological and managerial measures to apply in order to reduce the number of homophobic individuals in the scientific/work environment. Students added information on the national situation of LGBTQI+ rights and staff mentioned the legal framework in the topics that should be integrated. **Italian** participants identified terminology, the national situation of LGBTQI+ rights, ways to integrate inclusive practices and teaching strategies for a more inclusive approach in the most preferred topics.

Greek and **Lithuanian** participants elaborated that such trainings could incorporate the experiential aspect, or could have the form of a workshop or an open discussion, whilst they added on other topics that would be useful in the context of the aforementioned trainings, which pertained:

Empowerment and awareness raising of LGBTQI+ people to be open about their identity/identities and exercise their rights;

One of the **Greek** participants belonging to the academic staff group added that it would be useful for a document to be the output of such a training that could be communicated to the Hellenic Universities Rectors’ Synod.

It should be noted that some **Lithuanian** respondents expressed that there is no need for this kind of training, that the LGBTI+ community is against nature and should be treated as a disease and that there are no crucial issues regarding LGBTI+ in academic environments – researchers waste their time analysing it and that there are other topics, which are more important -, raising questions about Lithuania’s academic community openness and acceptance to diversity and especially LGBTI+ students and staff members.

3. EU Recommendations

Bearing in mind the existing situation in the three participating countries, as stipulated by the above presented results, the following recommendations are proposed, for the formation of more inclusive academic environments in Europe:

Promotion and Protection of Rights

- Further encouragement of the States to include sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics in the protected grounds of hate speech and hate crimes and additional monitoring of the integration of the EU Directives in the national legal contexts.
- Monitoring mechanisms, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, on SOGISC-based discrimination should be established in universities, where all stakeholders will be able to report such cases, in order to reduce the dark figure of such incidents, i.e. the committed crimes that are not reported. At the same time, awareness raising actions should be implemented, so that stakeholders are encouraged to report relevant cases.
- Further research needs to be made on the discriminatory incidents against LGBTQI+ people in universities, while data should be widely disseminated to relevant authorities, such as the University Rectors, the relevant universities' Commissions and the Ministries of Education.
- Researchers and policy and decision makers should work collaboratively, in order to exploit findings to provide solutions to the current needs and cover existing gaps.
- All interested parties, including university students and staff, should be given the chance to actively participate in the development and establishment of inclusive policies, may it be through research, official statements, calls for proposals or consultations, in order for practices to address the real-life needs of all actors involved in academic environments.
- Official procedures on the reporting of anti-LGBTQI+ crimes should be established, informing professionals of relevant authorities of all the steps that need to be followed, to ensure the protection of victims' rights and the criminal justice procedures. All guidelines and practices should be regularly evaluated and updated when needed, to insure their constant improvement.
- A safe space should be created so that not only students, but also academic staff members can freely express their identity in a protected, trustful, non-discriminative environment. In this context, information could be provided on ways to handle discriminatory incidents, as well as on the steps that should be followed.
- Support groups could be established in universities, where anonymity is secure and mutual understanding is ensured. Peer support could further encourage students and staff to be open about their identity.
- Cooperation between universities and civil society organisations should be established, in order to build a bridge between the academic environment and the community, to promote research, awareness raising and free expression.
- Education and Training
 - Constant training should be provided to all university staff on the current situation, legal framework and inclusive practices that should be applied. Such training should be organised following a top-to-bottom approach, and under the auspices of the competent authorities and Ministries.
 - Training, seminars and activities on LGBTQI+ issues should be widely disseminated, in order to reach as many interested people as possible. Universities' websites should be constantly updated with available programmes, while university staff should promote them through their classes.
 - Sexual education and LGBTQI+ issues should be integrated in the existing educational curriculum, starting from an early age, in order to instill tolerance and democratic values to students and contribute to them becoming active citizens and, potentially, advocate for human rights.
 - Regular research should be conducted on the current training needs of professionals and students, considering that this is a dynamic topic, depending on the existing curriculum topics and the participation in relevant events.
- Awareness Raising
 - Actions on awareness raising and information provision should be more often organised in the context of academic environments, in order for all parties to be acquainted with the different barriers and dis-

crimination faced by LGBTQI+ people in universities and in society in general.

- Information regarding the different options for reporting should be available and widely disseminated through different media, so that victims and by-standers (if and when applicable) are aware of their options.
- More awareness raising activities should be organised in order to contribute to the visibility of the community and existing barriers, and enrich the discussions around these topics.
- Universities should be encouraged and supported not only to participate, but also organise awareness raising actions, seminars and other activities, while professionals should be supported to integrate such topics in the existing lectures.

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