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Reaching Further: Decentralising LGBTQI Youth Activism

Report of the study session held by IGLYO
in cooperation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
27 - 31 May 2024

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe



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Executive summary

Between May 27 and 31, 2024, IGLYO hosted a study session titled “Reaching Further: Decentralising LGBTQI Youth Activism” at the European Youth Centre in Budapest. The study session aimed to address the marginalisation and lack of access to rights experienced by LGBTQI youth living in rural areas. This report highlights the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the study session, offering a comprehensive overview of the event's outcomes and future implications.

IGLYO, the world's largest LGBTQI youth and student network, seeks to support the rights of LGBTQI youth, particularly those facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as those in rural areas. These young people face unique challenges, including social stigma, lack of support networks, and limited access to LGBTQI-friendly services. The study session aimed to empower LGBTQI youth activists to decentralise their work, advocate for LGBTQI rights at the local level, and build networks and visibility outside urban areas.

The specific objectives of the study session included understanding the mechanisms behind the negative health and social outcomes for LGBTQI youth in rural areas, sharing good practices for decentralising activism, acquiring skills for community organisation and advocacy, drafting recommendations for various stakeholders, and developing follow-up plans for participants to implement in their local contexts.

To achieve these objectives, the programme included discussions on the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas, networking sessions, workshops on digital communication, community-building, advocacy and stakeholder engagement. As a result of in-depth discussions and exchanges during the workshops, participants drafted recommendations on how to include and empower LGBTQI youth living in rural areas (see Appendix IV) and developed action plans for implementing these recommendations locally.

The study session identified three primary challenges: limited access to LGBTQI-specific services in rural areas, economic dependence and transportation issues preventing access to urban services, and the conservative nature of rural communities leading to increased social pressure and isolation. To address these challenges, participants suggested educating local service providers about LGBTQI issues, raising public awareness, mapping LGBTQI-friendly services, extending public services to rural areas, decentralising LGBTQI organisational efforts, implementing anti-discrimination policies, and establishing safe spaces and support networks in rural areas.



Participants recognised that while local, national, and international LGBTQI NGOs, as well as local governments and service providers, hold significant responsibility for implementing these changes, the Council of Europe also has a critical role. The Council should set standards for member states, exert political pressure, and provide funding for initiatives benefiting LGBTQI rural youth.

The study session aims and objectives are aligned with the Council of Europe's priorities for youth, specifically the priority "living together in peaceful and inclusive societies". The recommendations developed during the session will be disseminated to the Council of Europe's SOGIESC Unit, Youth Department, and Advisory Council on Youth.

In addition to policy recommendations, participants developed local action plans, such as creating queer solidarity networks, opening community centres for queer youth, and delivering awareness training for local authorities. These action plans aim to bring tangible improvements to the lives of LGBTQI youth in rural areas.

The evaluation of the event was overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting the importance of the connections and community built during the session. These networks provide crucial peer support and foster future cooperation among LGBTQI NGOs across Europe.

Moving forward, IGLYO will support the implementation of the recommendations through micro-grants and continuous guidance to participants. The study session provided a critical platform for addressing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas, and the proposed solutions and action plans hold significant potential to improve their lives through decentralised activism, enhanced support systems, and advocacy for inclusive policies.

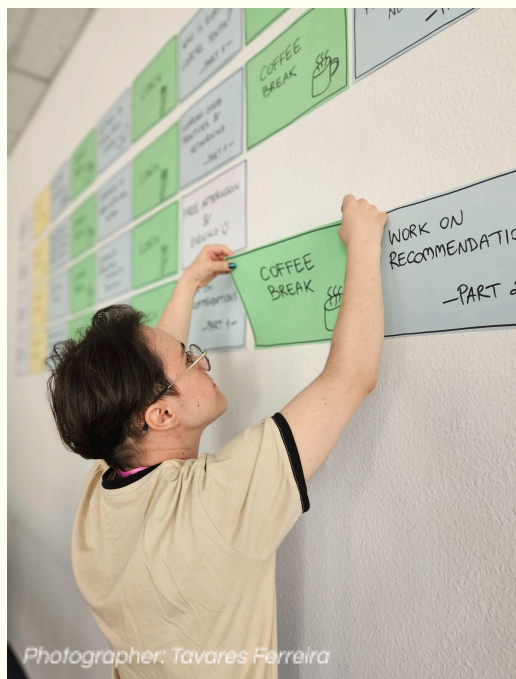


Report

Introduction

Between 27 and 31 May 2024, IGLYO hosted at the European Youth Centre of Budapest a study session titled “Reaching Further: Decentralising LGBTQI Youth Activism”. The study session aimed to address the marginalisation and lack of access to rights experienced by LGBTQI youth living in rural areas.

In this introduction, you can find an explanation of the relevance of this topic, an overview of the aims and objectives of the event, a summary of the contents tackled and their relevance for the Council of Europe, and finally a description of the profile of participants. In the following sections of this report, we will highlight the results and conclusions of the study session and describe the programme in more detail, before touching upon the planned follow-up activities. In the appendix, you can find the programme of the study session, the list of participants per country, links to the dissemination activities delivered, and the set of recommendations drafted by participants in the course of the study session.



Photographer: Tavares Ferreira

IGLYO, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth & Student Organisation, is the world’s largest LGBTQI youth and student network, counting more than 110 Member Organisations in 40 countries across the Council of Europe Region. Our mission is to strengthen the rights of LGBTQI youth, fight for equality and inclusion, and empower LGBTQI youth voices. IGLYO represents the diverse rights and intersectional needs of LGBTQI young people and works hard to ensure that their futures are bright.

IGLYO strives to support the rights of LGBTQI youth in their diversity, with a special attention to those particularly marginalised and facing multiple discrimination. This is the case for rural LGBTQI youth. Young LGBTQI people living in rural areas are disproportionately affected by social stigma, and by the lack of social connections and peer support systems.

Moreover, LGBTQI young people in rural settings face more social pressures to comply with traditional gender roles and norms, and capacity-building and leadership programmes often fail to involve young people outside of urban settings.

Indeed, many member organisations of IGLYO have raised concerns in the last few years over the lack of attention paid to rural LGBTQI youth. LGBTQI organisations that provide support and services for the community are often based in bigger cities, while service providers and local authorities outside of urban areas are often not aware of queer identities. Finally, there is a lack of representation, visibility and peer-support of LGBTQI people outside of big cities.

With this study session, IGLYO wanted to address this issue. Indeed, the aim of the study session was to develop the competences of LGBTQI youth activists on how to decentralise their work and reach rural areas, how to advocate at the local level for LGBTI rights and how to build networks and raise visibility outside of urban areas. This aim directly addresses the challenges identified before.

The specific objectives of the study session were formulated as follows:

- Acquire an understanding of the mechanisms that cause young LGBTQI people living in rural areas to have disproportionately negative health/mental health and social outcomes.
- Acquire knowledge of existing models of decentralisation of activism and services, through peer exchange of good practices, including best practices in the use of technology for the inclusion of youth in rural areas.
- Acquire a range of skills relevant to working with young LGBTQI people in rural areas and raise their visibility, in the fields of community organisation, community-based advocacy, the use of internet, social media and technology, and working with local authorities and service providers.
- Contribute to a set of recommendations to IGLYO, youth organisations, local service providers and the Council of Europe to reach and support young LGBTQI people living in rural areas.
- Elaborate a follow-up plan on how each participant will use the competencies acquired in their own local environment and raise visibility of queer youth living in rural areas.



To achieve the first objective, the study session included discussions on the specific characteristics of rural areas and on the different challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas.

In connection to the second objective, the programme included a networking session and an expert session on the use of digital tools for community-building in rural areas.

When it comes to skills-building, the study session offered workshops on the human-rights based approach to policy and on how to map local stakeholders; on how to interact with local authorities; on how to build communities online and offline; on how to design an advocacy action plan; and on how to use Council of Europe instruments for local-level advocacy.

Finally, several hours were dedicated to drafting recommendations addressed to IGLYO and other youth organisations, to local service providers, and to the Council of Europe (which you can find in appendix IV). Participants also elaborated in small groups action plans to implement the recommendations in their own local contexts.

This study session, and particularly the recommendations targeted to the Council of Europe, were particularly timely considering the current work of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on a recommendation on the social, economic, and political participation of rural youth (CM/Rec(2024)). IGLYO aimed to provide direct input to the work of the Council of Europe on this topic by including the perspectives of LGBTQI people. Furthermore, the study session contributed to two priorities of the programme Youth for Democracy and Human Rights of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, namely Young people's access to rights and Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies.

When recruiting participants for this study session, we targeted LGBTQI youth who grew up or currently live in a rural area, and/or have experience working with LGBTQI youth in rural areas, and/or want to work (more) with LGBTQI youth in rural areas. Young LGBTQI people with experience in working with state institutions and/or service providers in the field of education, health and social welfare were prioritised. We wanted participants who could rely on their lived experiences to identify directly the challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas, who could exchange good practices of how to build communities and decentralise activism in rural areas, and who could apply the lessons and skills learnt during the study session in their own contexts.



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This study session was a cooperation between IGLYO and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, as part of the Youth for Democracy programme.



Thanks to a careful selection process, the final group of 26 participants perfectly matched this profile, with a majority of participants with lived experience of growing up in rural areas and currently working in rural areas, but also participants working for LGBTQI organisations based in cities but interested in branching out to rural areas.

A strength of the group of participants was also its geographical variety: we welcomed participants from 18 different countries across the whole of Europe: from the North, to Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Caucasus. This geographic diversity proved very enriching for the discussions during the study session, by bringing in different perspectives and realities of LGBTQI youth. The full list of participants is available in Appendix II.

Results and conclusions

From the study session, the challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas emerged very clearly, together with a set of possible solutions and recommendations.

Three main challenges were underscored by participants:

- Service provision in rural areas is scarce and difficult to access. This means both that young queer people do not have access to LGBTQI-specific and LGBTQI-friendly services, but also that often there is no real choice when it comes to picking a service. In education, this means that if a young person experiences bullying or harassment, they will not be able to switch to another school. In (mental) healthcare, if the only service provider in the area is not educated on LGBTQI issues, young people will not have the possibility to go to another one.
- From the above, it is clear that in many cases young queer people can find adequate services only in urban areas. These are also the areas where one can more easily find LGBTQI organisations, queer spaces and communities. However, transportation from rural to urban areas is scarce, time-consuming and expensive. This often puts young queer people in a situation of economic dependence from their family, that is not always accepting of their identity. In the absence of significant efforts to decentralise services, including forms of peer support and community-building, young queer people in rural areas experience loneliness, marginalisation and poor mental and physical health.
- Finally, rural areas are generally more conservative, and people are more exposed to judgement from the wider community. Being outed in a rural area can have a greater impact than in an urban environment, because of the characteristics of a more tight-knit, conservative community, and because of the lack of peer support networks. This compounds the challenges of young queer people in relation to loneliness, mental health, and dependence on their families.

Having identified these challenges, the main solutions suggested involve:

- Educating local service providers about LGBTQI identities, issues and rights.
- Raising awareness among the general public about LGBTQI identities, issues and rights.
- Mapping LGBTQI-friendly services so that young queer people can be safer when accessing services.

- Extending the network of public services to rural areas and establishing mobile public services.
- Decentralising the efforts of LGBTQI organisations to rural areas, and funding LGBTQI projects focused on rural areas.
- Implementing anti-discrimination policies among local service providers and local governments, including inclusive education policies and school policies against bullying and school dropout.
- Establishing safe spaces and support networks in rural areas.

While participants underscored that the biggest responsibility for implementing these changes sits within local, national and international LGBTQI NGOs, and more importantly within local governments and local service providers, the Council of Europe also has a role to play by:

- Setting standards for Member States and local authorities.
- Exerting political pressure on Member States and local authorities to implement the measures suggested.
- Providing funding to initiatives focused on benefitting LGBTQI rural youth.

More details on the recommendations elaborated by participants can be found in appendix IV. The recommendations will be disseminated to the SOGIESC Unit, Youth Department and Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.



Besides developing these recommendations, participants also worked in small groups, based on geographic regions of origin, on an action plan to implement some of the recommendations at the local level. These action plans proposed projects such as creating a queer solidarity network to provide and redistribute resources, opening a community centre for queer youth in rural areas, delivering awareness training for local authorities and law enforcement, opening LGBTQI associations in schools, and much more.

Most participants of this study session are members of local, national and regional NGOs working on LGBTQI rights, and therefore they also have the resources and connections to potentially apply some of the recommendations and/or implement some of the action plans in their own local context. IGLYO stays at their disposal to provide future support and guidance, also in the forms of micro-grants. Every year IGLYO disburses some short-term grants for projects to their members based in the EU. In 2025, one stream of this grants programme will be especially dedicated to rural LGBTQI youth, and we will encourage participants of the study session to apply for it.



The evaluation of the event by participants was overwhelmingly positive. Besides having fully achieved the foreseen learning objectives, participants also stressed that the study session provided them with an opportunity to network, bond and create friendships with people with similar experiences. As stated before, queer youth living in rural areas are particularly marginalised and lonely, for many of them, it was the first time experiencing community and being in a group where they could be fully themselves.

Even though networking and building connections is always an important part of an international event, it emerged clearly that in this case the need for community was even stronger. Therefore, the connections built during the study session are to be considered an important outcome of it, as they will provide our young participants with a peer support network for the future, as well as foster cooperation between different LGBTQI NGOs.

Programme – inputs and discussions

The programme of the study session was structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas, facilitate the exchange of best practices and the upskilling of participants, and develop recommendations and actionable plans for decentralising activism.

An important element of the study session was the coherent thematic progression, or “red thread”, that wove through the entire programme. This red thread ensured that each day’s activities and discussions built upon the previous ones, creating a cohesive learning journey that guided participants from understanding to action. Moreover, weaving together themes of community building, skills development, advocacy, and reflection, each day built upon the previous, creating a comprehensive and impactful learning experience that equipped participants with the tools, knowledge, and networks needed to effectively support LGBTQI youth in rural settings.

Specifically, the study session programme started from creating a common understanding of what it means to live in a rural area and which challenges young queer people can face, then moved into different sessions focused on skills-building and sharing good practices, and finally finished with drafting recommendations on the inclusion and empowerment of LGBTQI youth in rural areas, and action plans on how to implement such recommendations at the local level. The full programme is available in appendix I.

Introduction and setting the scene

The study session kicked off with a welcome and team building session in the morning of day 1, which set the tone by establishing ground rules, introducing the programme, and addressing accessibility needs. This foundation was crucial for fostering a sense of community and safety among participants.



Photographer: Kayra Atasoy



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The session in the afternoon of day 1, titled “Who is LGBTQI Rural Youth?”, focused on understanding the unique experiences of LGBTQI youth in rural areas through personal narratives. In the first part of the session, participants came up collaboratively with a definition of rural areas, which was then the basis for further discussions. The definition reads:

A rural area is a place that has a low and scarce population density, is usually not well connected, and where opportunities are more limited because of lack of services, and access to resources. Rural areas are also outside of political, economical, social and cultural centres, and far from big cities. Often the economy of rural areas is based on agriculture.

Rural areas can be conservative and traditional, which can bring more social pressure to conform. The members of the community are very connected with one another which can result in lack of anonymity, as information circulates very easily. While rural areas are often perceived as more conservative and traditional, it's important to recognize that this stereotype can reinforce negative prejudices and overlook the diversity and potential of these regions.

In the second part of the afternoon session, participants identified the main challenges faced by LGBTQI youth living in rural regions: these were grouped into macro thematic areas, which were the basis for drafting recommendations on day 4. In this way, the topics of the recommendations emerged directly from the discussions among participants and from their lived experiences. The six areas identified as particularly challenging and needing improvement were: healthcare; mental health; community spaces, youth groups and activism; poverty homelessness and economic dependence; education; digitalisation and information.



As a result of these afternoon sessions, participants gained a deep understanding of the experiences of LGBTQI youth in rural areas and established a strong sense of community and trust among themselves.

Skills building

In the course of day 2, 3 and 4, participants received different workshops aimed at acquiring a range of skills relevant to working with young LGBTQI people in rural areas and raising their visibility. On the second day, the study session featured workshops on how to map services using a human-rights based approach, and how to engage with local actors. These sessions were designed to enhance participants’ abilities to map local services and engage effectively with local service providers.

As a result, participants developed practical skills for mapping services and engaging local actors and gained an enhanced understanding of rights-based approaches. Both sessions were based on *T-kit 15: Participatory youth policy*, by the CoE-EU Youth Partnership.

On the third day, the focus shifted to community building and community organising, and specifically to how to use digital tools to create networks and raise visibility of LGBTQI people in rural areas. Participants learned how to leverage technology for advocacy and outreach, particularly in rural settings, and explored strategies for creating supportive networks and fostering solidarity among rural LGBTQI youth.

As a result, participants acquired knowledge on using digital tools to bridge geographical gaps and enhance advocacy efforts, and developed strategies for effective community-building and organising. The workshop on Digital Tools was delivered by Daniel Grist (Communications Officer at Rural Youth Europe), who provided insights on using digital tools for effective advocacy and outreach, especially in rural settings.



Finally, the morning of day 4 was focused on acquiring skills and knowledge on policy and advocacy. The first workshop of the day introduced participants to the concepts of policy, advocacy and lobbying, presented different examples of local-level advocacy in different European countries, and prompted participants to discuss whether those cases were successful, why, and what could they learn from them.

After this session, participants received expert input from two representatives of the Council of Europe: Gabi Calleja (Senior Policy Advisor at the Council of Europe's SOGIESC Unit), and Péter Török (Member of the Advisory Council on Youth). Gabi Calleja delivered a presentation on the Council of Europe framework for the protection from discrimination based on SOGIESC, through standard setting and monitoring, and the role of the SOGIESC Unit in this.

Péter Török presented the Advisory Council on Youth and in particular their work linked to the priority “Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies”, including the Draft CM/Rec(2024) on the social, economic, and political participation of rural youth. Their input was very important to enable participants to better understand the policy context of the Council of Europe and therefore draft relevant recommendations targeted to this institution.

Furthermore, participants learnt how NGOs can engage with the Council of Europe by, for example, participating in the monitoring of its standards or cooperating with the Advisory Council on Youth.

Sharing good practices

One important element of the study session was the sharing of good practices on the inclusion and empowerment of LGBTQI youth living in rural areas, with a focus on the decentralisation of activism and services. This element was mainstreamed in the whole programme, as most sessions allowed participants to share their experiences and learn from each other.

The afternoon of day 2 was specifically dedicated to sharing good practices and networking. In the first part of the session, participants had the chance to present their own local organisation, thereby showcasing their work and facilitating networking and future cooperation. This session was particularly appreciated by participants, who enjoyed learning more about the work of other activists from all around Europe.

In the second part of the session, participants engaged in a theatre of the oppressed activity with the aim to perform different scenarios of challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas and intervening to find solutions.

Drafting recommendations and action plans

The afternoon of day 4 and the morning of day 5 were dedicated to drafting recommendations addressed to IGLYO, youth organisations, local service providers, and the Council of Europe. Participants worked in six thematic groups, each one dedicated to one of the main challenges identified on day 1.

They were provided with instructions on how to draft recommendations and with a template to follow, and were encouraged to incorporate in the recommendations the knowledge acquired during the previous days, as well as the outcomes of discussions and reflections.



Participants also had the chance to receive feedback on their work from other participants and from the preparatory team, before finalising and presenting the outcomes of their work. The recommendations drafted by participants can be found in appendix IV.

Subsequently, on the last day of the study session, participants worked in small groups based on their geographic origin, to devise action plans on how to implement some of the recommendations in their local context.

Evaluation

At the end of the study session, participants reflected on the overall outcomes and their participation in the study session. Key takeaways from the participants' evaluation include overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 20 out of 24 respondents stating their experience was very positive.

Participants felt safe and formed bonds, which is particularly significant for youth in marginalised situations. They appreciated the interactive and creative layout of the sessions, which accommodated different learning styles.

Additionally, participants gained awareness of LGBTQI rural youth experiences in various countries, acquired new ideas applicable to local contexts, learned facilitation methodologies, and built confidence in working with governmental bodies and NGOs.

Outputs

The study session produced several key outputs, including the aforementioned set of recommendations on the rights of LGBTQI youth in rural areas (included in appendix IV). Participants also designed action plans to implement these recommendations at the local level. Additionally, as an output, the session reinforced peer support and fostered collaborations across borders, creating networks among participants.



Photographer: Kayra Atasoy

Link to the Council of Europe programmes and instruments

First, this study session aligns with the 2024-2027 Priorities of the Council of Europe youth sector, and in particular with priority 3: "Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies". By empowering participants to take action to decentralise LGBTQI youth activism and advocacy for better service provision for LGBTQI youth in rural areas, the study session wants to combat intersectional discrimination (based on SOGIESC characteristics and geographic location), as well as increase the capacity of LGBTQI youth in rural areas to participate in democratic society. The study session also directly contributes to another aspect of this priority, namely to enhance the inclusion and social, economic and political participation of young people from rural areas.

Second, this study session aimed to provide direct input to the Draft CM/Rec(2024) on the social, economic, and political participation of rural youth. For IGLYO it is crucial that the perspectives of LGBTQI youth are integrated in this recommendation, so as to address intersectional discrimination. For this reason, representatives from the Advisory Council on Youth and from the SOGIESC Unit of the Council of Europe were engaged directly in the study session, and will receive a summary of its outputs. In this way, and thanks to the support of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, a direct link was established between the young participants of the study session and institutional actors in charge of policy-making.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this study session constituted a practice activity for one trainee of TRAYCE - Training of Trainers for Youth in the Council of Europe, while another trainee job-shadowed the work of the preparatory team as part of their learning programme.



Remaining questions

Despite the progress made, several questions remain:

- How can the proposed action plans and solutions be sustained over the long term?
- What strategies can effectively engage local authorities and ensure their commitment to implementing inclusive policies?
- How can the impact of decentralised activism and newly implemented services be measured and evaluated?

Concluding, the study session provided a critical platform for identifying the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas and developing comprehensive strategies to address these issues. The proposed solutions and action plans, aligned with the Council of Europe's priorities, hold the potential to significantly improve the lives of rural LGBTQI youth by decentralising activism, enhancing support systems, and advocating for inclusive policies. The recommendations and action plans formulated during the study session are crucial steps towards achieving these goals.

Follow-up activities

The follow-up to this study session takes different dimensions.

First, IGLYO will disseminate the recommendations developed by participants to relevant stakeholders, including the SOGIESC Unit, the Youth Department and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.

On an internal level, the recommendations addressed to IGLYO and other youth organisations will be presented to IGLYO board members, who will discuss a plan for the implementation of some of them. It is relevant to also mention that IGLYO board members are involved in local and national LGBTQI NGOs that are members of IGLYO. Because of this, IGLYO board members also have the possibility to disseminate such recommendations at the local and national level and to adopt good practices which emerged from the study session.

Second, participants are invited to use the recommendations targeted to local service providers to lobby for change at the local level. IGLYO staff will remain available to them in case they need help or advice with this. Furthermore, participants have developed action plans for the implementation of the recommendations with the aim of giving them a concrete roadmap to apply the skills and knowledge learnt during the study session in their own contexts, with the support of their local organisations and of IGLYO. IGLYO remains at the disposal of participants for advice and guidance after the study session.

Furthermore, in 2025 IGLYO will offer a micro-grant for a short-term (9 months) project focused on LGBTQI youth in rural areas. This is a way to ensure the sustainability of the results of the study session and provide financial support to participants who may want to implement some of the projects developed through the action plans.

Through these different actions, IGLYO wants to ensure the sustainability of the results of the study session, continuous support to LGBTQI youth living in rural areas, and cooperation with the Council of Europe.



Photographer: Kayra Atasoy

Appendix I: final programme

Monday 27 May 2024

| Time | Session | Aim |
|-------|--|--|
| 09:15 | <u>Intro of the Day</u> | |
| 09:30 | <u>Welcome Plenary</u> Welcome by the EYCB director, Introduction to the programme, ground rules, Code of Conduct and accessibility needs | To ensure that participants feel welcomed, informed, and prepared to actively engage in the programme by establishing ground rules, introducing the programme's structure, and addressing accessibility needs. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 11:30 | <u>Expectations, Getting to know each other and team building, reimbursement presentation</u> | To address the concerns of the participants, to get to know each other and to build a good team spirit for the upcoming days. |
| 13:00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| 14:30 | <u>Who is LGBTQI rural youth? (Part 1)</u> | To establish a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and obstacles encountered by LGBTQI young individuals living in rural areas. |
| 16:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 16:30 | <u>Who is LGBTQI rural youth? (Part 2)</u> | To deepen participants' understanding of the lived experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas through personal narratives, fostering empathy and solidarity among participants. |
| 18:00 | <u>Reflection groups</u> | |
| 19:00 | <i>Dinner</i> | |
| 20:30 | <i>Board games night</i> | |

Tuesday 28 May 2024

| Time | Session | Aim |
|-------|--|--|
| 09:15 | <u>Intro of the Day</u> | |
| 09:30 | <u>Mapping services in local context and human rights-based analysis of services</u> | To learn how to apply a rights-based approach to the mapping of local services for queer youth in rural areas. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 11:30 | <u>Skills building: strategies to work with local actors</u> | To foster cooperation with local service providers, such as schools, counselling offices, educators, non-formal education spaces, health professionals, etc. |
| 13:00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| 14:30 | <u>Sharing good practices/networking (Part 1)</u> | To create a platform for young activists to get to know each other's work and learn from each other. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 16:30 | <u>Sharing good practices/networking (Part 2)</u> | To create a platform for young activists to get to know each other's work and learn from each other. |
| 18:00 | <u>Reflection groups</u> | |
| 19:00 | <i>Dinner</i> | |
| 20:30 | <i>Film screening</i> | |

Wednesday 29 May 2024

| Time | Session | Aim |
|-------|--|--|
| 09:15 | <u>Intro of the Day</u> | |
| 09:30 | <u>Expert input: Digital tools</u> Expert: Daniel Grist, Rural Youth Europe | To equip participants with the knowledge and skills to leverage technology for effective advocacy and outreach, particularly focusing on the |

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| | | unique challenges faced by LGBTQI youth in rural areas. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 11:30 | <u>Community-Building, Community Organising</u> | To define and explore the importance of community building and solidarity among rural LGBTQI youth. |
| 13:00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| 14:30 | <i>Free afternoon and dinner out in the city</i> | |

Thursday 30 May 2024

| Time | Session | Aim |
|-------|--|--|
| 09:15 | <u>Intro of the Day</u> | |
| 09:30 | <u>Skills-building: Local level and community-based advocacy</u> | To be able to use advocacy techniques to improve the rights of queer youth in rural areas. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 11:30 | <u>Knowledge and Skills building: Introduction to SOGIESC and Youth policy in the Council of Europe</u> Speakers: Gabi Calleja - Senior Policy Advisory of the Council of Europe's SOGIGESC Unit; Péter Török - Member of the Advisory Council on Youth | To introduce participants to the work of the SOGIESC Unit and of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe. |
| 13:00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| 14:30 | <u>Work on recommendations (Part 1)</u> | To produce a set of recommendations for IGLYO, youth organisations, local service providers and the Council of Europe, by compiling the knowledge gained in the previous days and by doing further research. |
| 16:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 16:30 | <u>Work on recommendations (Part 2)</u> | To produce a set of recommendations for IGLYO, youth organisations, local service providers and the Council of Europe, by compiling the knowledge |



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| | | gained in the previous days and by doing further research. |
| 18:00 | <u>Reflection groups</u> | |
| 19:00 | <i>Dinner</i> | |
| 20:30 | <i>Free time</i> | |

Friday 31 May 2024

| Time | Session | Aim |
|-------|---------------------------------|---|
| 09:15 | <u>Intro of the Day</u> | |
| 09:30 | <u>Finalise recommendations</u> | To finalise a set of recommendations for IGLYO, youth organisations, local service providers and the Council of Europe, by compiling the knowledge gained in the previous days and by doing further research. |
| 11:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 11:30 | <u>Action plan (Part 1)</u> | To brainstorm ideas for the upcoming months and develop an initiative participants can implement in their organisations/in the areas where they live. |
| 13:00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| 14:30 | <u>Action plan (Part 2)</u> | To finalise action plans and give feedback on the ideas proposed by participants. |
| 16:00 | <i>Break</i> | |
| 16:30 | <u>Evaluation and Closing</u> | To measure the outcomes, the overall participation, the learning process of the participants, and bring symbolic closure to the experience. |
| 18:00 | <i>Free time</i> | |
| 19:00 | <i>Dinner</i> | |
| 20:30 | <i>Karaoke night</i> | |



Appendix II: List of participants

Participants

| Country | Full name | Organisation |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Albania / Albanie | Blin Sali | Alliance Against LGBT+ Discrimination |
| Armenia / Arménie | Emilya Nikoghosyan | / |
| Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan | Akif Musayev | / |
| | Nigar Safarova | Minority Azerbaijan |
| | Rəşad Huseynov | Genderhub Azerbaijan |
| Belarus / Biélorussie | D.K. | New Regions |
| Belgium / Belgique | Giulia Meco | / |
| Bulgaria / Bulgarie | Kamelia Tzeneva | Lespectra Association |
| Cyprus / Chypre | Tayfun Altaner | Queer Cyprus Association |
| Finland / Finlande | Francis Tähttiliija | Seta – LGBTI Rights in Finland |
| | Matias Hyvärinen | Transfeminiinit ry - Transfeminina rf |
| France / France | Venus Aves | ILGA World |
| | Margot Marivingt | / |
| | Ugo Ziccarelli | SOS homophobie |
| Germany / Allemagne | K Severin | / |
| Greece / Grèce | Lampro | Colour Youth - Athens LGBTQ Youth Community |
| Italy / Italie | Aurelio Pellegrin D'Olivo | Gruppo Trans APS |
| | Zhazgul Almazbekova | / |

| | | |
|--|-----------------|--|
| Kazakhstan | Merey Kulmyrza | PF "Education Community" |
| Republic of Moldova / République de Moldavie | Cristian Rotari | GENDERDOC-M Information Centre |
| Serbia / Serbie | Damjan H. | / |
| Slovenia / Slovénie | Nai Štagar | TransAkcija Institute |
| Türkiye / Turquie | Su Yücel | |
| United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni | Chloe Dudgeon | Dumfries & Galloway Council Youth Work Service |
| | Harry W. | / |
| | Theodore Nguyen | Mermaids |

Preparatory team

Ali Bodo

Ophélie Masson

Tavares Ferreira

Ralu Baci

Lecturers

Daniel Grist

Communications Officer at Rural Youth Europe

Course director

Viola Bianchetti

Educational advisor

Sulkhan Chargeishvili

Appendix III: Communication activities



The open call for the study session was promoted through social media (see promotional posts 1 and 2), [website](#) and newsletter. A [communications kit](#) was also circulated with IGLYO partners to help with the dissemination.

A photographer was present during the study session and the photos taken during day 1 and day 4 were shared in four different social media posts across all platforms (Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter/X).

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Promotional post 1 | Instagram | LinkedIn | Facebook | Twitter/X |
| Promotional post 2 | Instagram | LinkedIn | / | Twitter/X |
| Study session post 1 | Instagram | LinkedIn | Facebook | Twitter/X |
| Study session post 2 | Instagram | LinkedIn | Facebook | Twitter/X |
| Study session post 3 | Instagram | LinkedIn | Facebook | Twitter/X |
| Study session post 4 | Instagram | LinkedIn | Facebook | Twitter/X |

Information regarding the programme of the study session was shared with participants through the [GlueUp website](#).

Appendix IV: Recommendations

Healthcare

Authors

- Theodore Nguyen
- Cristian Ronaldi
- Aurelio Pellegrin D'Olivo
- Damjan H.

Definition of the right:

Right to accessible medication to treat and prevent HIV and STIs, and right to accessible trans-specific healthcare for trans people in rural areas.

Description of the challenge to this right.

Queer young people living in rural areas often have to travel to cities and more densely populated areas to access sexual health care. Oftentimes the lack of medical centres or accessible medication means that people in less densely populated areas are less knowledgeable of the possible symptoms of sexually transmissible infections. They are, consequently, less likely to seek treatment. The lack of communication and resources means there is also less understanding of the possibilities available to them for trans-specific healthcare care. Trans-specific healthcare is also often expensive and therefore inaccessible.

LGBTQI youth in villages face limited access to specialised medical services, such as ARVs, PrEP and hormone therapy and other trans-specific healthcare, due to poor medical infrastructure and long distances from urban centres. Social stigma and discrimination from medical staff discourage them from seeking help. Poor information and education makes access to appropriate services worse. High costs and lack of medical insurance make treatments unaffordable. Reduced privacy and fear of social repercussions prevent them from accessing the services they need for their health.

In Serbia PrEP without any additional costs is around 50 euros per month, which is 14% of minimum wage, and it's also only available in the three major cities of the country (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis) which become an additional cost to the patient to reach. Also, to get gender-affirming care you have to travel to the capital to get approval, and this process takes no less than a year.

In Italy, there are an estimated 400.000 trans people. Yet, there are only 102 services related to them, many of which cannot even offer medication or gender-affirming care and the majority of which are only in a few densely populated areas (Rome, Florence and Bologna). This leaves queer people living in rural areas to be completely isolated and have no possibility of getting the care they need.

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Young LGBTQI people in rural areas have access to sexual health care and trans-specific health care.

- Better support for people living in rural areas who live with HIV or need treatment or prevention for HIV and other STIs.
- Accessible hormonal therapy and medication related to sexual health and well-being, and other trans-specific healthcare.

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

- Implement a strict policy about confidentiality of medical databases for LGBTQI people.
- Develop medical infrastructure and extend the services in rural areas.
- Campaign of awareness in rural areas.
- Elaboration of guides and organisation of workshops for medical workers.
- Cost-efficient treatment for both the patient and the state (such as having a nationwide warehouse for medication).

Recommendations for IGLYO and other youth organisations

Recommendation 1: Mapping of services

Reach out to NGOs and organisations in countries with little access to medical and trans-specific healthcare to understand how to reach rural areas and understand their needs.

Anticipated Impact: youth organisations get a better understanding of where resources are most necessary

Recommendation 2: Outreach to target group

Hosting events that focus on accessing trans-specific healthcare and medical care in rural areas, so youth organisations can interact with people who are directly impacted by the lack of care

Anticipated Impact: Allows for patients to have direct knowledge of which services are available and learn how they can access them

Recommendation 3: present policy recommendations

Reach out to medical institutions on governmental ministries with findings to directly improve services.

Anticipated Impact: Increase the population's faith in medical institutions as a result of the improved services, and their reputation for providing quality care.

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: Survey on local needs

Reach out to queer local youth (e.g. via surveys or questionnaires) that may be in need of these services, and map out where they're most necessary

Anticipated Impact: Clearer understanding of the medical needs which will provide a foundation for further planning.

Recommendation 2: Communication within medical institutions

Make a centralised network for cross-pharmacy and clinic internal communications

Anticipated Impact: This will provide faster access to medications and healthcare, and allow for more efficient dialogues between medical professionals.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: Incentives for governments

Give benefits and higher standing to the countries that actually do extend their pharmaceutical services to rural areas

Anticipated Impact: Become a stronghold for queer rural youth and their reference point.

Recommendation 2: Pressure governments

Put pressure on local authorities and governments to change their policies on healthcare

Anticipated Impact: Help people to access the relevant medication and healthcare.

Recommendation 3: Supporting authorities with funding

Provide funding or help to access funding for local governments to be able to deliver these services.

Anticipated Impact: Local governments will actually implement these recommendations and provide people with adequate healthcare.

Mental Health

Authors

- Giulia Meco
- Matias Hyvärinen
- Nigar Safarova
- Francis Tähttililja

Definition of the right:

Right to access mental health services.

Description of the challenge to this right.

- Queer youth struggle more with mental health than youth in general.
- There are not enough LGBTQI therapists in rural areas with training on issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.
- Financial issues to access therapy: services are expensive for youth if you need to access private remote (online) providers.
- Lack of information in local language: most of the remote (online) services are in English or other non-local languages for youth.
- Stigma regarding mental health problems in rural areas: going to a therapist and having mental health problems is often stigmatised in rural areas.

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Every young queer person living in a rural area has access to mental health.

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

- Training more therapists and mental health professionals about issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.
- Add mandatory courses on LGBTQI-specific mental health challenges to universities training therapists and all the professionals working with mental health (nurses - social workers).
- Free mental health consultation for youth: offer remote (online) services in local languages for LGBTQI youth. E.g. online support chat to talk with therapists.
- Decrease stigma and raise awareness about mental health.
- Allocate more funds to mental health support.
- Pressure governments to invest more money in mental health support, with help from the Council of Europe.

Recommendations for IGLYO and other youth organisations

Recommendation 1: Develop a Handbook to Support Mental Health Professionals Working with Queer Youth

Youth organisations could collaborate with NGOs specialising in mental health issues to create a comprehensive handbook. This handbook would offer guidance and recommendations on how to effectively engage with and support queer youth, particularly those in marginalised contexts such as rural areas. It should include actionable recommendations and best practices, illustrated with concrete examples, to ensure mental health professionals can implement these strategies effectively. This initiative aims to raise awareness among mental health professionals, reducing the risk of discrimination and trauma for queer youth.

The handbook should be translated into all the languages of the Council of Europe and made available online in PDF format. In addition, it would be beneficial to conduct in-person training sessions based on the handbook and develop online video lessons that professionals can access at their convenience. Providing a participant certificate for mental health professionals who complete the training would also be advantageous.

Anticipated Impact:

- **Improved Communication:** Mental health professionals will be better equipped to communicate with queer youth, fostering an environment of understanding and support.
- **Reduced Discrimination:** With increased awareness and education, the likelihood of discrimination against queer youth by mental health professionals will significantly decrease.
- **Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes:** Queer youth will experience improved mental health outcomes due to receiving appropriate, empathetic, and informed care.
- **Increased Trust in Mental Health Services:** As queer youth see that mental health professionals are knowledgeable and supportive, their trust in mental health services will grow, encouraging more individuals to seek help.
- **Professional Development:** Mental health professionals will benefit from the additional training and certification, enhancing their skills and professional credentials.
- **Community Benefits:** The broader community will benefit as mental health professionals apply these inclusive practices, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive society.
- **Policy Influence:** Successful implementation and positive outcomes may influence policy changes and encourage the adoption of similar initiatives in other regions or sectors.
- **Resource Availability:** The availability of multilingual and easily accessible resources ensures that a wider audience can benefit from the information, promoting widespread adoption of best practices.

Recommendation 2: Online Survey to Determine Discrimination Experienced by Queer Youth in Rural Areas Accessing Mental Health Support

Develop an online survey to assess the extent of discrimination experienced by queer youth living in marginalised rural areas when accessing mental health support.

The survey should be distributed through IGLYO member organisations operating in rural areas to ensure a broader reach and to collect diverse data.

The collected data will be fundamental in understanding the needs of queer youth living in rural areas. This will enable more precise and targeted actions to achieve the concrete objective of improving mental health access for queer youth.

Anticipated Impact

- Understand better what queer youth living in rural areas need in order to access mental health support.

- The data collected from the survey can inform IGLYO about the specific challenges faced by queer youth in rural areas when accessing mental health support.
- The survey results can raise awareness about the discrimination faced by queer youth in rural areas among the general public, mental health professionals, and LGBTQI advocacy organisations. This increased awareness can lead to greater advocacy efforts to address these disparities and promote inclusivity in mental health services.

Recommendation 3: Online Database to map queer therapists

Create an online and interactive map where queer youth living in rural areas could find a therapist living nearby and/or speaking their language and ally they could reach out and contact in case of need.

IGLYO could carry on this mapping work in collaboration with queer organisations working in each country and ask them for suggestions on LGBTQI-friendly therapists. The map should be updated from time to time, so possibly it should be interactive e.g. people could suggest therapists they know and IGLYO in collaboration with local support groups could double-check if those therapists are allies or not.

Anticipated Impact: Queer youth will have a database of professionals they can rely on.

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: Visible indications to mental health service providers that the space is safe for LGBT youth

Visible indications help LGBTQI youth to recognize service providers and spaces that are safe for them and that have the tools and resources to work with LGBTQI-specific mental health challenges. It can be physical material i.e. stickers, posters, pride flags and business cards. It can also be a digital indicator i.e. emojis, social media or written indications.

Anticipated Impact: LGBTQI youth will know that the service provider is safe for LGBTQI-related topics and they have the tools and knowledge to offer safe service for them. The indicators help LGBTQI youth even in rural areas and when accessing services remotely to feel more safe and not stigmatised when working with a mental health professional.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: Benefits for states that support NGOs offering free mental health consultation

More fund allocation allows local NGOs to offer LGBTQI-safe and accessible mental health consultation for free. It protects the rural youth's right to access mental health services.

Anticipated Impact : When NGOs are able to offer free, LGBTQI-safe and accessible mental health consultation remotely, it allows rural youth to access it safely and anonymously. In the long run, it eases the pressure on public health services and targets especially the rural youth in vulnerable positions.

Community spaces, youth groups, activism

Authors

- D.K.
- Chloe Dudgeon
- Tayfun Altaner
- Emilyya Nikoghosyan

Definition of the right:

- Right to education
- Right to your own private life
- Right to be free from discrimination
- Right to assemble and protest, and participate in politics
- Right to legal protection

Description of the challenge to this right.

A lack of safe spaces, resources and support for rural LGBTQI youth to come together, impacting on activism and representation within the community.

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Rural communities and youth spaces in rural areas are inclusive towards LGBTQI people. Young LGBTQI people have access to spaces to practise activism. LGBTQI youth see themselves represented in different positions and professions.

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

Ensure that rural schools and community centres have designated safe spaces for LGBTQI youth.

Steps:

- Work with school administrators and community leaders to designate and equip safe spaces.
- Provide training for staff to manage and support these spaces effectively.
- Promote the safe spaces to LGBTQI youth through outreach and engagement campaigns.

Recommendations for IGLYO and other youth organisations

Recommendation 1: Outreach Programs

Organise outreach programs specifically tailored to reach LGBTQI youth in rural areas. These programs can include workshops, support groups, and social events to provide a safe space for these individuals to connect, share experiences, and access resources.

Recommendation 2: Funding Pots

Create dedicated funding pots specifically aimed at supporting initiatives that benefit LGBTQI rural youth. These funding opportunities can be used to finance projects, events, and services that address the unique needs and challenges faced by LGBTQI individuals in rural areas. By providing financial support, organisations can empower local communities to implement programs that enhance the well-being of LGBTQI rural youth.

Recommendation 3: Accreditation Program

Establish an accreditation program that recognizes and rewards organisations that demonstrate a commitment to supporting LGBTQI rural youth. This program can set standards for inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility, encouraging youth organisations to prioritise the needs of LGBTQI individuals in rural settings. Accredited organisations can gain credibility, attract more funding, and effectively showcase their dedication to creating safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQI rural youth.

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: Anti-discrimination policies

By implementing anti-discrimination policies, local service providers and local governments can create a safer environment for LGBTQI individuals in rural areas. This will reduce the risk of discrimination and harassment, promoting a sense of security and belonging.

Recommendation 2: LGBTQI sensitivity training for law enforcement

Providing sensitivity training for law enforcement officers can improve the safety and trust of LGBTQI individuals in rural areas. This will lead to more respectful and supportive interactions, reducing the risk of mistreatment or discrimination.

Recommendation 3: Safe spaces and support networks

Establishing safe spaces and support networks tailored to the needs of LGBTQI individuals in rural areas can offer vital resources and assistance during times of crisis. This can help mitigate the impact of discrimination, isolation, or violence, promoting the well-being and safety of LGBTQI individuals.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: Develop and implement inclusive education policies

The Council of Europe should work with member states to provide guidance in developing and implementing comprehensive policies that mandate the creation of safe spaces for

LGBTQI youth in rural schools and community centres. These policies should include guidelines for setting up safe spaces, criteria for what constitutes a safe space, and provisions for continuous monitoring and support.

Anticipated Impact:

- **Standardisation and clarity:** Schools and community centres will have clear guidelines to follow, ensuring consistency and quality across different regions.
- **Legal Backing:** Policies will provide a legal framework that supports the creation and maintenance of safe spaces, making it easier to secure funding and resources.
- **Enhanced Protection:** LGBTQI youth will benefit from legally mandated protections and support, leading to safer and more inclusive environments.

Recommendation 2: Allocate dedicated funding and resources

The Council of Europe should establish a funding program specifically dedicated to supporting the creation and maintenance of safe spaces for LGBTQI youth in rural areas. This program should cover expenses related to training, educational materials, physical space modifications, and ongoing support initiatives.

Anticipated Impact:

- **Resource Availability:** Schools and community centres will have the financial means to create and sustain safe spaces without straining their budgets.
- **Equity and Access:** Dedicated funding ensures that even the most resource-constrained rural areas can participate in the initiative, promoting equity across different regions.
- **Sustainability:** Continuous funding can support long-term initiatives, ensuring that safe spaces remain functional and effective over time.

Recommendation 3: Conduct training and awareness campaigns

The Council of Europe should organise and facilitate comprehensive training programs for educators, administrators, and community leaders on LGBTQI issues, safe space management, and inclusive practices. Additionally, they should run awareness campaigns to inform the public and LGBTQI youth about the existence and benefits of these safe spaces.

Anticipated Impact

- **Increased Competency:** Educators and community leaders will be better equipped to support LGBTQI youth, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- **Public Awareness and Support:** Awareness campaigns will help reduce stigma and promote acceptance within the broader community, creating a more welcoming atmosphere for LGBTQI youth.
- **Youth Engagement:** LGBTQI youth will be more likely to utilize the safe spaces if they are aware of them and understand their purpose, leading to increased usage and effectiveness of the spaces.

Poverty, homelessness and economic dependence

Authors

- Ugo Zicarelli
- Harry W.
- Margot Marivingt
- Blin Sali
- Meredy Kulmyrza

Definition of the right:

- The right to safe housing: creating shelters, safe LGBTQI spaces that should be sustainable (autonomous and independent);
- The right to privacy and dignity;
- The right to work: fair wages, decent living conditions, access to benefits and social security;
- The right to quality education: to solve the problem of discrimination, violence and bullying in schools;
- The right to legal support;
- The right to access public services: transport, utilities, social security;
- The right to access information: free access to the Internet, information, and knowledge of how to use the Internet.

Description of the challenge to this right.

In rural areas, LGBTQI youth face various problems:

- Lack of support after prison: after people leave prison, they often find themselves without any support and turn to survival crime (engage in sex work and the sale and/or trafficking of narcotic substances);
- Lack of family support;
- Stigmatization around poverty;
- Domestic violence;
- Lack of resources: insufficient funding for schools, medical institutions, transport;
- Lack of conditions for privacy: lack of access to a bank account, car, information exchange.

One important challenge is the fact that access to public services and public welfare schemes requires an address and a bank account, which is often inaccessible to homeless people and to children and youth living in hostile families. As such, there is an issue of how we can give money and access to public services to these people without them being singled out, in a secure and sustainable way. We acknowledge that solutions like vouchers are often making people suffering poverty feel shameful, and can lead to enhanced bullying for students.

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Young LGBTQI people in rural areas have autonomy, dignity and independence, and do not experience poverty.

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

Overall, the objectives are the following:

- Increase public spending to mitigate poverty.
- Give young people access to community and financial support in case they face poverty.

More in detail:

- Build sustainable LGBTQI youth safe spaces in every rural area.
- Begin a scheme introducing mobile public services for a trial period of 5 years to see the impact they have on local communities. Extend this scheme and make it a permanent resource if the trial is considered positive.
- Provide LGBTQI mental health support in each rural school and implement recommendations on inclusive education.
- Have free, gender-neutral and accessible hygiene spaces in every town (toilets and shower facilities).

Recommendations for IGLYO and other youth organisations

Recommendation 1: Support the creation of autonomous and accessible queer spaces in rural areas through grants.

Youth organizations such as IGLYO could ally with town officials and farmers to open autonomous and accessible queer spaces in rural areas, or provide funding to help organizations develop these kind of initiatives. It would revitalize rural areas, promoting existing work there. For youth experiencing poverty, this is a solution to provide a shelter, a place to live and also a community space to rest and exchange.

The creation of these hybrid spaces (work/community) is a way of raising young people's autonomy and financial independence. It helps fight isolation by providing a shelter and a community space.

Recommendation 2: Promote and organize networks of sharing resources.

Taking on the idea that young people do not often have access to effective public transportation and public services overall, youth organizations could promote the sharing of resources from urban to rural areas and from rural to rural areas. One idea is for instance to have mobile vans with multiple resources and with community services (STD testing, trans-specific resources, mental health resources, etc.) or to organize car shares to take young people to healthcare specialists or queer events. It is important that these solutions are thought out with communities and queer youth themselves to ensure reciprocity.

Having urban queer organizations and people travel to and enter rural areas, also through digital tools, would enhance community-making and identity-making for rural youth, and promote empowerment. Fighting the isolation of rural youth is also a mean of giving them access to resources that are inaccessible otherwise.

Recommendation 3: Participate in community life in rural areas by joining public spaces and events.

Very often, urban organizations go towards rural areas by directly proposing events or solutions that are all thought out without consulting people living in rural areas. Instead, we want to emphasize the idea of joining public spaces and events and think of solutions together with the rural communities. This would imply for example going to rural fairs, spaces in municipal councils or to markets.

The main goal is to promote a new approach of reaching rural communities and to enhance community-building in the long term, by making youth organizations and/or queer organizations actors of these spaces and not simply visitors.

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: Implement mobile public services to go towards isolated rural areas.

Public services are often concentrated in cities and urban areas, where the population is the densest. This creates inequality in access to rights and resources, leading to poverty. Instead, public services should visit rural areas and towns who experience poverty and lack of services. This could take the form of mobile vans offering different services and gathering different professional figures, such as a social security assistant, a health care professional doing STD screenings and/or a community worker. Such an idea is currently being implemented in France.

The main goal is to tackle poverty by attacking one of its causes, which is distance to public service.

Recommendation 2: Fund rural schools on the condition that they implement plans to act against students being bullied and dropping out.

Rural schools are often underfunded and have trouble applying inclusion strategies for LGBTQI students, for example through comprehensive sex education programmes or better representation in school materials. Due to underfunding, it can be more difficult for them to tackle bullying. Though, these hostile conditions can lead queer kids to drop out of school, which can create barriers to access higher education and the labour market, which in turn can either provoke or reinforce poverty in the future. Therefore we propose an increase in public spending on schools, but on the condition that schools apply measures to tackle bullying and school dropout (using existing solutions and the help of youth/queer organizations). It is also important to promote trauma-informed care and knowledge of neurodivergence as these are often important issues for students who experience difficulties in following education properly.

With this solution, we aim to have an impact both on inequalities in funding of rural schools and on vectors of poverty and dependence in these areas. This would empower students as well and make education more inclusive if these solutions are thought out with them.

Recommendation 3: Have free, gender-neutral and accessible hygiene spaces in every town (toilets and shower facilities).

Dignity is an important human right to take into account when fighting against poverty. The issue of toilets is very essential in promoting quality of life and access to water and hygiene. Every town must invest in having a freely accessible space that would help homeless people, especially migrants, to have a more dignified life and to be able to access jobs more easily. Often bathrooms require a fee - most often payable by card - which is a barrier for those without an address.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: Promote the idea of a global wealth tax, building on the work of the UN Tax Convention and the work of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty.

It is necessary to promote a fairer global tax policy that aims at redistributing wealth and going against international abuses and promoting human rights. International work has already started at the OECD and UN levels and the Council of Europe could play an important part in promoting this idea as well. We recognize that rural areas are more difficult for tax administrations to go to, so we suggest tackling first the lack of equality in taxation to then enhance investment of public spending.

Training programmes on rural youth

Authors

- Su Yücel
- Akif Musayev
- Rəşad Huseynov
- Zhazgul Almazbekova

Definition of the right:

- Freedom of assembly
- Right to attend social events.
- Right to your own private life (e.g. Introducing yourself as you wish).

Description of the challenge to this right.

In many European countries, LGBTQI people are still not allowed to form /create groups with the aim of protecting human rights and advocating for their own rights. For example, Students in Mersin University were not allowed to create a student club which was based on

human rights in 2020. Similar episodes have happened in other Universities in Turkey, where LGBT clubs have been closed in the years since 2020.

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Queer students are able to form groups within their schools and universities without facing discrimination from school administration.

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

Have students put pressure on school administration through an anonymous e-petition.

Implement anti-bullying sessions or sessions on human rights for social workers and teachers in school

Support the opening of LGBTQI clubs in schools.

Recommendations for IGLYO and other youth organisations

Recommendation 1: Provide training

Youth organisations could provide training for social workers and teachers, so that they can be more educated on LGBTQI issues and more inclusive.

Recommendation 2: Increasing the visibility of local NGOs events

Raising the profile of local LGBTQI NGOs can contribute to broader public awareness and education efforts, reducing stigma and discrimination through increased visibility and representation.

Recommendation 3: Creating an international website for queer youth to share experiences

A website can provide a safe space for queer youth to connect, share their stories, and support each other, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Educators and peers who read these stories may become more aware and sensitive to the issues faced by queer students, leading to a more inclusive and supportive school environment.

Recommendation 3: Provide materials and resources.

Youth organisations can support the set-up of sustainable LGBTQI clubs in Universities and schools by providing information materials and resources.

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: Funding from local government

Local governments should support the training of school staff and the creation of LGBTQI clubs through funding.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: Recognise this project as a good practice to be adopted across Member States

Member States should be incentivised to adopt this system of supporting LGBTQI clubs in schools and Universities.

Digitalisation and information

Authors

- Kamelia Tzeneva
- Nai Štagar
- Lampro
- K Severin
- Venus Aves

Definition of the right:

- Right to access information
- Right to participate in cultural life
- Right to privacy
- Right to safety
- Right to freedom of opinion and expression
- Right to freedom of assembly and association
- Right to internet access

Description of the challenge to this right.

- Social media and traditional media outlets fail to regulate hateful content.
- Social media platforms are not neutral and need to be democratised.
- In many CoE countries hate speech also comes from high-level politicians, thereby legitimising hate speech and hate crime.
- Queer youth in rural areas are disproportionately affected by digital abuse because of isolation.
- Many queer people in rural areas face violence online because there are no functioning regulations. While this is not an issue specific to rural youth, it's perhaps even more present among them as they are more reliant on online communities than urban youth

Goal of the policy recommendation.

Queer youth, especially in rural areas, are able to freely create and participate in online spaces, while being safe and protected on all websites and platforms

Objectives of the policy recommendation.

Create a binding document for all member states to appoint an independent national regulatory organ comprised of civil society sector representatives and experts to monitor the actions of government, media and other opinion-shaping bodies in powerful positions, making sure that they secure safe environments for LGBTQI youth; including:

- ensuring that all media outlets, social media platforms and government information channels have zero tolerance for hate speech;
- creating a reporting feature for hate speech/ hate crimes;
- Create a policy brief with guidelines for hate speech and discrimination to distribute among responsible bodies.

Sanctions are applied to companies if they don't comply with hate speech regulations.

Do research on the national level about whether social media platforms prevent or enhance the creation of safe, democratic queer online spaces

Recommendations for local service providers and local government

Recommendation 1: to provide municipal mobile vans which travel according to need to rural areas and provide mobile devices and free internet so that access is improved; as well as to provide free trainings on safe use of online environments

Anticipated Impact: All young people in rural areas, including LGBTQI youth, can freely and safely access the internet, and are equipped with the capacity and resources to be active digital citizens.

Recommendations for the Council of Europe

Recommendation 1: For the CoE to develop concrete guidelines on LGBTQI youth online rights to be followed by each member state, with the inclusion of an independent national regulatory organ to monitor traditional media, social media platforms and government information channels

Anticipated Impact: Safer online places for queer rural youth to express themselves, form communities, get informed, etc., which would result in improved mental health, empowered young people, better employability and school performance, social skills, etc.