

# LGBT EDUCATION

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GLOBAL NEWS: UNITED NATIONS

## UN adopts anti-bullying resolution but deletes references to homophobia

On 24 November, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution against bullying, but played down all references to homophobic bullying.

### *Downgrading from "recalling" to "noting"*

A coalition of conservative countries lobbied to cut all references to homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, to gender and to discrimination. For example, the UNESCO report on homophobic bullying is an important source of evidence. But the reference to the

UNESCO report was downgraded from "recalling" to "noting". Another report mentioning homophobic and transphobic bullying was written by The Special Representative on Violence against Children. This also was downgraded from "recalling" to "taking note of the submission of" in the resolution. In UN jargon, "recalling" means: "we generally agree with what's in this document". While "taking note", or worse: "taking note of the submission of" means, "We understand this document exists but we don't say we agree with it."

Even more general language about gender, stereotypes and discrimination were downgraded. In this case, the resolution changed "urges" to "encourages."



## ***There is hope***

Still, there is some progress. There will be a report from the Special Representative on Violence against Children to the General Assembly 2016.

After the adoption there was a strong statement by Chile on behalf of a long list of progressive states. Chile expressed the expectation that the 2016 report will cover bullying against LGBT youth.

Djibouti spoke on behalf of the African group. It threatened Africa will not accept a report that "does not include every country's experience of bullying". This phrase implies that mentioning the existence of LGBT bullying in African countries will lead to rejection of the report by the African coalition.

Activists present at the discussion about this resolution stress that it is very important to provide the Special Representative on Violence against Children with reliable information. We need to prove that homophobic bullying also occurs in other than Western states.



## ***High level conference UNESCO 2016***

In addition to the actions of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, UNESCO plans to organize a high level meeting of Ministers of Education in 2016.

*Image left: The statement about tolerance in the garden of the UNESCO headquarters in Paris*

A global report on the state of homophobic bullying in the world will be presented and discussed. It is hoped the Ministers will adopt a resolution which solidifies the international coalition of countries which support LGBT safety in schools.

Peter Dankmeijer, director of GALE comments: "It is extremely important that activists, sex education professionals and researchers now join forces to inform the national and international authorities about what is going on in our schools. We also need activists to start lobbying their ministers of Education to secure a role in the UNESCO High Level Conference."

Sources: IGLHRC, UNESCO

### **Brazilian boys wearing skirts in school force teachers to respect trans rights**

Teachers from the Pedro II school in Rio de Janeiro who fined a transgender student for wearing a skirt have been forced to back down after her classmates - both male and female - did the same.



#### ***Fines for not behaving according to biological sex***

Maria Muniz, 17, who was born Mario Muniz, said she had never felt happy as a boy and decided to come out by wearing a skirt to school. But the teachers got upset about a boy wearing a skirt. They fined her and ordered her to wear trousers in school.

However, Maria's classmates - including the boys - supported her decision and engaged in protest by all turning up for classes in dresses. They then posted the images on social media where they quickly were widely shared. In Brazil, where heteronormative gender stereotypes are very common, especially the images of boys wearing skirts attract a lot of attention.

#### ***Support empowers transgender student***

Maria said: "I always turned up in trousers but I felt repressed. For me wearing a skirt is expressing my freedom to show who I am inside and not how society wants to see me. I am really happy about the way my classmates supported me and I hope it serves as an example to others to feel encouraged to do the right thing. I was always taught at school to accept who you are, I am only trying to live that."

## **Nôme social**

The civil disobedience of the students is part of a larger social and political process in Brazil to claim the right of transsexuals to choose their own nôme social (social name) in school. The demand to respect ones chosen name reflects the human right of self-expression, which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself and strengthened by the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the rights of the Child.

## **School response**

After the protest, the Pedro II school principal said they were considering relaxing the school rules. His explanation however showed the school still needs some education before they can make a positive and informed decision: "The sexual orientation is not important for us, all our students are equal. However, the uniform rules do state students have to wear male or female clothing. We study a new way of coexistence".

Source:

[http://web.orange.co.uk/article/quirkies/Boys\\_don\\_skirts\\_to\\_support\\_transgender\\_pupil?utm\\_content=buffer39078&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://web.orange.co.uk/article/quirkies/Boys_don_skirts_to_support_transgender_pupil?utm_content=buffer39078&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

## LOCAL NEWS: CANADA

### **Canadian teacher suspended for sticking gay on a pupils back**

In September, a secondary school teacher from Langley in British Columbia, Canada, has been suspended for sticking a sign on a 11 year old students back saying "I'm gay".

#### **The "joke"**

The prank, apparently intended to be funny, was played by Daniel Mark Ogloff, a metal fabrication and machining teacher at Aldergrove Community Secondary School. After allowing other students to take pictures of the victim, Ogloff let him leave the



classroom unaware of the sticker.

The school district has suspended Ogloff for 10 weeks without pay over the incident, and the British Columbia Commissioner of Teacher Regulation suspended his teaching certificate for two weeks.

## "Horseplay"

The teacher later described the incident to school officials as horseplay. Peter Dankmeijer, director of the Dutch expertise centre of sexual diversity and school EduDivers comments:

"Teachers may have a twisted sense of what is horseplay. I once coached a school where a gay student was pushed head down in a toilet pot. Teachers were watching but did nothing, because they considered it horseplay. Luckily, this school had a quality policy.

When the student left school because of the harassment, he and his parents had an exit conversation with the principal. He immediately called in the relevant teachers and questioned them about why this "incident" was not lodged in the incident registration system. When the principal became aware how little awareness there was among

staff, he initiated the first explicit LGBT school policy in the Netherlands. This was a school in a poor neighborhood in a rough environment. The definition of "horseplay" may have different connotations in different class environments. Therefore, a strong school policy which clearly outlines limits of hurting behavior and includes a joint implementation by the staff is required. Dutch research shows such rules and implementation are the prime measure with significant impact on school safety."



Source: <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/09/25/canada-teacher-suspended-for-sticking-im-gay-sign-to-students-back/>

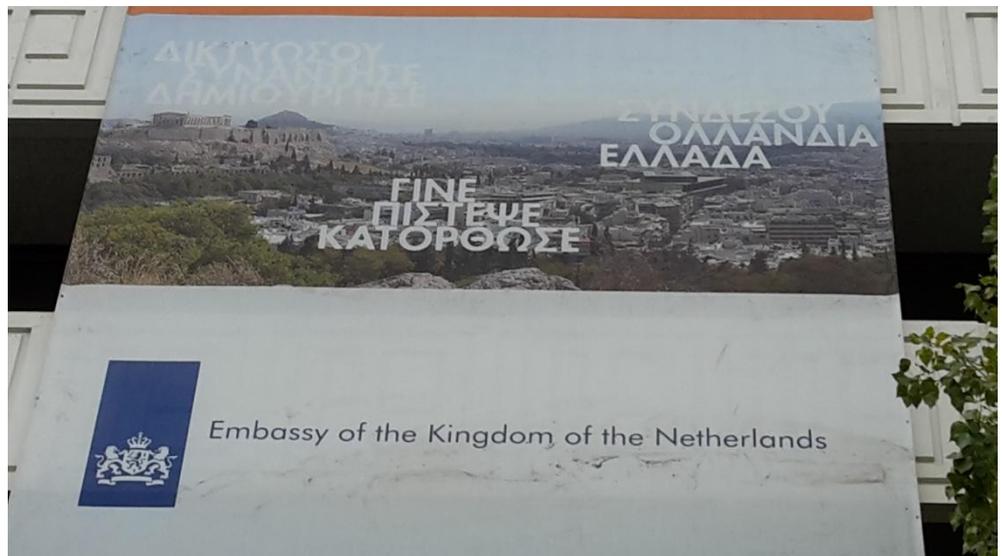


### Greeks ambiguous about their education for LGBT students

During the last weekend of November, GALE facilitated a strategic workshop on implementation of the right to education in Greece. The Dutch embassy graciously offered her conference hall to cater for the 45 participants.

As always, the workshop started by an assessment of the implementation of the right to education by the participants, using the GALE checklist. The first impression of the participants was that

*Image right: billboard on the Dutch embassy, December 2014*



Greece is somewhere between a denying and an ambiguous position. Many participants - mostly experienced teachers and school psychologists, both heterosexual, lesbian and gay - considered the almost complete taboo to discuss sexual diversity as well as sexuality in general in schools, a major reason to score Greece as forbidding and discouraging on most of the 15 checkpoints. However, after more discussion and reconsideration, many participants shifted their opinion. Since attention for sexual diversity is not really forbidden, maybe this should be considered an ambiguous situation. The discussion also gave space for several examples of schools and the government willing to be engaged with diversity issues, although not with much results because of multiple challenges.

#### **The Greek orthodox church**

One of the most serious challenges is the negative influence of the Greek orthodox church on the quality of education. The church actively promotes out of date rigidly heteronormative guidelines for behavior of boys and girls, leading to hyper masculine and potentially violent behavior of men. It also promotes subservient behavior of women which leads to a lack of self esteem and dependent social positions.



Any aberration of the traditional family model and gender roles is rejected, resulting in a strong discrimination of LGBTI people.

The participants agreed that change of the church should come from within the church. To support this, the LGBTI movement should combat anti-religiosity in its own ranks and create space for LGBTI Greek orthodox Christians to organize

themselves. It was recognized this is not an easy task because many LGBTI people has suffered a lot of pain due to the church and religious teachings. To be able to work on this, such frustration needs to be overcome.

## ***The economic crisis***

The economic crisis has hit Greece hard and many people are struggling to survive. This is not an ideal situation to discuss and to promote tolerance and interest for diversity. On the contrary, fear, competition, racism and xenophobia are on the rise. The financial help from the European Community creates ambiguous responses. on one hand Greece needs it. On the other hand, the payment conditions create resentment. Increasingly, "European values" like equality are seen as "colonizing" Greek with foreign ideas. The participants noted a kind of national identity crisis, currently appearing in the shape of a minority complex: feeling powerless and discriminated, and arrogantly superior at the same time. As negative as this sounds, this situation also offers opportunities. Society is now in flux, and people feel the need for change. Especially young people are open to think out of the box. This is an opportunity for diversity strategies, including sexual diversity.

## ***Emerging LGBTI movement***

A final challenge that was identified, is the current state of the Greek LGBTI movement. Most organizations are still small and without funding, a work place or professional support. The Greek government is poor and not yet willing to play a role in professionalization of the main organizations like OLKE. European funding is out of reach because the LGBTI organizations cannot afford the required co-

funding. In addition, there is no tradition of cooperation or strategy development, which constitutes risks of competition and ad hoc activities.

The good thing is that the participants recognized all this and would welcome next steps to improve this situation. The coming together during this strategic workshop helped to come to shared analysis and to start thinking about how OLKE (national LGBTI organization) and the Anti-Homophobia and -Trans phobia Teacher group could partner on a joint strategy and projects. There was a wish to also partner with organizations from other countries to learn how to work strategically and with projects. An immediate concern is how to start such efforts while all activists and teachers are volunteering and at the same time trying to survive on relatively low paid jobs. In addition, the teachers are being threatened with dismissal because there is not enough money for the current number of teachers. They are afraid any dissention may add to the risk of losing their job. Any plan to improve the Greek quality of education needs to take into account that teachers need to be protected against negative repercussions of being critical.

## LOCAL NEWS: CATALONIA

### Catalonia passes historic anti-homophobia law

Catalonia's new anti-homophobe legislation could see offenders fined up to 14,000 for attacks carried out against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGTB).

#### ***Sanctions give teeth to this law***

The Catalan chamber passed the bill on Thursday (2 October) in what has been described as a first in Spain. Without sanctions, this law would be a mere statement of intent. This is meant as a deterrent, Anna Simo, of the leftist Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), was quoted as saying in *El Pais*.

*Image right: back entrance by Gaudí of a famous Barcelona school in Parc Guëll*



## ***Shift burden of proof***

The new legislation is radical because it shifts the burden of proof from the victim to the accused. The law requires the person accused of homophobia to prove their innocence instead of the victim having to prove homophobic intent of the perpetrator. This shift has drawn criticism from the Catholic church and from conservative political groups. The conservative Popular Party (PP) and the Catalan nationalists of Unio had vetoed the law but were outnumbered by the Catalan socialists and other left wing groups.

## ***Spain supportive or ambiguous?***

A global survey published by Pew Research over the summer suggests Spain appears to be the country most accepting of homosexuality worldwide. Eighty-eight percent of those surveyed agreed that "homosexuality should be accepted". Same sex couples have also been allowed to marry since 2005. At the same time, the EU-funded European Men to Men Internet Survey showed that 40 percent of gay respondents and 45 percent of bisexual respondents in Spain had suffered violence or intimidation within a year of the survey. As far as education is concerned, GALE has scored Spain as "ambiguous" rather than supportive because the safety of schools seems to be lagging behind government intentions and because pro-active policy in this area seems to be lacking.



Sources: ILGA Europe [http://www.ilga-europe.org/media\\_library/rainbow\\_digest/2014/october/equality\\_and\\_non\\_discrimination/catalonia\\_passes\\_historic\\_anti\\_homophobia\\_law](http://www.ilga-europe.org/media_library/rainbow_digest/2014/october/equality_and_non_discrimination/catalonia_passes_historic_anti_homophobia_law), EU Observer <http://euobserver.com/justice/125904>



*Image: UNESCO symposium on homophobic bullying*

Next issue:

- UNESCO symposium on homophobic bullying and presentation GALE World Map on Education
- Finnish strategic workshop recommends to rate Finland "ambiguous" rather than "supportive"

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#### Colophon

LGBT EDUCATION 12

20 DECEMBER 2014

Published by the GALE Foundation,  
Supporter of the Global Alliance for  
LGBT Education, [info@lgbt-education.info](mailto:info@lgbt-education.info).

The GALE Foundation is financially  
supported by the Dutch Ministry of  
Education, Culture and Science