

# Trigger Technology Manual

*A guide for facilitators on how to foster sexual diversity sensitivity among students in vocational institutions*

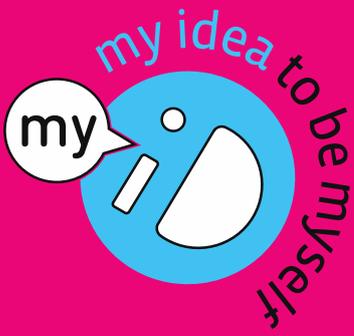
*Eileen Quinn*

## Trigger a discussion on sexual diversity

A guide for facilitators on how to foster sexual diversity sensitivity among students in vocational institutions



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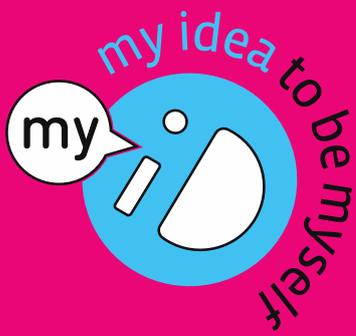


“You hear about these things [homosexuality] on television or when we mock each other, but I never talked about it in school. Actually, I never really think about it that much.”

*17-year-old student from a vocational school in Palermo (Italy)*

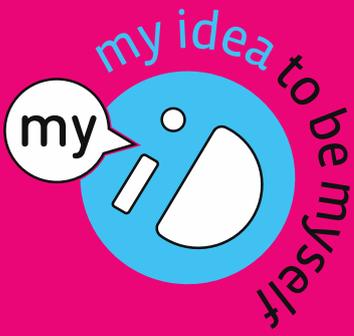
“I mean, if you are *born* gay that’s it, there’s nothing you can do about it, right? But if you *become* gay, that’s deprivation.”

*19-year-old student from a vocational school in Palermo (Italy)*



## Content

Introduction .....	4
About the SENSE project .....	4
How to use this guide .....	5
Be informed .....	6
LGBTI+ .....	6
European research .....	6
Be prepared .....	10
Self-reflection .....	10
Be a trigger for change .....	12
[1] Talk about it and create a safe environment.....	15
[2] Make it simple and celebrative.....	16
[3] Have fun.....	17
[4] Turn students into active agents .....	17
Examples of trigger technologies .....	19
Theatre of the Oppressed.....	19
Suggested steps to take with your class when planning a theatre performance .....	20
Video Making .....	22
Choose your way of filming.....	22
Explore examples.....	23
Think about the storyline.....	24
Stop Motion video.....	25
Photography and visual art.....	30
Colophon.....	34



## Introduction

This manual is aimed at providing a theoretical, as well as practical, guide for educators or facilitators working with young students in vocational education and training (VET) schools. It provides guidance on how to create an artistic product with students which can help them, and their audience, reflect upon an extremely sensitive issue: Sexual diversity, and the discrimination which people who identify as sexually diverse, are exposed to everyday in society. We call this a “trigger” because in this context we use artistic expression not as a goal in itself but as a trigger for discussion and dialogue.

### About the SENSE project

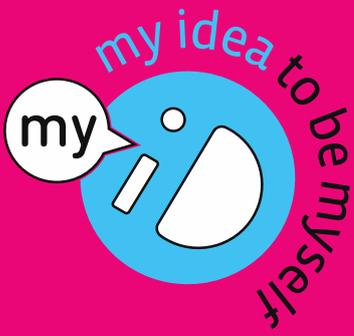
The manual is a central element of the first intellectual output (IO1) of the project **Vocation and Sexual Sensitivity – Sexual Diversity in Social Domain Vocational Training (SENSE)**, 2018-1-NL01-KA202-038973, coordinated by the Stichting Global Alliance for LGBT Education (GALE) based in the Netherlands. The project further sees the collaboration of the following European organizations:

- Fondazione Centro Studi Villa Montesca (Italy)
- Formacion Para el Desarrollo e Insercion, Sociedad Limitada – DEFOIN (Spain)
- Eurotraining Educational Organization (Greece)
- ROC Van Amsterdam – ROCVA (Netherlands)
- European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training – EFVET (Belgium)
- CESIE (Italy)

The project focuses on teaching diversity skills to VET students in the social domain, and its main objective is the social inclusion of both fellow students and their future clients. This becomes particularly urgent in the light of the fact that a growing number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) people have acquired an open lifestyle, meaning they are confronted with professionals in all sectors more often than in the past. Therefore, it is imperative to form students, but also teachers, in VET schools also in the **acquisition of skills which have to do with an ethical and professional management of sexual diversity.**

The instrument chosen in the SENSE project to foster reflection among students and teachers involved in the activities, is that of the **Trigger Technology**. This refers to instruments used to foster a discussion among students. The goal of a trigger is to get attention, create interest and to provide inspiration for further discussion and debate. In earlier projects on sexual diversity, experiences showed that **theatre and short video films**, especially interactive theatre, work very well to engage VET students. However, it is also clear that triggers need to be tailored closely to the attitudes and context of the student target group. If they're not, the triggers will not be considered reliable or authentic and will create defensive feedback. This is a main reason why we have decided in this project to ask VET students themselves to develop the triggers for their own institutions.

But in addition, developing their own triggers will play an important role in assessing the true needs in their own institutions, and developing a trigger will be a valuable professional experience for them. These are innovative elements in this IO. Until now, such theatre performances and videos are only developed by professional theatre



makers and film editors, which guarantees high artistic quality but often limits or even diminishes the pedagogic quality.

Although this manual is meant as a practical guide for the development of a trigger technology with your students, it is important to highlight that each cultural, social and educational setting is unique and will hence most likely require a unique approach to the subject. For this reason, even though the guidelines presented in the following sections will be a useful basis for action and discussion around the topic of sexual diversity, they were designed with the aim of making them as adaptable as possible.

Do not forget that you know your students and only you can tell which activity will work best and how to best carry it. In other words, trust this guide, but also trust yourself as you prepare to develop a trigger technology with your students.

## How to use this guide

The manual has 3 main sections. Each section represents a step to follow in the preparation phase of your trigger technology with your class, based on the belief that preparatory work and methodologies are extremely important when tackling sensitive issues such as sexual diversity with young people.

**Be informed\_** This section provides background information about LGBTI+ students, their experience and anti-LGBTI+ attitudes in Europe. It represents the first step to take: Know the facts about sexual diversity, try to identify with the problem, and then crucially share this knowledge with your class.

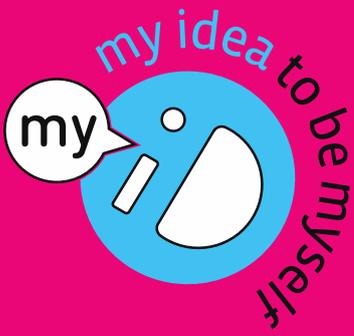
**Be prepared\_** This section provides an overview of some of the most frequent biases against sexual diversity in both adults and young people. The second step is here presented: Try to recognize your personal bias and prejudices against sexual diversity, which be hidden and unconscious.

**Be a trigger for change\_** This section provides the technical and practical guide to develop the trigger with your class. Within this section, you will find 4 macro-steps related to the education approach to take when working with your students on the trigger on sexual diversity. In addition, we present three artistic techniques which you can use as your trigger technology: Theatre of the Oppressed, Video Making, and Photography. The section provides an overview of methodologies, as well as useful practical steps to follow to develop these triggers ideas.

**Work with theatre\_** This section goes into how to work with interactive theatre as a trigger.

**Make a videoclip\_** This section gives detailed information on how to develop a stop-motion animation with your students.

**Make photographic art\_** This section offers suggestions and examples on how to use photography as a trigger tool.



## Be informed

### LGBTI+

Despite some important achievements over the past decades, the situation of LGBTI+ persons is still affected by considerable forms of isolation and discrimination<sup>1</sup>. The abbreviation LGBTI + stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other”. Just for the clarity:

- Lesbian = women who are attracted to women
- Gay = men who are attracted to men
- Bisexual = people who are attracted to men and women
- Transgender = people who want to change or have their body changed to a gender other than their birth
- Intersex (condition) = people born with a mix of feminine and masculine biological characteristics
- + = young people nowadays use a whole series of other labels to identify themselves in terms of sexual preference, behaviour or gender (expression).

Check out: <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/> for a very comprehensive list of labels that young people can use today.

In this manual, we will occasionally also talk about cisgender heterosexual students.

- Cisgender = people who are satisfied and behave according to the gender on their birth certificate, so male or female
- Heterosexual = people who like someone of the opposite sex / gender

Because we use one abbreviation, it seems as if it concerns a group, but actually it concerns six groups or more, each of which has its own and often different experiences. One thing they all have in common is that our culture is built around a complex of values and norms that we sometimes call the "norm of heterosexuality," or "heteronormativity." We explain this in more detail in the reader for the MijnID teacher training. It is our belief that society will improve when there is no longer a norm of heterosexuality, but when heterosexuality, like homosexuality, bisexuality and different kinds of genders, are considered normal (as "the norm"). In other words, the norm is that there is simply diversity in the field of sexuality and gender.

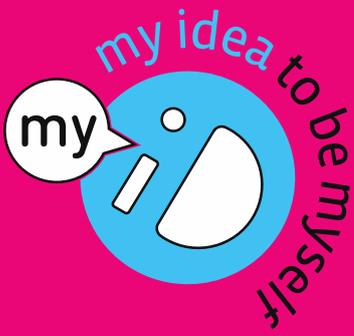
### European research

The condition of LGBTI+ persons in the EU has become a recognized human right concern, with the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations among others, calling for an urgent need to develop and reinforce standards on non-discrimination and equality for the LGBTI+ community.

One way of contributing to the full respect of the right to equality and non-discrimination of LGBTI+ people is through the regular and efficient collection of reliable data, allowing for both comparisons between EU countries, as well as for analyses of in-country situations. With this aim, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) developed the “**European Union survey of discrimination and victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons**” in April 2012, to which more than 90,000 respondents from EU countries participated, providing thus a reliable source of comparable data.

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this guide acknowledges the existence of different, more comprehensive, versions of the LGBTI+ acronym, such as LGBTQI (which also include the terms “queer” and “intersex”). However, for the purpose of this publication, the acronym LGBTI+ will be used throughout the document as an umbrella term including all recognized forms of sexual identity. An overview of these terminologies will be presented in the last section of this guide.



As much as 47% of respondents reported they felt personally discriminated against or harassed due to their sexual orientation in the year preceding the survey. In addition, 59% of them reported that the harassment or discrimination experienced was based entirely or partly on the fact that they were perceived as LGBTI+. Finally, the survey highlighted that a worrying majority of respondents **rarely report harassment to the authorities**, mainly because they felt that reporting would lead to no actual positive change.

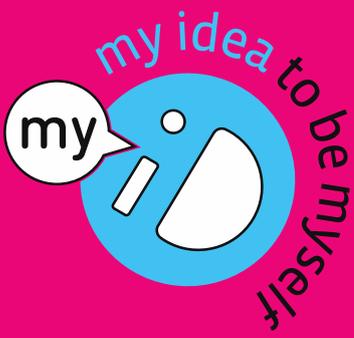
Overall, the survey showed that LGBTI+ people in the EU face many obstacles to the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights. Importantly, a considerable number of respondents was found to **not being willing to openly share their sexual orientation with their immediate families**, a result which points to the need to also address the psychological repercussions of not being able to fully live one's identity within the family nucleus.

Discrimination on the basis of sexual identity is especially apparent in the areas of employment and **education**. 18% (one in five) of respondents who had attended school or university in the past 12 months, felt discriminated against by school or university personnel because they were LGBTI+. A large percentage (68%) had heard or seen negative comments during their schooling before 18 because a schoolmate was perceived as LGBTI+. Importantly, gay or bisexual men respondents reported hiding their LGBTI+ nature during their schooling years more often than lesbian or bisexual women respondents.

**“We see LGBTI+ students suffer considerably because of their families’ negative reaction to their sexual orientation. Few weeks ago, we provided psychological assistance to two lesbian students who were told by their parents that they’d rather have children working for the Mafia than being lesbian.”**

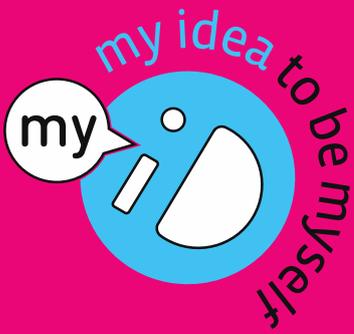
Teacher and educator from a vocational school in Palermo (Italy), 2019.

**“A gay student who is regularly bullied by his peers here, suddenly came up with the invented story that he**



had sex with a girl and that she is now pregnant. I am confident he felt forced to invent this story in a desperate attempt to be accepted and to stop daily harassment.”

Tutor and mentor from a vocational school in Palermo (Italy), 2019.



On 13 December 2018, the Council of Europe published the “Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe” report<sup>2</sup>, which provides data on bullying in European schools based on sexual identity and orientation, as well as country recommendations regarding national policies to address discrimination of LGBTI+ people.

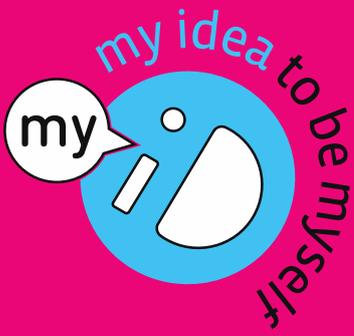
The report addresses the need to respond to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics (*SOGIESC-based violence*), and defines it as “a form of gender-based violence that targets those who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI+). It can be psychological, physical or sexual, and can occur at school, around school, on the way to school or online” (Safe at school report, p.9). The impacts of SOGIESC-based violence range from physical and psychological damage on both victims and perpetrators/observers (anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and tendencies), to lower educational achievement, higher levels of early school leaving, poorer academic results, and learning difficulties. Its longer-term impact however manifests itself also on other areas of the victims’ professional and personal life, resulting in low performance at work, difficulty in establishing and maintaining meaningful and healthy relationships, as well as a greater risk of engaging in anti-social and/or criminal behavior.

The report found the following key results and trends across Europe, which are worth mentioning here (Safe at school report, p. 10):

- SOGIESC-based violence occurs in all European countries, independently of socio-economic, cultural and political context.
- LGBTI+ students are affected by significantly higher levels of discrimination and bullying compared to their non- LGBTI+ peers.
- The most frequent forms of violence against this category are verbal discrimination and bullying.
- Among the LGBTI+ subcategories, transgender and gay boy students report the highest forms of victimisation and violence, although lesbian and bisexual girls are affected by an added discrimination based on their gender.
- This kind of violence affects everyone, including those bullied or discriminated against because they are thought to be LGBTI+.
- SOGIESC-based violence is consistently under-reported due to either fear of repercussions, or a general lack of trust in the ability of authorities to make a positive change following reporting, as well as an overall tendency to normalize phenomena of violence related to sexual orientation and identity.

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<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe & UNESCO (2018). Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-125718-gbr-2575-safe-at-school-a4-web/16809024f5>



## Be prepared

### Self-reflection

As an educator and as a teacher you may be directly confronted with negative comments, discrimination or even violence towards LGBTI + students, or future LGBTI + clients. In the My-ID teacher training we explained how such negative behavior is based on negative attitudes which are in turn based on negative emotions, which can arise from instinctive fight or flight reactions. Strong or hypothermic negative expressions can be confronting for teachers. As a teacher you also experience a feeling of threat or indignation, in short also a fight or flight impulse. How do you deal with that?

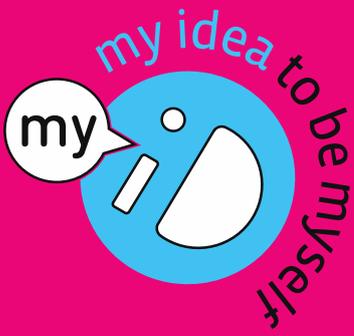
Finding the most effective and safest way to deal with situations of intolerance and violence with students can be overwhelming and raise questions; it is also emotionally challenging. This may have to do with your own values and standards, but also with your beliefs about how a teacher should behave. For example, many teachers feel that they should have answers to all questions, or that they should not express their own opinion, or that it is unprofessional to show any emotion in the classroom. Such beliefs and fears influence the lessons of all teachers. It is important to be aware of this and to estimate how you can deal with it especially in challenging situations. In the focus groups and interviews that the partners of the SENSE project share, it turned out that there is often also a sometimes unconscious distance between teachers and LGBTI + people. It also turned out that such a bias is not only present in people who are openly against LGBTI +, but also in people who are not necessarily against sexual diversity. This is called an implicit bias (implicit bias). Harvard University has developed tests to measure such implicit biases. If you're curious how you score on such a test, check out <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> and try the “ Sexuality IAT ” or the “ Transgender IAT ”. (IAT = Implicit Association Test).

A negative result on such a test is not a problem in itself; it is not a conviction. However, an implicit association test does indicate that you may have certain presuppositions, which are under the surface, and therefore may be noticeable in students through your personality and remarks. So it may be that on the surface you would like to do something against LGBTI + discrimination, get started with developing a trigger for discussion together with students, and then during this process you still encounter an unconscious bias in yourself. Recognizing this is the very first step to develop an efficient trigger technology and more generally to build an inclusive school environment.

Another way to determine whether you are biased is to honestly answer the following questions for yourself:

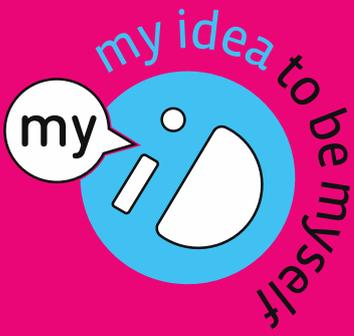


**Ask yourself  
about any hidden  
bias you may  
have related to  
sexual diversity**



## ASK YOURSELF

- When did you first hear a negative message against LGBTI+ people?
- How do you react in your everyday life when you hear negative messages against LGBTI+, such as name-calling? E.g. do you laugh?
- Do you ever, or did you ever make jokes which verbally ridicule LGBTI+ people?
- How would you react if a LGBTI+ person approached you at the local bar at night?
- Would you stand up for a bullied or victimized LGBTI+ person? If not, why not?
- How would you react if a transgender person asked you for professional help?
- How would you react if one of your close family members, or friends, told you they were LGBTI+?
- Would you give a LGBTI+ colleague the same professional consideration as a non-LGBTI+ colleague?



## Be a trigger for change

The expression “trigger technology” in the SENSE project refers to **instruments that are used to start a discussion among students.**

The goal of a trigger is to get attention, create interest and provide inspiration for a critical and conscious discussion around a specific topic. In the specific case of this project, the trigger technology developed should foster reflection – both at the individual, class, and school level – and discussion around the issue of sexual diversity.

Experience gathered from earlier projects on sexual diversity shows that **interactive methodologies**, and in particular those **drawn from the arts**, work efficiently in engaging students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) schools. However, the need also emerged to **tailor the trigger technologies to the specific needs, contexts, and expectations of the student target group directly involved in the activity.**

For this reason, and conscious of the diversity in attitudes towards LGBTI+ people among different countries and social contexts, the development of the trigger technology central to IO1 began with a needs’ assessment phase. This consisted in the conduction of interviews and/or focus groups with a selected group of students in each of the VET schools involved in the project, where the successive stages of the project will be implemented.

The aim of the interviews and focus groups was to gather information and specific data on current prejudices and common beliefs among the target students in each partner country, as well as to highlight any underlying commonalities and/or differences in attitudes towards sexual diversity in the groups interviewed.

One important element of the initial stage of the trigger technology development was to note down any typical or interesting comment made by students interviewed, with the aim of using these in the final product and make it as authentic, and context-specific, as possible.

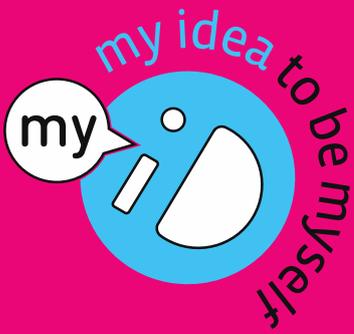
### Questions used during focus groups

Initial, more general questions:

- What do you study in this VET institution?
- How long have you been a student here? Where you studying in any other institution prior to this one? If so, why have you changed school setting?
- Could you tell me some of the things you like most about your school community? (Try to get practical examples, in relation to the study curriculum but also to other peers and teachers)



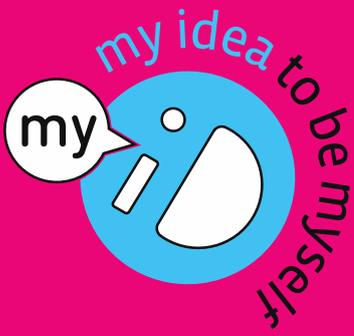
**Assess the beliefs, prejudices, fears, and thoughts about sexual diversity among your students**



- Could you tell some of the things which you would improve about your experience as a student here? (Also here, try to get some practical cases out of the discussion, in relation to especially the way the student interacts with their peers and/or teachers).
- What is your dream job, and why? Do you think this study curriculum is helping you achieve your professional aspirations? (Depending on their answers to the questions related to study curriculum and job aspirations, adapt this question accordingly)
- What do you think are the characteristics which make people professional in the job you want to do? (The idea at the basis of this question is to explore whether there are any intrinsic prejudices about gender characteristics associated with some jobs)

#### **More specific questions**

- What is your gender?
- Have you ever heard of the expression sexual diversity? If so, in what context and under what circumstances? (If the student replies “Yes”, try to figure out what they were doing and how they reacted when they first heard the expression)
- What do you think about when I say homosexual?
- In your opinion, can a man be attracted by another man? (Wait for answer and if the answer is NO, then also ask) why?
- In your opinion, can a woman be attracted by another woman? (Wait for answer and if the answer is NO, then also ask) why?
- Try to ask the student, depending on the VET course they are taking, if they ever related to non-heterosexual clients, and what impressions they have about this.
- Is there attention to sexual diversity in your curriculum? Is it positive, negative, useful?
- How will you deal with LGBT customers or clients? (and why?)
  1. I will be correct but aloof
  2. I 'd rather not deal with them
  3. I will approach them just like other clients or clients, without considering their differences
  4. I will take their specific situation and wishes into account

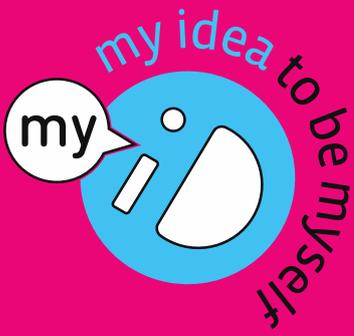


- Should the school do something to improve the situation for LGBT youth? What? (if they do not come with option, suggest antibullying measures, attention in the curriculum (and hat exactly), student counseling, other activities like symbols or pride? If not, why not?
- What does being normal mean to you?
- What do you think of when I say transgender?
- What does being different mean to you? (Try to get some practical examples here, it is important to understand what each student identifies with “normal”, in terms of behaviour, choices, lifestyle, etc. and also during discussion, if possible, try to understand whether the concept of “normal” derives from external influences such as family, friends, society).
- How do you think this school setting could help you feel better about your identity?
- What does sexual identity mean to you?

#### **After the interview**

After the interview, students should be asked to provide their demographics (only concerning age, school curriculum they are studying towards, name of the School, and email address if they are happy to do so. All interviews should ensure anonymity).

It may not always be feasible as an educator to interview your students nor to conduct focus groups. Nonetheless, there are other ways to understand how your class feels about the topic of diversity in sexual identity, and which are easier to use in your everyday work life. **Each of the following steps can help you in the development of a product to trigger reflection about sexual diversity.**



## [1] Talk about it and create a safe environment

In the “Be informed” section of this guide, the importance of gathering more information about the experiences of LGBTI+ people, was discussed. It is at least as important to share this knowledge with your class, as this helps normalize concepts and meanings surrounding sexual diversity. You can help your students empathize with marginalized groups, and one very efficient way of doing it is by talking about them.

Part of the problem with sexual diversity discrimination in educational environments is that educators, teachers, mentors, and curricula in general, never actually talk about LGBTI+ culture and people. Students are only rarely confronted with questions pertaining to the meaning of sexual orientation and gender identification, even though past experience has shown that school environments which tend to include conversation about sexual diversity in their curricula are also less affected by isolation and discrimination at the expenses of LGBTI+ students and/or staff.

You may find some level of resistance on the part of students when a conversation in the classroom about sexual diversity is started. For example, some may laugh and make derogative jokes about the topic, or worse with the aim of mocking a peer student perceived as or who identifies as LGBTI+. **Always pay attention to the psychological wellbeing of especially LGBTI+ students in your class when you talk about the issue, and think of the consequences that unpleasant reactions on the part of other students can have on them.**

For example, rarely do students report learning about LGBTI+ people and themes. A survey of over 3,700 pupils in Britain’s secondary schools conducted by the charity Stonewall in 2017<sup>3</sup> found that two in five LGBTI+ students are never taught anything about LGBTI+ matters in school or college; three in four have never learned anything about bisexuality, and three in four have never discussed what *trans* means.

Never talking about the topic increases the general feeling among students that LGBTI+ people and culture do not truly exist, or that the theme should not be mentioned openly. Ultimately, it prevents schools and their students from celebrating diversity.

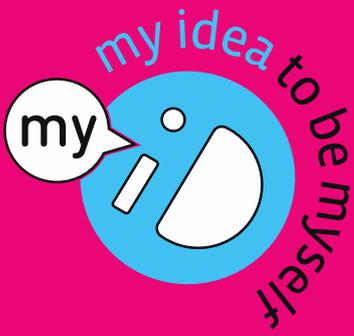
For this reason, it is extremely important to create a working environment for your trigger which feels safe to your students. Here are some simple steps you may take to begin with:

1. It might not be feasible or possible to involve the entire class in the development of the trigger technology. Some students may not be open-minded or mature enough to participate in the group work.

<sup>3</sup> Stonewall School Report 2017. Available at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017>



**Keep in mind the psychological consequences of talking about sexual diversity for LGBT students in your class**



It is not a good idea to force reluctant students into the activity. Remember this is not a compulsory element of the curriculum, and that it should be a fun activity where students involved share values and principles, otherwise the end product might not be effective. You may hence start by identifying a selected group of students within your class to work on the trigger. Ask them how they imagine their participation, i.e. how empowered they feel to carry out the activity on their own, or whether they would rather have you guide them throughout the process; or which kind of end product they are thinking of, e.g. some students might not be comfortable with a product which shows their identity, such as a video, so it might be better to think of something which ensures a higher level of anonymity such as an online campaign.

2. Set ground rules with the trigger development group at the very start.
3. Actively discuss ways to maintain safety and mutual care with the group.

## [2] Make it simple and celebrative

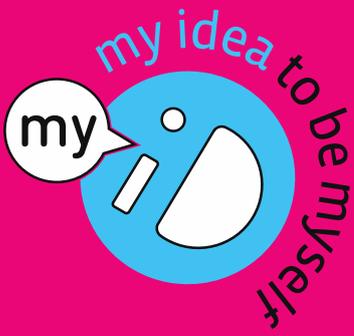
There is no need to overcomplicate it. Although presenting sensitive topics to a class of young students may certainly be challenging and raise some complicated reactions, it is important to understand that integrating discussion about sexual identity and diversity into your teaching routine is not a complicated matter.

The more pupils hear about a certain subject, the more they are asked to reflect critically about topics of human and social importance, the least it will sound strange or unusual to them. Do not forget you are working as an educator with young students who will, one day, be fully active professionals and interact daily with a wide variety of clients (or patients depending on the specific curricula taught in the VET school you work at). These may also include people who are not heterosexual or who do not necessarily identify with binary, birth-linked forms of gender. Their ability to interact ethically and consciously with sexually diverse people will most likely have a positive impact on their attitude towards other forms of recognized diversities, such as physical and/or mental disability, cultural diversity, etc.

You may for instance **try to identify the relevant links to LGBTI+ people, experiences or themes during a class by quoting popular and positive LGBTI+ characters or role models.** Or else, you may ask your school director to integrate the school library with literature about, or even indirectly linked to, sexual diversity and the LGBTI+ community (e.g. when reading about a certain author, say Oscar Wilde, think about how you can guide your class towards a reflection about his experience with discrimination due to his personal orientations, finding connections with more present forms of discrimination which they may feel affected by thus creating a readier link between them and a LGBTI+ person).



**Helping your students be respectful of sexual diversity will also make them respectful of other forms of diversity**



### [3] Have fun

Creating a trigger technology must ultimately be something funny for both you and your students. Remember that no one is or can be obliged to learn more about sexual diversity, nor to reflect about the prejudices at the basis of LGBTI+ discrimination.

The success of a trigger technology will precisely depend on the involvement of students who are willingly participating in the activity because they believe it is important to talk about sexual diversity and identity, and that they can contribute to changing their school environment for the better.

### [4] Turn students into active agents

Guiding students in the development of a trigger technology on sexual diversity ultimately means helping them shift from a passive position of “immobile recipients of knowledge”, to an active one of “creative agents and actors of critical content”. All students in the class, both LGBTI+ and not, should feel that they can play a part in **creating** a product which reflects the importance of tackling social issues such as gender and sexual identity. In order to do so, it is very important for students to first learn how to communicate their ideas to others in a respectful manner, as well as to provide feedback to others’ opinions in a constructive and harmless way. In other words, the group of students within the class who will actively develop the trigger should maintain a **collaborative safe environment** where students can feel free to express their thoughts, both positive and negative ones, their fears and perplexities both as individuals and as a group.

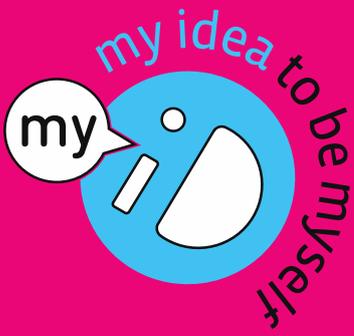
The benefits both at the individual and group level of collaborative learning have been confirmed by a plethora of analyses and authors. It is widely recognized as an effective educational practice to help students develop teamwork skills (Curseu et al. 2017, Cohen 1994). As Kirschner noted (2009), collaborative forms of learning, facilitates the transfer of curricular knowledge through social interaction and sharing, reducing therefore the cognitive load on the individual learner.

One of the most crucial benefits of collaborative learning is its group-level nature, whereby students are asked to carry a certain educational task, or reflect and debate about an issue, in groups. This allows them to acquire and criticize curricular knowledge while at the same time exercising their teamwork skills through social interaction.

After all, if you are going to guide students in the creation of a product which reflects on sexual diversity, you will immediately realize that collaboration and teamwork are key elements for this activity. The artistic product you and your class will produce can be drawn from a wide variety of art methods and techniques, and the choice will depend on elements such as: The specific skills of your students (e.g. you may know about some of your students being talented in visual arts such as drawing/painting/photography, or of others whose performative skills – useful for theatre performances – are strong, etc.), your own skills(think about what you can do for your class, sometimes we have



**Your trigger technology must be in a format which allows your school to show it to other classes**



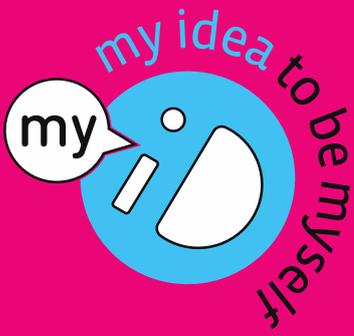
skills we are not aware of), and the social and cultural context in which you are working (each city/country/local context will have certain specificities and the way you communicate will have to be adapted to these).

The beneficial effects of applying the arts with young students to trigger reflection are numerous. Perhaps the most important benefit is that students are active agents in the creative process, from the initial to the final stages of the production process, no matter what artistic mean you end up using. For the purpose of the SENSE project, it is however crucial to remember that the product you create will be shown to other classes who did not directly take part in the creative process, and who possibly did not have a chance to discuss and reflect upon sexual diversity as much as your group of students. Hence **the first thing to remember is that whatever you create must be in a format which can be shown to or screened in different classes.**

**Keep in mind that the trigger in the SENSE project should comply to the following criteria:**

- 1. The trigger takes between 5 and 30 minutes; it should leave time within a regular class of 1.5-2 hours to have a good discussion.**
- 2. The trigger should link into the existing interests of students, elicit emotions and opinions, but it does confront students so much that they emotionally close down.**
- 3. The trigger leads to discussion about dealing with sexual diversity (LGBTI+ clients or customers).**

The following sections will present three different artistic instruments which you can apply for (theatre, video, photography and stop motion) the production of a trigger technology and that can be of inspiration to you and your class, guiding you in the creative process: Theatre of the Oppressed, video making, and visual art. However, you are free to explore other artistic methodologies which might not be included in this guide (e.g. painting, music, photography, video and film). Crucially, whichever product you create, following the steps included in this guide will hopefully help you in having an ethically sound and psychologically safe basis when working with your students on sexual diversity.



## Examples of trigger technologies

### Theatre of the Oppressed

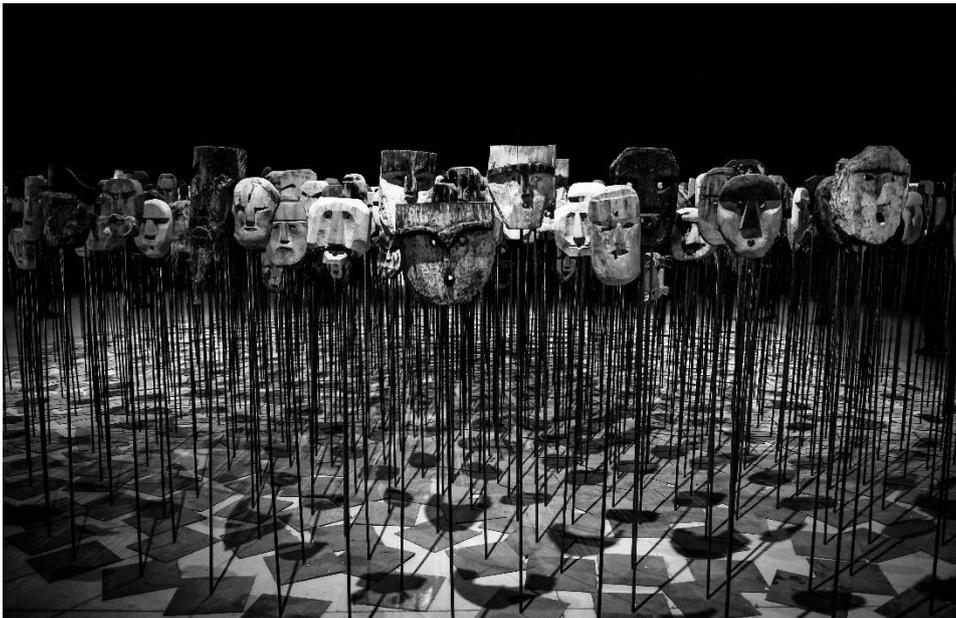


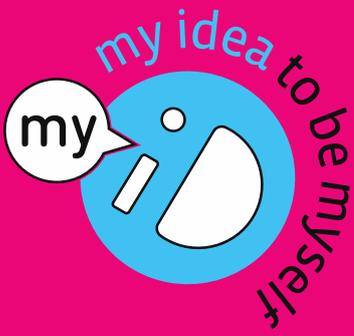
Photo by [Francesco Ungaro](#) from [Pexels](#)

Theatre of the Oppressed is a form of community-based education which uses theatre as a tool for social change. The technique was originally created by Brazilian artist, and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, **Augusto Boal** (1931-2009) as a form of peaceful revolutionary method to use together with peasant and worker populations in Latin America.

Today, Theatre of the Oppressed is widely applied all over the world as an instrument for social and political activism, conflict resolution, and community engagement. It works particularly well with marginalized communities in society, as well as with social groups affected by socio-economic or cultural isolation, or by serious forms or rights' violation. The aim of Theatre of the Oppressed performances is to foster reflection in the wider population about the condition of the most vulnerable, by involving them directly in the performative work, and through this collaborative work, inspire tangible positive change at the legislative, political or ideological level.

It directly invites critical thinking, turning the audience into an active agent participating in the performance, invited on stage to explore solutions and alternative answers to a given social issue. The main objective of these performances is to analyse and question a certain social problem, rather than passively describing or presenting it to an immobile audience.

Some of the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, which you can get inspiration from with your class, include:



### IMAGE THEATRE

Participants use their own bodies, and those of others, as “clay” to create “human sculptures”, i.e. frozen or moving images expressing their feelings, ideas, fears, oppressions and expectations about the issue under analysis. It is a participatory exercise, which can benefit from improvisation, and where participants should reflect on their body as an instrument of communication. In this context, the human voice becomes a tool of the body, and it might be very important to work on breathing and on the sounds different breathing techniques can produce when trying to express a certain emotion.

### FORUM THEATRE

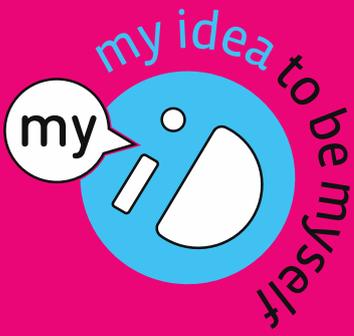
This technique is very effective as a problem-solving tool. The participants first perform a scene, where an unresolved oppression or uncomfortable situation is presented. The scene is then replayed once again, but this time the audience is asked to stop the action, identify and replace the character which they perceive as oppressed or lacking power, and improvise alternative solutions together with performers.

### COP-IN-THE-HEAD

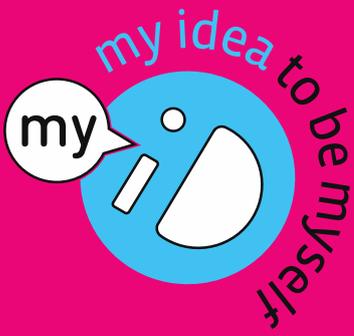
This technique explores a concept known as internalized oppression, that is the very personal dimension of discrimination or oppressed felt by the individual affected by the problem. Rather than a performance per se, the cop-in-the-head technique can be used as a preparatory exercise to carry with the group before defining a performance. Rather than focusing on the external oppressors, the individual is asked to concentrate on the internal oppressing voices, such as societal messages integrated into one’s fears and expectations about identity (your personal cops in other words).

### **Suggested steps to take with your class when planning a theatre performance**

1. Start by discussing the issue – in this case sexual diversity, LGBTI+ people, discrimination based on personal orientations and identity – together with the class. You may simply ask them whether they have ever heard about these concepts, where and in which context, and how they feel about them.
2. Note down any peculiar or common reaction, focusing also on body language and on non-verbal forms of communication. For instance, you may find that some students start laughing when you mention terms such as “sexual diversity” or “transgender” and “homosexual”. Some students may make offensive comments as well. Try to manage your discomfort with their reaction in a constructive, and conscious way, rather than applying non-communicative defence mechanisms which simply act as punishers of disturbing students. Laughter is often a reaction to embarrassment, so try to focus on students’ embarrassment by asking them why they feel that way.
3. Turn negative reactions to sexual diversity into positive tools of change during your performance.
4. Allow your students to ask questions, and to express their curiosity. Provide answers where possible, but don’t be afraid if your reply is “I don’t know”. It can be as beneficial to look for an answer to a certain question together with your student.



5. Explain to your class what theatre of the oppressed is, and how it can be used to foster positive change.
6. Reflect, together with the class, on one or two scenes which clearly represent the oppression a LGBTI+ person experiences. Students may think of everyday life examples, perhaps inspired by the real situation in their school.
7. Based on these examples, write a more defined scene with them (The script of the performance). It might be useful to identify the main characters of the scene immediately, as well as a location where the scene takes place (school, home, street, or a combination of these). When writing the script, start with simple questions which your students can answer in groups. For example, if you have identified a single main character, you may ask them what his or her background is, how they imagine him or her, whether he or she is a student like them, in what way he or she identifies as sexually diverse.
8. Think about the oppression. What kind of oppression and discrimination do your LGBTI+ characters experience in your performance? How are other, non- LGBTI+ characters, affected by or contributing to their discrimination?
9. Try to engage the entire class. Even if the performing students will be limited in number, everybody in the class can play their role in thinking about the scene, writing it, and imagining ways of performing it.
10. If you are directing the performative exercise, keep it simple, especially if you are not an experienced actor/director. If your school has a performative arts department, it might be a good idea to talk to its representatives and involve them in the work where possible. If this is not the case, work on the written script produced with your group of students. You are not writing a book, so it is recommended to divide the script into scenes (from 1 to n.), where each scene should present a key element of the story. Rehears each scene as many times as necessary, but remember, your focus should be on the message you want to share rather than on the quality of acting *per se*.
11. Always allow for a short discussion about feelings and impressions at the end of each session. Reflecting on their feelings after having performed a task can be extremely important.
12. Remember that performing is an act of social change, and that each individual has something very unique to bring to the performance. Allow for improvisation, and give space and time to your students to move away from the original script if they feel like it.
13. Feedback is a crucial element of your trigger technology. Always keep in mind that what you and your students are creating will be presented to an external audience of other students who possibly know nothing about sexual diversity and the SENSE project. Be prepared for negative reactions, such as



laughter and mocking. Be prepared for uninterested reactions. One way of working efficiently on this possibility, is to guide your class in performing this scenario. One or two of your sessions might involve a group of your class performing your script, and the other group acting as the external audience. Some students may play the role of “trouble makers”, some others may act as the “indifferent” ones, while others as the “accepting” part of the audience. At the end of this internal performance, ask them how they felt by enacting the different characters (by performing it more than once, you will have all students performing all possible roles by the end: The actors, the trouble makers, the indifferent, and the accepting).

14. Always film the performance with a camera. Remember that it will be shown to other students in your school who did not directly take part in the SENSE project, or who were not given a chance to discuss sexual diversity.

## Video Making

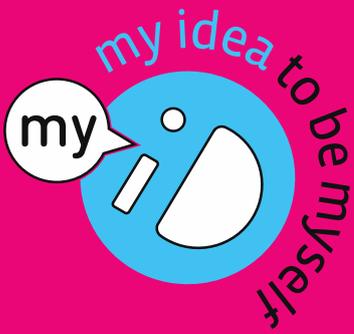


Photo by CoWomen from Pexels

Short videos remain one of the most powerful tools for communication, especially among young people, given the familiarity to this technique of younger generations. Videos are also a particularly effective instrument when trying to convey messages related to sensitive topics, such as sexual diversity and gender identity, as they leave plenty of room for creativity and imagination.

### Choose your way of filming

There is not a single perfect way to create a video, but rather a plethora of possible options you can choose from. Each style will very much depend on a variety of factors such as your target, the topic covered, the message you wish to convey, and the specific context in which you are going to show the final video. It is also terribly important



to bear in mind that creating a video with your students is a double process: You are of course focusing on the final result, i.e. the video, but you are also involving your students in all the steps necessary for its creation, so keep in mind that all you do before the video is ready will be part of the trigger technology in a way.

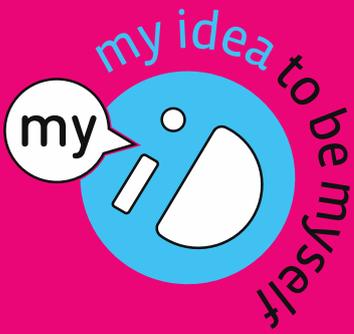
For instance, depending on your specific context of action, you might want to opt for a video without dialogue, where images and other background sounds play the central role. Or else you might find it more effective to pay more attention to the conversations in the video, and the action of characters. Your video can also include one single character, or on the contrary many different people in the story. It all depends on what message you want to transmit, and of course on the level of participation you wish to reach on the part of your students.

### Explore examples

An important first step when planning a short video with your class, is to know about videos which have already been produced by other artists. **Start by showing existing videos to your class, and always allow for discussion both before and after the video.** Reflect on questions which relate to the topic of sexual diversity, but also crucially to the technical aspects of the video. For instance, ask your students what techniques they think were used in the videos you show them, the role each character played, whether there are alternative techniques to be explored.

There is plenty of material out there to take inspiration from, but here we present a short selection to begin with:

1. **Sam: A Short Film About Gender Identity and LGBTQ Bullying**, by Sal Bardo:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOiN2MYEzSg>
2. **HollySiz – The Light (music video)**. In this powerful music video, we meet a child designated a boy at birth, who enjoys stereotypical girl toys and clothing. The mom is accepting the father isn't until a beautiful moment in the video. Truly a wonderful music video! Available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf79KXBCIDg>
3. **Kumu Hina: A Place in the Middle**. A PLACE IN THE MIDDLE is the true story of a young Hawaiian girl who dreams of leading her school's all-male hula troupe, and of an inspiring teacher who uses traditional culture to empower her. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4EaN8yd0qc> ;  
<https://vimeo.com/121840165>
4. **Why Pronouns Matter for Trans People**. This short video strings clips of interviews with a wide variety of trans individuals, showing the importance of pronouns and the variety of how they are used. It also provides a few short practical points on discussing pronouns and asking others about the pronouns they prefer. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_yBG0qg7kM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_yBG0qg7kM)
5. **I'm Just Anneke**. I'm Just Anneke is a portrait of a 12-year-old Vancouver student who is struggling with gender identity. She loves ice hockey, has a loving, close-knit family and everybody she meets assumes she's a boy. The onset of puberty has created an identity crisis for Anneke.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POOXCFs35do>
6. **STAND UP Against Homophobia**. The video calls on everyone, gay and straight, to support each other in taking a stand against homophobic bullying.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzFfTiOSz4U&feature=youtu.be>
7. **Love Has No Labels**. The video uses an X-ray screen to show that love doesn't depend on gender, race, religion, ability or age. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnDgZuGIhHs>



8. **Caged.** Straight guy David discovers his best friend is gay, and feel uncomfortable to talk about it. The situation escalates when his hang-out group forces him to choose between them or his best friend. What would you do? <https://orvel.me/caged-2013/> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5oPqGnoOqc>
9. **Ruben.** A slightly effeminate boy is teased in school. It get's worse when his class mates follow him on his first date and photograph his first shy kiss. Ruben sees no way out and wants to commit suicide. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqvwBnHjORI>

### Think about the storyline

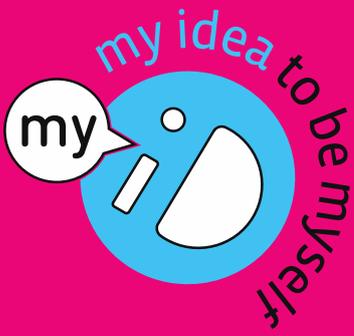
Once you have explored existing videos, you can begin involving your class in **thinking about a story**. These are some questions you need to consider:

- Who is/are your main character/s?
- Where does the story take place?
- What is the timeline of your story? I.e. Does it all happen in one day, or over a longer period of time?
- Is your video a fictional story, or are you more interested in making an awareness-raising campaign?
- Will you need music in the background?
- Will your video include dialogues, or will it be silent?
- What is the main issue described? E.g. what issue related to sexual diversity are you covering?
- Think of the story as a series of events with a beginning, a middle point (where the issue is usually manifested), and an end (where the issue is either resolved, or where the issue stays unresolved).



Photo by William Bayreuther on Unsplash

While brainstorming with your class, make sure to include every student in the discussion, even and especially those who are most shy. You might invite them to explore some of the most common prejudices among them and their peers concerning sexual diversity, and use them in the video as part of quotes for your story. Or else, you might invite them to think of a story which talks about sexual diversity in particular scenarios drawn from the professional curricula they are studying, e.g. if your students are enrolled in a vocational curriculum on social and



health assistance, you might think of a story taking place in a hospital or clinic, and whose main character is a person providing assistance to a LGBTI+ patient.

Once the story has been defined, written down, and approved by all members of the class, **it is time to film it**. Do not worry if you lack the expensive materials for filming, you might be surprised at how you can perfectly make a video without spending a fortune.

Start by asking your school whether there are some cameras available (perhaps your school has bought a camera for an art course in the past and you simply don't know it). In case your school does not have or cannot provide any technical instrument, it is just as fine to use mobile phones to film your video. Make sure to ask your school director whether it is possible to involve more experienced staff (for instance from an art course, or simply staff passionate about video making) to assist you in the filming process.

Remember that although the end result is important, as it will be showed to the rest of the school, what matters very much is also the process itself. Have fun with your students while you create your short video. In other words, don't go for complicated options, just for efficient and realistic ones. For example, if you feel filming a fictional story might be too complex, it can be just as effective to film your students while they tell messages aimed at raising awareness among their peers.

After the European ARES-project, GALE developed a set of criteria for a good educational film on homophobia: <https://www.gale.info/doc/project-ares/26-Criteria-for-a-good-educational-film-short.pdf>. The criteria can be used by a teacher to assess whether a video is adequate for a student group, but it can also be used by film makers, like the students who make trigger.

### **Stop Motion video**

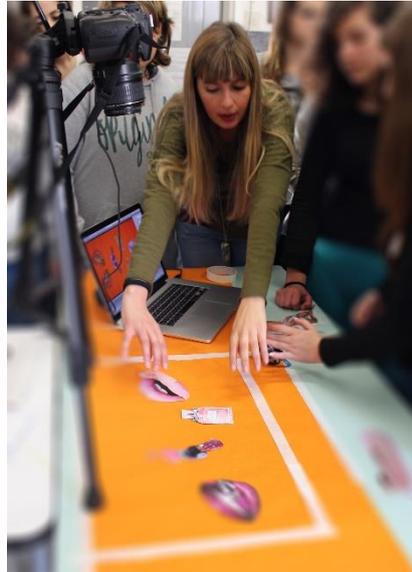
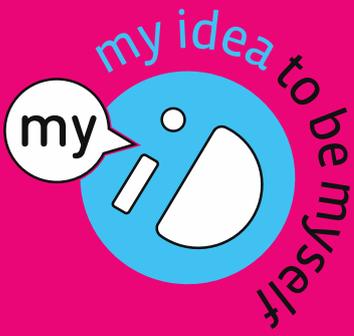
The animated cinema, through different ways of story-telling and for his expressive potential, offers a thousand points of reflection.

Stop-motion animation is one of the simplest, most fun animation techniques.

You can use just about anything in your stop-motion animation, and thanks to digital cameras and computers, creating one is now super easy!

Stop motion (or frame-by-frame) animation is an animation technique to make a physically manipulated object appear to move on its own.

Playing back these images creates the illusion of movement, the very essence of animation.



### What you will need

1. The first thing you need is, of course, an **IDEA**.
2. While brainstorming, keep in mind that you can expect to **shoot around 10 photos for every second of film**.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE!** The shortest and simplest concepts are the easiest to animate.

**Stop Motion App** can be downloaded for free from Play Store:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cateater.stopmotionstudio&hl=it&gl=US>

### Brainstorming

Great animation starts with a great “idea” for a story. By learning how to tell a story through animation, you will be challenged to use symbols and movement for to convey your messages and stories.

The intent is to tell **a meaningful story that expresses a strong message** to its intended audience.

### Scripting

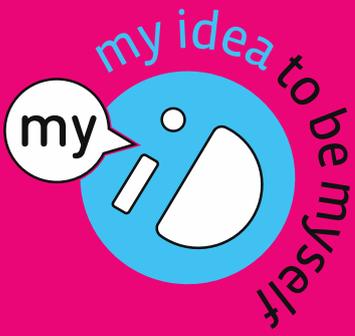
After brainstorming ideas, you need to write down your thoughts to determine what interaction and action will take place.

Most people prefer to start with **scripts**, a storyboard that is completely textual.

Writing descriptions of the action helps to determine how and in what order every shot will become animated later in the process.

Basically, **a script is the written description of the actions that will take place.**



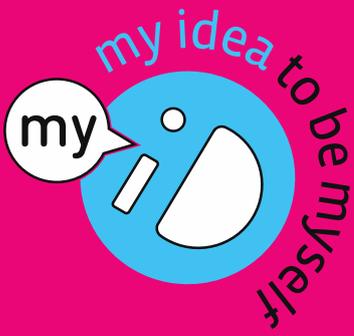


Name of Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

A		
<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C	<input type="checkbox"/> D
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Set Up: How to make short stop motion videos with your digital camera





1. Start shooting pictures for your movie.
2. You should use **a tripod for stable shots**.
3. **A light** should be used to ensure good lighting in your images.
4. Also, it might be a good idea to ask a friend to help you move your characters and or objects in small increments.

More pictures you take with small changes in position, the more realistic your movie will be.



**Camera or Smartphone**

You can use almost any camera to capture the individual frames of your animation.



**Animation Stand**

In 2D stop motion animation, the camera is positioned directly above the background upon which the cutout characters lay flat.

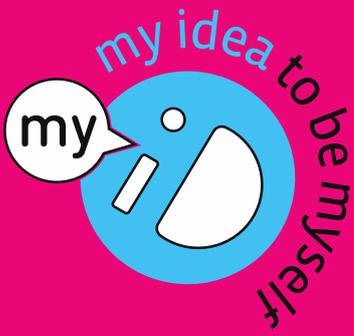


**Tripod**

The camera is mounted on a tripod because you don't want the camera to move at all during the picture-taking process.

**Place the background so that it completely fills the frame for the pictures you'll take.**

- Position the characters where you'll want them, and then press the "Capture" button to take your first frame.
- After you take each picture, slightly move your characters into position for the next shot. Each picture you take will become a frame in your movie.
- Click play to replay captured frames in real-time.



## Photography and visual art



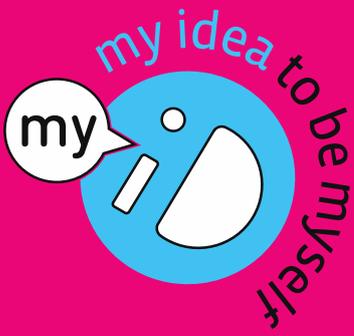
Photo by Ivandrei Pretorius from Pexels

Visual art has a great potential to trigger critical thinking, as shown by the existence of many artists making use of this technique to raise awareness about important topics of universal interest. Photography in particular can be used with your class as a way to trigger positive change about sexual diversity sensitivity. First of all, thanks to the mass diffusion on mobile phones' cameras, photography has become a much more widely available tool. It would be extremely difficult to find a young student who is not familiar with social media actively using photography, such as Instagram. Young people today not only are continuously exposed to photographic images with an easy click, but they are also creators of photographic content themselves. As such, they have become critical observers and makers, even if they might not be aware of this.

To explain how photography can be a trigger for positive change and critical reflection, take a look with your class at these photographic works by renowned artists who have reflected on identity and diversity:

### 1. Humanae Project, by Angelica Dass (ongoing)

<<Humanae is a work in progress, who intends to deploy a chromatic range of the different human skin colors. Those who pose are volunteers who have known the project and decide to participate. There is no previous selection of participants and there are no classifications relating to nationality, gender, age, race, social class or religion. Nor is there an explicit intention to finish it on a specific date. It is open in all senses and it will include all those who want to be part of this colossal global mosaic. The only limit would



be reached by completing all of the world's population. This taxonomy adopts the format of the PANTONE® Guide, which gives the sample a degree of hierarchical horizontality that diluted the false preeminence of some races over others in terms of skin color. The presentation of the range of color shades induce the viewer to reflect on one of the dual meanings containing the word identity: that associated with equality. Humanae activates a semantic mechanism with an "innocent" displacement of the socio-political context of the racial problem in a safe environment, as is a color catalog in which the "primary" colors have exactly the same importance as "mixed".>>, Alejandro Castellote. Available at: <https://www.angelicadass.com/humanae-project>

2. ID PROJECT - IDENTITIES AND URBAN STEREOTYPES, by Francesco Paolo Catalano (ongoing)  
<<ID Project is a self-portraits long-term series to investigate the Italians through stereotypes and social behaviors. As in an ID photo for a document, these altered self-portraits have a only rule: a frontal face pose in a white wall. Make-up help me to be every kind of person I meet in the street.>>, F.P. Catalano. Available at: <https://phmuseum.com/francescopaolocatalano/story/id-project-identities-and-urban-stereotypes-b3c7f99593>

3. A New Kind of Beauty, by Philip Toledano (2010)  
<<I believe we are at the vanguard of a period of human-induced evolution.

A turning point in history where we are beginning to define not only our own concept of beauty, but of physicality itself.

Beauty has always been a currency, and now that we finally have the technological means to mint our own, what choices do we make?

Is beauty informed by contemporary culture? By history? Or is it defined by the surgeon's hand?

When we re-make ourselves, are we revealing our true character, or are we stripping away our very identity?>>, P. Toledano. Available at: <http://mrtoledano.com/photo/a-new-kind-of-beauty/thumbnails/>

4. Alterity FtM - Women become Men, and Alterity MtF – Men become Women, by Francesco Paolo Catalano (ongoing)  
Available at: <https://francescopaolocatalano.tumblr.com/tagged/alterity> and <https://francescopaolocatalano.tumblr.com/tagged/alterity2>

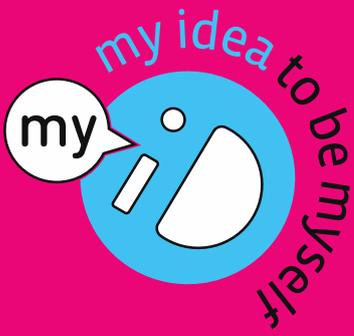


Photo by [slon dot pics](#) from [Pexels](#)

How can you use photography in your class to trigger change about sexual diversity sensitivity? If you do not feel comfortable with starting a new photo project with your students due to its complexity, here is an idea you might find interesting and certainly easier to realize.

If you have not heard of **the Dysturb collective** yet, it might be the right time to get in touch with them. They will help you use photography with your class.

[Dysturb](#) is a non-profit organisation driven by the desire to make international news accessible to a larger audience, by pasting large size pictures on the walls of city streets worldwide.

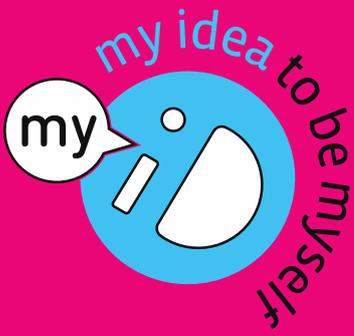
**Dysturb Edu is an educational tool using photojournalism to question our world, our societies, our lifestyles and the way our media function.**

“Education and transmission are top priorities for Dysturb. Since its beginnings, Dysturb has intervened in public and private institutions, in schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, corporate committees in France, Australia and in the United States.

These encounters have convinced us of the necessity to bring photojournalism into schools. Our photojournalists initiate a conversation on social and environmental issues, on conflicts and humanitarian crises, thanks to the testimonies of those who witness these news.”

#### **How does it work?**

Choose 6 ready-to-paste posters per year, directly delivered to your school, according to the themes you wish to address.



Each poster is paired up with an educational kit summing up the geopolitical situation of the country pictured, the story of the picture and its context, as well as information on the photographer.

The six posters can be received immediately or in instalments according to your preferences. The first delivery comes with a pasting kit including all the equipment and instructions needed to paste up the #Dysturb posters with your students.

This will ensure that your students are involved both in the process of choosing the best photographs to foster discussion in their school about sexual diversity and gender identity, and in the actual pasting of the photographs at school, which is undoubtedly a fun activity.

It's simple.

1. Check the Dysturb website here: <http://www.dysturb.com/education#pasteup> to better understand how they work;
2. Explain it to your students, and start selecting with them 6 photos from their archive which might best raise awareness in your school about sexual diversity sensitivity;
3. Check with your school director whether it is OK to paste large photos inside the school's premises;
4. If you get permission, get in touch with the collective. The photos will be posted to your school;
5. Think with the students where the photos could be pasted;
6. Have fun pasting them, and always make sure you start a critical discussion at the end of each session.

What really makes a good story?

#### DRAMA

The more familiar a story feels, the more powerful it is.

It's easier to fill in the gaps if a story is familiar.

Stories need dramatic development and emotional dynamics.

#### IDENTITY

The more people identify with a story, the more likely they are to be persuaded.

#### IMMERSION

The more readers put themselves into a story, the more likely they are to change their opinions.

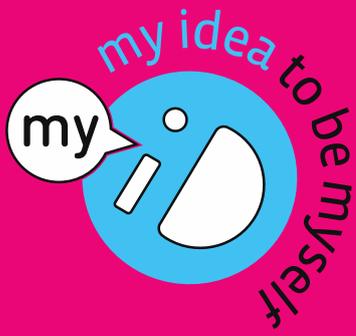
#### SIMPLICITY

Simple stories are strong stories.

Take out everything that doesn't serve the narrative.

#### FAMILIARITY

The more familiar a story feels, the more powerful it is.



## Colophon

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