

The SENSE-project

Sexual Diversity in Social Domain Vocational Training



The SENSE project was granted by the Dutch Erasmus+ authority to a partnership of GALE (Global Alliance for LGBT Education, Netherlands), Villa Montesca (Italy), CESIE (Italy), DEFOIN (Spain), EUROTraining (Greece), ROC of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and EFVET (European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The project will run from January 2019 until December 2020.

The goal of this project is to explore how sexual diversity (=lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues, LGBTI) can be integrated in vocational schools (VET: Vocational Education and Training).

Why attention for sexual diversity?

Research showed a lot of students are tolerant, but some are quite negative towards LGBTI fellow students and they also say they do not want to wash or help LGBTI clients when they have finished their training. We think this is bad for the cooperation at school and not professional in work situations.

VET courses often do not give attention to sexual diversity because it is taboo, or people think it is not important enough, or because teachers don't know how to talk about it. Many VET institutions become more multicultural nowadays, but this does not mean tolerance is getting better, especially not towards LGBTI. So, we need to improve the situation.

What we develop

In the Netherlands, GALE has worked for 7 years on a method that seems to work. It is a

combination between theatre, teacher training and curriculum adaptation.

First, we offer the students a theatre performance about sexual diversity. This is a good trigger for a discussion. In the Netherlands, a professional theatre company was used for this, but in this project, we help students to make their own performance or film. This is even more “real” and much cheaper.

Then we train the teachers on how to deal with strong negative reactions from homophobic and transphobic students and we inform them how they can gradually coach students to become more tolerant and open-minded.

Of course, the curriculum needs to be adapted for this. Because one lesson is too short and will not have enough effect, we help the school to develop a “spiral curriculum”. This means we look at all subjects and each teaching period and decide where and when we can give attention to diversity in general and specifically to LGBTI issues. The background idea is that these moments of attention are not just repetitions of “you have to be tolerant” but a gradually developing better understanding and awareness of how good professionals need to help different types of clients, like LGBTI people.

Now, it is not so clear what you as a student, needs to learn for this. One product of the project is a “competence framework”, a matrix that shows exactly what you need to learn, and another one that shows what teachers need to learn to be able to teach this.

The time table

Needs assessment: The teachers in the VET training courses who participate in the project will look for 30-10 students to help with the project. From January until July 2019, the partners will do a survey research. The students will do interviews with other students. These interviews will give you information on how other students think and how you can develop a theatre play or a short film to discuss sexual diversity with them. Between July and October 2019, three of these students can go to a 5-day international exchange in Athens (Greece) to discuss how to make the theatre performance or film with 15 other students from the Netherlands, Greece, Spain and Italy. This trip is paid for by the project.

Development of draft products: From May until December, the theatre play/movie, the teacher training, curriculum ideas and the competence matrix will be developed (as drafts). The partners will do this, and the teachers and student can comment on it.

Try-outs: From October 2019 until June 2020, the products will be tested in participating VET

training courses. From May 2020 until October 2020, the products and their use will be evaluated.

LGBTI students

Because the project is about LGBTI, it is important to have at least one lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex student among the three travelling. This will also mean that of the 15 students in the Athens meeting, at least 5 will be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex and this will feel more comfortable than when you are the only one among heterosexuals.

Interested?

Talk with your teachers if you are interested. They can tell you more and they decide about who can participate. For more information, see also: <https://www.gale.info/en/projects/sense-project>. The international coordinator of the project is Peter Dankmeijer, director of GALE, p.dankmeijer@gale.info.