



Good practice UNIQUE Methodology for LGBTIQ+ VET Learners' Inclusion

Title of the good practice in English	<i>EqUal iNclusion of LGBTIQ stUdents in VET (UNIQUE)</i>
Subtitle of the practice (in original language)	<i>A European Erasmus (KA3) project on social inclusion of LGBTIQ students. Grant agreement 621478-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN</i>
Date of creation	2023
Abstract summarising the practice	<i>The UNIQUE project developed a methodology to stimulate VET Teachers/Trainers and managers to become 'Ambassadors' of LGBTIQ inclusion in their institutions and beyond and train them on how to effectively address incidents of discrimination against LGBTIQ VET learners, create safer classrooms and design more inclusive training materials.</i>



Description of the practice	<p><i>The UNIQUE project developed a methodology to stimulate VET Teachers/Trainers and managers to become 'Ambassadors' of LGBTIQ inclusion in their institutions and beyond and train them on how to effectively address incidents of discrimination against LGBTIQ VET students, create safer classrooms and design more inclusive training materials.. The key tools developed are a model Curriculum, a free Massive Open Online Course for VET Teachers/Trainers, a methodological framework to analyse existing curricula, a set of policy recommendations on the classroom level, institutional level, local/national level and the European level.</i></p> <p><i>One of the greatest innovation of this project is that (a) it specifically refers to the VET sector responding to an existing gap for sector-related interventions (previous projects referred to other levels of education) and (b) the UNIQUE Curriculum draws the attention to emotional intelligence which intends to promote among VET Teachers and Students. Many VET courses are focusing on teaching technical skills, but the labour market is changing fast and requires more generic horizontal skills to be able to adapt to flexible demands. Client friendliness and attention for a range of different client groups are core competences. Promoting LGBTIQ inclusion in VET goes hand-in-hand with this. It is easier to convince students to be cautious and not display potential homophobic and transphobic attitudes, when this is presented as a core job requirement.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, the UNIQUE approach holds that traditional training by the LGBTIQ movement, which is often focus on visibility of LGBTIQ identities and on factual knowledge is not enough to change students' attitudes. Here again, an approach that is focused on how to deal with differences (emotional intelligence) is offered by the UNIQUE project as a more effective approach.</i></p> <p><i>The project ran from January 2021 until May 2023 and ended with a European conference In Brussels. It was coordinated by AKMI (Greece).</i></p>
Country or countries	<p>Choose an item.</p> <p><i>Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Poland</i></p>
Beneficiaries	<p><i>VET students (school-based learning)</i></p>
Beneficiaries extra text	<p><i>LGBTIQ students.</i></p> <p><i>The project focused on tools for teachers, manager and other stakeholders to provide a safe environment for LGBTIQ students.</i></p> <p><i>VET Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of <u>the</u> Unique project but they indirectly participate in it. The project focuses on upskilling the VET Teachers/Trainers in order to create safer classrooms for LGBTIQ VET students and promote inclusion and diversity in the school environment.</i></p>



Education level and sector	<i>Upper secondary vocational education and training (school based)</i>
Education level and sector extra text	<i>The project targeted all VET school based learning but in its products focused on upper secondary training (young adults).</i>
Type of policy/initiative	<i>Tick the appropriate box(es)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prevention <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Compensation
Type of policy/initiative extra text	<i>One of the project key deliverables is the development of a Set of Policy Recommendations targeting policymakers at national and EU level. Following a "bottom-up" approach, policy recommendations aim at informing policymakers about the real problems and needs of VET Teachers/Trainers, providing concrete information about much needed mechanisms and processes within VET system and hopefully inspiring them to adopt additional measures as well as invest in practical tools To make VET schools truly inclusive spaces.</i>
Level of implementation/Scope	<i>Tick the appropriate box(es)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provider level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local level <input type="checkbox"/> Regional level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> European level <input type="checkbox"/> International level
Level of implementation / Scope extra text	<i>The project targeted all levels of implementation but focused on the classroom (teacher) level and the institutional level. Through this 'bottom-up' approach, policy recommendations for the local, national and European level could be formulated in line with classroom needs. The international partner of the project, GALE, also disseminated the good practice beyond Europe.</i>



Aims of initiative/practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1: Provide a renewed skillset to VET teachers with the intention to integrate LGBTIQ-friendly techniques and adjust their courses accordingly2: Highlight the significance of diversifying manuals and educational materials so that they are up-to-date, inclusive and aligned with social reality through the development of innovative courses for VET teachers3: Introduce new training methods which promote the active involvement of VET teachers with the aim to maximize the impact of the project and reach out as many end users as possible4: Reduce school drop-out rates and enhance performance of LGBTIQ young learners while actively engaging them in the VET school environment5: Motivate LGBT people and provide a clear pathway towards employment, based on equal opportunities and evaluation of competences instead of gender identity6: Set up effective monitoring mechanisms to verify change of VET teachers' perceptions and the impact on LGBTIQ learners7: Raise awareness on LGBTIQ issues, combat stereotypes and stigmatization towards a more inclusive and diversified society8: Promote equality, human rights and EU values to local communities, contributing to mutual respect and understanding on people's choices away from fear, embarrassment or suppression9: Support local economies with qualified workforce who is now being marginalized and unexploited
Features and types of activities implemented	<p>The project undertook the following activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mapping LGBTIQ-related discrimination in Vocational Education and Training sector in the partner countries (through the use of online surveys and in-depth interviews/focus groups with various stakeholders), and developing a methodology for non-discriminatory educational strategies in VET2. Developing an e-learning and blended (face-to-face and online) training for VET teachers (the MOOC offers 36 hours of content, divided over 4 modules and a total of 44 learning units; another 24 hours of blended training and coaching has been designed).3. Pilot implementation of the Unique Curriculum in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece and Poland4. Promotion of inclusion by VET Teachers/Trainers who become Ambassadors for LGBTIQ inclusion and introduction of a peer-to-peer training scheme



Target group

- VET Teachers/Trainers/Staff

This is the key target group since most of the Unique activities are addressed to them (Curriculum, Trainings etc). They will become a factor of positive change, acting as a middle level group which will inspire VET students through role modelling and hopefully persuade the VET Management Board to adopt anti-discrimination policies.

- LGBTIQ+ VET Students

These are the ultimate beneficiaries but their needs are addressed rather indirectly as they will benefit from a safer VET environment which will be made possible after VET Teachers/Trainers will develop the required skillset to efficiently address incidents of discrimination.

- VET Providers

They will benefit through the upskilling of their teaching and administrative staff and the implicit pressure (through a bottom-up approach) to integrate inclusive policies

- Others (Parents, NGOs, Employers, Representatives of Educational and Social Sector)

External stakeholders play an important role in the operation of VET institutes and more or less directly affect the existing conditions and policies. The focus in these cases is to enhance the image of VET among the society and become a driving force for positive societal changes.

- LGBTIQ communities

They will be indirectly supported in their causes through the diffusion of LGBTIQ inclusion in the society, a pillar of which is the VET sector.

Some stakeholders in the area of early school-leaving may wonder why the target group "LGBTIQ students" is represented in this toolkit. This is because research in high schools shows that LGBTIQ students have a higher risk of dropout and lower grades due to social exclusion and discrimination. During the Unique project we have proven that social isolation and discrimination is a trend that is perpetuated in VET, especially in fields that are traditionally focused on 'masculine' professions and on so-called 'hard' (less social) technical skills. The research that was conducted throughout the Unique project has shown that homophobia and transphobia is not restricted to a certain class, culture or ethnic or racial background. However, the level and expression of homophobia and transphobia can be different across social classes, cultures and countries. National supportive or restrictive policies on sexual orientation and gender identity have significant influence on the attitudes of the population and the assessment of VET teachers with regards to the possible risks that they take when deciding to give attention to LGBTIQ issues.

Research on effective antibullying and anti-discrimination interventions has shown that a focus on perpetrators and victims is not effective. Rather, the focus should be on social processes in classrooms, awareness of gender and sexuality, and a supportive whole school approach which prioritizes emotional intelligence and friendly behavior to each other rather than just transferring knowledge and technical skills.



	<p><i>The UNIQUE approach outlines how teachers can create a safe classroom in which all students (regardless of sexual orientation and gendered identity and expression) have a friendly attitude to each other, and also work with the intention to have a friendly and inquisitive attitude towards future clients and customers. This means that VET Teachers/Trainers have to deal more with the emotions of the students, and, during this process, they will also encounter their own helpful or limiting attitudes and emotions. They need to learn how to deal with the fear that focusing on emotions or on specific issues on, sexual orientation and gender identity will be a threat to their discipline or to the perception of others of their professionalism. The UNIQUE project made a substantial effort to develop teacher training to tackle these issues. Our recommendations for institutional support of teachers who want to be ambassadors of tolerance and inclusion, and the related encompassing recommendations for local, national and European levels represent a bottom-up approach of a realistic change strategy of the VET sector.</i></p>
Resources	<p><i>This was an Erasmus KA3 project, 80% co-funded by the European Union. The total budget was € 499.997 with staff costs representing 76% of the costs.</i></p>
Evaluation of the practice	<p><i>The project was continually monitored and evaluated by BK Consult. The project was also externally evaluated by Opinion & Action Services Ltd. The evaluations report are internal and for EACEA. Links: none</i></p>



Evidence of effectiveness
of the practice

At the time of the project itself, and especially after the end of the VET Teachers/Trainers' trainings at national level, we have started to see the potential impact of the project on the VET Teachers/Trainers' attitudes. Most of the Teachers who took part in the pilot implementation voluntarily, expressed their own challenges within the classrooms and actively asked for support on how to address incidents of discrimination and support their LGBTIQ+ students in the best way possible. At the same time, VET institutes and associations demonstrated a great interest to get more information about the project and engage in the asynchronous training through the Moodle platform. However, monitoring changes in the safety of the classrooms and institutions participating in the project as changing attitudes – especially training other people to adapt their own views- is a long-term process that cannot be exhausted within a project's lifetime as it goes beyond the scope of this project.

Also, data about the eventual reduction of early school leaving in VET, which requires large-scale comparative research, was not within the ambitions of the project; it is included, nevertheless, in the policy recommendations for the national level.

However, several interactions within the project gave an indication to an impact that was supportive for LGBTIQ inclusion.

- In the pilot countries, students took part in a student contest to make artworks about LGBTIQ inclusion. The submissions showed an enthusiasm and willingness to engage with the subject, but also hesitation to approach LGBTIQ issues explicitly in some countries (Croatia, Poland), with a tendency to frame LGBTIQ inclusion in more general terms. During the pilot implementation of the training of teachers, most teachers expressed their willingness to be Ambassadors of social inclusion. On this level, we also saw some hesitation to approach LGBTIQ inclusion in a very explicit way. This is to make expected because in most of the pilot countries, the national policies and the attitude of the population is not overly positive towards LGBTIQ issues. Still, the participating teachers approved of the cultural sensitivity of the offered training, which did not force them to promote a specific kind of invisibility or to engage in risks that they could not manage.*

Overall, It is encouraging that the VET Teachers/Trainers who originally accepted to participate (Ambassadors) and all the others that learnt about the project during peer-to-peer training activities, through word of mouth and targeted dissemination, showed a great level of enthusiasm and commitment and keep contacting the project partners for further guidance.

The Unique project has a very promising sustainability perspective as it seems through:

- (a) The interest of other educational organizations to enrol into the courses*

Met opmerkingen [FM1]:



Success factors	(b) <i>The interest of institutional organizations to inform their members</i> (c) <i>The interest of the VET Teachers/Trainers themselves to get more engaged in the future (requests for repeating the national trainings in the beginning of the next school year)</i> (d) <i>The transferability of the project and the training materials into other educational levels (including adult education)</i>
	<p>Key innovative elements of this approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a focus on emotional intelligence to teach teachers and students on how to deal with difference, even when the difference may appear to be controversial • a culturally sensitive approach to LGBTIQ visibility, which goes beyond the traditional demands of the LGBTIQ movement • the ambassador approach, which outlines how VET teachers can be made enthusiastic for LGBTIQ inclusion, recruited as ambassadors and how can be supported through training and ongoing coaching • the development of a tool to monitor the level of LGBTI inclusion in VET course curricula • a model curriculum on LGBTIQ issues in VET courses which, among other things, makes VET Teachers/Trainers aware of the mechanisms of discrimination and bullying, offers practical tools to address them and a tool to assess risks when VET Teachers/Trainers are confronted with objections (integrated in the MOOC) • the formulation of policy recommendations in a bottom-up way, based on supportive for effective interventions on the classroom level (bottom-up approach)
<i>Contact details for further information (all fields are required)</i>	
Contact Name	Viktoria Topalidi (AKMI)
Contact Email	uniqueproject.eu@gmail.com / euprojects@akmi-international.com
Contact Telephone	+30 210 3468265
Contact Website	https://www.uniqueproject.eu/ ; uniqueproject.eu@gmail.com ; https://www.facebook.com/uniqueproject.eu/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I agree that the contact details provided in this section can be disclosed to the general public via Cedefop online toolkit and to contracted by Cedefop third parties that, as part of the quality assurance process, might contact you for further clarification on the information provided in this template.	

heeft opmaak toegepast: Tekstkleur: Auto

Completed template please send to: vet.toolkit@cedefop.europa.eu

Version: February 2023