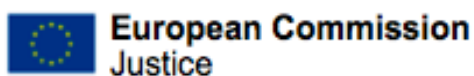|	NISO PROJECT
	"Fighting homophobia through active citizenship and media education"
	No. JUST/2009/FRAC/AG/1179 – 30 – CE – 0377095/00/44

WS 1: Analysing homophobic attitudes and stereotypes

D.1.6: NISO report on youngsters most common homophobic attitudes and stereotypes

Contract Number: No. JUST/2009/FRAC/AG/1179 – 30 – CE – 0377095/00/44
Project Acronym: NISO

Author: Antonella Passani (Province of Rome), Marie Debicki (T6 COOP)
Partners contributed: GALE, Çavaria and Sekü
Made available to: Public

Quality check: Sven Spreutels (Çavaria)
Internal Reviewer: Peter Dankmeijer (GALE)

Table of Contents

Introduction

This document report a selection of the result of a research carried out by NISO partners in 4 countries: Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Estonia. In all the countries two surveys have been conducted in parallel: one addressing LGBT community members and one addressing students from high school.

The aim of the two surveys was to better understand gender stereotypes, stereotypes related to LGBT and discriminative practices as they are experienced by LGBT persons and as they are perceived by students.

This document represent a sort of overview of the researches conducted at national level, but to not substitute the national reports that provide a more detailed analysis of the data gathered. It is foreseen that a scientific paper will be developed by the data gathered and will be submitted to a scientific journal; in fact the results are promising.

This document is composed on four chapters: in the first one we will describe the methodology used for the research, the questionnaires and the two samples (one related to the LGBT community members and one related to students). It is important to remember that the samples are not statistically representative; therefore the analysis that follows should be understood as qualitative and interpretative rather than explicative. The second chapter is dedicated to gender stereotypes and stereotypes attached to LGBT persons. Effects of stereotypes on LGBT persons are also described. The third chapter is dedicated to relationship between LGBTs and society; here we will compare the view of the LGBT persons with that of students. We will see to what extent LGBT persons experience discrimination, how students judge the society in which they leave from the point of view of assuring an equal treatment to LGBTs. We will see, than, the opinion of students with reference to LGBT rights and their behaviours towards LGB schoolmates. In the conclusion section the results described are summarized.

This report can serve as a starting point for understanding the situation of LGBT persons and the opinion of students in the four countries, we address the reader to the national report of each country for a more detailed analysis of their findings.

1 Presentation of the methodology and the samples

In order to be able to gain a clear picture of the most common attitudes and stereotypes towards LGBT people, it has been decided to make two surveys in parallel: one within the LGBT community, and one with students. The two surveys aim at gathering information on the point of view of these two different groups and to compare the experience of LGBT people and the attitudes and vision of the youth with reference to LGBT people and related issues.

This chapter describes first the research methodology and then the main research questions, which guided the definition of the questionnaires. It presents also the difficulties that emerged, linked to the issues tackled, to some of the questions of the questionnaires and to how they have been distributed.

The second and third paragraphs describe more in detail how the two questionnaires have been diffused among the two target groups and the samples' characteristics.

1.1 Methodology

As mentioned, the research here reported is based on two parallel surveys, one for LGBT community members and one for students. We will now introduce the structure of the two questionnaires, which proposed three types of questions: closed questions, Likert scale and open questions.

The questionnaire for the students was composed of 23 questions touching the following topics:

- Personal information (age, gender, sexual orientation, school of belonging, religious affiliation, level of education of parents and cultural background)
- Opinions on characteristics to be attributed to boys and girls (gender identity and roles)
- Definition of homosexuality and characteristic to be attributed to LGBT people, if any
- Perception of LGBT acceptance at social level and in different social contexts (including school)
- Level of closeness with LGBT people and behaviour towards them
- Opinion about LGBT rights

The questionnaire for LGBT community members was composed of 19 questions and was focused on the following themes:

- Personal information (age, gender, sexual orientation, employment, level of education, religious affiliation and cultural background)
- Experiences of discrimination
- Opinions about the reasons behind LGBT discrimination
- Perception of the school environment with reference of LGBT inclusion
- Perceived stereotypes on LGBT people and their consequences at personal level
- Channels perceived as most relevant for confronting homophobia

One of the research questions that guided this double survey was: "what are the factors that influence a more or less open attitude towards LGBT persons and their request of rights in young people?". The hypothesis was that those factors could be: the gender of the respondent, the level of education of their parents, the number of LGBT persons known, the cultural background, the school of belonging and the religious affiliation.

These hypothesis were based on the results of the FRA report 2011 Homophobia, transphobia and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in the EU member states[1]".

Others research questions were:

-   "What is the students' perception of LGBT discrimination/inclusion at social level if compared with that of LGBT persons?"
-   "Do the stereotypes perceived by LGBT persons match with the one attributed by students to LGBT persons?"
-   "Can we observe a link between gender stereotypes and perception of LGBT people so that persons that are closer to traditional understanding of gender roles are also less incline to accept LGBT persons and requests of rights?"

We will see in the next chapters how the research answered the questions mentioned above but, before looking at the results, few more words on the research processes are needed.

Both in developing and distributing the questionnaires, we encountered some challenges that are worth mentioning. First of all it was difficult to tackle the problem of stereotypes and perception with a semi-structured questionnaire: the tendency to answer following politically correctness or social pressure on this topic can be high and the NISO consortium carefully thought about questions formulation also looking at previous survey conducted with smaller sample at local level.

An example of this difficulty is related to the interest in knowing the sexual orientation of the respondents. The researchers thought this information was important but, at the same time, they did not want to push for self-labelling. Researchers did not want neither the LGBT respondents, neither the students to be forced to insert themselves into pre-fixed categories such as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, etc. So the choice was to ask for gender identity first and then to ask about the attraction towards same or other sexes in a way in which the respondent could have multiple options.

Related to this difficulty is the challenge of engaging LGBT people; this was overcome by the presence of LGBT associations in the consortium that acted as facilitators for distributing the questionnaire within the LGBT community. However this introduces a possible misrepresentation of the results due to the fact that we interviewed people that participate in LGBT events and is close to LGBT associations. We did probably reached only a minority of LGBT person that are not openly part of the community and this need to be considered in interpreting the results; we cannot give for granted that the interviewed represent the opinion of the LGBTs people in the four engaged countries.

About the questionnaire in the schools, we have to mention that some terms and questions resulted to be difficult for the students. This was partially due to the difficult of generating a questionnaire to be used in different nations and in different typology of schools and in particular the difficult was also related to the need to translate the questionnaire from English. Especially the questions proposed using the Liker scale resulted complicated; in some countries/occasions NISO team members where present while students filled-in the questionnaire, but in some other this was not possible, so that some of the answers where not considered in the analysis because evidently based on a misinterpretation of the question.

In terms of the analysis proposed in the next chapters, it is important to underline that the samples are not statistically representative and national samples are also different in terms of number of the respondents.

---

[1]   http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2011/homophobia-transphobia-and-discrimination-grounds-sexual-orientation-and-gender

This implies that the evaluations that will be made are only illustrative and non explicative and cannot be intended as a strictly comparative. To the contrary we will delineate some trends and differences that we interpret as relevant and that have been useful in supporting the NISO project activities in the schools.

In conclusion we can say that the double survey conducted is informative and provided interesting results that succeed in guiding NISO partners in their activities. Moreover, this research can be seen as a starting point for more in depth, qualitative research but can also be re-used in the future by so doing creating an historical database and adding more data for multiple comparisons. It is expected that some partners will use the results here summarized for a more, in depth, analysis to be proposed to scientific journals.

1.2 The LGBTs' sample

Overall, 1.108 members of the LGBT Community participated to the survey in the four countries: Belgium, Estonia, Italy and The Netherlands. According to the countries, these persons responded to the questionnaire using different means. Some used an on-line format diffused using emails, LGBT associations' websites, adds on journals, etc. Others filled it physically during events and parties. Fig 1 presents the repartition of the respondents among the countries.
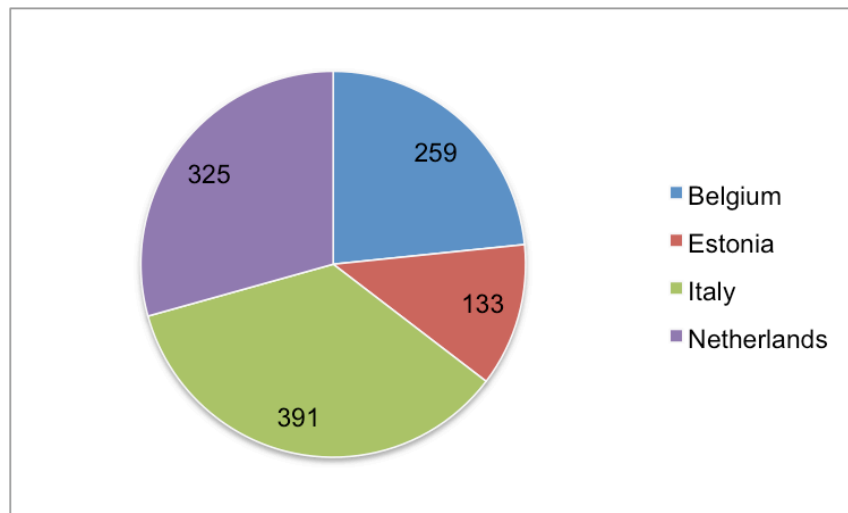

Fig. 1 Number of respondents to the questionnaire for LGBT persons in the four countries

More than half of the sample is represented by young LGBT persons (18,5% of the LGBT respondents are under 20, and almost 40% have between 21 and 30 years old). The number of respondents over 51 is quite low with 8,3% of the respondents (Fig. 2).
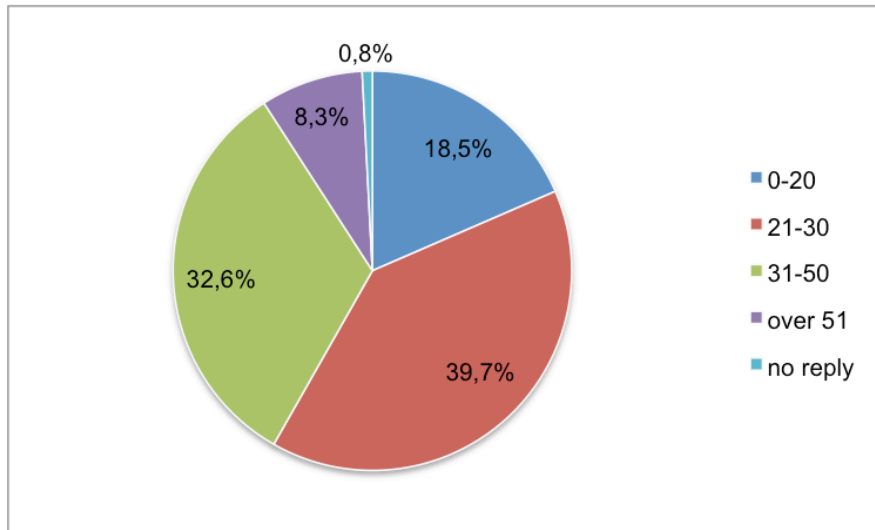
7

Fig. 2 Repartition by age of the respondents to the questionnaire for LGBT persons

However, there is a significant difference among the countries regarding the repartition by age of the respondents. While in Belgium, Estonia and Italy the majority of the respondents are under 30, in The Netherlands the majority is over 30: 40% of the Dutch respondents are, in fact, between 31 and 51 years old, and 20% are over 51.
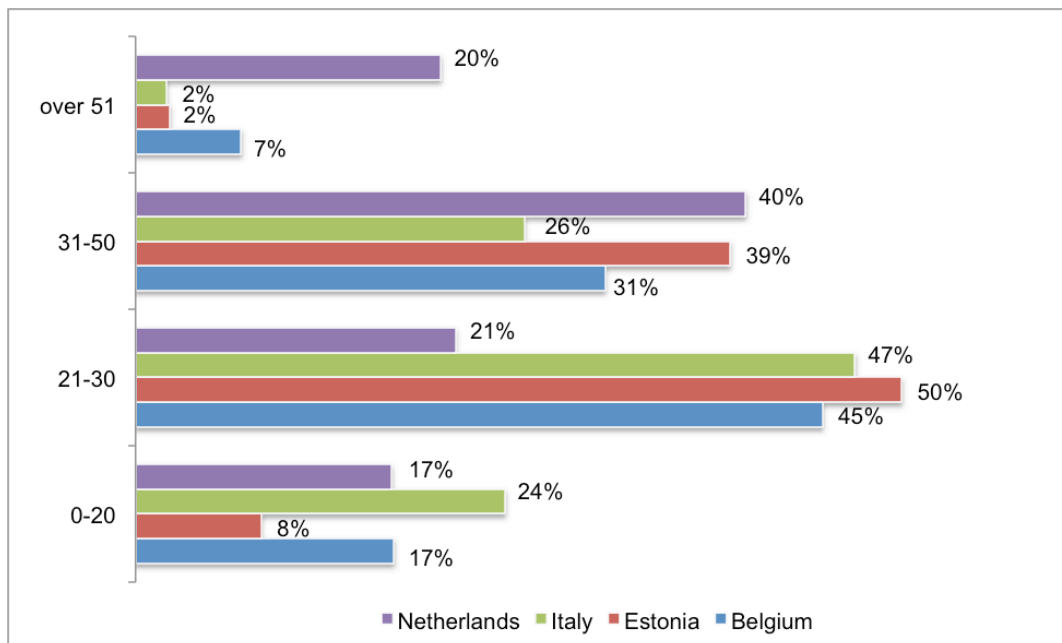

Fig. 3 Repartition by age of the respondents according to their country

The number of men and women represented in the sample is quite equal. Only 5,7% of the respondents can be considered as transgender[2]. The highest number of transgender respondents was found in Belgium, with 13,5% of the Belgian respondents.

---

[2]   In this context, we define a person as transgender when his/her stated psychological gender is different from his/her gender at birth (for example, a person born a male, but who now identifies himself as a woman or mostly woman).

As mentioned, during the preparation of the questionnaire, it was decided not to insert a question asking whether the respondents are gay or lesbian, but rather a question about whom they are attracted to, in order to avoid direct self-labelling.

By transforming the answer in well-know categories it is possible to say that the majority of the respondents are gay men[3] (45,8%) and lesbian women[4] (38,6%).
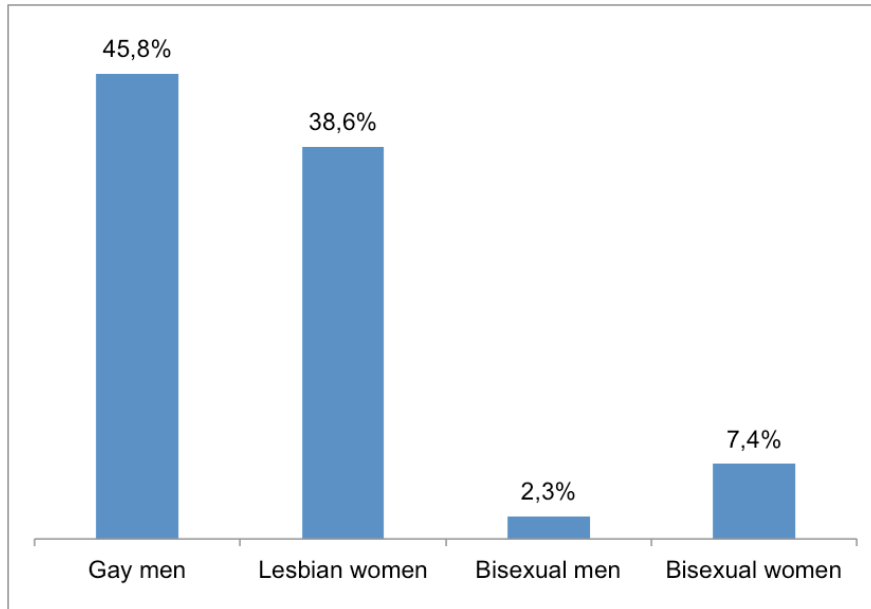

Fig. 4 Sexual orientation of the LGBT respondents

Almost 10% of the respondents are bisexual[5], mostly women (as can be seen in Fig. 4) 7,4% of the respondents are, in fact, bisexual women and 2,3% are bisexual men.

---

[3]   In this context, male respondents are defined as gay when they declared that they are attracted only or mostly to men.

[4]   In this context, female respondents are defined as lesbian when they declared that they are attracted only or mostly to women.

[5]   In this context, respondents are defined as bisexual when they declared that they are attracted both to men and women.

Considering the repartition by age of the respondents, it is not surprising that almost a quarter of them (24%) are students. The rest of the respondents are office workers (15,9%), workers in the education or research sector (12,6%), in the commerce (12%) or are self-employed professionals (9,3%). These data regard only the respondents from Belgium, Italy and The Netherlands because this information was not available in Estonia. Fig. 5 presents the LGBT respondents' employment typologies.
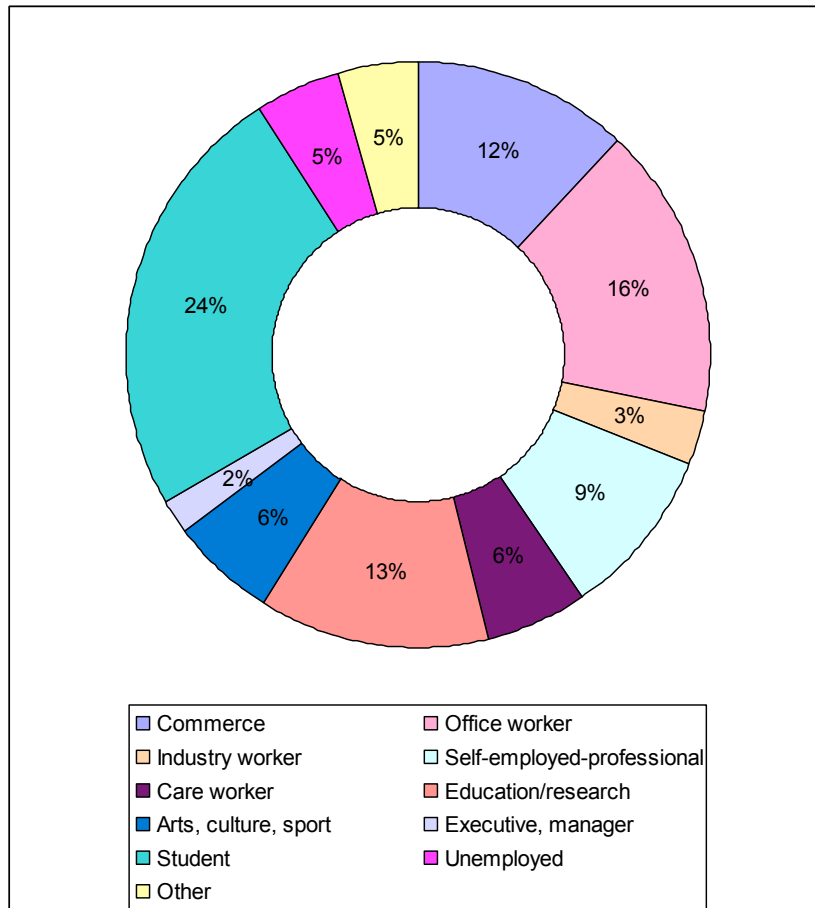

Fig. 5 LGBT respondents' employment typologies

The job typologies of the respondents are very different according to the countries (Fig.6) . For example, in The Netherlands, there is a high number of persons working in the education and research sector (28,5% of the Dutch respondents). Besides the important number of students, in Belgium a quarter of the respondents are office workers (26,6% of the Belgium respondents), while in Italy the sector more represented is commerce (22,2% of the Italian respondents). These differences can be explained by the different modalities used by the partners in distributing the questionnaire and by the characteristics of their networks. For example, GALE, the Dutch partner, had a lot of contacts with the schools and the education sector, and therefore distributed the questionnaire among a large number of LGBT persons working in this sector.
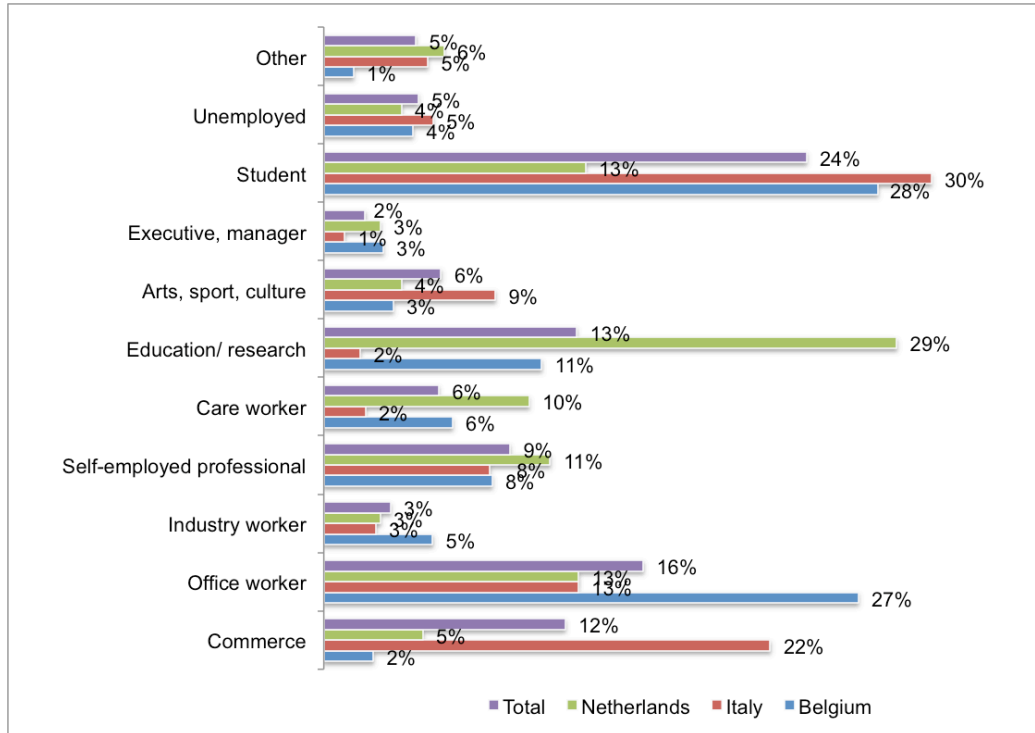
10

Fig. 6 LGBT respondents' jobs according to their country *(no data available for Estonia)*

Another big difference among the respondents coming from different countries is their level of education.

Considering the entire sample, 1,8% of the LGBT respondents has a primary education, 41,5% frequented secondary schools, 31,4% have a bachelor degree and 25,4% have a MA or a higher diploma (Fig. 7).
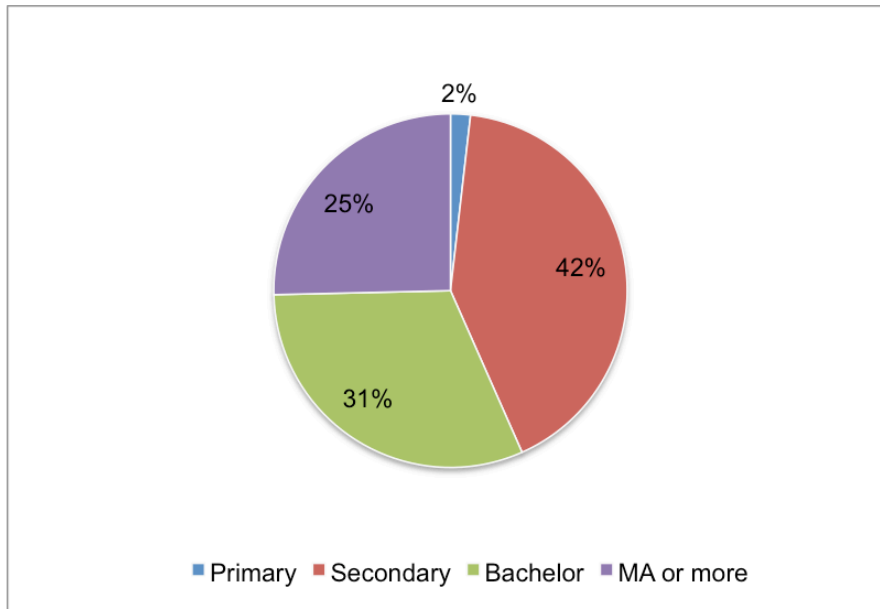

Fig. 7 Level of education of LGBT respondents

But these averages hide important differences between the countries (ountries involved in the survey (Fig.8).
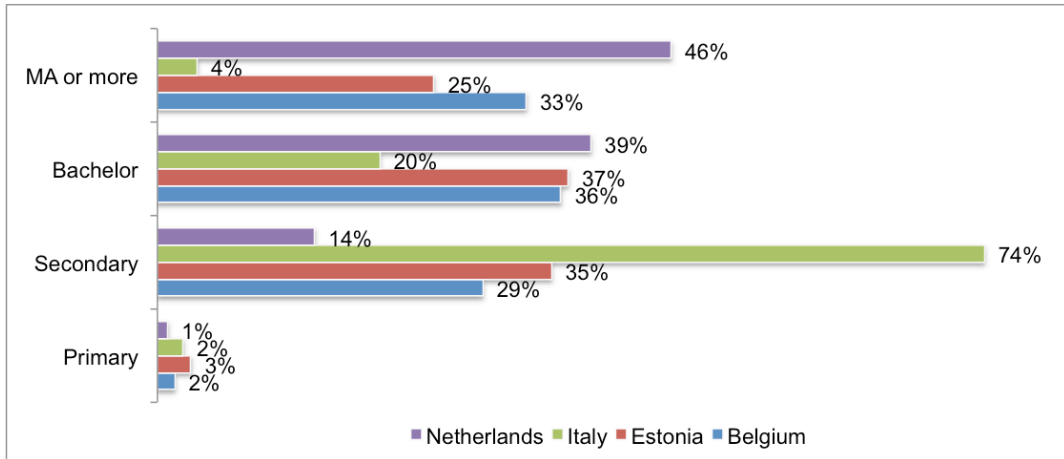
11

Fig. 8). In Italy, 74% of the respondents have a secondary level school title, and only 4% have a MA or a higher diploma. On the contrary, 46% of the Dutch respondents have a MA or more.

Estonia and Belgium have similar figures: respectively 35% and 29% of the respondents with a secondary school title, 37% and 36% with a bachelor degree and 25% and 33% with a MA or more.

Here again an explanation of these differences can be found in the age of the respondents, and in the means used to distribute the questionnaires in the different countries, but it may also reflect the different level of education that characterise the four countries involved in the survey (Fig.8).
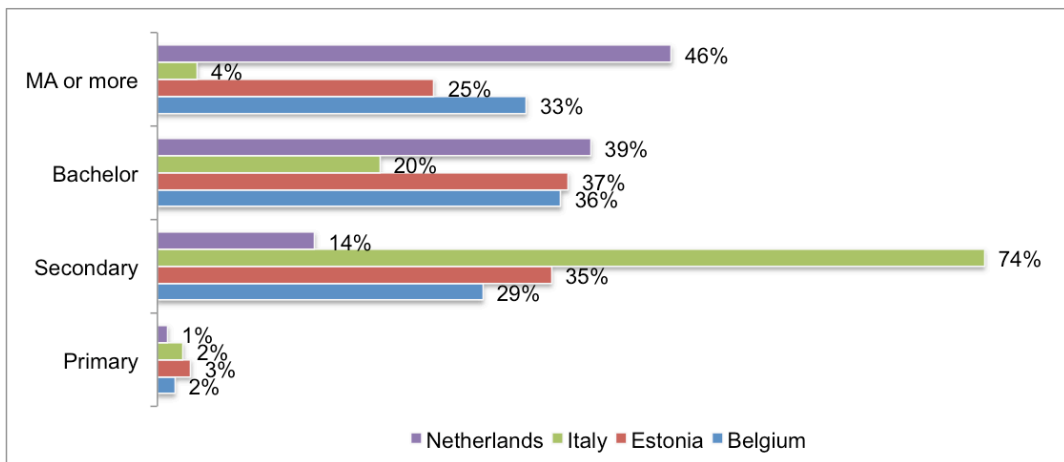

Fig. 8 Level of education of LGBT respondents according to their country

1.3 The students' sample

In total, 1.371 young people responded to the questionnaire prepared by NISO team. In all the countries, the questionnaires were distributed in the schools, either using a paper version (in Italy and some schools in The Netherlands) or using an electronic version (Belgium and some schools in The Netherlands). In Estonia, the questionnaire has been distributed online using the Estonian Youth Centre Network to reach more persons.

Fig. 9 presents the number of respondents in each country: 249 young persons participated in the survey in Belgium, 48 in Estonia, 739 in Italy and 335 in The Netherlands.
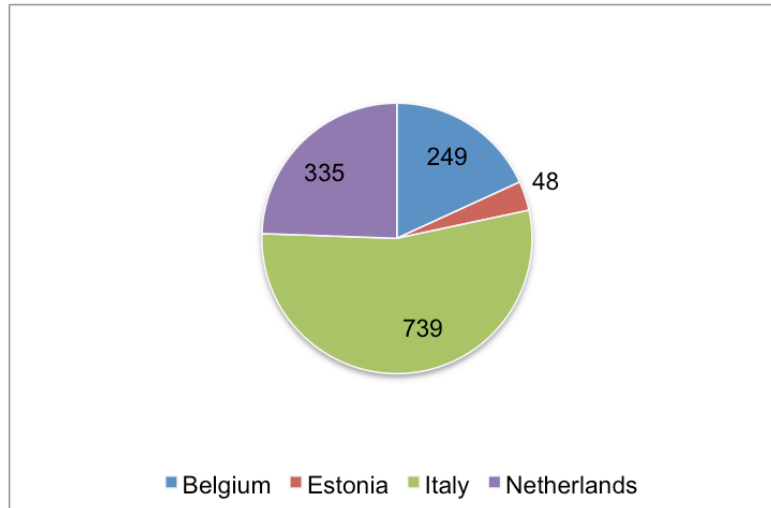
12

Fig. 9 Number of respondents to the questionnaire for young people in the four countries

There is an almost equal number of boys and girls (Fig. 10): 47,6% of the respondents are boys, 51,5% are girls and 0,9% declared themselves as "other".
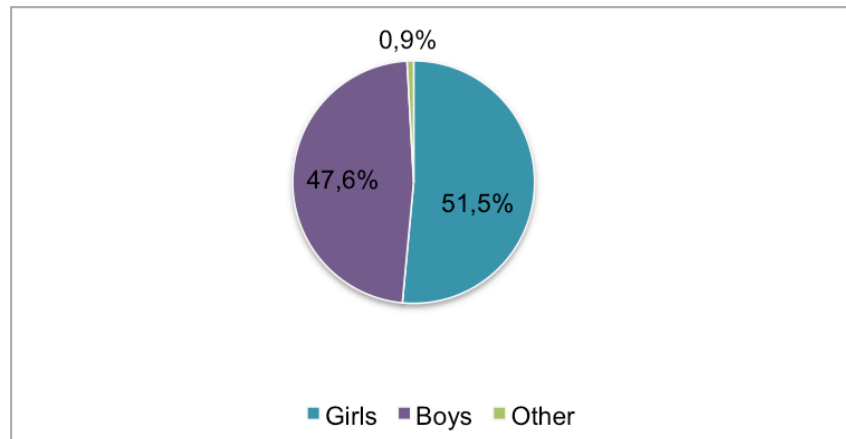
Fig. 10 Gender identity of young respondents

The larger part of the sample is between 14 and 18 years old: 9% are under 14 and 4% are over 18. The age of the samples is very different between the countries (Fig. 11). While the majority of the Dutch students (56,9%) are 14 or under, almost half of the Italian students are 18 or more (44,3%). Estonian students have mostly between 15 and 17 years old (85,4%) as well as the Belgium students (61%). This difference can be explained in part by the conditions of the questionnaire's diffusion. In fact, in Italy, sometimes the questionnaire could be distributed only to students over 18.

13
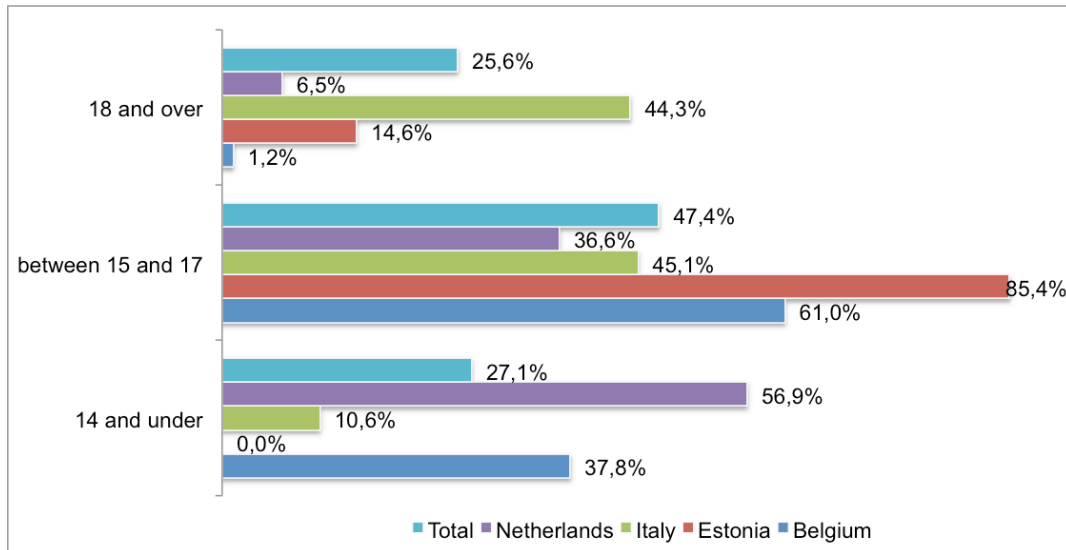
Fig. 11 Age of the young respondents according to their country

One of the variables taken into consideration while analysing the results in the number of LGBT person young persons known. A large part of the students knows 1 or 2 LGBT persons (Fig. 12), while 23% doesn't know any and 24% knows between 2 and 5.
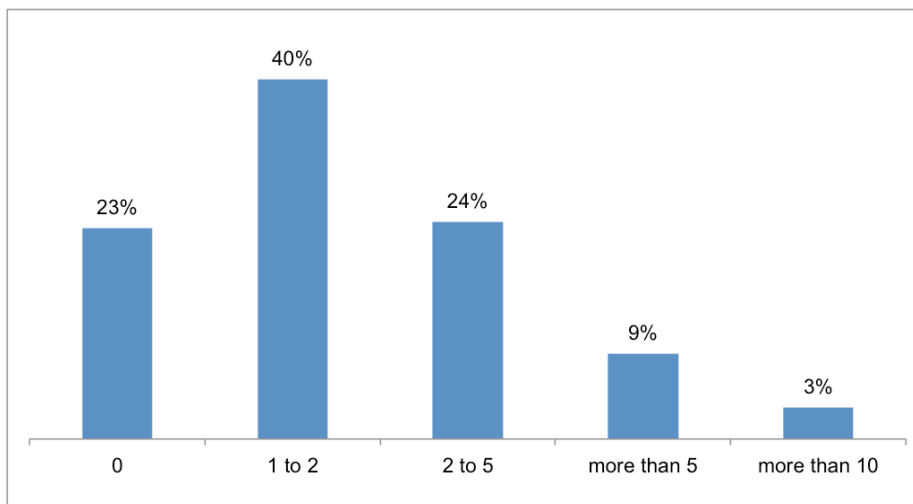
Fig. 12 Number of LGBT persons known by young respondents

There are not many differences between the countries regarding the number of LGBT persons they know (Fig. 13). We can note that in Estonia fewer respondents declared that they didn't know any LGBT person (4% of the Estonian students) and a large majority declared that they know 1 or 2 LGBT person (60%). Belgium is the only country where more than half of the students know more than 2 LGBT persons (52%).
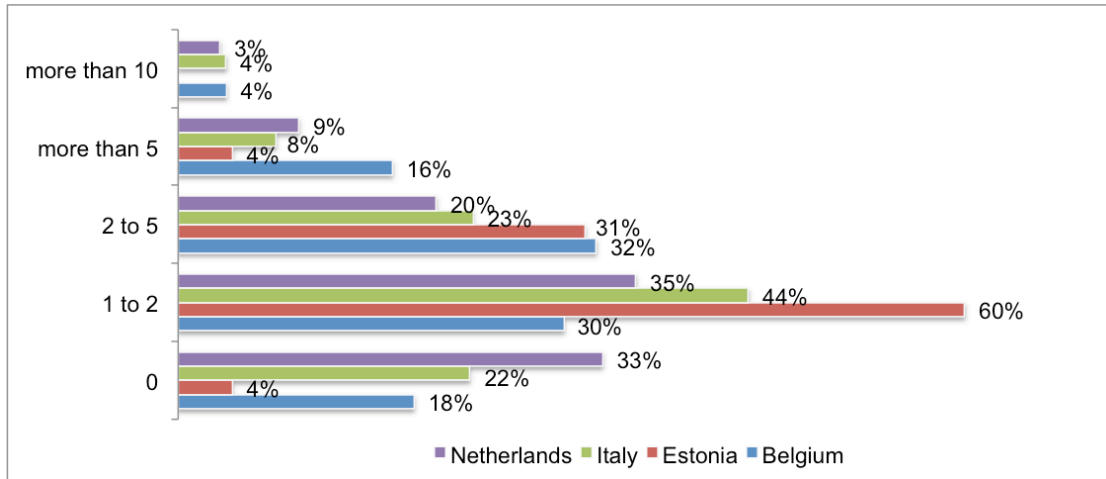
Fig. 13 Number of LGBT persons known by young respondents according to their country

As presented in Fig. 14, the LGBT persons known by the respondents are mainly schoolmates (32%), close friends (22%), parents' friends (14%) and general acquaintance (13%).
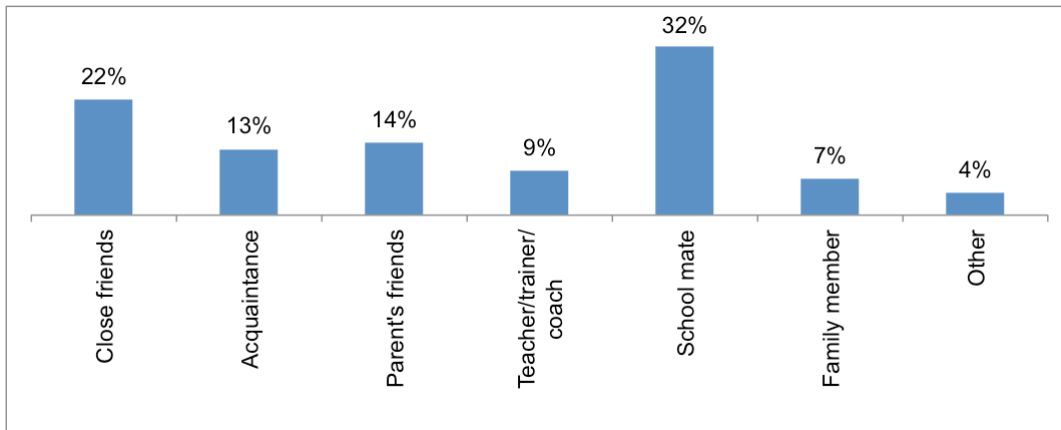
Fig. 14 Relationship with LGBT persons known by young respondents

While the Italian and Belgium students mostly know LGBT schoolmates (respectively 39% and 33%), Estonian and Dutch students nominated more general acquaintances (respectively 32% and 23%).
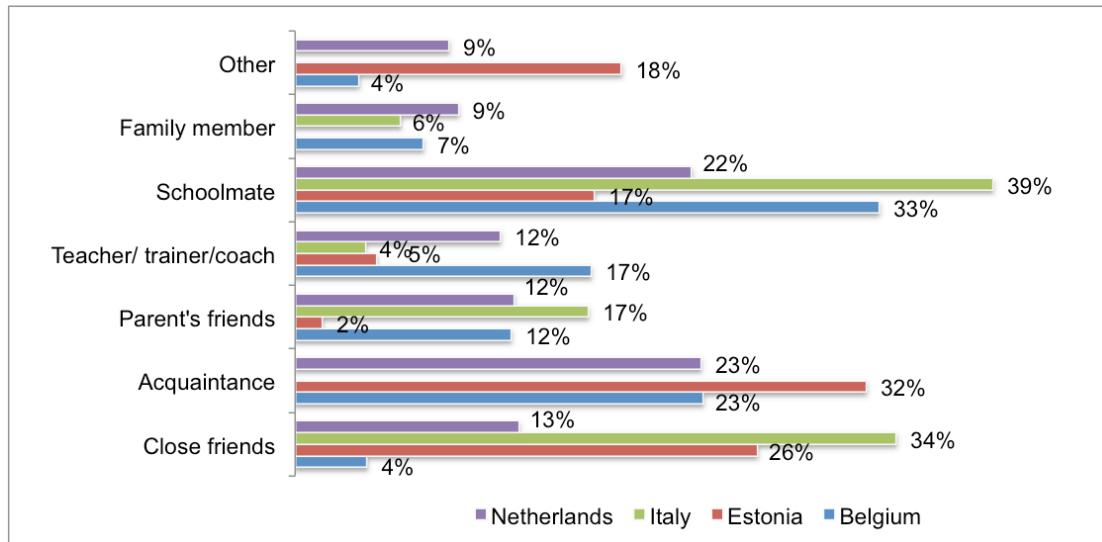
Fig. 15 Relationship with LGBT persons known by young respondents according to their country

In the next chapter we will look at gender stereotypes and stereotypes attributed to LGBT persons. We will see what are the common places students attribute to gay men and lesbian women and then we will see what are the most common stereotypes experienced by LGBTs. We also see, the consequences that those stereotypes can have on persons that are "object" of them.

2 Gender stereotypes and stereotypes related to LGBT's

This chapter is dedicated to stereotypes and commonplaces about woman, men and LGBTs. We will see, first, to what extent students are close to traditional definition of gender, and then we will consider stereotypes attached to LGBTs. With reference to the latter, we will compare the prospective of students with that of LGBTs looking at possible correspondences between the stereotypes LGBT see as attached to them and the characteristics that students attribute to them.

2.1 Students and gender stereotypes

We asked students to agree or disagree on a set of statements that may be interpreted as stereotypical views on gender definition and roles.

What mean to be boy and girls is something that we all learn very soon; in some societies more than in others there is a strong pressure for corresponding to the cultural definition of genders. Non-conformity with social definition of gender may have consequence in the everyday life of persons - especially for young - and traditional views on gender role may have negative effect in terms of LGBT acceptance/social inclusion. The figure below (Fig. 16) shows the responses of all the students interviewed in the four countries.

16
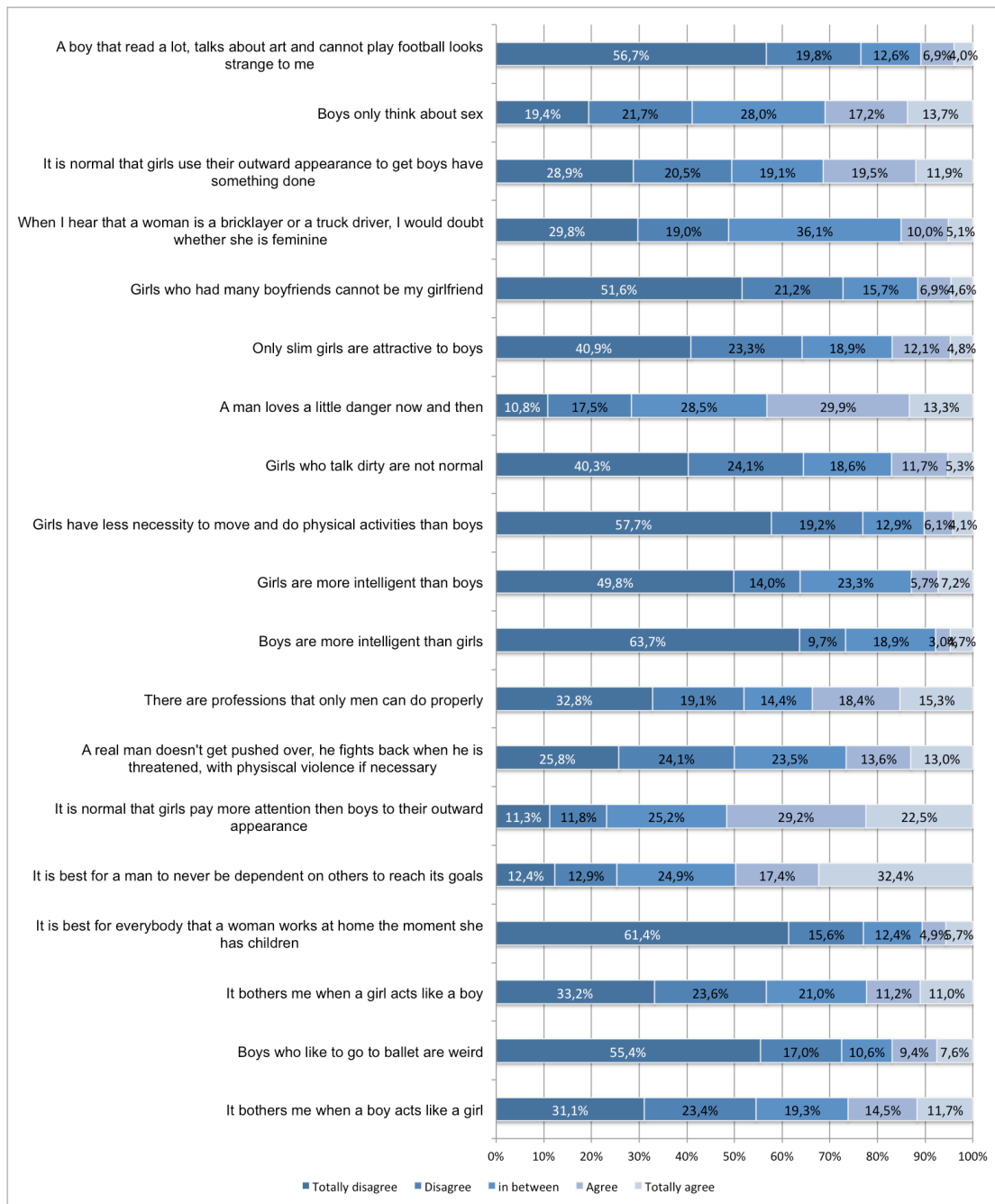
Fig. 16 Students view of gender roles

As can be seen, students distance themselves from traditional definition of what is appropriate to do as a men and as a woman: only a minority (7,6%) think that boys who like ballet are strange and that women should not work once become a mother (5,7%). Also interestingly, only around 11% of the respondents say to be bothered when a boy acts like a girl and vice-versa. Never the less, some common places about being a boy and a girl seem to persist as valid. 32,4% of the students affirm that "It is best for a man to never be dependent on others to reach its goals", 15,3% strongly agree that "there are professions that only men can do properly" and the 22,5% that "It is normal that girls pay more attention then boys to their outward appearance".

17

If we look now at the differences among countries, we can see that, for example with reference to the fact that a men should be independent, Italian and Estonian students show to be more persuaded about this statement than the others (Fig. 17). 47% of the Italian and 27% of Estonian students strongly agree with the statements where only 17,1% of Dutch and 10,1% of Belgian do.

Fig. 17 Relevance of men independency in the four countries

Dutch students tend to agree more than Italians and Estonian on the sentence "it is normal that girls pay more attention then boys to theirs outward appearance". If we look at the total, 22,5% of them strongly agree on this sentence and 29% agree; Dutch students strongly agree in a percentage equal to 33,6% and 53% of the Belg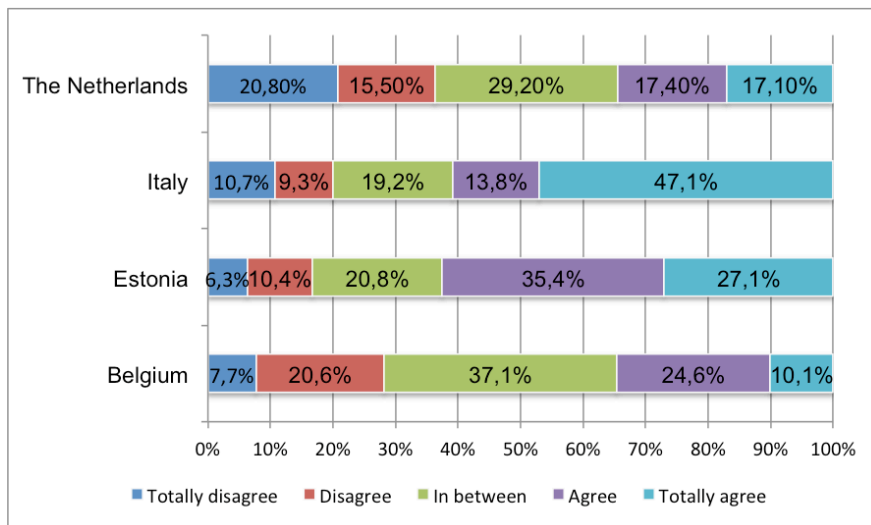ian agree too. 22,9% of Estonian students, instead, strongly agree that a "Girls who talk dirty are not normal", but if we look at the totally this figure go down to 5,3%.

It is important to underline that in all the countries, answers show important differences with relevance to the gender of the respondents; in fact boys seem to conform more closely to traditional definition of gender roles than girls. We can say, therefore, that girls lean on the side of more egalitarian views, while boys more on the side of traditional definitions. In addition, in some countries it emerged that students with a higher number of LGBT friends and acquaintances still show more egalitarian views than the others, of course it is not possible to trace a cause-effect relationship on top of this findings. In fact, a possible interpretation is that students closer to LGBT persons are more open to a non-traditional definition of gender, but it can also be that students that have a non-traditional view of gender tends to have more LGB friends.

In conclusion we can say that, even if students seams to be open to non-traditional definition of gender, expectation in terms of social gendered behaviours and related attitudes are still present. For this reason the Voice OUT approach integrate the work on LGBT issues with more general training on gender differences and identities.

2.2 Stereotypes about LGBT people: comparison between the students and the LGBTs' point of views

We asked to the students if gay and lesbian have any specific characteristic. To the ones who answered positively to this question, we also asked which are those characteristics. The table below (Tab. 1) shows the five terms used the most for describing gay men.

	Estonia	Italy	The Netherlands	Belgium
1	Effeminate	Effeminate	Feminine	Feminine
2	Hypersexual	Sensitive	Effeminate/sissy	Sensitive
3	Flamboyant	Way to dress	Manierism	Cares about look
4	Mentally Ill	Attention to their look	Fashion conscious	Fashion conscious
5	Well groomed	Voice, way to speak	Focussed on look	Friends with girls

Tab. 1 Adjectives attributed to gay men by students

As evident, in all the countries the first adjective is effeminate or feminine; so the first stereotype is related to the fact to be non-conform to standard gender definition. The link with the previous paragraph is evident: it is important to combine (as it happen in the Voice OUT approach) education on gender with education about LGBT issues.

Other adjective used for describing homosexual man are related to the attention for dress, look and fashion that, as we saw in the previous paragraph, seams to be attribute of girls mainly. However, with the exception of Estonia, that mentions "mentally ill", in all other countries there are not extremely negative adjectives. In Estonia it also emerged the idea of gay man as hypersexual, promiscuous and flamboyant.

We also asked to LGBT person to list the most common stereotypes they perceive as attached to gay men (Tab. 2).

	Estonia	Italy	The Netherlands	Belgium
1	Not available	Effeminate	Effeminate	Feminine
2	Not available	Hairdresser/stylist	Promiscuous	Effeminate
3	Not available	Promiscuous	Manierism	Promiscuous
4	Not available	Ill	Artistic or soft professions	Oversexed
5	Not available	Fashionable	Fashion conscious	HIV

Tab. 2 Adjectives attributed to gay men, accordingly to LGBT respondents

Unfortunately we do not have data about Estonian LGBT members, but in all the other countries what emerged is that LGBT members feel that adjectives attribute to them are much more negative than the one attributed them by the students interviewed. For example, in the Netherlands none of the students ascribe promiscuity to gay man, while 51% of the LGBT adults think this is one of the most relevant stereotype attributed to them. Similarly, in Italy terms as "ill" and "promiscuous" approach only in the answers of the LGBT community members. In Belgium then, we find another relevant term, that recals the HIV disease.

We asked the same questions with reference to lesbian woman characteristics and stereotypes. The answers are similar to the one obtained with reference to gay men, with students providing less negative adjectives than the one provided by LGBT community members. Also in this case, the Estonian students different from the ones

of the other countries by mentioning more negative images such as the fact that lesbian woman didn't find a man, or are ugly. Here below the answers provided by students (Tab. 1Tab. 3).

	Estonia	Italy	The Netherlands	Belgium
1	Masculine	Masculine attitude and behaviours	Masculine	Masculine
2	Ugly	Clothes, way to dress	Short hair	Clothes, way to dress
3	Hasn't found a man	Physical aspect, hair	Butch, rough	Show off
4	Wear manly clothes	Good looking		
5	Aggressive	Hard, tough		

Tab. 3 Adjectives attributed to lesbian woman by students

The term masculine is the first one to be mentioned in both the surveys, but as evident in the answers provided by the LGBTs we find more reference to works (considered masculine, such as the truck driver) and the fact to be aggressive, violent and rough. It has to be noted that with reference to lesbian women there are not reference to sexual behaviours that seams to be attached only to gay men; terms such as promiscuous and oversexed are absent, as the term "ill".

	Estonia	Italy	The Netherlands	Belgium
1	Non available	Masculine attitude and behaviours	Masculine	Masculine
2	Non available	Truck drivers	Short hair	Butch
3	Non available	Rough, coarse, vulgar	Butch, rough	Short hair
4	Non available	Quarrelsome, violent	Ugly/fat	Hate men
5	Non available	Aggressive	Hates man	

Tab. 4 Adjectives attributed to lesbian women, accordingly to LGBT respondents

In conclusion, we can say that the most mentioned stereotypes, again, are related to genders' definition. The fact that LGBT members perceived more negative stereotypes that the one actually attributed to them by students can be a sign of a process in which young people are developing a more open view on LGBTs, but more qualitative research will be needed in order to confirm this preliminary interpretation.

2.3 The effect of stereotypes on LGBTs

The last aspect analysed in this chapter regards the effects that these stereotypes have on LGBTs' lives.

We asked to the LGBT respondent if the stereotypes attributed to them have any consequence in their life: in Italy and in the Netherlands respectively 63% and 60% of the respondents said that stereotypes produces some consequences. This was an open question, so we will now summarise the answers by country.

In Italy, some respondents declared that these stereotypes made them feel excluded or engendered self-exclusion (6%). For others, these stereotypes had consequences on the construction of their identity and on the acceptance of their homosexuality (6%). To others it provoked a sense of insecurity or depression (4%) or a feeling of shame (2%).

The respondents in the Estonian survey reported that LGBT stereotypes have had an effect on their lives in many ways, ranging from the emotional sufferings (emotions like fear, humiliation, low self esteem, depression) to using strategies in order not to be visible, to conform to what is expected (e.g. controlling one's bodily movements, clothing, etc.). Two male respondents also reported that they have had suicidal thoughts. Most of the respondents (those who open about their sexuality) who answered to the question also stated that they have to constantly explain their sexuality (e.g. it is not just a phase, gay doesn't mean paedophile, etc.).

In the Netherlands, most mentioned was that LGBT respondents were showing the contrary of stereotypes (18% of all the examples), consequences for their own identity (for example not coming-out; 17% of the examples) and not speaking about their own homosexual feelings (13% of all examples).

The strategy to show the contrary of stereotypes is a very common one in the Netherlands and is not only a personal strategy. It is also used in anti-homophobia education. Especially in the more rural parts of the country, were visible cultural diversity is less common, anti-homophobia peer-education groups tend to stress that gays and lesbian are 'normal' rather than stress that it is necessary to learn to cope with diversity.

Also in Belgium the need to contrary stereotypes has been mentioned by 16% of the respondents that account any consequence. For half of the Belgian respondents, in fact, they did not had any effect. If the stereotypes did have an effect, it was a negative influence on self-esteem, self-image and acceptance, and fear of coming out.

The literature confirms that many LGBT persons suffer from depression and other mental health problems, particularly the younger ones[6]. Adolescence is a very delicate moment in which one builds its own identity, and social pressure and non-acceptance can have very strong effect on young people.

Finally, the stereotypes attached to LGBT people have also consequences for some on their relationship with the LGBT community on a negative (distance from it for 4%) or positive (desire to fight for LGBT rights for 4%) way.

As we have seen above, the perception that LGBT people have of the stereotypes attached them is rather negative, and these stereotypes have for some a negative impact on their life. This negative perception can be in part explained by the experience of episodes of discrimination and prejudice they have suffered directly and indirectly in their life. The next chapter of the report analyses more in detail the

---

[6] Garofalo R, Wolf RC, Wissow LS, et al. Sexual orientation and risk of suicide attempts among a representative sample of youth. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 1999;153(5):487-93.

perception of homophobia and discrimination by the LGBT community and by the students.

3 LGBT people in society: perspectives and practices

In this chapter we will see, first of all how students define homosexuality, than we will look at episodes of discrimination reported by LGBTs respondents and will compare them with the perception students have about the capability of the society to accept LGBTs. In the last paragraphs we will see shat students think about LGBT rights and how they behave with LGBT schoolmates.

3.1 Definition of homosexuality accordingly to students

We asked to the students to define homosexuality, selecting from a list of possibilities (Fig. 18). The option "other" was also present. Looking at the chart below we can see that the options that aggregate most of the answers are three:

- A choice (58,5%)
- A natural sexual orientation (52,5%)
- A lifestyle (28,2%)

The term "a choice" is somehow problematic; it can be interpreted in two ways: homosexuality as something that an individual can decide on (as we decide to be left-wing or right wing, for example) or a "legitimate possibility", something that is part of the freedom of individuals. We tend to interpret the students answers in this second sense, this interpretation - in fact - emerged more clearly during the activities in the schools. However, the idea that homosexuality is a lifestyle is also present among a consistent number of students (28,2%).

Generally speaking we can say that the large majority of respondents provide a "positive" definition of homosexuality, however we have to notice that 11% define homosexuality as a sexual aberration/perversion, 12% as a mental disease/insanity, 4,9% as a physical disorder and 4,4% as a sin.
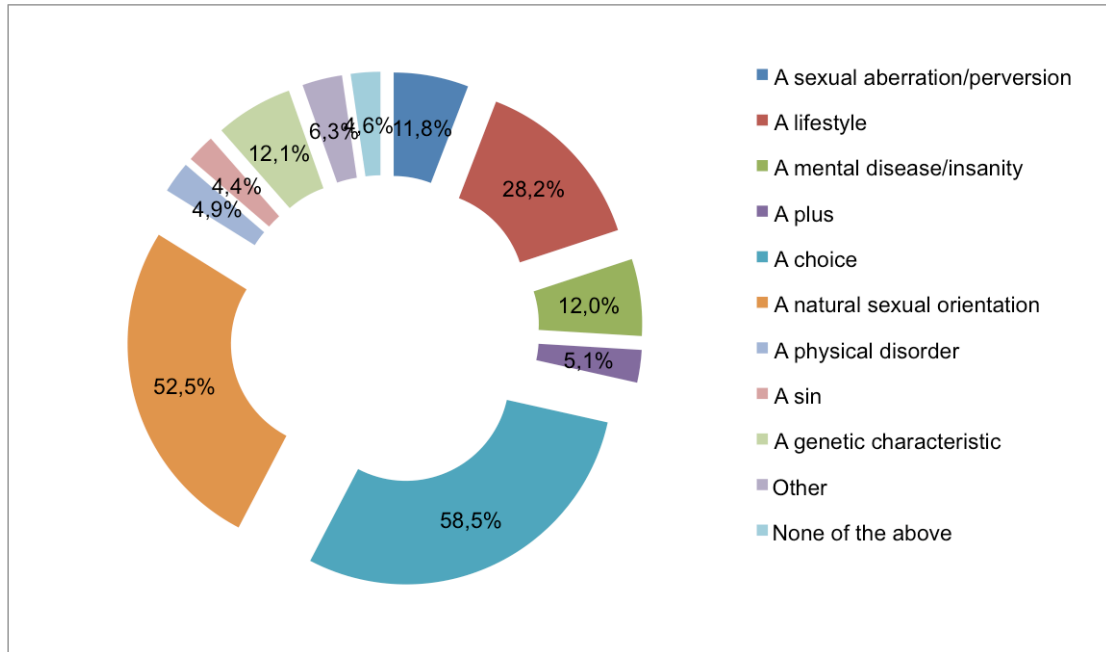
Fig. 18 Definition of homosexuality by students

(Sum is more than 100% because respondent could chose more than one answer)

We will see now the differences among country with respect to this question (Fig. 19). We can see that Estonian answers are more "extreme", in fact the majority of the respondents define homosexuality as a natural sexual orientation in a percentage higher than in the other countries, but have the higher rates also on "a sexual aberration", a "sin" and a "genetic characteristic". Belgian students respond, in percentage higher than the others, a "choice" and a "lifestyle". Dutch and Italian students' definitions are more or less equally spread across the options: " a choice", " a lifestyle" and a "natural sexual orientation".
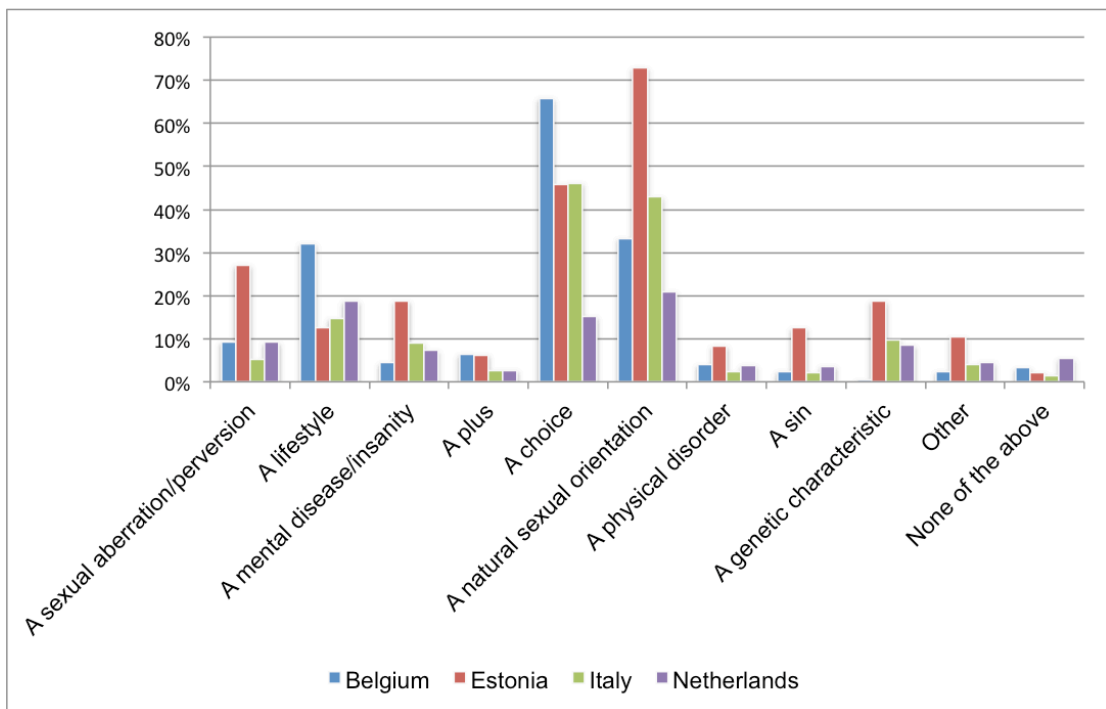

Fig. 19 Definition of homosexuality by students (by country)

Asking this question to students in a school before starting educational activities can be of great help; in fact on one hand it open up a space for discussion in classes and, on the other hand, it can give the educators a map of the ideas and definitions available in the school.

3.2 Experience of discrimination by LGBT respondents

The large majority of LGBT respondents experienced discrimination, at least once in their life. The graph below (Fig. 20) shows the differences among countries, but what is more relevant for the NISO team is understanding in what environments the discrimination took place and what is the students' perception of such environments.
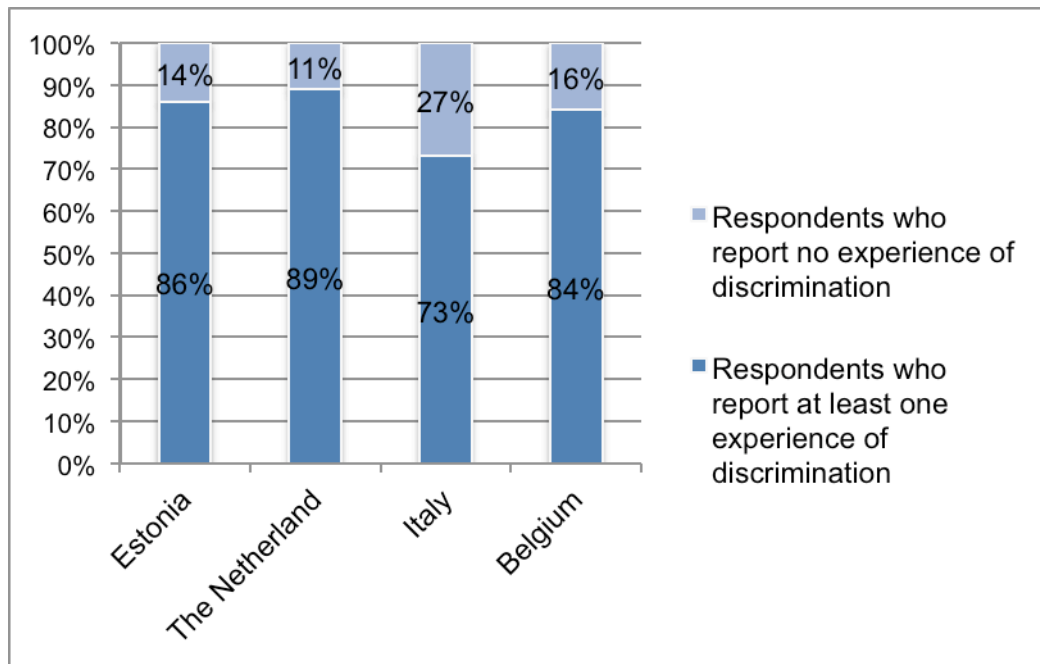

Fig. 20 Experience of discrimination reported by LGBTs

These figures give an idea of the difficult situation of LGBTs in all the four countries; Italian seams to experience less discrimination but this data is some how surprising considering the situation of LGBT rights in the country. A possible interpretation is that, exactly because the lack of recognition of LGBT rights, LGBTs themselves consider discriminative only major offences consequently under-estimating discriminative practices. More research is, however, needed in order to better understand what is considered "discrimination" in the different countries.

Most of the respondents reported psychological violence (42,3%) like mobbing, pressure for assimilation and similar, other reported verbal violence (insults for the 24,7% of respondents and jokes for 7,6% of respondents), refusal and non acceptance (8,5%) but also physical offences (3%).

We will see now the environments that are perceived as more discriminative. We will see the opinion of LGBT people first and than that of students.

	Estonia	**Italy**	**The Netherland**	**Belgium**
1	Media/Internet	School	Media/Internet	School
2	Family	Family	School	Family
3	Bars/pubs	Bars/pubs	Family	Bars/pubs
4	School	Media/Internet	Work	Media/Internet
5	Close circle of friends	Work	Bars/pubs	Work

Tab. 5 Environments in which LGBT respondents experienced discrimination

For Italians and Belgian LGBTs school is the first place of discrimination, followed by family, bars and pubs, media and the internet and work. In The Netherlands and Estonia, differently, the media and the internet is the first place of discrimination, family is the second one in Estonia, while school is at the second position in the Netherlands. Family is the third place of discrimination in The Netherland followed by workplace and bars/pubs. In Estonia we find in third position Bars and Pubs, followed by school and the close circle of friends that is not in the top five of the other countries.

We asked, then, to students to evaluate to what extent different environments are gay friendly. In the figures below (Fig. 21) we report a selection of the results, where the differences among countries are evident.
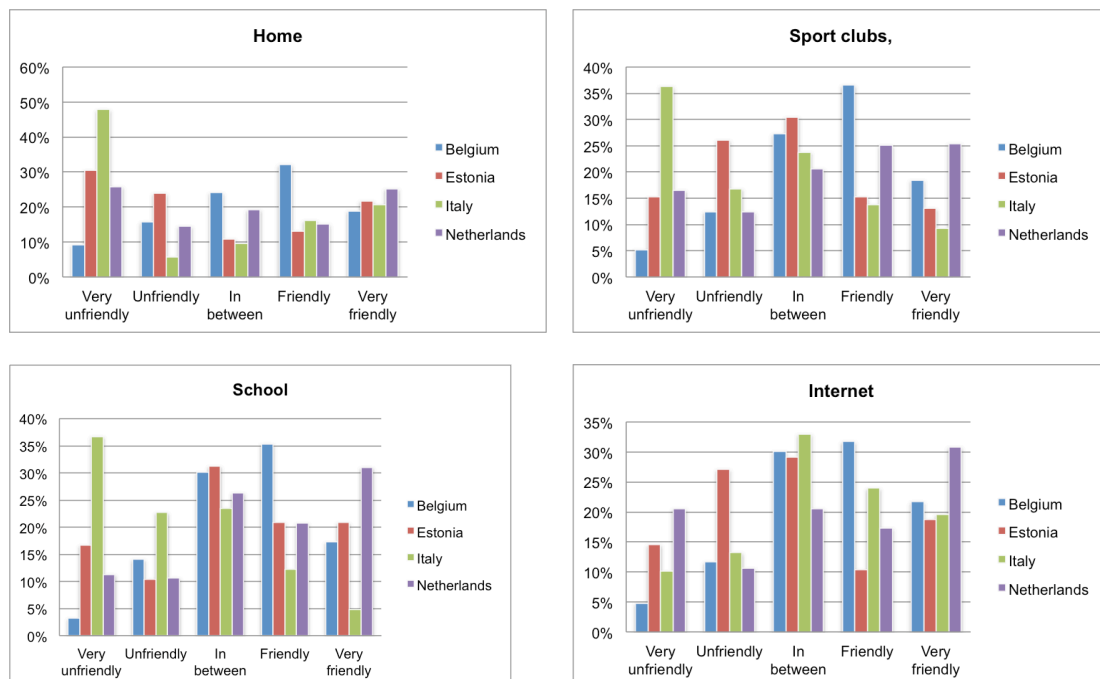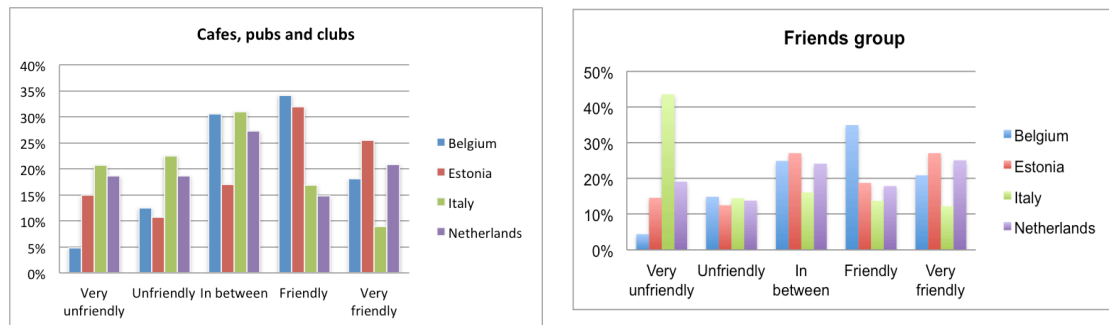
Fig. 21 Students view capability of different enviroment to welcome LGBTs

Italian students evaluate as very unfriendly their school, their circle of friends, their home and the bars, clubs and pubs there are use to go to. In other terms, from their perspective, the everyday life of a young LGBT person would pass through environments that will not welcome him/her. For them, the internet is a relative safer place; to the contrary this is not true for Estonian students, while Dutch respondents are divided between a positive and a negative view of the internet. Estonian, Dutch and Belgium students positively evaluate cafe, pubs and clubs; school is a welcoming place for Dutch students and this is for sure a positive result, as this is one of the most important place of teenager everyday life and a place for identity formation.

3.3 Social inclusion and rights of LGBTs accordingly to students

Now we will see how students perceive the society in which they leave; we are interested in undersanding if the perception of the level of accenptance and inclusion of LGBT is similar to that of LGBTs reported at the beginning of the previous paragraph.
We asked to the students to agree or disagree with a set of sentences. The first one was "Homosexuality is accepted at social level". The graph below illustrate the asnwers we gathered.
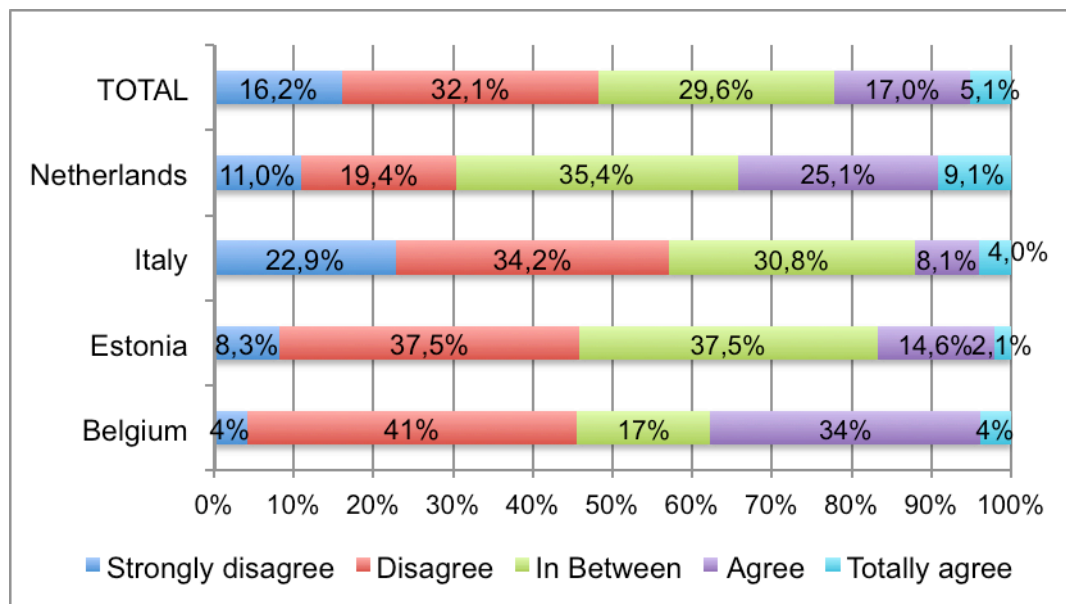

Fig. 22 Students perception of homoxessuality acceptance at social level

As we can see there are important differences among countries. In Belgium 34% of students agree that the society they leave in accept homosexuality and 4% strongly agree on this statement; in the Netherlands the situation is quite similar with 25,1% of

27

the respondents that agree and 9,1% that totally agree. To the contrary, in Italy only the 8,1% agree and 4% strongly agree. The Italian figures are the most worrying ones, followed by those of Estonia in which 14,6% of students agree with the statement and 2,1% strongly agree.

Finally, we asked the students their opinion in terms of LGBT rights. In the chart below we can see some interesting results: not only 61,6% of the respondents totally agree that "gay men and lesbian women should be free to live their own life as they wish", but also 47,4% totally agree with the possibility of same sex marriage. If we consider also the ones who agree on this sentence (17,7%) we can see that the majority of the students are in favour of this right. It is important to consider that two of the four countries represented in the survey do not have such a right, so these figures are particularly relevant. We will see later on the difference among countries on these questions.

However it is important to observe that the data about the possibility to leave their life as they wish find a large agreement when speaking about gay men, lesbian woman and bisexual, but the percentage decrease when talking about transgender person. In fact, the figures pass from 61,6 (for gay and lesbian) and 61,7 (for bisexuals) to 51,7 for transgender persons. This is an important result that shows how t transgender l persons are still confronted with ostracism and non-acceptance.

Moreover, if 46,6% totally agree with the sentence "It is important that gays and lesbians stand up for their rights", the percentage decrease of 10 points when we move to a more concrete level asking opinions about the following two sentences: "Lesbian, gay and bisexual activists should have the right to organise a peaceful event in the neighbourhood" and "Lesbian, gay and bisexual activists should have the chance to express their opinions in TV programs". So, here we start to see something that will become more evident in the next paragraph, i.e. there is a gap between the declarations about rights to be attributed to LGBTs and the acceptance of LGBT visibility at social level. The social closeness with LGBTs is another variable that need to be considered when analysis these results, as it seams possible to say that invisibility and separation is a scenario envisaged by some of the respondent that are open to right recognition but are bothered by LGBT visibility and closeness.
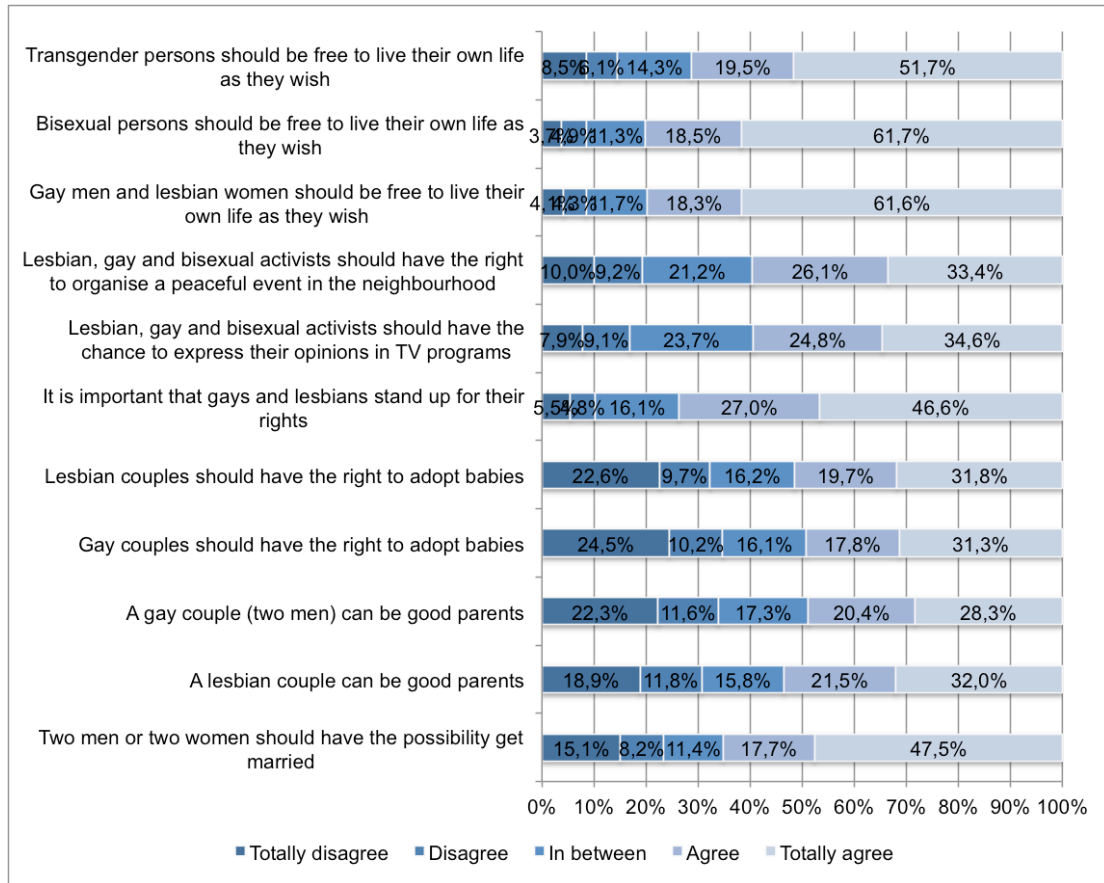
Fig. 23 Students opinion on LGBT rigths

If we move from the rights to get married to the right to adopt children, we see that figures decrease. By summing up students that totally agree with those who simply agree we obtain that 51,5% is in favour of this right for lesbian couples and 49,1% for gay couples to adopt children.

If we look now at differences among country, for example with reference to marriage rights, we see that Estonian and Italian students show some criticism. 20,6% of Italian students and 27,1% of Estonian students totally disagree with the attribution of this right, where only 10,4% and 2,5& of, respectivelly, Dutch and Belgian students share this opinion.
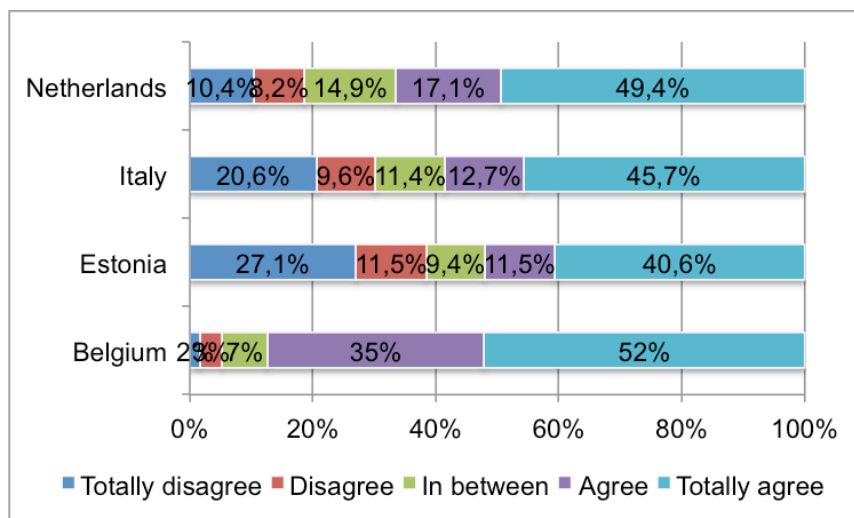

Fig. 24 Students opinion on merriage rigth (by country)

29

As for the previous topic analysed, girls appear to be more open than boys to LGBT rights, another variable that seams to influence answers is the number of LGBT persons know. As the number of LGBT persons known grows, as the respondent appear more open to right recognition.

In the national reports the reader can find more details about the position of the students on each of the items used in the survey for analysing their position towards LGBT rights.

3.4 Students behaviours towards LGBT schoolmate

In this paragraph we will look at students behaviours towards LGB schoolmates. We asked them to think at different kinds on interaction with LGB schoolmates, representing different degree of closeness.

The large majority of respondents show to be at easy in interacting with LGB schoolmates, but there is a percentage (15-30%) of them that find it difficult to do homework together, would prefer not to sit close to a LGB students during breaks and that will have problem in sharing a room with an homosexual peer.
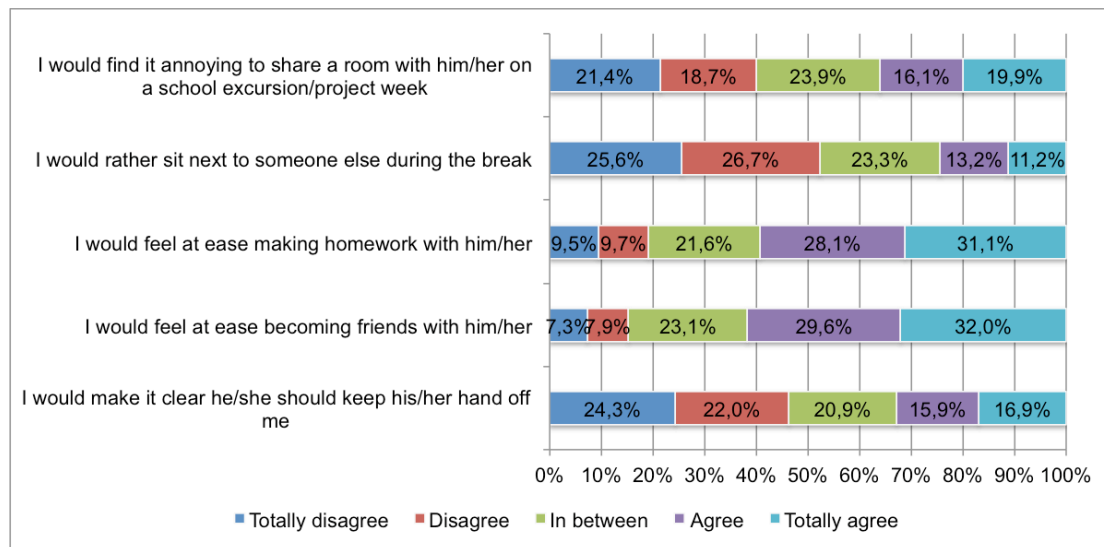

Fig. 25 Students' behavious towards LGB schoolmates

More precisely, 15,2% of respondents (summing up respondent who agree or totally agree with the item) would not feel at easy in becoming friend with a LGB schoolmate; 24,4% would prefer to sit next to someone else during breaks and 36% would find annoying to share a room during a school excursion or project week.

Unfortunately we do not have the data from Estonia on this question so it is not fully meaningful to do comparisons among countries, but it is important highlighting that boys seam to have more difficulties in dealing with LGB students than girls. This is true in Italy as well as in Netherland and in Belgium. Moreover, the higher the number of LGBT persons the students know, the more they feel at easy in dealing with them.

In conclusion we can say that there is a difference based on gender in dealing with homosexuality, and that discomfort of young people increase when the social distance proposed in the question become smaller. So it is perceived as easier to make homework together than sharing a room. Harsh statements like "keep your hands of me" are less common, with 46% of the respondent disagreeing with this statement, but still there is a 32,8% that will be so explicit to affirm something like that to a schoolmate.

Conclusions

In this document we summarized some of the results obtained in a double survey conducted in the four countries represented in the NISO consortium: Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and Estonia. The research engaged 1.108 members of the LGBT communities and 1.371 high-school students.

The surveys were based on a semi-structured questionnaire distributed by different means in the four countries. The samples are not statistically representative, but, still, they provided interesting results that supported the school activities of the project.

We analysed gender stereotype first, and the results show that – even if students seam open to non-traditional definitions of gender role – there are still some stereotypes that see men as strongly independent and woman as dedicated to their outward appearance. Similarly, there are jobs that only man can do properly and, in some courtiers, is considered normal that a girls use their appearance to obtain favours by men. When we considered common places attributed to gay man and lesbian woman we saw that the main characteristic to be mention is exactly that on non-conformity with traditional definition of genders. Consequently, gay men are seen as feminine and lesbian woman as masculine. There are also other adjectives attributed to these categories but what is more interesting to be noted is that adjectives attributed by students are less negative that the ones perceived by LGBT respondents. LGBT respondents, in fact, think that at social level they are described as promiscuous and ill (for the gay men) and aggressive, violent and ugly (for the lesbian). Those adjectives are totally absent from Italian, Dutch and Belgian students answer: are present, but not predominant, in the Estonian answers showing that young people seams to have non very negative view of gay and lesbian persons.

Another topic discussed in this document is LGBT discrimination. The large majority of the LGBT respondents experienced - at least one in their life – a form of discrimination. Most common discriminations are physiological even if also physical aggressions are reported. We compared this results with the perception of social acceptance of LGBT people by students and we observed that especially Italian students feel the society in which they live as non welcoming with respect to LGBT people. Also an important, but lower, percentage of Belgian and Estonian students share this view. With reference to the environments where discrimination took place, school is at the first place in Italy and in Belgium while media and the internet are at the first place in The Netherland and in Estonia. This is the point of view of LGBT respondents. Student's perceptions are quite aligned, but interesting differences are observable at country level. Italian students evaluate as very unfriendly their school, their circle of friends, their home and the bars, clubs and pubs there are use to go to. Consequently, almost all the environments of their everyday life are seen as unsafe for LGBT persons. For them, the internet is a relative safer place; to the contrary this is not true for Estonian students, while Dutch respondents are divided between a positive and a negative view of the internet. Estonian, Dutch and Belgium students positively evaluate cafe, pubs and clubs; school is a welcoming place for Dutch students.

The last dimensions we considered are those of LGBT rights and students behaviours towards LGBT schoolmate. We observed that 61,6% of the respondents totally agree that "gay men and lesbian women should be free to live their own life as they wish", and 47,4% totally agree with the possibility of same sex marriage. If we consider also the ones who simply agree on this last sentence (17,7%) we can see that the majority of the students interviewed are in favour of same sex marriage. An important percentage is in favour of the adoption right for gay and lesbian couples

31

too. Transgender persons appear to be less accepted than gay and lesbian persons and there are some scepticism about the LGBT activism. 46,6% totally agree with the sentence "It is important that gays and lesbians stand up for their rights", but the percentage decrease of 10 points when we move to sentences such as: "Lesbian, gay and bisexual activists should have the right to organise a peaceful event in the neighbourhood" and "Lesbian, gay and bisexual activists should have the chance to express their opinions in TV programs".

Finally the majority of students appear to be at easy in dealing with LGB schoolmates, but 15,2% of respondents (summing up respondent who agree or totally agree with the statement) would not feel at easy in becoming friend with a LGB schoolmate; 24,4% would prefer to sit next to someone else during breaks and 36% would find annoying to share a room during a school excursion or project week. So, we can see that right recognition and an open position in terms of stereotypes do not correspond directly and necessarily with the capability of dealing with LGB peers and cannot assure them a full inclusion within peer groups. This result is particularly relevant for NISO that is proposition an educational approach for make the school a safe place for LGBT students but also a less heteronormative environment for all. The research shows, also, that girls are more open than boys to non-stereotypical definition of gender, of sexual diversity and in terms of rights recognition. Moreover, students who have LGBT friends seem to share similar views.

In this sense, Voice OUT can be an important resource, which combines gender perspective with anti-homophobia education and, in doing so, it recognise the important interdependency between homophobia and heteronormativity.

In conclusion we can say that the NISO research is an important output of the project and open up new questions to be further investigate in future, more qualitative, research and in future European projects.