



What can we learn from LGBT experiences of European cities?

Cities and local policies play an important role in promoting the social acceptance and safety of lesbian women, gay men, and bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Local policies can use targeted approaches and activities to combat prejudice, discrimination, intimidation and violence against LGBT people.

This overview offers suggestions to shape policies to make LGBT people feel supported, safe and resilient in society and help them to really participate.





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Regional, national and international cooperation

Forces can be joined and expertise can be exchanged by regional, national and international cooperation.

Dutch Rainbow Cities

A good example of cooperation beyond city boundaries is taking place in The Netherlands.

Throughout the country 44 cities are actively engaged in LGBT emancipation under the name Dutch Rainbow cities. The initiative was taken by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The agreements have been put down in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both the Minister and the aldermen of the cities. Movisie, the Netherlands centre for social development has been commissioned to support and counsel the local policies involved.

International Rainbow Cities Network

29 cities from 14 (mostly European) countries work together to develop and implement policies and strategies for LGBT people. In this network they exchange good practices, collaborate in projects and share campaign materials. City government officials of the Rainbow Cities meet annually and remain in contact through a separate mailing list. Any city can apply

Good practice Italy

In 2006, Rome and Turin city councils launched RE.A.DY, a network of public administrations that deal with anti-discrimination issues regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. The network has since expanded, numbering up to 102 partners across Italy in 2016: 9 regional authorities, 11 provinces, 72 city councils, 6 municipal districts, 3 provincial equality bodies, and 1 local government association. The authorities involved in the network have initiated policies to promote social inclusion of LGBTI persons; they also develop and share best practices and promote administrative acts and regulations that protect against discrimination. (Hoof, 2016)

for membership, as long as they execute an LGBT (inclusive) policy and have a staff member on the administrative level to represent the city in the network.

Movisie founded the network in 2011 and coordinates the network and supports its members. www.rainbowcities.com

Why develop and execute a local LGBT policy?

- To safeguard the right to equal treatment and the rights of LGBT people

- To improve the social climate of tolerance and acceptance towards LGBT people
- To create an inclusive society with room for diversity and freedom of all citizens
- To ensure safety of LGBT people at home and in the street, to combat violence
- To fight discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- To promote resilience of LGBT citizens
- To contribute to a safe school environment



**Alderman Karsten Klein
from The Hague:**

'We want to be a city in which all people can participate and feel safe: whether they are men, women, transgender, old or young, gay or straight.'

What can local governments do?

1. Inclusion in policy processes

If municipalities wish to pay structural attention to the position of LGBT citizens, inclusion in general municipal policies offers the best opportunities. By paying attention to LGBT citizens in the city council policy programme, the policy is mainstreamed and multiple aspects of LGBT policy can be introduced in other programmes. As a result, the policy can be included in programmes for safety, education, health care and sports.

2. Cooperate with local interest groups and self-organisations

When designing policies it is important to decide on focal areas and priorities together with interest groups. Interest groups and advocacy organisations are often very active and involved. Collaboration and partnership are crucial for success and shared responsibility and ownership. It is important for local policies to invest in a strong LGBT

network of interest groups and self-organisations. Governments could support organisations financially or professionally, but other forms of collaboration are also possible.

The mutual collaboration between interest groups varies. Experience shows that local policies can play a strong role in connecting local parties and create more options as a result. In the Netherlands we see a growing tendency to hold interest groups collectively responsible for implementation, for instance by funding various organisations only in a collective effort.

3. Local policies have an important role in setting the example

There are various ways for local authorities to demonstrate that LGBT people can be themselves in the municipality. By showing in their communications with citizens that diversity is being recognised and acknowledged. Including LGBT

information in the municipality's communication channels shows citizens that the municipality finds it important that LGBT people can be themselves in their city.

June 2016 Gay Pride Kiev

The Gay Pride in the Ukraine capital Kiev took place peacefully thanks to large scale police protection. The National Police of Ukraine and the city council had mobilized nearly seven thousand police officers and other upholders of justice to guide the march and to protect the right to demonstrate. www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-pride-parade-idUSKCN0YY0FD



Good practice Vienna

In the Austrian capital Vienna every junior civil servant has to take part in a workshop on anti-discrimination and LGBT issues. (Hoof, 2016)

Good practice Norwegian

The Norwegian Pink Competency project, a national collaboration between the Norwegian ministry and LLH, the national LGBTI organisation, provides health-care professionals with the competencies and tools necessary to adapt to a more LGBTI-inclusive way of working. Training courses are offered at the local level to doctors, nurses, psychologists and midwives, for example, with support of local governments. In the city of Oslo, within the youth healthcare centre, specialised staff are trained to deal with issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. (Hoof, 2016)



Profiling LGBT activities and information

A municipality can show their commitment to LGBT citizens in various ways:

- Fly the rainbow flag on LGBT celebration days. The Transgender Day of Remembrance is annually on November 20. This is a day to commemorate those who were murdered as a result of transphobia and to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community.
- The IDAHOT (International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia) is on 17 May. <http://dayagainsthomophobia.org>
- Put pictures of same-sex couples or transgender people on the municipal website or leaflets that promote your municipality. These pictures show that your municipality pays attention to the diversity of its citizens. Add a page to your municipal website with information on LGBT activities and links to local and regional organisations. Use digital channels to distribute relevant news
- City councils and city planning departments can literally contribute to the visibility of the LGBTI community by naming streets and squares after pioneers of LGBT rights. Nominations from the local LGBT community to the designated commissions, as well as petitions, can point out suitable names of LGBTI rights' defenders.
- Support events of interest groups by the presence of political representatives. And pay attention to sexual and gender diversity in local events and traditions.

Other forms of leading by example

It is also possible to facilitate the development of expertise on diversity of municipal civil servants. For instance by training desk staff on dealing with diversity and anti-discrimination, as the example below from Vienna shows. Standard forms and letters should take sexual orientation and gender identity into account. And is this attention also included in human resources policies within the organisation?

4. The municipality as service provider

The municipality has an important role in commissioning service provision. In commissioning such services or providing grants for funding, the conditions around diversity can be taken into account. Make a shared list of criteria and targets for evaluation for future monitoring.

But also in collaboration with organisations in other capacities a strong vision and conviction can be useful to increase organisations' consciousness of diversity, through dialogue and persuasion.

5. Monitoring

Local authorities often use citizens' surveys, city monitors, safety monitors, youth monitors or health monitors, as a way to inquire after citizens' wishes, needs, issues and specific themes. When questions on sexual orientation and gender identity are included in these monitors, local governments can get a better idea of the circumstances and possible issues of LGBT citizens. A specific LGBT monitor provides opportunities to signal in which fields specific attention is necessary. Monitoring also helps to focus and to measure the effects of policy.

Models of collaboration between local policies and interest groups

Practice shows that local governments work closely together with interest groups on the implementation of policies. We distinguish three different models of collaboration.

a. Shared responsibility

The vision and the policy are established in co-creation with interest groups. Local policies are responsible for embedding policy and interest groups for its implementation.

b. The municipality as director

The municipality is in charge. It establishes policies and looks for collaborative partners. The municipality is closely involved in the implementation and corrects when necessary. The municipality initiates and coordinates activities.

c. One of the collaborative partners in the lead

The municipality appoints another party, for instance an interest group and allocates financial means to them to be the leading party. The municipality monitors progress but is hardly involved in the actual content. This model includes the risk that the policy does not really become part of municipal policy.

Experiences in Dutch Rainbow cities project

Questions on sexual orientation do not lead to less response

Often, it is assumed that the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation will lead to lower response figures. This has never been proven however. It is very important how the questions are phrased. Two examples of inclusive questions and possible answers:

In general, do you feel sexually attracted ...

1. exclusively to women
2. mainly to women
3. to both women and men
4. exclusively to men
5. mainly to men

Are / were you a transgender person?

The term transgender is used as a broad umbrella term that includes all those who are gender variant, cross dressers, transgender, transsexual or men and women with a transsexual past, and other terms.

1. Yes --- a list appears only for those who tick "yes"
2. No



Issues and topics to get started

Countries and cities have varying mandates with regard to the subjects that are a city's responsibility. Experience shows that care, safety and young people are important LGBT issues in which cities can play an active role.

Healthcare

The right to health care is an universal right. Research among LGBT people shows that one third of the LGBT people in the study feel they are being discriminated against in health care, social services, housing, education and access to goods and services (FRA 2013). The number is even higher for transgender people.

Often the cause is professional ignorance, unfamiliarity with specific issues. This is being reinforced by the 'invisibility' of LGBT people. People can conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity out of fear or shame. Elderly people in need of care sometimes feel forced to return into the 'closet' again. Municipalities have opportunities to

include this issue in contracts with service providers, to stimulate or facilitate training for care professionals on the subject, or to establish specific projects on health and LGBT for particular groups such as elderly people or transgender people.

Safety

Various studies show that LGBT people frequently experience discrimination and aggression. LGBT people are victims of violent crime more often. Transgender people more frequently fall victim to violence. In 2012 the EU Fundamental Rights Agency organised an internet monitor among 90.000 LGBT people in 28 EU countries <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/lgbt.php>. This showed that 25% of transgender people had faced violence over the previous five years; 49% were intimidated or threatened.

Police registration of incidents shows a much lower frequency. People often feel ashamed to register a complaint or they expect that the police will not take their experiences seriously. Sometimes it is hard for police and/or persecutors to prove it was a hate crime on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Suggestions to improve safety

- Pay particular attention in municipal policies to LGBT people's safety in the streets.
- Provide training to neighbourhood coordinators and police officers in dealing with anti-LGBT violence and treatment of victims.
- Ensure close cooperation between police, municipality and the LGBT interest organisation with regard to safety.
- Work together with the police to increase registration and official reports. Focus on increasing the willingness of victims to report and improve victim support.

- The city can show its leadership in cases of incidents in the living situation. For instance when people are being harassed by their neighbours it is important that the municipality immediately takes measures against this behaviour.

Youth and education

It is important to start paying attention to sexual orientation and gender identity at an early age. This can take place in both formal and non-formal education. Negative reactions, bullying and name-calling are still very common in schools. Dutch research shows that 4 to 5 times more gay and lesbian young people attempt suicide than heterosexual young people (SCP 2012). Bullying is the main reason. Gay bashers often use sexual orientation terms as abuse. The suicide figure is even higher among young people who are hesitant about their gender identity.

Various tools can be used to address diversity in schools. They can be adjusted to the school's identity, varying from guest lectures by volunteers in schools, teacher training programmes, designing and implementing teaching materials, interactive theatre plays, promoting gay-straight alliances, and combinations of the above. A municipality can sign a contract with a school to confirm their agreed efforts to improve the social safety and inclusion in the school.

Opportunities to meet

Local policies can create opportunities for LGBT young people to meet, to financially or professionally support self-organisations that coordinate exchange and interaction. International research shows that a positive perspective on the future and meeting like-minded people can be protective factors in the empowerment of LGBT young people.

It is important to start paying attention to sexual orientation and gender identity at an early age.

Good practice Lancashire County

Lancashire County Council (UK) set up a special training programme provided by the transgender organisation. This programme helps managers and professionals working with elderly and with disabled people to better support transgender people and to gain more insight in what is needed. (Hoof, 2016)



Read more

- A European White Paper Against Homophobia, European Local Administration Devices (AHEAD) (Barcelona, 2011). *Combating Homophobia, Local Policies for Equality on the grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.*
- The Congress of Local and Regional Councils of Europe (Strasbourg, 2015). *Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions.*
- European Union lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survey European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (Vienna, 2014). *Main results.*
- *Compendium of good practices on local and regional level policies to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.* Council Of Europe (Strasbourg 2016).



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