

Stand out against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia!

“When my boss found out that I was gay, she didn’t fire me (of course, she couldn’t), but she just started to do everything so I would quit myself. She needed a month to break me – I did actually quit, and she reached her goal.” (Poland, Lesbian woman, 27) ¹

“I hear homophobic comments almost every day at work, if not every day it is definitely every other day. It gets so hard sometimes you feel very ostracized that you are not normal according to them.” (Sweden, Gay man, 19) ²

“I have been attacked in the corner of my street by a group of men, only because I was holding hands with my partner at the time.” (Germany, Gay man, 28) ³

These experiences illustrate that LGBTIQ+ persons across Europe still encounter harassment, discrimination, and violence at work and in social life despite recent advances. Indeed, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’ (FRA) 2019 survey, one in four (26%) respondents hide being LGBTI at work, while around 21% felt discriminated against at work in the year before the survey. Moreover, most respondents (61%) revealed that they always or often avoid holding hands with their same-sex partners.

In Malta, 1 in 5 trans and intersex people reported that they were physically or sexually attacked in the five years prior to FRA’s 2019 survey, while 33% of respondents felt discriminated against in many areas of life, such as going to a café, restaurant, hospital or a shop.

More efforts are needed to ensure that every person is fully respected regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Within this context, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is marked on the 17th of May to celebrate diversity and raise awareness of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTIQ+) people.

¹ Source: FRA, the second EU LGBTI Survey – A long way to go for LGBTI equality

² Ibid

³ Ibid

This year's chosen theme for the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia** is *'Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Rights'*.⁴ This theme claims our rights to live our sexualities and to express our gender freely, demands to be free from physical violence as well as free from conversion so-called 'therapies' to forced sterilisation of Trans and Intersex people.⁵

In Malta, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy & Action Plan (2018-2022) was formulated by the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) in close partnership with the LGBTIQ Consultative Council to carry out practical measures that result in better access to rights and services for LGBTIQ persons and eventually to a better and more cohesive Maltese society.⁶

Moreover, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is empowered by Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta to investigate complaints of alleged discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in employment, education and vocational training as well as by banks and financial institutions. The NCPE also provides training to organisations on request and organises conferences and awareness-raising campaigns to promote equality and combat discrimination.

In this context, the NCPE is currently working on a qualitative research study to analyse discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ persons in Malta, in various sectors of life. In addition, the NCPE organised capacity-building sessions for the staff, and awareness initiatives in partnership with Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC) as part of an EU co-funded project entitled 'Empowerment for Diversity (E4D)' running from April 2020 until November 2022.

On the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, let us all do our utmost to put human dignity at the heart of all that we do to build more equal, inclusive, and just societies.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2276 8200 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page.

⁴ <https://may17.org/the-theme-for-2022-is-out/>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ <https://humanrights.gov.mt/en/Documents/LGBTIQActionPlan.pdf>

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