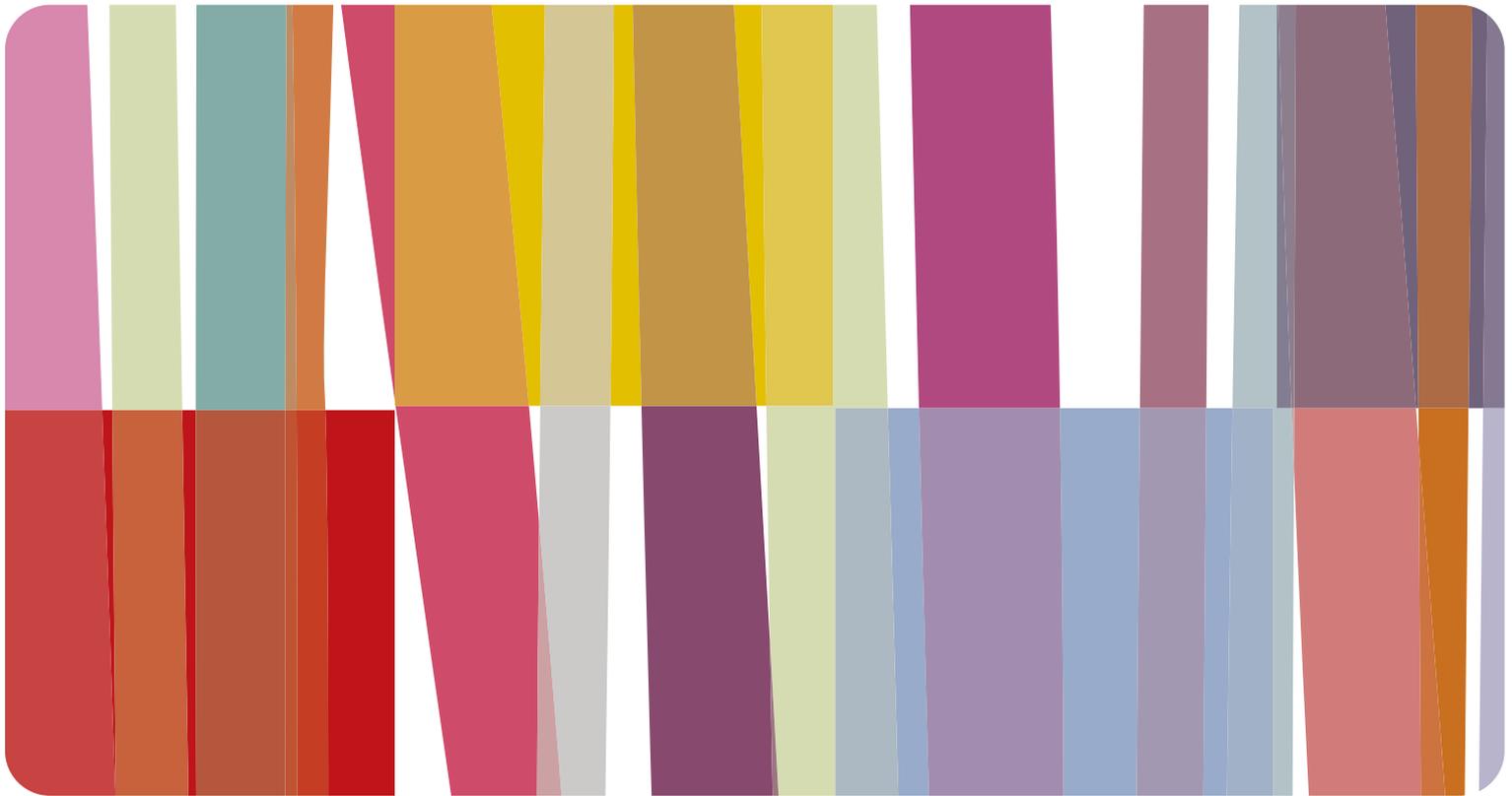
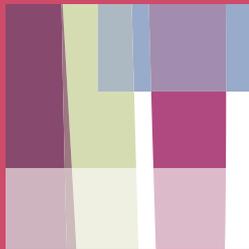


STRAIGHT TALK

gays, lesbians and bisexuals at work





Coordinator: **Gunnar Svensson** integratia@swipnet.se

Editor: **Rickard Henley** rickard.henley@chello.se

Language services: **Steven F. Machado** english.support@swipnet.se

Layout and illustrations: **Anna Björnström** www.bjornstromform.se

Distribution: **COC Netherlands Magazijn, P.O. Box 3836, NL-1001 AP**

Amsterdam, Netherlands magazijn@coc.nl

Printed in Sweden by: **Ljungbergs Tryckeri**

© 2004 RFSL Sweden

ISBN: **91-973456-2-8**

This publication was made possible by a grant from the European Union

STRAIGHT TALK

gays, lesbians and bisexuals at work

Contents

Straight Talk – Introduction	6
What should be done and who should do it?	8
Employers/human resources staff	10
Employees	11
Trade unionists	12
Others	13
The Project – Step 1 – Getting organised	14
How to fill the wallet	16
Together with partners	18
Finding the enthusiasts	20
The Project – Step 2 – Up and running	22
Formal approach – informal method	24
Spreading the word	26
The press release	28
Pitfalls and obstacles	30
The Project – Step 3 – Securing support	32
Evaluation	34
From project to process	36
The Projects – A Presentation	38
Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers	40
Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System	42
Normgiving Diversity	44
Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work	46
Closing Comments and Contact Information	48

Straight Talk – Introduction

Having gay, lesbian or bisexual people at work improves the working climate.

This may be an overly simplified way of putting it, but it does carry a grain of truth.

A workplace where everybody feels safe and can be open about their true identity offers benefits to the entire atmosphere. A corporation or organisation that uses different people's experience and know-how will have a great advantage on many levels. If we all feel at ease and enjoy our working situation, it will have a favourable effect on the working effort and the output. It's as simple as that.

Unfortunately, a lot of companies and organisations haven't realised this yet. So being gay, lesbian or bisexual at work can still be a troublesome experience.

As the relationship between a man and a woman is still the expectation in society, everything that doesn't fit into that mould is often seen as unusual and strange, or even disgusting.

This forces a lot of people to keep their personal lives secret in their workplace. Needless to say, this is not very healthy.

The responsibility lies with everyone to create a working environment where each individual feels at ease, where nobody is made invisible, marginalised, discriminated against or harassed. Colleagues, employers, human resources staff and trade unionists all have important roles.



On a more basic level, gay and lesbian issues at work are a question of *human rights and equal opportunities*. These issues are also an occupational safety matter and should be treated as such by trade unions and employers' organisations.

Recognising and accepting differences, and striving for equality applies not only to gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. It affects all of us and our possibilities to contribute with our experiences at work. All diversity work is closely related. Take sexuality and gender for example. An environment where certain kinds of female or male behaviour are expected is an environment where differences are emphasised and become a great obstacle to achieving equality at work.

In this booklet we focus on lesbians, gays and bisexuals at work, but many situations and difficulties also relate to others, for instance, women and transgendered people.

This booklet will give you specific advice on how to create a workplace of equality (*What should be done and who should do it?*). It will also give you advice on how to start and run a project to improve working conditions for everybody (*The Project – Step 1–3*).

EU directives

In 2000, the eu adopted two anti-discrimination directives to combat discrimination in, for example, working life. The member states are required to implement these directives into their national legislation.

One of the grounds for discrimination that the directives protect against is sexual orientation, but the implementation of this directive has varied significantly among the member states. Some, but not all, have included sexual orientation into their national anti-discrimination laws. There is still a lot of work to be done before acceptable conditions in working life have been achieved.

What should be
done and who
should do it?



It is vital that gay and lesbian issues are made an integral part of all levels of diversity and equality work in companies and organisations. On both the local and national levels, projects are a good way to raise awareness and to increase knowledge about these issues. However, if projects do not evolve into routines that are considered every day in all areas of the workplace, they are of no real use.

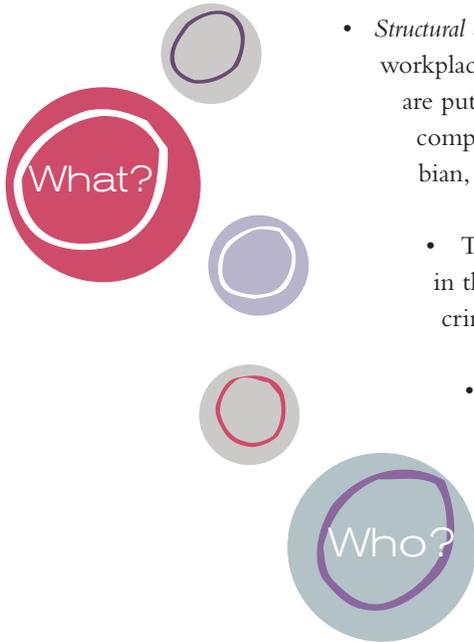
We all have the responsibility to create these working environments. It is the individual who makes the decision to be open about his or her life and identity, but it is everyone's responsibility to make it possible for that step to be taken.

It is also very important that issues about sexual orientation are tackled not only by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisations. Activists have an important role in raising awareness, but to make an enduring change in attitudes and opinions, there must be tangible work taking place on site. One important way of reaching this aim is through education and training, a responsibility that lies with the employer.

On the following four pages, we will give you tips on how to create a healthy working environment whether you are an employer, a colleague, an activist or a union representative. Everyone at the workplace can benefit from these suggestions, as the issue of safety for lesbians, gays and bisexuals affects us all, in one way or another.

Employers/human resources staff

As an employer or person responsible for human resource issues, you have a great responsibility to make your company or organisation a safe and healthy environment to work in. This affects the overall atmosphere, and hence the efficiency and output of your staff.



- *Structural changes* are necessary. Set up clear rules and guidelines for an open workplace. Include sexual orientation in these guidelines and make sure they are put into practice throughout the organisation. Have a protocol for complaints from the staff and encourage that this protocol be used for lesbian, gay and bisexual issues.
- Take clear and *direct measures* if harassment or discrimination emerges in the workplace. Also make sure that anyone feeling harassed or discriminated against knows where to turn to for help.
- When *hiring people* for your company or organisation, state clearly in the advertisement that you welcome people regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and so on. This shows that your company has an open atmosphere, not only to people applying for the job, but to all people reading the advertisement.
 - *Educate and train* the staff in diversity and what it means to be gay, lesbian or bisexual at work. It's vital that everybody in the company or organisation has knowledge of these issues and of how jokes and homophobic jargon adversely affect the workplace. Teach staff how to talk about gays and lesbians in a respectful manner.
- Support gay, lesbian and bisexual *networks* in the workplace. The management has an important role of setting standards for the rest of the company.

Employees

We can all contribute to a healthy working environment where everybody can feel at ease and feel free to talk about what they've done at the weekend, without having to leave their family situation out of the conversation. Ridding the workplace of homophobic name-calling and behaviours that exclude is important for all employees. It will increase everyone's possibility to break free from expectations and prejudice.

- Suggest to your colleagues and employers that you should have an *anti-discrimination* policy that specifically includes gay and lesbian issues.
- When you hear an *offensive joke* about gay or lesbian people, say that you don't appreciate it. Such jokes create an unsafe working environment and are bad for everybody.
- If someone tells you about his or her sexual orientation, find out if that person wants you to keep it to yourself. Sometimes people like to come out step by step and not to everybody at the same time. *Treasure that trust* and support the person, so that he or she feels at ease in the workplace.
- When you're asking someone about their personal situation, *phrase the questions* in an inclusive way. Ask about their "partner" instead of about their "wife", "girlfriend" or "husband".
- If you think that something should be done about lesbian and gay issues, start by *finding some allies* and look for outside support. Often lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations and the trade union have a lot of expertise and contacts.

When you hear an
offensive joke about
gay or lesbian people,
say that you
don't appreciate it.

Trade unionists

When something happens at work, if we feel ignored, marginalised, ridiculed or harassed, we should be able to turn to our trade union representatives. The employer has the responsibility to keep the workplace safe and free from homophobic tensions, but trade unionists have a responsibility to protect their members' rights.

- First of all: treat lesbian, gay and bisexual issues as other issues about working safety and *set clear standards* for this work. Trade unions need to look out for everyone's safety at work and make lesbian and gay issues an integral part of that work.
- *Increase awareness and knowledge*, both within the trade union and in the workplace. Help the employer find speakers to educate the staff. Knowledge and information are very important.
- Organise or *support capacity building* by lesbian, gay and bisexual workers. There are several forms this can take, depending on the wishes of the workers: occasional social meetings, more organised formal groups, lesbian, gay and bisexual groups within the union, groups that focus on external activities and projects.
- When organising campaigns for how to combine work and family, and other related issues, remember to have the *gay and lesbian perspective* as well.
- Make the staff aware of the possibility to seek *legal advice* from the trade union regarding gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. Make sure that the legal advisors have good insight into these issues.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Lesbian and gay organisations are usually the ones that make these issues visible to the public. Other NGOs can play an important part by integrating these issues into their practical work.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations are advised to seek partners who know about the practical problems in working life and who have networks to start projects.

Universities and research institutes

Research is needed so that the work is based on facts and figures, but it also helps us look at gay and lesbian issues with a new perspective. Research is also a very effective way of influencing opinions and legislation. Unfortunately, in many countries research about gay and lesbian issues is often overlooked.

Combining statistical and qualitative research is useful for setting out a strategy, while collecting examples of workers' experiences is extremely useful for creating awareness and setting the agenda.

Researchers should be involved in the whole project and not just in the research work. Therefore, it is advisable to have a research institute as a full partner in the project.

Government authorities

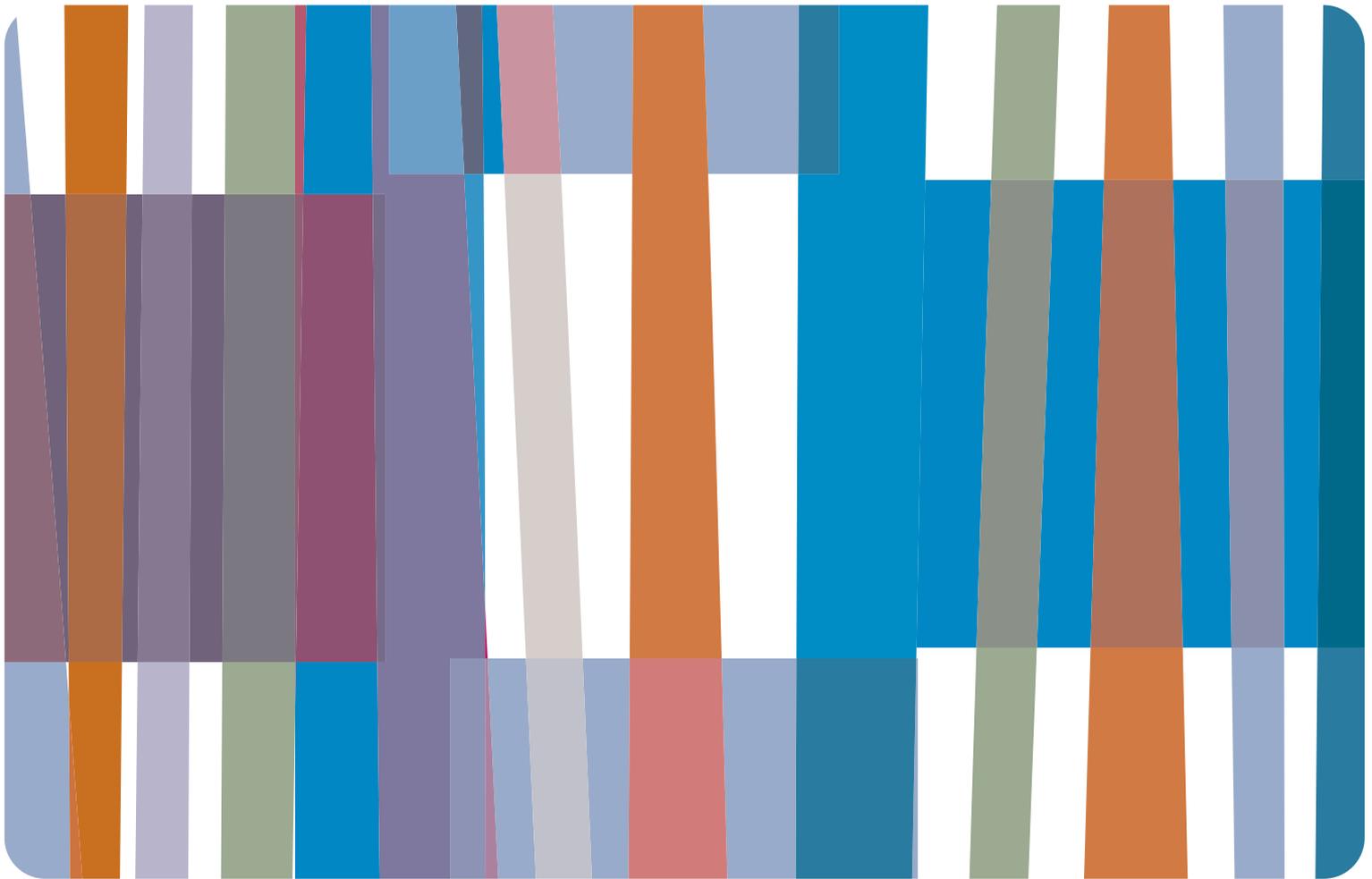
Both local and national authorities and politicians have a vital role in setting the standards and publicly declaring that lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are prioritised and need to be dealt with. Legislators and politicians have an important task in making sure the laws will cover all aspects of the issues. In addition, employment offices and offices for occupational safety need to review their own practices and perhaps revise them to include lesbian, gay and bisexuals on the agenda.

Researchers
should be involved in
the whole project and
not just in the research
work.



The project – Step 1

Getting organised



The need for something to happen is obvious, but what can be done? Starting a well-defined project is one way of changing things and we will give you some advice on how this can be done.

Start by checking your surroundings for research and work that has already been done. There's no need to reinvent the wheel.

A project can be on a local level, in your own company or maybe even in your department. It can also be on the national level. A project can vary in terms of partners, professional areas and budget. Don't try to fit everything in there and aim to change the world in one single project; it will only bring frustration.

Here are some examples of projects just to get your thoughts started:

- Helping young and unemployed lesbian, gay and bisexual people to find a job. The project would develop new methods to work with young persons. You should probably limit the work to one large city, but experience can be distributed throughout the whole country.
- Brainstorm within your company on how to integrate relevant attention to lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in your workplace. After identifying areas and solutions, ask the management to help you set up small working groups that work out the ideas into practical plans. If every group is made up of different people, the responsibility that everyone has to work on these issues becomes more natural.
- Are the churches welcoming to young gays and lesbians? Send out a questionnaire; interview different people from some congregations in your hometown; summarise your experience in a report. The purpose of this kind of project is not to confront, but to start a dialogue.



How to fill the wallet

Financing the project is, of course, a significant factor – no money, no project – unless you intend to work on a voluntary basis, which is usually very short-term.

Each of the four projects responsible for this book is financed in part through the EU programme Equal, but there are a lot of other resources and funds that you can look into.

It's good to have visionary and economically strong partners in the project. This will help in terms of the financial situation, the implementation and creating the foundation for further spin-off projects and continuous work.

There may be *governmental funds* in your country aimed at increasing equality, and within the *EU* there are a number of different sources. In addition, there are different kinds of *research foundations* for research, various funds given by *organisations and ministries* for equality and occupational safety issues. Check your local sources to find different ways of funding your project.

Another way of financing is through *companies* that invest financial resources or personnel in wellness programmes, which are set up to make sure employees are feeling well at work and are productive. With your help, they might see the benefits.

“When the first round of the Equal programme was launched in 2001, the trade union confederations LO and TCO had just recently put gay and lesbian issues on the agenda for the very first time. The programme supported them in continuing with further actions in the area. At that time, the Swedish Armed Forces also realised that they had a responsibility to do something, and they joined the project.

Besides the financial aspect, having these types of organisations as partners in the project has been very important for implementing the projects and being able to reach out and educate personnel within those working areas.”

Gunnar Svensson
Coordinator, Normgiving Diversity

“In Holland, the key to getting money from the Ministry of Social Affairs was having a good working relation with them. A precondition for this was that this ministry already had homosexuality as one of the diversity issues in their working policy. On a European level, it is therefore very important that governments really aspire to work with homosexuality as a part of

diversity. Not enough of the European member states put this priority into action.”

Jorina Horzelenberg
Coordinator, Enabling Safety For LesBiGay Teachers, COC Netherlands (lesbian, gay and bisexual organisation)

Together with partners

Finding a partner to work with is good, but not always necessary. The Equal programme demands that the projects have development partners, who also contribute with a part of the financing, but other funds don't have this demand. Even if it's not for the funding, there are still good reasons to get partners to join you.

People working together have a much greater possibility to make an actual difference. A strong partner can also open doors to other organisations, and sometimes even help you in the search for funds.

If a potential partner is reluctant to join the project, try others, but don't give up on the first partner. Some organisations may need more time; they need to be convinced.

If your first idea for the project needs to be altered and developed to get a partner to join, do it. You need to be flexible, and a project that is developed in collaboration with a partner has a better chance of achieving its goals.

Common excuses not to join your project:

It's too narrow; we must include ethnic minorities, disabled people and a gender perspective.

Quick reply: It's good to have the full overview, and this project will improve your work with diversity in general. Gay, lesbian and bisexual issues have been overlooked for a long time, so they need to catch up with other occupational safety issues.

We don't have the time; if we had a cent for every project, we would be millionaires.

Quick reply: You must relate the time to the outcome. Turning your organisation into a more comfortable and appealing place to work will probably make it more efficient and actually save you time in the long run. (*Introduce it as a service to the organisation, not a problem.*)

We don't have the resources.

Quick reply: Maybe we can work it out together. We've found this fund that would make it possible to... (*Be well prepared.*)

“We learned from the Swedish projects to make our contracts with schools less rigid. Instead of a full-scale contract, we sometimes presented it as a quick study about safety in the school, and supported them with the follow-up, rather than as a specific pilot about homosexuality.

Another thing that worked to get into schools was to connect specifically to schools that we already knew were working in the direction of diversity.”

Peter Dankmeijer

Transnational Liaison Officer, Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers

“At first we had an idea about following the example of the Dutch project and focusing solely on schools and teachers. But, after several attempts to try to convince the teachers’ trade unions to join the project, we resigned and decided to change direction. Instead of the extremely frustrating experience of convincing reluctant organisations to join us, we found that

it was easier and less demanding to work with people and organisations that already had an interest in these issues.”

Jukka Lehtonen

Project director, Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work

Finding the enthusiasts

Finding activists and enthusiastic people within organisations or companies will radically improve the possibility of getting trade unions, employers' organisations and others to join the project.

Having a person "on the inside" will prove valuable on many levels. But, it is important that this person implement the ideas throughout the organisation, with help from others, so that he or she doesn't become the only spokesperson for that organisation. The enthusiasts have to lobby from the inside and take steps to place these issues on the everyday agenda.

It is obviously preferable that the person be close to the management of the organisation.

Start where you stand

- Aim the searchlight at your own network. You may have these persons closer than you think.
- Post notes on Internet discussion boards, a good way of drawing attention to your project.
- Contact your local lesbian, gay and bisexual organisation. They may know where to look.



“We have been very lucky in finding true enthusiasts in many different locations. For instance, the main reason we managed to educate all of the Swedish defence units throughout the country probably comes down to one person, one individual who managed to spread the importance of gay and lesbian issues in the entire organisation.”

Gunnar Svensson
Coordinator, Normgiving Diversity

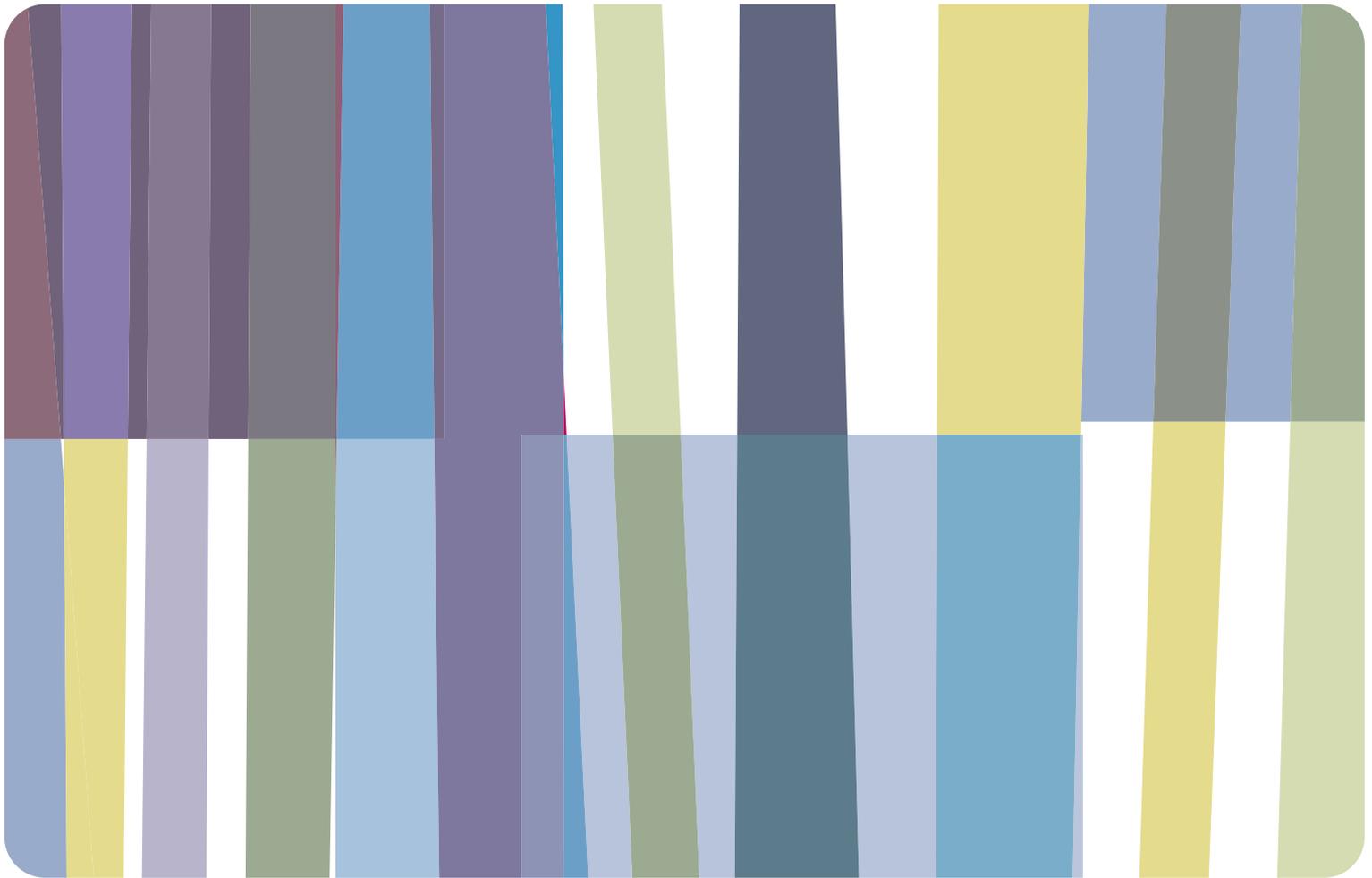
“Start looking in the inner circles, and then move further. In Holland, the **inner circle** was the COC (national lesbian and gay organisation) and the gay group of the teachers’ union. The **second circle** was professionals in general support organisations. They were convinced to join through money, a stimulus by the government, and later on actually worked on the issues themselves. The **third circle** was workers in schools, mainly gay teachers. We found them through a working customer relationship management (CRM) system, in which we could trace teachers that had been interested in getting involved in projects in the past. The **fourth circle** consisted of managers,

who often weren’t very interested in lesbian and gay issues, but who had a responsibility to pursue diversity policies. We reached them through personal contacts, contacting them through their regional school boards and offering them money for the activities. But, we also got the national school inspection authority to announce that they were going to check schools on the quality policy involving lesbian and gay issues.”

Peter Dankmeijer
Transnational Liaison Officer, Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers

The project – Step 2

Up and running



Now that you've managed to get everyone working in the same direction through clearly stated goals, it's time for the next stage. If you're running a large-scale project, it will be important to make your project known to a wider public. This will make it easier when approaching pilot cases and workplaces for practical experiences.

At this stage, it is important not to be too detailed about how the practical work should be done. Stick to the aims and the goals, but let the method and work be flexible according to whom you are working with and what their needs and resources are. This will keep you from being frustrated and in most cases affect the outcome in a very positive way.

But, never lose sight of the main objectives.

Formal approach – informal method

Everyone involved in the application for EU funds or governmental funds can testify that there is a wall of bureaucracy that sometimes surrounds the process. Therefore, it is important to have a formal approach and to state very clearly from the beginning the projects' aim, objectives, target groups, partners, working process and so on. This applies to most kinds of projects, even when not using EU funding. It is advisable to have someone who is good at writing applications and taking care of the administration within the project.

Unfortunately, approaching organisations, companies and employers in a formal way can be rather difficult. There just isn't enough time for them to engage in the various projects presented to them, so you need to find a clever way of getting them on board. Formal invitations and letters often end up in the trash bin. So, be creative. Send out invitations to a theme day or find someone who is interested in the issues and take him or her out for lunch to explain the project face-to-face.

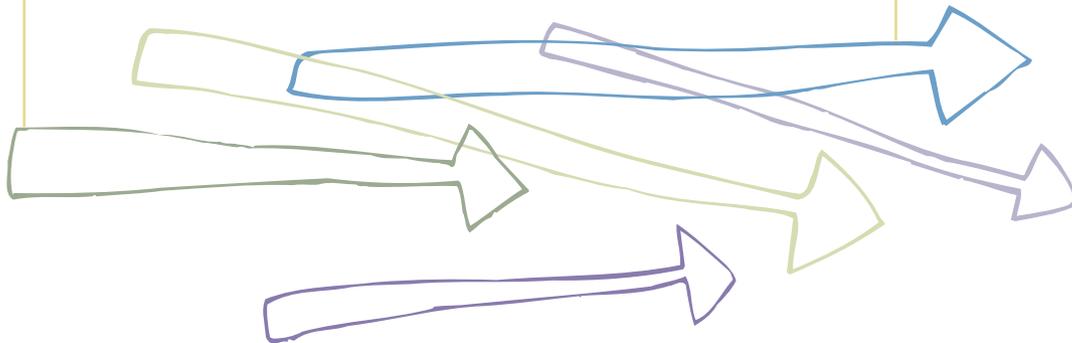
The broad approach

Don't underestimate the value of sending letters to organisations and potential cooperation partners. If a hundred letters are sent and you get a positive response from one or two, don't take it as a setback; use the positive ones to persuade the others.

“We sent out a letter and a questionnaire to all (289) municipalities in Sweden, telling them about the project and asking if they wanted to be involved. About 15 municipalities expressed their interest when answering the questionnaire. The representatives we met were all very enthusiastic, but when they got back to their own organisations, it wasn't that easy to get the work done. We discovered that it is almost impossible to influence them from the 'outside' only. You need allies within the organisations, people who are motivated enough to work on their own, and they are not always easy to find. We realised that we had to be flexible and adjust our plans to reality. We had to accept that not all of the municipalities were ready to do as much as we had hoped for, but at least they were doing something.”

Anette Sjödin

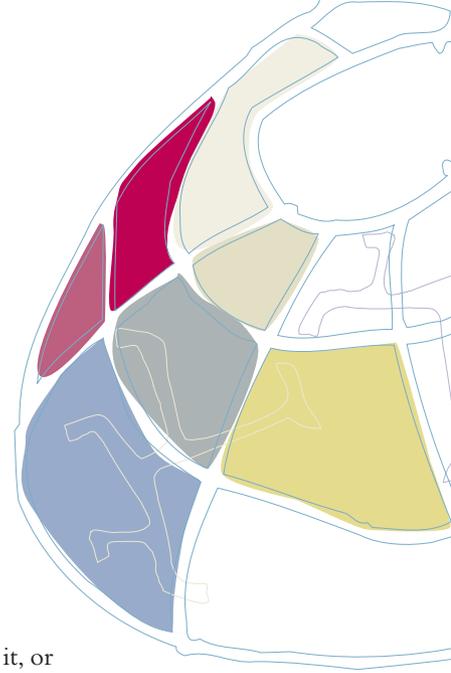
Coordinator, Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System



Spreading the word

Making the project known to a wider audience is an important way of opening shut doors and making people aware of the issues you are dealing with. A project surrounded by silence is much more likely to be ignored by people in managing positions. Gay and lesbian issues are very often made invisible, unless they are turned into something exotic. The task of getting the media to write about working life conditions can be hard, but it's not impossible.

So, how do you get the media's attention? Writing an opinion article is a good start, especially if you manage to get an important politician or perhaps a trade union president to write it, or at least mention such a person in the article.



Map the market

Try to find all the reporters writing about gay issues and about working life. Put them on a mailing list, but don't flood them with information; keep it on a strict news-brief level. At the same time, you need to keep in mind that reporters want to have some kind of unique angle on the subject. Maintaining personal contact with a few selected journalists who write about these issues can prove very valuable.

Using the Web – guerrilla marketing

An inexpensive but effective way of getting your voice heard is through the Internet. Find the mailing lists and discussion boards where these topics or similar topics are discussed and be active on those boards. This will mainly reach the people who already have an interest in these issues.



“**One thing I noticed** personally is that human interest issues score much better in media, unless you have really serious and shocking percentages. For us it was very important to ask the Minister for comments regularly and to feed possible answers to the civil servant that would write her speeches. This way, the Minister regularly said something about homosexuality or included comments on homosexuality in more general speeches about safety in schools. So, the inclusion of homosexuality in diversity policy as a whole becomes more natural.”

Peter Dankmeijer

Transnational Liaison Officer, Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers

“**In contrast to the Dutch project**, the Finnish and the Swedish projects both experienced that the outcome of research was the most effective way to get media attention. When the results from two different Swedish studies were presented, they were well received by the media and even made it to Finnish newspapers. In Finland we started our project by compiling all the existing research and essays on the subject into an article collection, which had an impact in the media and helped to spread the word both about the project and about gay, lesbian and transgender issues in working life.”

Kati Mustola

Researcher, Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work

Writing a press release

The cheapest way of spreading the word about your project is through a well-written and well-targeted press release. Sometimes it's easy (releasing very clear statistical research) and sometimes it's trickier (telling the world your project has started).



Stay with the news

Trying to include every aspect of your work is a very common error when sending press releases. Focus on what you want to say and stick to that.



Offer more information

Make it easy for journalists to go further and find out more. A link to a website, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses must be shown clearly. Keep a list of reference people who can be interviewed or profiled by the media.

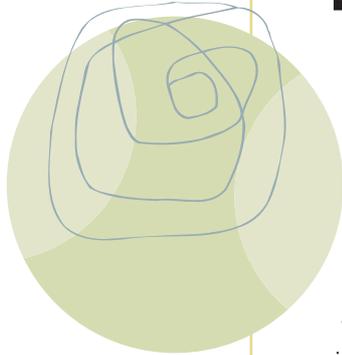


Quotes make it more human

There's nothing wrong with presenting facts and figures, just as long as you mix it up with quotes from real people. This will bring it down to a more concrete level and also make it a lot easier to read.

Target different media with different angles

The same press release can easily be altered for different types of media. For instance, a local angle will be good for regional media. Try to imagine what the news would look like in an ordinary paper and write your press release in accordance with that. Have someone from the outside look at the press release and tell you what the news is; sometimes it's hard to see when you are involved.



“In **Normgiving Diversity** we have used locally targeted press releases with great success. When, for instance, the police trainers are travelling to a city to train local police authorities about our issues, I look up the addresses to the local papers and TV/radio stations. Then I send the editors an e-mail informing them about when and where the training will take place and briefly what it is about. Almost all the media contact the police officer whose name and number is in the press release. And almost all local media make a big feature story about it.”

Elisabet Qvarford

Project Manager, responsible for media contacts, Normgiving Diversity

Pitfalls and obstacles

You will make mistakes at times; sometimes it will be a learning experience and sometimes it will just be frustrating. Here you'll find some advice for avoiding a few of the traps that can appear along the way.



Keep the focus

It's very good to have an advisory group or, more informally, just a group of people that can generate ideas and help you to move on in the project. But remember that not all good ideas can be put into practice. Somebody has to be the realist and keep the focus on the core issues of the project. And that will usually be you.



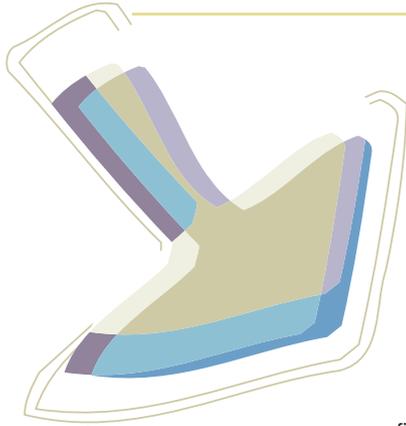
Communication

In meetings, it is vital that you all are very clear about what you want and what you agree on. It's not very uncommon that you speak different languages or professional jargon and after the meeting it becomes obvious that you were talking about different things. A way of avoiding this is to take detailed minutes and make a short summary after each paragraph, asking if everybody agrees to what has been decided.



Countering resistance

It is not uncommon to run into opposition. Not everyone will be positive to the message or agree on what needs to be done. It is therefore necessary to identify the problem and determine a response quickly. People need time to change their attitudes. If the opposition is fierce try to find some support. Making a detour with project goals in mind can actually be more effective than waiting at a roadblock.

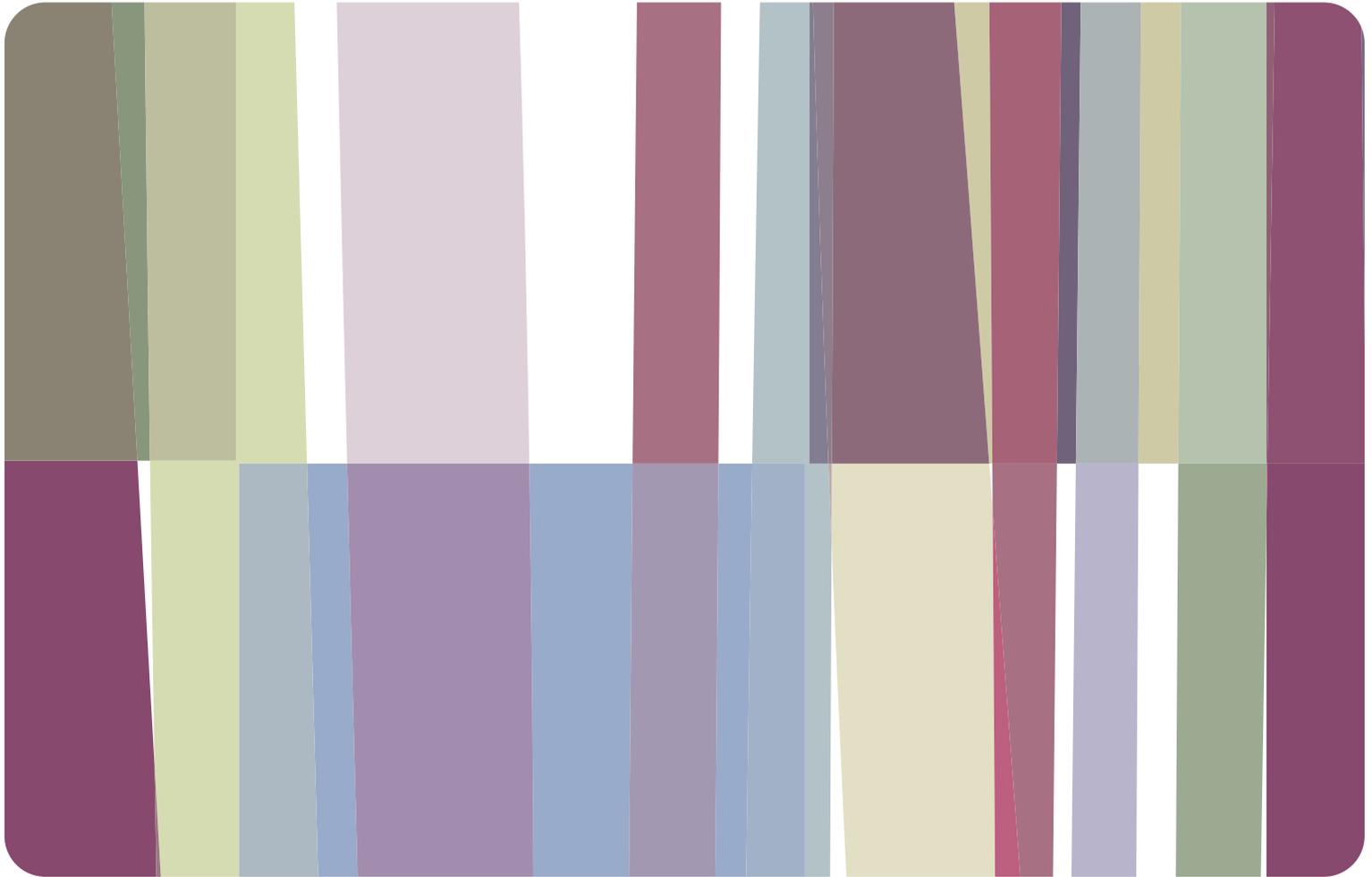


“Working within the church part of the project has been a challenge. I had my ideas as to how things should be done and spent a lot of time being frustrated. Activities described in the project description took much more time than I expected. Some were impossible. I learned that I could not make assumptions. I needed to do a lot of both talking and listening to find a way in. We needed a new approach and it took time to find it.”

Britta Svensson
Project Manager for EKHO in Normgiving Diversity

The project – Step 3

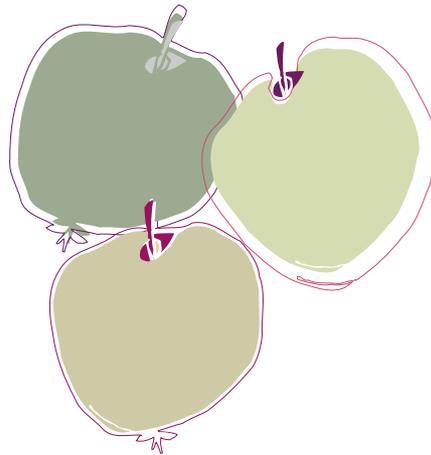
Securing support



So, you've navigated the ship through the storm, avoiding the reefs of bureaucracy and the winds of homophobia. Finally you see the port, the end of the journey.

When your project comes to an end, as all projects do, you will not want the work to have been in vain. You will have to secure support, to make sure that the things you've found out through research will be put to use and the practical work you have started will be carried out on a daily basis. How this works will of course vary from project to project, both in method and in practice.

Securing support is not an easy task, but on the following pages we will give you some advice on how you can do this.



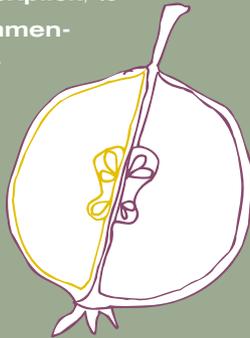
Evaluation

It is important to start working with evaluation from the beginning of the project. First ask yourself what the purpose of the evaluation is – what are you going to do with the results? Then decide on the purpose and method, and include evaluation in your project budget.

There are both formal and informal ways of evaluating the project. Some projects, like the ones within the Equal programme, have evaluation as a prerequisite for funding. In some projects you will do the evaluation yourself, while others have external evaluation to ensure independence. Having a neutral person, someone from the outside evaluating your project, is definitely recommended.

Why do we evaluate?

Evaluation is a vital tool that helps you to **monitor your progress**. It is a way to show the funding is being used for the specified purpose. Evaluation can also be used to **make your good practices explicit**, to **formulate recommendations** for policy or for professional standards and to **generate support for new projects**.



How do we evaluate?

As previously mentioned, evaluation can be done within the project as well as through external evaluators. There are three main types of evaluation:

- **Process evaluation:** Did everything go as we planned?
- **Impact evaluation:** Did we get any results on the policy level?
- **Effect evaluation:** Did the project change anything in people's actions and opinions?

“Within the Equal programme there is a built-in demand of evaluation with mid-term reports, which are the formal way of evaluating the project. But, in our case, it has perhaps been even more important to have a combined steering committee* and advisory board for the project. At the board meetings, we have had discussions about how we could have handled things differently and have come up with new ideas on how to move further all the time. It's on a very informal level, but it has been immensely valuable for rectifying mistakes and developing the project.”

Tiia Aarnipuu,
Chairperson of SETA

**The Finnish steering committee is made up of people from SETA (the national organisation working for the human rights and well being of sexual and gender minorities in Finland), the University of Helsinki, the Research and Development Centre for National Welfare and Health and from the Ministry of Labour.*

From project to process – dissemination and mainstreaming

The work is not done when the project period is over. Before and throughout the entire project, it will be important to keep in mind how the results and knowledge will be spread both during and after the project period.

Dissemination (spreading the results)

Use **the Internet** to spread the knowledge at a very low cost (at least in comparison to printed matter). A website can be used as an inspirational source and a fact base for other projects and people working with occupational safety issues at corporations or organisations.

Writing articles and other documents are good ways of making sure the results of the project inspire others. Such documents can also be used as practical tools by other organisations and companies.

Mainstreaming (influencing decision makers)

Mainstreaming is ideally focused on achieving visible results: having decision makers take your results into account. However, it is just as important that they “do” the right thing, as “think” the right way. Convincing, practical examples can be useful tools in this part of the mainstreaming process.

Cooperate with others to plant the project’s ideas in various areas. Issues about gays, lesbians and bisexuals should be an integral part of other working environment issues and in diversity work at all levels.

Lobbying and training are important. Be in contact with national and local politicians and interest groups to plant the ideas and make sure they convey the message when the project is over. Train and educate people within organisations or companies who are expected to be working with these issues.

“**We are trying to integrate** the project’s results into regular work using a helpdesk. Originally we planned to have a separate helpdesk with its own helpline, which was going to help teachers and which would support managers in creating a diversity policy in their school. Now we decided not to set up a separate helpline, but instead to integrate it right from the beginning in the existing helpdesks within permanent organisations.”

Erwin Kunnen

Teacher and Chairman of the Trade Union (AOB) Lesbian and Gay Group

“**The trade union representatives** working in the project, were already employed by their organisations when the project work started. They were already responsible for discrimination issues. When the project ends, they will still be there, but with more knowledge and experience. This means that sexual orientation will be an issue on the agenda in the future work.”

Åke Lundström

Labour Representative and Project Manager, Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System

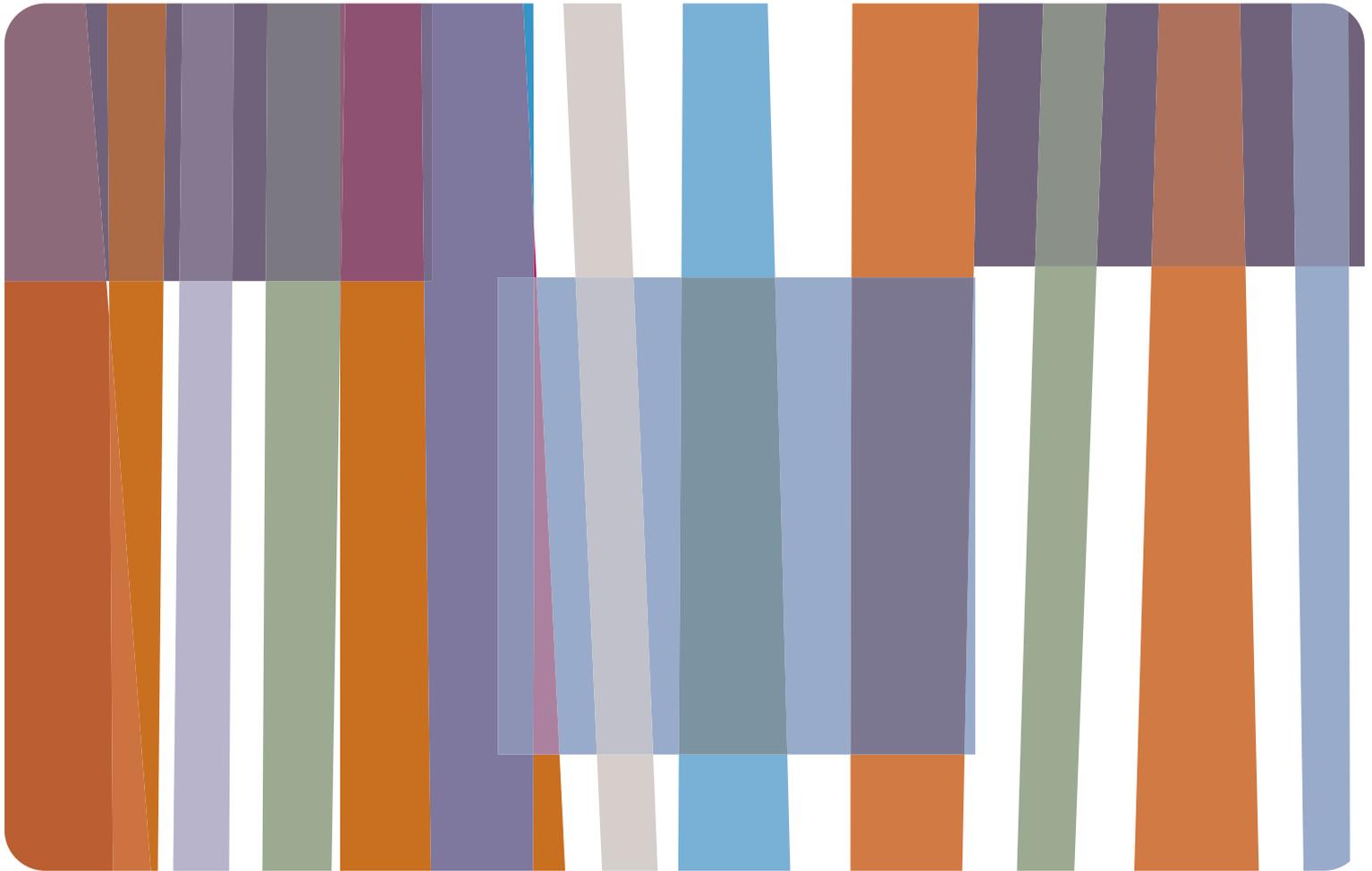
“**The production of an educational tool** was a natural way to make sure the knowledge and results of the projects were put to use. The educational tool consists of five movies, one textbook and a CD-ROM for self-study, and will be used not only within the areas of work that were included in the project, but also in other working areas.”

Christine Gilljam,

Director of Development, The Office of the Ombudsman Against Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation, (HomO)

The Projects

A presentation



The four projects that used their experiences to make this booklet are all funded in part by the EU's Equal programme. To a certain extent, they have also been working together on a transnational level to exchange experiences and good practice, regarding both research and the practical work.

On the following pages the projects are more properly introduced.

What is Equal?

Equal is a programme funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The programme is orientated towards structural discrimination in connection with the labour market. The main goal is to find ways of combating discrimination and inequality that is experienced by people in working life. The projects in the Equal programme are focused on discrimination issues on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and disabilities. Not all countries explicitly state that sexual orientation is a part of the directive, but the absence of such a statement should not hinder you from undertaking a project in your country.

Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers

The Dutch project “Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers” is focused on occupational safety for lesbian, bisexual and gay teachers. The aim is to inform, educate and alter attitudes in order to create a safer working environment in schools.

Research has been done with a nationwide survey aiming to find out more about attitudes and the situation for lesbian, bisexual and gay teachers. Available protocols for safer schools have been analysed, after which it became clear that a new protocol specifically aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues would not be useful. In pilot projects in schools, work is being done to find out how to make diversity policy include gays and lesbians. A helpdesk is being set up to advise school managers and staff working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. Training is being developed and, at the end of the project, the good practices will be handed over to regular school support organisations.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisation in the Netherlands, COC, is the coordinator of the project, while the APS, a national school support institute, does most of the support work in schools. The teacher union AOB is the third development partner. Ties have also been made to a range of other educational institutions.

“For years now, homosexuality in schools has been much talked about.

Teachers are being harassed in schools, gay and lesbian pupils are being made invisible, and in a lot of schools the climate doesn't permit gay pupils or lesbian teachers to be open about their sexual orientation.

What makes the school environment so special that it is necessary to develop more than general rules? The school and the classroom are the second most important places in the lives of students, right after their home life. The educational process encompasses not only the teacher transferring knowledge, but also showing the students how knowledge and life questions are interrelated. When the teacher as a person is made invisible, the education becomes dull and ineffective. But the teacher can only talk about his or her own life and experience only when the school makes it safe to do so. This is an issue especially when teaching about religion and sexuality. Dealing with those subjects becomes problematic when issues about sexual orientation are taboo.

The research done by the Enabling Safety project shows that there is a need for an explicit policy in schools that deals with prevention of problems that lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers and students may face. Such a policy needs to be implemented through multileveled action plans that deal with these different target groups.”

Walter Dresscher

Chairman, Trade Union Educational Personnel AOb

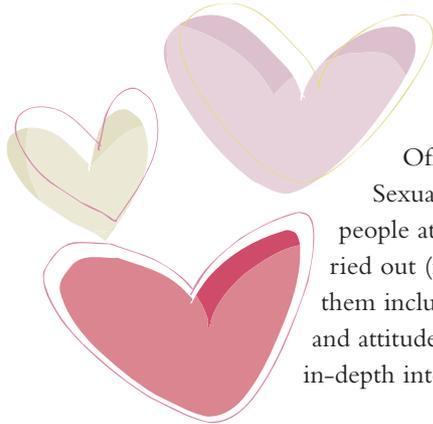


Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System

The Swedish project “Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System” is working to increase the knowledge about homosexuality and bisexuality in the work places, and to change negative attitudes to positive ones. The project focuses on the area of local care, that is, child and elderly care, from the caregiver perspective. The local authorities in Swedish municipalities are the employers in this sector. Therefore, representatives from different municipalities are being educated and given support, for example, in writing policy papers

The project is being run by the Swedish lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisation RFSL, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the trade unions SKTF and Kommunal.

A training tool has been developed together with HomO (the Office of the Ombudsman Against Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation) and the project Normgiving Diversity to educate people at the workplaces. Two major research projects have also been carried out (in cooperation with the project Normgiving Diversity). One of them includes the biggest enquiry ever made on working life conditions and attitudes towards gay and lesbian people at work. The other is based on in-depth interviews with gays and lesbians in working life.



“It will take knowledge, engagement and insight to tackle working life discrimination. The Equal project has paved the way for the work of the trade unions in this area.”

Wanja Lundby-Wedin

President of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO)

“In the municipality of Botkyrka, we welcome diversity and see differences as a resource. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals are a part of that diversity – but the issue of sexual identity has still not been placed on the agenda in a lot of organisations. Besides active work, it takes new perspectives and increased competence

to include sexual orientation in the diversity work. This project has fulfilled this need and made it easier for us to include the issue in our diversity work.”

Anne Fihlman

Personnel Advisor, Botkyrka Municipality

Normgiving Diversity

The Swedish project “Normgiving Diversity” is focused on three professions that have a normative function and set standards in society: the police, the church and the defence forces.

The main partners of the project are the employers the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish National Police Board, and the employers’ organisation the Association of Parishes and Pastorates of the Church of Sweden, but other employer organisations and trade unions have also been closely connected to the project in all its stages. Another important partner has been EKHO (the Swedish Ecumenical Association of Christian Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered People).

A training tool has been developed together with HomO and the project Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System to educate people at the workplaces. Two major research projects have also been

carried out (in cooperation with the project Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System). One of them includes the biggest enquiry ever made on working life conditions and attitudes towards gay and lesbian people at work. The other is based on in-depth interviews with gays and lesbians in working life.



“If someone within the Swedish Armed Forces encounters difficulties or problems because of their sexual orientation, I will personally get involved.”

Johan Hederstedt

Former Swedish Supreme Commander

“Trade unions, employers and interest organisations have never before worked together on this level. Considering our collective experience within different areas of competence we have great possibilities to succeed in the work that lies ahead of us.”

Sture Nordh

President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO)

“I understand now that I need more knowledge to be available in order to handle these issues as a trade union representative.”

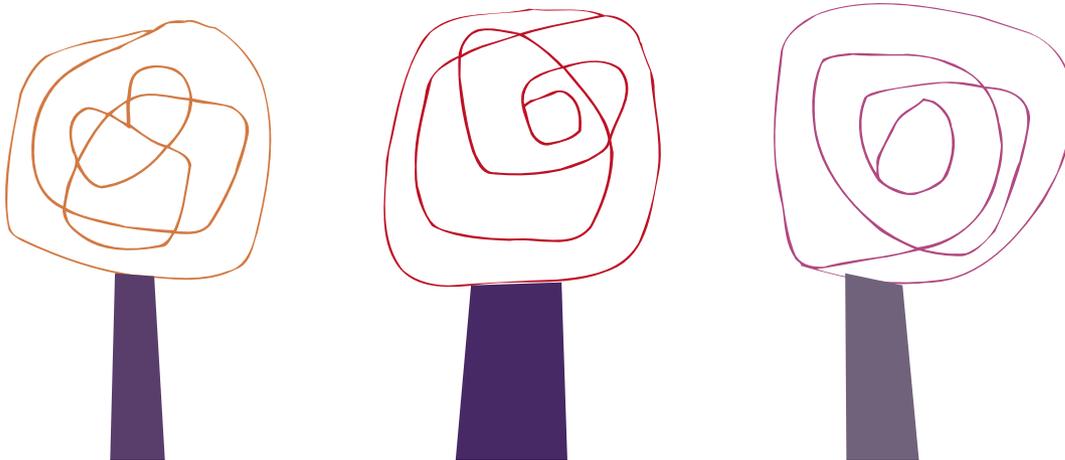
Participant at a seminar held for the staff in the Church of Sweden

Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work

The main objective of the Finnish project “Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work” is to increase equality in working life. This objective is to be achieved mainly through initiating discussions and conducting research in the field.

In the course of the project, various studies have been carried out on the status of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people in working life. A survey with more than 800 respondents was conducted and about 50 interviews were carried out. The project has also held seminars and lectures for teachers, social and health care workers and other professionals working within the field of employment all over Finland.

The project is governed by the Department of Sociology at the University of Helsinki, and it is carried out in cooperation with the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) and the Finnish National Organisation for Sexual Equality (SETA).



“**The project will conduct** the first ever research on the well-being, discrimination and marginalisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in Finland. The aim is to develop new ideas on how to tackle discrimination and inequality in the area of sexual orientation. In Finland, from 1995 onwards, there has already been a law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in the working life, but unfortunately this is not yet widely known. The fight against discrimination requires courage and we are all responsible for it.”

Tarja Filatov
Finnish Minister of Labour

“**I got a lot of interesting information** and new view points for tackling the issues of sexual orientation in my work. The most important thing is to understand that not all colleagues and clients are heterosexual. I will start at my workplace by putting up the brochure of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisation on our office noticeboard.”

A participant in a training event for Helsinki City employees

Closing comments

“**I work in the child care** sector and I am afraid of the reactions from both my colleagues and the parents of the children. I am frightened of losing my job if I were to come out. But if there is some discussion about sexual minorities, I will always defend us – but I don’t say directly that I am a bisexual. Information and education is needed, especially for the managers at the workplaces. Work needs to be done in this area.”

Female respondent in the Finnish survey for lesbian, gay and bisexual people

“**I don’t always feel** as strongly for the tasks I am responsible for as I do for the issues about discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The knowledge and the insight I’ve received through this project have given me strength and I have learned to see this kind of discrimination from a trade union perspective.

In both my heart and soul I feel that these issues have affected me deeply. And I will keep on working with them with both conviction and pride.

Another bonus is the friends I’ve made during the course of this project.”

Berit Göthberg

Labour Representative, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO)

Contact

This booklet is also available in Finnish, Dutch and Swedish. Below you will find the contact information for the different projects that are behind this booklet.

Normgiving Diversity

www.normgivande.nu

Gunnar Svensson, integratia@swipnet.se

Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System

www.rfsl.se/equal

Anette Sjödin, anette.sjodin@rfsl.se

Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers

www.lesbigayteachers.nl

Jorina Horzelenberg, j.horzelenberg@coc.nl

Peter Dankmeijer, p.dankmeijer@tolerantescholen.net

Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work

www.valt.helsinki.fi/sosio/tutkimus/equal

Jukka Lehtonen, jplehton@valt.helsinki.fi

The Equal Programme

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal

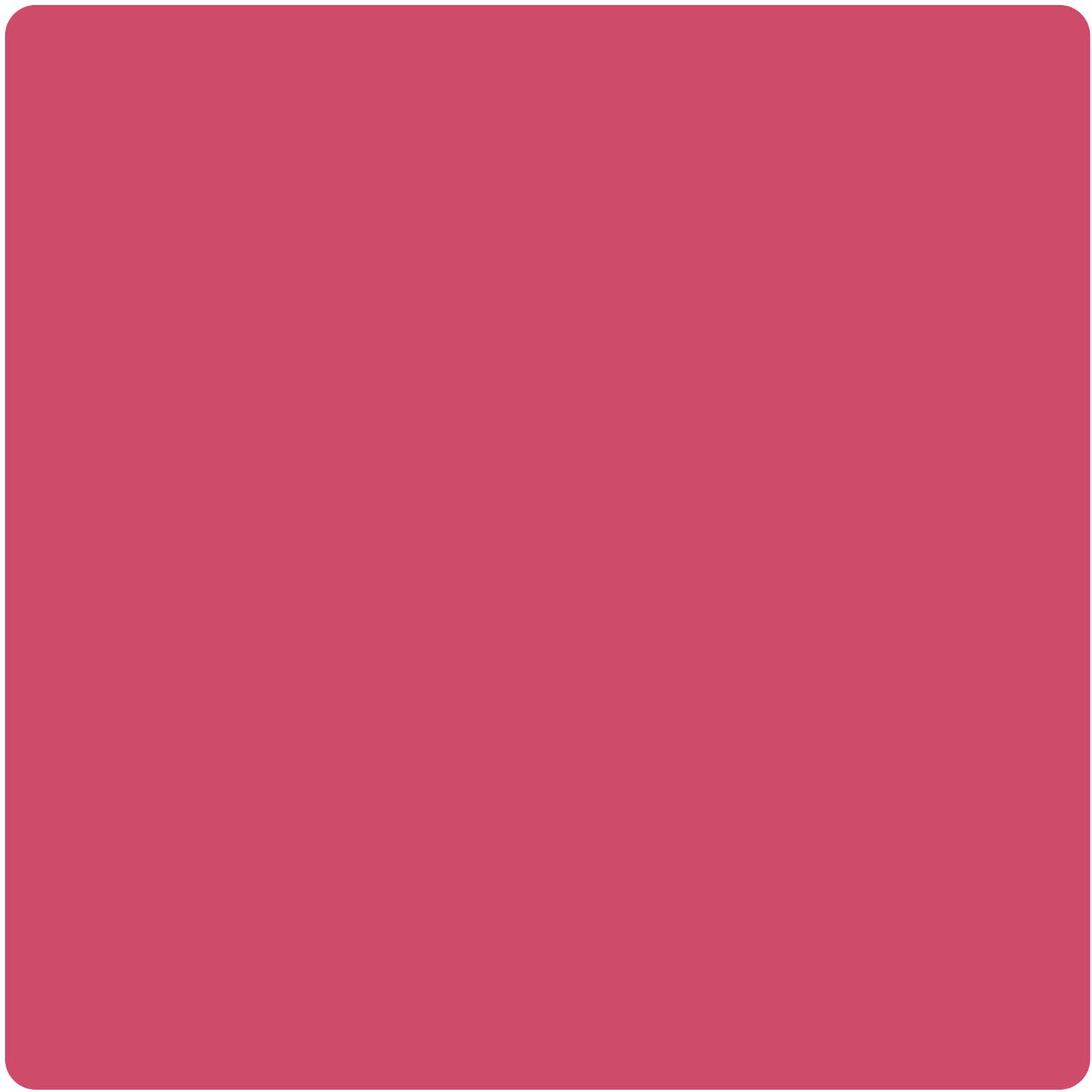


Homo- och bisexuella i omsorgen
ETT PROJEKT INOM EQUAL-PROGRAMMET

norm
givande
mång
fald
ETT PROJEKT INOM
EQUAL-PROGRAMMET



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



This booklet will give you advice on how to start and run a project aimed at improving the situation for gays, lesbians and bisexuals at work. It will also give you specific tips on what you can do as an employer, trade unionist or colleague. We all share the responsibility to improve our working places.

The booklet is the result of the collective experiences from four projects within the EU programme Equal: the Dutch project "Enabling Safety for LesBiGay Teachers", the two Swedish projects "Homosexuals and Bisexuals in the Care System" and "Normgiving Diversity", and the Finnish project "Sexual and Gender Minorities at Work".

