

Being Seen, Understood and Accepted



A school hosts a special club in which students with different gender identities can discuss diverse topics and challenges, demonstrating teachers' commitment to fostering a supportive and accepting school environment

Target groups: VET students/ learners; teachers/ trainers; parents; employers; general public

Focus: Exploring gender identity through discussion; creating a safe atmosphere for students to express themselves fully.

Objectives: Integrating all gender identities into education started when teachers began to encounter individual cases within the school.

Methodology: The teacher interviewed stated that it is vital that students who need help have at least one adult who sees and understands them, accepts their existence and addresses them according to their wishes. A seemingly small thing such as others using their preferred chosen name is of utmost importance. The school is accepting, supported by the principal and two teachers regularly hold LGBTQ club meetings which are attended by between 6-12 students. They discuss terminology; accepting difference within families; coming out to friends and families; how to actively engage in events; how and why to contact other LGBTQ students across Europe etc. Students from other schools can also attend these club meetings, as well as through various related societies. Students with different gender identities are usually regular attendees, whereas others just occasionally drop in to see how things run. They are public about the club, nothing is hidden and all 800 students (from 1st to 4th year) are informed that events are taking place. Some teachers include these topics in their lessons, although this still depends on the individual: certain teachers are very supportive, but there are some that are not. Out of the 90 employees at the school, there are only a few who do not approve. In the 6 years that the club has been active, they have had mostly positive feedback from parents.



Impact: A grammar school teacher from Ljubljana told us that she routinely deals with the topics of integrating all gender identities into education. Two other fellow teachers participate, although none of this would be possible without the approval of the school's management. Three colleagues actively work in this field, but only two do so intensively. They cooperate with two nongovernmental organisations, Legebitra and TransAkcija.

Teachers do not attend the club meetings; that is why obligatory training for teachers should be required. Their school is very diverse in terms of school programme: grammar school, art school, nursery school programme, which means a large and varied staff. On the whole, the teachers are not interested in this type of training, though some may already be familiar with the topic.

Conclusion: According to the interview data, the Ministry of Education is not involved in these endeavours. The circumstances are slightly better at university level - the Faculty of Arts accepts gender differences and even managed to create an open environment for trans students who usually have more difficulties and are less likely to be accepted.

The teacher interviewed has attended various consultations and training courses. Teachers have the opportunity to integrate this topic into their lessons. There are no formal barriers, only personal reservations or rather the disapproval of the management. Certain training courses should be obligatory for teachers to make them aware of gender-related topics. This awareness should also be transferred to formal institutions, ministries, etc. Fear is the most common factor when people are unaccepting of differences in schoolmates, teachers, parents, schools, workplaces, friends, etc. Teachers are also fearful, though everyone could educate themselves on the topic as there is much literature available on the subject. This is especially important, as they prepare youths for adulthood and employment during their most vulnerable years.

