

SOGI DISCRIMINATION IN SPORT

Recommendations to the Working Party on Sport of the Council of the European Union based on the first EU-wide research on the experience of LGBTI people in sport.

The **Outsport** project – “Innovative and educational approaches to prevent violence and tackle discrimination in sport based on sexual orientation and gender identity” – is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus Plus program. It is promoted by AICS, Associazione Italiana Cultura Sport, and it seeks to address homophobia and transphobia in sport through **scientific research** and **training**.

More than **5,500 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people** from all the **28 EU countries** completed the online survey created by the ***Institute of Sociology and Gender Studies of the German Sport University of Cologne*** and within the framework of the **Erasmus + Outsport project**. Participants’ ages ranged from 16 to 78 years (27 years on average).

The key results of the study show that:

- Almost 90% of respondents consider **homophobia, and particularly transphobia, a current problem in sport**.
- 20% of respondents refrain from participating in sport due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This is most frequently the case for trans people (54%) and refers predominantly to football/soccer, dancing, swimming, and boxing.
- One third of respondents who are active in sports have not revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity respectively to anybody in the sporting environment. This percentage is higher in Italy (41%) and Hungary (45%).
- **16% of respondents who are currently active in any sports have had at least one negative personal experience over the last 12 months** in relation to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The figure is higher among trans people – especially among **trans women (46%)**.
- Among the **negative experiences**, verbal insults (82%) and structural discrimination (i.e. unequal opportunities) (75%) are the most common forms of homo-/transphobic incidents that were indicated. Verbal threats (44%), e-bullying (40%), physically “crossing the line” (i.e. being shoved and/or pushed) (36%) and physical violence (20%) are also common experiences.

Outsport promoted a new inclusive **training** approach: apart from contrasting homophobia and transphobia in sport, concrete tools to educate against any form of exclusion and to develop social competencies have been provided in the framework of **Non-formal Education Through Sport** and **Human Rights Education**. The achieved practices and methodologies have been described in the ***Outsport Training Toolkit***, which is a concrete example of how coaches, PE teachers and sport managers could be involved in education in sport and through sport.

The importance of training and education has also emerged in the research. According to survey respondents, “**Diversity training**” was considered one of the top three actions to take in order to tackle homo-/transphobic discrimination in the field of sport. Other actions include the promotion of “popular sports stars coming out” and “high profile anti-homophobia/transphobia campaigns”.

We also gathered several observations coming from associations and activists regarding the importance of introducing a specific focus in the next *European Work Plan for Sport* - **contrasting homo-transphobia and gender stereotypes**. This would also enhance the debate on “gender equality”.

Concrete policies on SOGI discriminations in sport could be very useful to contrast homo-transphobia and gender stereotypes. These policies could indeed boost initiatives in the field of gender equality, because tackling stereotypes and discriminations based on sexual orientation and gender identity is also a necessary step to address **sexism in sport**. Unfortunately, to this day, female athletes still face numerous obstacles based on their gender.

In accordance with the first guiding objective of the current EU Work Plan for Sport, “to ensure, through cross-sectoral cooperation, the awareness of other EU policy domains of the contribution that sport can make in meeting the policy challenges facing the EU” project partners recommend the **Working Party on Sport** of the Council of the European Union:

- to include LGBTI issues and SOGI discrimination in the guiding objectives of the next EU Work Plan for Sport.
- to enhance the existing sport education programs with trainings on SOGI discrimination and LGBTI rights issues.
- to open up a dialogue with all relevant stakeholders (EU and COE Institutions, associations, NGOs) who can contribute to the development of such policies.