



Centre for Civic Education



Ministry of Education



**IT IS OK TO BE  
DIFFERENT!**





The basic value of the education system *is equality in realization of this right, irrespective of personal characteristics*. This is a key prerequisite for the development of society and for an environment without violence, social exclusion and other forms of discriminatory treatment.

A series of research and project activities examining the state of public opinion have indicated that the public is aware that LGBT persons suffer the highest levels of discrimination. Despite this, a negative attitude towards LGBT persons persists, and as a consequence the LGBT population is isolated, and therefore marginalized.

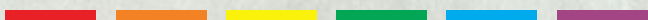
The research conducted among high school students suggests that more effort is needed to influence the attitudes towards the rights of sexual minorities (45.92% of young people holds a negative attitude towards them). It is clear that *the path to reducing homophobia is long and requires perseverance in education, dissemination of the values of tolerance and democratic social learning*. Through the educational process we should strive to build the knowledge and skills, and a system of values conducive to a society that is characterized by understanding and acceptance of diversity, respect of human dignity and the right to free life.

Plenty of international documents confirm the above principles. "Learning to Live Together" is one of the four cornerstones of education emphasized by UNESCO (1996).



It is important to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for a life in a society of diversities - such as respect for diversity, tolerance, cooperation, openness and flexibility. Similar recommendations can be found in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against racial, national and religious hatred (1996); Parliamentary Assembly in relation to xenophobic attitudes and movements in the Member States (1983); the Committee of Ministers on measures to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (2010), etc.


The policy of equality is based on *providing objective information related to sexual orientation and gender identity*. We need to remember that homophobia has a long historical pedigree. It appeared in the most drastic form under Nazism, which persecuted the homosexuals and forced them into concentration camps. It was with the end of the World War II that the rejection of discrimination of LGBT persons began to strengthen in Europe and the United States. One of the first gay organizations was founded in Netherlands in 1946, and similar organizations were soon established in Denmark, the US, the UK and elsewhere. The biggest change came as a consequence of the civil rights movement, and the political and social liberalization that emphasized the supremacy of individual rights and freedoms. The American Psychiatric Association *removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders* in the 1970. Its decision was seconded by the World Health Organization, which began to treat *homosexuality as a variant of sexual orientation*. In the 1980s and 1990s, the major social and legislative changes which affirmed and entrenched the rights of LGBT persons took place.



After the restoration of its independence, Montenegro quickly gained membership of most important international organizations. Accordingly, it also undertook to honour its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Social Charter and other major conventions which prohibit various forms of discrimination. *Montenegrin Constitution* incorporates international legal standards on the protection of human and minority rights in the country's legal system, especially with regard to the equality of opportunity, and *prohibition of all forms of discrimination and spreading of hatred*.

It is important to note that *LGBT persons have a sexual orientation* (emotional and sexual attraction) *which is part of their identity just as it is part of the identity of heterosexuals*. It is important to know that the life, social and emotional status of LGBT persons is complicated and difficult. Families can be traditional and rejecting. Therefore, the process of acceptance of LGBT persons is more challenging and the judgement of their sexual orientation and identity more severe than it is the case with heterosexual persons.





For a systematic improvement of the status of LGBT persons, it is essential to focus, within the education system, in the first phase, on the adolescent age group. Young people are more open to reconsideration of values, and to changing their habits and behaviour. We believe that by working with adolescents it is possible to change the negative attitudes which arise from traditionalism, introduce them to *new and correct information* to dispel the misconception about homosexuality and bisexuality as a mental illness, and teach them to react with *adequate emotions*, as well as with proportionate and *non-violent forms of behaviour*, and realise that stigma, discrimination and violence pose a risk to the mental health and well-being of LGBT persons.

*LGBT adolescents should be supported in the process of understanding, acceptance and recognition of their sexual orientation or identity, which is part of a common development process at this stage in life.*

It is therefore necessary to constantly review the dominant social attitudes and confront stereotypes and prejudice against LGBT people. It is the only way to ensure widespread respect for human rights, promote tolerance in all segments of the society, and provide full legal protection and social inclusion to people of different sexual orientation.





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