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AGDISTIS

'AGDISTIS'- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERVENTION IN NON-NORMATIVE BEHAVIOUR AND GENDER BULLYING.



E - BOOK

FOR NON-NORMATIVE GENDER TRAINING FOR TEACHERS



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Istituto d'Istruzione Superiore
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **E-Book for Non-Normative Gender Training for Teachers**, developed as part of **Work Package 3** of the **AGDISTIS** project, funded by the European Union. The AGDISTIS project aims to combat gender-based bullying and support non-normative gender behaviors in schools through the application of Emotional Intelligence. By **equipping educators with the necessary skills** to foster **empathy, inclusion, and respect**, the project seeks to create a safer, more accepting environment for all students, regardless of gender expression.

In **Work Package 2** of the project, a comprehensive “**Encyclopaedia of Good Practices for Gender Behaviour**” was developed to support educators, schools and policymakers. Readers who are interested in learning more about best practices in non-normative gender behavior education can refer to that guide for further insights.

This e-book focuses on the current landscape of non-normative gender education in the **AGDISTIS** project’s partner countries: Spain, Turkey, Italy, and Austria. By examining the status of non-normative gender education in these regions, we identify existing gaps in teacher training, highlight key challenges, and offer practical recommendations for future improvements. Our goal is to provide educators with the tools they need to effectively support students who defy traditional gender norms and create inclusive classrooms that nurture diversity and empathy.



UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

SPAIN



Non-normative gender education in Spain has experienced **significant advances** in recent years, although it also faces challenges and resistance. In terms of legislation, Spain has implemented **laws and policies that promote gender equality and the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity in education. The Organic Law on Education (LOE) and the Organic Law on Effective Equality of Women and Men** are important examples. In several autonomous communities in Spain, specific educational programs have been developed to address the needs of students with non-normative genders and to promote the inclusion of gender diversity in education. As an example, we can cite the Program of Attention to Sexual and Gender Diversity in Andalusia. The Department of Education of the Regional Government of Andalusia has implemented this program to promote inclusion and respect for sexual and gender diversity in educational centers. It includes teacher training actions, elaboration of didactic materials and psychological and social attention to LGTBI students. We can also mention the LGTBI Equality Law approved in 2018. Where measures are established to promote equal treatment and non-discrimination of LGTBI people in all areas of society, as well as to ensure their protection and promote their visibility.

Initiatives have been undertaken to **train teachers on issues of gender diversity and sexuality**. However, there is still a need to improve and expand this training to ensure that all teachers are prepared to address these issues effectively in the classroom. Despite progress, non-normative gender education continues to face controversy and resistance from some sectors of society. Conservative, religious and political groups often oppose the inclusion of gender diversity issues in the school curriculum, which can lead to tensions in the educational arena. Despite resistance, there is growing recognition of the importance of addressing gender diversity in education. Spanish society is increasingly aware of the need to promote equality and inclusion in all areas, including education.

In summary, although non-normative gender education in Spain has advanced in terms of legislation and social awareness, it still faces challenges in terms of implementation and acceptance in some sectors of society. Teacher training and the development of inclusive educational programs are key to advancing towards a more egalitarian education that respects gender diversity.

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

TURKEY



The right to education is guaranteed in national and international legislation. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights state that **everyone has the right to education**. Türkiye, although the right to education is subject to reservations to the relevant articles of the conventions on the grounds of domestic law, it is also guaranteed in Article 42 of the Constitution that **no one can be deprived of the right to education and learning**. When all these articles are read together with the provisions of the relevant instruments prohibiting discrimination, the essence of the right to education is based on the right of everyone to benefit from free basic education without discrimination.

In our country, where **gender roles are systematically constructed by family, school, law, morality, religion and media**, the education system plays an important role in perpetuating these inequalities. Contrary to the dominant discourse that every individual who accesses school has equal rights and that schools are environments free from all forms of discrimination, in schools and classrooms, **students are segregated on the basis of gender through official and unwritten hidden curricula**. Education policies based on gender inequality and gender perception and inequality are deepening with the conservative and reactionary gender understanding of the political power. The biggest phenomenon that feeds and grows this process is the preparation of the official and implicit education curriculum with a **sexist understanding and its structure that legitimises the gender roles of women and girls and ignores LGBTI+ individuals**.

Although the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies have enacted many laws and regulations targeting gender equality, there is no regulation on **sexual health education**, which can function in the context of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, the education system is dominated by a binary gender system both in terms of form and content. **There is no article on non-normative gender education in the primary, secondary and high school curricula or in the counselling programme**.

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

In 2015, SPoD and SPF (Boğaziçi University Social Policies Forum) conducted a research. According to the findings of this research on Social and Economic Problems of **LGBT Individuals in Türkiye, 67.4 per cent of LGBT individuals received negative comments and/or criticisms** due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their educational life before the age of 18. Reaction to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity are not accepted at school. This situation may lead LGBT individuals to drop out of school because their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is not accepted at school; 8.3% of those who stated that they dropped out of school for this reason. These findings, which strikingly point to prejudices and discrimination against LGBT individuals, require a more in-depth examination of discriminatory practices based on sexual orientation and gender identity in educational environments.

However, studies conducted by SEÇBİR (Istanbul Bilgi University Sociology and Education Studies Application and Research Centre) with teachers reveal that teachers feel **uninformed, inadequate and helpless when it comes to gender identity and sexual orientation.**

A very small number of education faculty students take some courses such as 'Fundamentals of Counselling and Psychological Counselling' or 'Gender' course, which can be taken as an elective course, and in these courses they have the opportunity to engage with the issue. Such courses are offered in a few universities, and in most faculties of education, including the counselling department, the **LGBTI issue is not addressed at all.** In the rare cases where it is addressed, it is enough to share very basic information such as the fact that homosexuality is not a disease, and there is almost no talk about an educational construct that includes LGBTI children/youth in schools.

The binary gender system that dominates educational institutions and policies causes **students with non-normative gender behaviour to be exposed to violence and discrimination in the educational environment,** leading to a sense of insecurity, decreased sense of belonging, truancy and even dropping out of school altogether, and thus decreasing the chances of academic success. The physical conditions of the school, the attitudes of teachers, lecturers and other education personnel, the lack of mechanisms to prevent peer bullying, and the lack of inclusive course content are some of the problems these students face in their education and training life.

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

ITALY



There is a need for a scientifically founded knowledge of the conditions that can promote, from a psychological point of view, well-being at school, since it has effects on learning, motivation and social relations. In the context of emotional and relational problems at school for the improvement of well-being levels, the prevention and/or management of bullying and cyberbullying behaviour certainly occupies a central role in educational practice. This includes taking charge of pupils' social development and supporting interpersonal dynamics oriented towards sharing and inclusion.

It is clear that phenomena of intolerance, aggressive isolation and prevarication represent alarming situations towards which educational intervention is needed. The Ministry of Education and Merit (MIUR) has long expressed its views on the **prevention of bullying and in April 2015 issued the 'Guidelines for actions to prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying'**. Subsequently, the **'National Plan for the Prevention of Bullying and Cyberbullying at School 2016/2017' was promoted**. MIUR's actions have sought to raise children's awareness of these phenomena with the aim of helping the school to be a 'community of dialogue' to foster forms of inclusion, respect for diversity and social integration.

From a psycho-pedagogical point of view, each school institution, within the framework of its collegiate bodies, can then develop real intervention programmes on bullying and cyberbullying, and - as indicated above - specific forms of workshop teaching, such as Psycho-educational Didactic Workshops (LDP), which can represent a real resource in this regard for the prevention and tackling of such aggressive and antisocial behaviour.

Focus is always placed on the assessment of **at-risk behaviours and situations, training of teachers in anti-bullying protocols**, and to interventions from a pedagogical point of view. **Very little indication is given on non-normative gender education or to the root causes of homophobic bullying and discrimination.**

Non-normative education is openly undermined in Italy, a predominantly Catholic country where the Vatican still has leadership and authority on moral and ethical matters, and where a populist government first in 2020 and a centre-right government later in 2022 have repeatedly rejected a draft legislation, first of its kind, known as 'DDL Zan' (from former MP Alessandro Zan, the sponsor of this law).

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

Among the 'measures for the prevention and countering of discrimination and violence based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability', the draft included **awareness-raising days against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, harsher penalties for acts of homophobic and transphobic violence, and the encouragement of sex and gender education in schools.**

The initiative had become necessary due to «**the absence or inadequacy of school and training projects on sexuality and affectivity education in our country**», as explained by Vittorio Lingiardi, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and professor of Dynamic Psychology at La Sapienza University in Rome.

It has been precisely the project of bringing gender and sex education in schools of all levels -although not mandatory- that caused concern in conservative ambients, with politicians, parents and **Vatican representatives condemning the “brainwash of children”, the “gay agenda”, the “encouragement of sexual promiscuity” and the “spread of gender theory”.**

The fact that the project has failed to become law indicates that, notwithstanding the progress made in the last 10 years in affirming the rights of LGBTQ+ people, a **sense of resistance persists in Italian society in recognising and stigmatising homophobic behaviour**, resistance that becomes open veto when it comes to the education of minors. This is not surprising: a survey conducted in 2011 on perceptions of discrimination showed that more than half of the participants (56%) agreed that homosexuals would be more accepted in society if they kept quiet about their identity (ISTAT 2011).



UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

AUSTRIA



Austria's education system mirrors the country's socio-cultural landscape, which has historically been shaped by conservative values, particularly regarding gender roles. Although legal frameworks have evolved in recent decades to foster gender **equality and protect non-normative gender identities**, significant gaps remain, both in policy implementation and societal attitudes. Austria is still grappling with deep-rooted gender inequalities, as evidenced by persistent challenges highlighted in global reports such as the Global Gender Gap Report. These challenges intersect with broader issues of education, where **gender stereotyping and unequal opportunities continue to be prominent concerns**. Non-normative gender education, as part of a wider movement towards gender equality, remains an essential, yet underdeveloped, aspect of the Austrian educational landscape.

Although the **Austrian constitution clearly states that men and women are equal**, reality shows that this equality is far from fully realized in many areas, especially in the labor market. Women may have formal rights to education and careers, but structural inequalities and deeply ingrained gender stereotypes still prevent many women. These differences are particularly evident in the workforce, where women continue to be systematically disadvantaged. One of the central issues is the gender pay gap, the wage disparity between men and women, which affects women's careers and long-term economic security.

The education of women in Austria has a long and significant history. Since the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1774, girls have had the right to receive an education. In 1897, women were also allowed to attend universities, marking an important step towards gender equality, as education plays a crucial role in women's empowerment. In a 1976 speech, Minister for Science Hertha Firnberg emphasized the **importance of education for women's emancipation and the reform of family laws**. Women have access to all educational institutions in Austria, and specific support programs encourage them to enter fields where women are still underrepresented, such as technology and the sciences. These programs aim to **break down traditional gender roles** and increase the number of women in higher-paying professions. Despite equal access to education, deep-rooted gender stereotypes continue to influence girls and young women. From an early age, children are exposed to gendered expectations about which careers, behaviors, and family roles they should pursue. Girls are often steered towards social professions, while boys are encouraged to pursue careers in technology or science.

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER EDUCATION

Austria's commitment to gender equality is enshrined in several legal frameworks, most notably:

- **The Equal Treatment Act (Gleichbehandlungsgesetz):**

Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation in education.

- **The Austrian Constitution:** Guarantees equality for all citizens, explicitly prohibiting gender-based discrimination.

- **The Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research (BMBWF)**

Guidelines: The BMBWF has issued guidelines and frameworks that include aspects of gender diversity and equality in education. These guidelines encourage schools to incorporate gender-sensitive teaching practices and materials.

- **SDG 5 (Sustainable Development Goal 5):** Calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, with particular emphasis on eliminating gender-based violence and ensuring equal participation in all aspects of life, including education.

Despite these legal safeguards, the integration of non-normative gender education in Austrian schools is still developing. The SDG 5 agenda highlights many of the systemic issues that remain unresolved, including the pervasive impact of gender stereotypes, which continue to shape educational experiences from early childhood onwards.

In recent years, there have been efforts to **integrate non-normative gender education into Austrian curricula**. The Federal Ministry of Education has introduced guidelines aimed at **creating more inclusive classrooms**, encouraging schools to foster an environment where all gender identities are recognized and respected.



GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

SPAIN

The main gaps in training needs in Spain on sexual diversity in the classroom tend to include:

- **Lack of specific training for teachers:** Many teachers do not receive adequate training on sexual and gender diversity during their initial training nor in their continuing professional development.
- **Absence of inclusive curricula:** School curricula may lack content that addresses sexual diversity in an inclusive and respectful manner.
- **Lack of adequate educational resources:** The availability of educational materials that address sexual diversity in an appropriate manner may be limited.
- **Lack of knowledge about how to address sexual diversity in the classroom:** Teachers may lack the skills and strategies necessary to address sexual diversity in the classroom in an effective and respectful manner.
- **Lack of institutional support:** Lack of clear school policies and institutional support may hinder the inclusion of sexual diversity in the educational environment.
- **Taboo and stigma:** The topic of sexual diversity is often perceived as taboo or sensitive, which can hinder its inclusion in the school curriculum and classroom discussions.

Addressing these shortcomings requires a commitment on the part of education systems, teacher training institutions and society in general to ensure that sexual diversity is adequately and respectfully addressed in the school environment.

Historically, educational curricula in Spain have faced criticism for their lack of inclusion of sexual diversity. In the past, many of these curricula did not adequately address issues related to sexual and gender diversity, leading to a lack of representation and recognition of LGBTQ+ people's identities and experiences in the educational setting. This lack of inclusion could contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes, discrimination and exclusions.

However, in recent years there has been a push by activists, organizations and some political sectors to promote greater inclusion of sexual diversity in educational curricula. Efforts have been made to introduce content that addresses sexual diversity in a respectful and educational manner at different educational levels, from primary to secondary education.

Despite these advances, there is still work to be done in many educational settings to ensure that curricula adequately reflect sexual and gender diversity, as well as to provide teachers with the necessary tools and training to address these issues effectively in the classroom.

GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

The lack of specific educational protocols to assist sexually diverse students is a significant concern in many educational systems. These protocols are essential to ensure a safe, inclusive and respectful school environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

To address this gap, it is critical to develop and implement robust educational protocols that address the needs and concerns of LGBTQ+ students. These protocols should include preventative measures, intervention procedures in cases of harassment or discrimination, guidance for educational staff, and support resources for students and families. In addition, it is important to provide sexual and gender diversity training and awareness to educational staff so that they can effectively implement these protocols.



GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

TURKEY

Students with non-normative gender behaviour are **systematically ignored, not accepted, excluded, marginalised, humiliated, forced to conform to norms and subjected to discrimination in almost all areas of social life** from the early stages of their lives. All these are violations of the child's human rights and violence. It is unacceptable to leave these students alone and unsupported in this whole system. For this very reason, our responsibility as educators is to protect the rights of LGBTI+ children against the pincer of family and school.

Especially when it is considered the primary and secondary school levels, since children act as objects of the family and school within educational institutions, it is necessary to define a definition of rights for them and create a space of freedom where they can express themselves. Not only on the basis of sexual identity, but also within the education system, all the rights of the child stemming from being a child are prevented. It must be aimed to create an educational environment free of violence, discrimination and bullying. **The rights and needs of students with non-normative gender behaviour are completely invisible.** The fact that education policies ignore these rights, that is, in fact, the rejection of a human state of existence, is the direct cause of discrimination, violence and social exclusion for these children. This state of ignorance becomes an area of struggle in the education system to protect the rights of children.

It can be expected that those working in the field of education are influenced by the dominant norms of the society in which they live and have personal perspectives, values and beliefs. However, it is unacceptable for an educator to think and make decisions on behalf of the students in front of him/her, to approach students who do not conform to social norms in a judgemental way, and to try to make students like him/her/the majority. All these are violations of human rights. The educator's attitude that ignores the human rights of the child shows that he/she does not comply with the ethical framework of the profession, because the ethical principles established according to the characteristics of professions are based on human rights.

GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

From the way the school space is organised to the content of the curriculum and textbooks, from the language we use in our classrooms to the way we interact with parents or the administration, **many practices at school serve to establish and reinforce the binary gender regime**. The binary gendered system, which begins to be **established in the preschool period, appears in various forms throughout the child's/ young person's educational life**. For example, school toilets, in other words 'girls' toilets' and 'boys' toilets', are among the spaces that reinforce the binary gender regime by separating genders with sharp distinctions. On the other hand, the restriction of the regulations does not allow for alternative architectural arrangements.

Textbooks are another tool for imposing gendered roles. In textbooks, boys are frequently depicted playing with cars or playing football; on the other hand, there is not a single example of girls playing football not even in the textbooks. On the other hand, we see girls jumping rope in the textbooks; boys are never seen jumping rope, at most they are seen twisting rope. In addition, we observe that girls and women are mostly depicted doing housework.

Individuals who do not conform to the norms imposed by the binary gender regime are labelled by teachers. Different actors of the school, including students, parents, teachers and administrators, are under the influence of the norms imposed by the binary gender regime while interacting with each other. In addition, the practices experienced in the school environment reveal that in most cases where the teacher tries to establish an egalitarian environment, parents can adopt an approach that will reproduce the binary gender regime. A significant number of teachers may also tend towards a 'diagnostic' and 'therapeutic' approach.

To sum up, we can say that the binary sexist system and heteronormative understanding are widely internalised in daily school practices. At this stage, the biggest gap in the education system is the lack of an educational construct that equally considers the interests of all individuals, does not impose sexist roles, includes all forms of existence, and that teachers or trainers do not have sufficient knowledge and awareness about how to behave towards students with non-normative gender behaviour.



GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

ITALY

At the present moment, **Italy does not have unified curricula of gender education or sexual education, nor are teachers trained to touch upon these subjects in their classes.** Any kind of initiative is left to the singular schools, that have to autonomously organise their programmes and train their staff- or choose external associations to carry training out.

The main training gap identified through the seminars and interviews with the teachers is the lack of education itself. Teachers usually don't receive training on gender issues or root causes of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Even when they are willing to implement programmes, they find themselves in dire lack of instruments and education.

Isolation and fragmentation of practices are all consequences of a lack of institutional framework and support; while Italian teachers are very competent when it comes to practical intervention, effective practices of prevention of bullying, especially homophobic bullying, are still emerging.

Another **significant training gap connected to non-normative gender education -or lack thereof- is represented by the lack of instruments and legal frameworks to manage the relationship with families and tutors.** This is part of a widespread and alarming trend of Italian teachers becoming targets of verbal and physical violence from dissatisfied parents and family members, with aggressions growing of the 111% in 2024 compared to 2023. **Teachers don't feel legally protected and are not trained to manage the relationship with families and parents.**

An important factor to take into consideration is the impact of **cultural diversity in the composition of Italian classrooms.** Although less so than countries like Austria or Spain, Italy has received massive waves of extra-EU immigration in the last 30 years which are starting to alter the cultural and therefore educational landscape of the country, with the predictable accompaniment of debates on how to make integration or assimilation possible (or even desirable). Teachers are undertrained in these regards as well, even though elements like religion and culture are important factors to take into consideration when implementing comprehensive gender education.

GAPS IN TRAINING NEEDS

AUSTRIA

While efforts to achieve gender equality and inclusive education have been implemented, significant gaps remain, particularly when addressing the needs of non-normative gender identities. Unfortunately, Austria's education system still falls short in providing adequate support for these communities.

In June 2023, Austria's Independent Monitoring Committee released a special report on inclusive education, highlighting the country's failure to meet its obligations under Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While this report focused on students with disabilities, many of the findings are relevant to the non-normative gender population, revealing systemic shortcomings that hinder the creation of a truly inclusive education system. The gaps in gender-inclusive education reflect Austria's broader failure to provide equal opportunities and adequate support for marginalized groups.

When it comes to non-normative gender education, the gaps are even more pronounced. Austrian education, both in its formal structure and its cultural attitudes, tends to operate within a rigid gender binary. This creates several specific challenges:

- **Teacher Training Gaps**

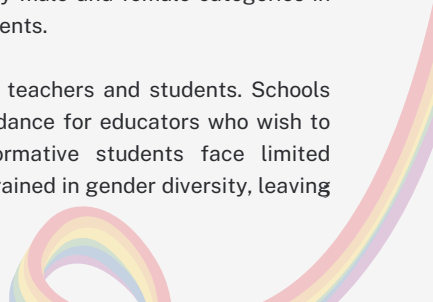
Many teachers in Austria lack the training to handle issues related to non-normative gender identities. They are often unaware of how to support non-binary or transgender students, largely due to limited gender sensitivity training. Without proper education on these topics, teachers may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or exclude students who do not conform to traditional gender roles. Additionally, professional development programs often fail to update teachers on the latest practices in inclusive education, leaving them underprepared to support diverse student needs.

- **Curriculum and Policy Shortfalls**

Austrian schools work within the gender binary, reflected in both curriculum content and school policies. Non-normative gender identities are largely absent from textbooks and classroom discussions, which perpetuates stigma and misunderstanding. Furthermore, school policies on dress codes, restrooms, and sports participation are often designed with only male and female categories in mind, excluding non-binary and transgender students.

- **Institutional Support Lacking**

There is also a lack of institutional support for teachers and students. Schools often do not provide adequate resources or guidance for educators who wish to implement gender-inclusive practices. Non-normative students face limited access to mental health services or counselors trained in gender diversity, leaving them without essential support networks.



IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

SPAIN

Before addressing this identification, a distinction should be made between "gaps" and "problems". Gaps in training needs, as discussed in the previous section, refer to areas where teachers lack the necessary knowledge or resources. Problems, however, are the consequences of those gaps, manifesting as negative impacts on students, teachers, and the overall school environment.

The gaps identified in Spain's approach to non-normative gender education translate into several significant problems that affect students, teachers, and the school environment as a whole.

- **Limited Teacher Knowledge and Confidence:** A lack of specific training often leaves teachers feeling unprepared and lacking confidence to address non-normative gender issues in the classroom (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional [MEFP], 2018). This can manifest in various ways, such as unintentionally misgendering students, perpetuating gender stereotypes, or struggling to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students. A study by Esteban (2018) found that a significant number of Spanish teachers reported feeling insecure and unsure how to address issues of sexual diversity with their students. This lack of confidence can lead to avoidance of the topic altogether, hindering progress towards a more inclusive educational environment.
- **Ineffective Classroom Management:** Without proper training on gender diversity and inclusion, teachers may struggle to effectively manage classroom dynamics (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional [MEFP], 2018). This can lead to situations where students who are questioning their gender identity or expressing themselves in non-normative ways are ostracized or bullied by their peers. A report by FELGTB (Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Transexuales y Bisexuales) (2019) found that a high percentage of LGBTQ+ students in Spain experience bullying and harassment at school due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. This highlights the need for teachers to develop skills for identifying and intervening in instances of gender-based bullying, fostering a climate of respect and acceptance in the classroom.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

- **Negative Impact on Student Wellbeing:** The problems discussed above can have a profound negative impact on students' well-being. Students who experience misgendering, gender stereotyping, or bullying due to their gender identity or expression may develop low self-esteem and self-acceptance (Esteban, 2018). This can lead to emotional distress, social isolation, and even academic difficulties. A study by Molanaro et al. (2018) found a correlation between experiences of gender-based discrimination and increased risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ+ youth. These findings underscore the urgency of creating inclusive school environments that support the well-being of all students, regardless of their gender identity.
- **Missed Opportunities for Positive Development:** Beyond the negative consequences, the lack of comprehensive non-normative gender education also leads to missed opportunities for fostering positive development in students. Schools play a crucial role in shaping young people's understanding of gender and identity. Without proper training and resources, teachers may miss opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes, promote empathy and respect and empower students with diverse identities.

When schools fail to address non-normative gender issues, it creates a ripple effect. Teachers feel overwhelmed, the school's reputation suffers, and discrimination can persist. This not only harms students who don't feel safe, but also weakens the school community by limiting valuable partnerships with parents and organizations. By prioritizing non-normative gender education, schools can create a more positive and inclusive environment for everyone.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

TURKEY

Students with non-normative gender behaviour experience much more difficulties and rights violations than cisnormative and heteronormative binary gender regime and discriminatory ideologies compared to cisgender and heterosexual children. These students are **systematically ignored, unaccepted, excluded, marginalised, humiliated, oppressed and discriminated** against in almost all areas of social life (at home, at school, in dormitories, in playgrounds, on the streets, in gyms, in the media, in social media, etc.) from very early stages of their lives and perhaps throughout their lives. All these are violations of the child's human rights and violence! It is traumatising and developmentally damaging for a child to live in a situation that is open to threat at any time and to be exposed to repetitive traumas.

While family is one of the most important sources of support for the majority of children, children with non-normative gender behaviour have to struggle for their families to accept and love them unconditionally. The family often becomes a structure dominated by pressure, violence and hatred for these children. Sometimes the family does not apply pressure and violence, but conveys deep sadness and disappointment to the child.

Students with non-normative gender behaviour are exposed to various sexist attitudes and behaviours in educational environments starting from pre-school and primary education. The fact that the physical conditions of the school and the curriculum are based on the binary gender system, peer bullying including cyber bullying, the lack of protective measures against bullying, discriminatory attitudes and insufficient knowledge of educators and administrators are among the problems frequently experienced by these students. Being exposed to violence and discrimination in the educational environment can lead to a sense of insecurity in students, a decrease in the sense of belonging, running away from school and even leaving school completely, and therefore, it leads to a decrease in the chances of academic success. Therefore, humiliation and oppression arising from homophobia and transphobia in educational institutions force students with non-normative gender behaviour either to exist by hiding themselves or push them out of the system.

When students with non-normative gender behaviour behave as they are, when they are themselves, when they are not hidden, they feel intense anxiety that they will not be accepted, loved, excluded, punished and subjected to violence by their closest relatives, friends, teachers and the society in general.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

This situation may cause them to distance themselves from themselves, suppress their identities and develop false/artificial selves. When they start to make sense of and define their gender identity, sexual orientation and/or gender characteristics in later years, it may take time for them to accept their socially excluded and suppressed identities and to live in peace with their identities. Unfortunately, as individuals of this society, students with non-normative gender behaviour can also learn and internalise homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. In order to make sense of, define and accept their identities, they may first have to overcome their own prejudices and negative attitudes. Even if they accept their identities, they may not be able to come out even though they want to for fear of being subjected to discrimination, oppression and violence, and they may have to continue hiding.

One of the most common forms of violence that students with non-normative gender behaviour are exposed to is peer violence and the most common place where this is experienced is the school environment. Bullying based on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia is quite common in schools. In addition to students with non-normative gender behaviour, cisgender and heterosexual children who do not perform gender roles as expected by society are also affected by this form of bullying. Students with non-normative gender behaviour who are subjected to peer violence may feel constantly uneasy and threatened in the classroom and at school, may keep silent about bullying in order to be included in peer groups, may not be able to ask for help if they do not receive attention and support from adults in their immediate environment, may have difficulty focusing on their lessons, may have difficulty focusing on their lessons, and may be academically. They may regress, be absent from school and withdraw from school.

Briefly, we can list the problems encountered in non-normative gender education as follows:

- **Physical conditions of schools**
- **The dominance of a binary gender system in the education system both in terms of form and content**
- **Peer bullying**
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Schools do not have measures to protect LGBTQ+ people against bullying**
- **The fact that those working in the field of education (administrators, educators, PDR specialists etc.) do not have even basic knowledge on the subject**
- **Course contents are not inclusive**
- **Lack of support from parents for their children with non-normative gender behaviour**

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

ITALY

The problems that emerged in the Italian school environment all have to do with the background and the gaps detailed in the previous chapters, as they all stem from a social context that still feels extremely diffident about LGBTQ+ matters, especially in public insitutions as most of Italian secondary schools are.

The first problem identified is **how to manage the relationship with the families and parents** of both students displaying non-normative behaviours and their peers. On one hand, **the involvement of families and parents is necessary** in any programme with the ambition to tackle gender-based and homophobic bullying and non-normative gender education, if anything since most of the students involved are minors; on the other hand, it is not uncommon for LGBTQ+ youth to hide their identity from their families in fear of being rejected, stigmatised or punished. Teachers are, in this sense, in a very delicate position and need to preserve both the trust of the parents and of the pupil. Moreover, students that display discriminatory and homophobic behaviours and speeches are likely (although this is not a constant factor) to have been brought up in a family environment where homophobic prejudices and stigmatisation are somewhat normalised and accepted; collaboration is made particularly difficult then, since the single school and institute has no right to directly override the education that has been imparted at home by the pupil's parents. It is precisely the belief of a large number of Italian families that gender and sex education should be handled privately, at home, so that each family could choose how to educate their own child.

The second order of problems has much to do with the aforementioned **fragmental and irregular involvement of local and national institutions** in dedicated school curricula. Schools in urbanised areas or in progressive municipalities of Italy could count on the institutional support from cultural and educational entities on their territory, obtaining the sponsorship and the attention of their local law-makers; but schools in rural areas (the majority of Italian schools) or in conservative municipalities could find themselves left to their own devices or even opposed by their local and regional counsels. A dishomogeneous involvement of institutions outside of the school context weakens any attempt to comprehensive non-normative gender education and hinders the creation of widespread and shared protocols and curricula, which in turn materialise in disparities of education and opportunity in the different areas of the Italian peninsula.

IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Finally, not all teachers are willing to devote their time and their energies to training in non-normative gender education. Some share the diffidence and resistance that is still prevalent in the public discourse; others are afraid of becoming targets of violence and abuse by families or conservative media; all feel not adequately supported by institutions, which results in lack of motivation.

AUSTRIA

The gaps in addressing non-normative gender identities within Austria's education system can lead to several significant issues. One major problem is the **increased stigma and misunderstanding resulting from the lack of representation**. When non-normative gender identities are absent from the curriculum, it reinforces stereotypes and fosters an environment where students may not understand or accept diverse gender identities. This can perpetuate stigma and misinformation, making it more difficult for students to relate to or accept their peers who do not fit traditional gender norms.

This lack of inclusivity can also contribute to **psychological distress and feelings of isolation** among non-normative students. The absence of positive representation and support can lead to increased anxiety, low self-esteem, and overall emotional turmoil. These issues can significantly impact **students' mental health and academic performance**, creating a barrier to their success and well-being.

Non-normative students may face **discrimination and bullying** in environments where there is inadequate understanding and support from both peers and educators. The resulting unsafe environment not only affects their safety but also their overall experience at school, contributing to a hostile atmosphere that can hinder their social and academic development.

Systemic inequality is another critical issue arising from these gaps. The failure to implement inclusive practices and curricula perpetuates broader systemic inequalities, denying non-normative students equal educational opportunities and support.

Teacher preparedness, as already mentioned, is also a significant concern. Inadequate training for educators means that they may not be equipped to provide the necessary support for non-normative students. Educators who lack knowledge about gender diversity might unintentionally contribute to an unwelcoming or discriminatory environment, further exacerbating the challenges faced by these students.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SPAIN

Having tackled the current landscape of non-normative gender education in Spain, the gaps in training needs and the problems arising from them, it is crucial to turn our attention towards potential solutions and recommendations that can help address these challenges and promote inclusive, supportive, and affirming educational environments for all students, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Solutions and recommendations from the Spanish landscape include:

1. Comprehensive Teacher Training

To ensure all students feel safe and respected, teachers need comprehensive training on non-normative gender issues. This training should cover understanding gender identities, creating inclusive classrooms, and supporting students with diverse genders. Workshops and online courses can equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to use inclusive language, address bullying effectively, and provide confidential support to students questioning their identity or facing gender-related challenges. This investment in teachers empowers them to create a positive learning environment for all.

2. Curriculum Integration

The curriculum should become a window into the world of gender diversity, ensuring all students have access to accurate and inclusive information. This can be achieved through integrating diverse narratives across subjects. Literature, history, and other fields can be enriched with characters and stories that reflect the spectrum of gender identities. Challenging stereotypes and promoting a broader understanding of gender is key. Additionally, dedicated lessons and units specifically focused on gender diversity can be incorporated. These lessons can cover topics like gender identity formation, expression, roles, and the history of LGBTQ+ rights movements. Finally, creating a safe space for exploration and self-discovery is crucial. Activities that encourage self-reflection, open discussions, and access to resources and support groups can empower students to explore their own identities.

3. School Policies and Protocols

Schools must establish clear policies to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of gender identity. This involves three key areas:

- **Non-discrimination and Equality:** Clear policies prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or expression are essential. This guarantees all students have equal access to educational opportunities and resources.

- **Inclusive Language:** Schools should adopt guidelines for respectful and inclusive language. This may involve avoiding unnecessary gendered language and using gender-neutral pronouns whenever possible.
- **Anti-Bullying Procedures:** Clear and effective procedures to identify, investigate, and address bullying or harassment based on gender identity are crucial. These procedures should involve students, teachers, parents, and administrators to ensure a coordinated and supportive response.

4. Parent and Community Engagement

Schools can't go it alone! Partnering with parents and the community is essential for creating a wider support system for students. Schools can offer workshops and resources to help parents understand non-normative gender issues and create supportive home environments. Collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations can provide valuable expertise and resources for both students and families. Finally, open communication through regular updates, feedback opportunities, and discussion forums keeps parents and the community informed and engaged in the school's approach to non-normative gender education.

5. Ongoing Evaluation and Assessment

Spanish schools need to constantly check their progress on non-normative gender education. This means gathering data on student well-being, academic performance, and sense of belonging. Feedback from students, teachers, parents, and the community through surveys, interviews, and focus groups can also provide valuable insights. Additionally, assessing the overall school climate and bullying rates can reveal the program's effectiveness. By analyzing all this information, schools can continuously improve their initiatives, which might involve revising materials, adjusting training, or implementing new policies. This ongoing evaluation ensures the program effectively supports all students.

Addressing non-normative gender issues in education is not merely a matter of inclusion; it is a fundamental imperative to create safe, supportive, and affirming learning environments for all students. By implementing comprehensive teacher training, integrating non-normative gender education into the curriculum, establishing supportive school policies and protocols, engaging parents and the community, and conducting ongoing evaluation and assessment, schools can play a fundamental role in fostering inclusive educational experiences that respect and affirm the diverse gender identities and expressions of all students.

In doing so, schools can contribute to a more just and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TURKEY

Students with non-normative gender behaviour need educators who will see, accept, listen and support them. Be one of those educators! There are many things you can do for your students, here are some of them:

Embrace unconditional and positive acceptance. Remember that your most fundamental professional principle is to include all your students, in all their states of being, with unconditional and positive acceptance

Do not abandon the rights-based approach. Know, protect and do not violate children's human rights. Remember that the identities, lives and needs of your students are diverse and their rights are equal.

Embrace critical thinking, pluralism and diversity. Reflect these in your language, course content and teaching practices. To be able to talk about these issues with your students, you can use the relevant parts of your lectures. You can open spaces, ask plenty of questions instead of lecturing continuously and one-sidedly, and support your students in expressing their views. Seeing and including all diversity, not just sexual identities, organise an inclusive educational environment.

Recognise the existence of students with non-normative gender behaviour. Increase the visibility of students with non-normative gender behaviour so that they are not subjected to rights violations, open spaces for them to express themselves and do this in the natural flow of the educational environment.

Create a safe space. At the beginning of the school term, create a classroom environment in which all pupils feel safe, comfortable and secure. To do this, draw up a group agreement with the participation of your pupils and by mutual agreement. This agreement sets out the basic principles to be followed by everyone in the class, including you, and prevents unfavourable situations from arising to a large extent.

Do not tolerate hate speech, discrimination and violence. Do not allow racist, sexist, homophobic, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, transphobic, labelling, stigmatising, hateful, discriminatory discourse and actions in the educational environment, whether by your students or colleagues. Intervene decisively every time such situations occur.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Support freedom of expression. Children have the right to access information and ideas as well as the right to express their information and ideas. Create a safe space where your students can express their views freely.

Make space in the curriculum. Include areas such as human rights, children's rights, gender identity diversity, gender equality, combating hate speech, discrimination, bullying and violence in your curriculum where relevant. Open spaces where you can raise issues. Recognise statements, information and/or images in the curriculum that are outdated, reinforce stereotypes, normalise discrimination and violence, and are not inclusive. Ensure that your students draw his attention to these places and talk about them together.

Utilise opportunity education opportunities. Regardless of the area you share with your students (lessons, guidance work, club activities, tournaments, excursions, rehearsals for the end-of-year show, etc.), regardless of your branch (Turkish, Mathematics, Turkish Language and Literature, Philosophy, History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Music, Visual Arts, etc.), when opportunities arise to talk about the topics listed in the above article, take advantage of them.

Review the materials you will use. The materials that you will use in lessons, extra-curricular activities or guidance activities, that you will recommend to your students, that you will put in the classroom/guidance room/library. Check the content and language of books, magazines, games. Give preference to inclusive materials that are egalitarian, recognise and support diversity.

Do not assign a gender identity to your students. Do not assume that all your students are cisgender. Recognise that there are trans, non-binary and children of diverse gender identities. Adopt an inclusive language that opens space for gender identity diversity and does not exclude anyone. Tell your students that you are my daughter/son call them by their first names, not by gender-assigning addresses such as "gender identity".

Do not segregate your students according to binary gender. Avoid binary gender groupings (girls and boys) in your work, activities, games, clubs or sports with your students.

Do not segregate materials according to binary gender. Avoid grouping books, games, toys in the classroom or counselling room on the basis of binary gender (e.g. girls' toys, boys' toys) and placing them in separate corners of the space.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Do not assign sexual orientation to your students. Do not assume that all your students are heterosexual and must necessarily feel emotional/romantic and/or sexual attraction. Bear in mind that there are homosexual and bisexual children and that emotional/romantic and/or sexual attraction may not be the same for all children.

Do not impose certain ways of living on your students. Do not assume that all of your students live or will live according to the way of life you have in mind.

Remember that children's gender expressions can be very diverse. In the educational environment do not interfere with your students' characteristics such as clothing, jewellery, hair style, hair colour, speech, body language, behaviour and attitudes based on binary gender stereotypes, as long as they are in line with the general framework.

Follow the agenda. Make an event, news, series, film, book, event or special day an opportunity to bring up issues such as human rights, children's rights, sexual identity diversity, gender equality, combating hate speech, discrimination, bullying and violence.

Discuss ways of not being a bystander. Explain to your students that they should not remain silent about bullying they witness at school, outside school or online.

Encourage them to ask for support. Tell your students that they have the right to ask for support whenever they need it, that adults have a responsibility to support children, and that asking for support is a sign of incapacity/weakness explain that it is not.

Talk to your colleagues. Talk to other educators you work with at school about the rights and needs of children with non-normative gender behaviour and the homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, hate speech, discrimination, bullying and violence they are exposed to talk. In this way, you can think and act together on what you can do at school, share responsibility, build solidarity, and strengthen each other without becoming isolated at school.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ITALY

Involve local institutions, from associations to city and regional councils.

Ensuring that non-normative gender education initiatives receive the sponsorship of local authorities, or even single members of local councils will strengthen the programmes and give them visibility, helping create at least a local or regional network of schools and public institutions that share practices and materials.

Never abandon the relationship and dialogue with the families.

Families represent a fundamental stakeholder in educational programmes and projects; this should always be taken into consideration. We suggest implementing educational initiatives that actively engage and involve pupils' families, parents and tutors as a way to create a common line between the two institutions, but also in order to educate parents on themes and matters that might still be perceived as uncomfortable in a way that still make them feel in control and fully involved. Families' support is pivotal to the success of any initiative in this sense.

Create “Civic Education“ curricula that include gender issues.

A 2019 law has introduced mandatory Civic Education in all Italian schools of all order and grade, with at least 33 hours a year required to comply. This new obligation is a formidable space to discuss of civic values as respect and freedom of expression. We warmly suggest to devote some of the hours to gender education, using the AGDISTIS materials as a baseline to develop personalised and customised curricula and activities.

Focus of emotional literacy and relational skills.

Even in the absence of specific gender or sex education programmes, a recommended action is to train teachers on emotional literacy and to include it into teaching practices and activities (including the aforementioned Civic Education curriculum). A basic literacy in emotional management, emotional intelligence, empathy and non-violent conflict resolution will prove a valuable tool for the fight to all types of bullying and discrimination, and it will allow teachers to explore themes as self-awareness, identity, respect, integration of different points of view and affective relationships without engaging in non-normative gender education or in LGBTQ+ education in classes and contexts where the resistance might prove insurmountable.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AUSTRIA

Similarly to other countries, Austrian educational system can address the gaps and problems by revising curricular activities and educational materials, focusing on teachers training, emotional literacy and creating space for dialogue. Additionally, few other points can be addressed by:

Promoting Student Support Services:

Establish support services, such as counseling and peer support groups, specifically for non-normative students. These services should be accessible and confidential, providing a safe space for students to discuss their experiences and receive guidance. Schools should also engage with local LGBTQ+ organizations to offer additional resources and support.

Encouraging Student and Community Engagement:

Involve students, parents, and community members in the development and implementation of inclusive practices. Encourage open dialogue about gender diversity and inclusion within the school community to foster a culture of acceptance and understanding.

Monitoring and Evaluating Progress:

Establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of inclusive practices and policies. Regular evaluations should be conducted to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Feedback from students, parents, and educators should be actively sought and considered in this process.

CONCLUSION

In exploring the **current landscapes of non-normative gender education across Spain, Turkey, Italy, and Austria**, this E-book has shown both the steps made and the significant challenges faced in creating inclusive educational environments. It has provided valuable insights into the status of gender education, identifying the key gaps, ongoing struggles, and proposing practical solutions for improvement.

In some countries, there has been progress in acknowledging and integrating non-normative gender identities within educational frameworks, while in others clear political and cultural barriers are still very persistent with systemic issues affecting students, particularly non-normative and marginalized youth. These varying contexts highlight a common thread: **the need for a more comprehensive approach to non-normative gender education.**

In all four countries, there is a notable lack of targeted teacher training on non-normative gender issues, resulting in inconsistent support for students. Problems such as **curricular invisibility, limited awareness, persistent gender stereotyping, and exclusion and marginalization of non-normative students.** Addressing these issues requires effort to develop and implement solutions that foster an inclusive and supportive educational environment.



CONCLUSION

To bridge these gaps, this E-book has recommended several strategies, including revising curricula to include for example diverse gender identities, implementing comprehensive gender sensitivity training for educators, creating inclusive policies and practices, and promoting student support services. By adopting the recommendations made, educational systems can better support non-normative students and work towards eliminating the barriers they face.

For further support and to enhance understanding and implementation of non-normative gender education, readers are encouraged to utilize the resources developed as part of the **AGDISTIS** project.

The **Training Pills, developed as part of Work Package 3** offer targeted training for teachers, covering the following essential topics:

- 1. Sexual Diversity and Acceptance**
- 2. Foundations of Non-Normative Gender Education**
- 3. Soft Skills and Effective Communication**
- 4. Emotional Intelligence with a Gender Perspective**
- 5. Creating an Inclusive School Environment**
- 6. Well-being and Professional Development for Teachers Addressing non-normative gender education**

By engaging with these resources, educators can better equip themselves to meet the needs of non-normative students and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape. Through continued efforts and collaboration, we can advance towards a future where all students, regardless of their gender identity, are supported and valued in their educational journeys.



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AGDISTIS



AGDISTIS

'AGDISTIS'- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERVENTION IN NON-NORMATIVE BEHAVIOUR AND GENDER BULLYING.

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