

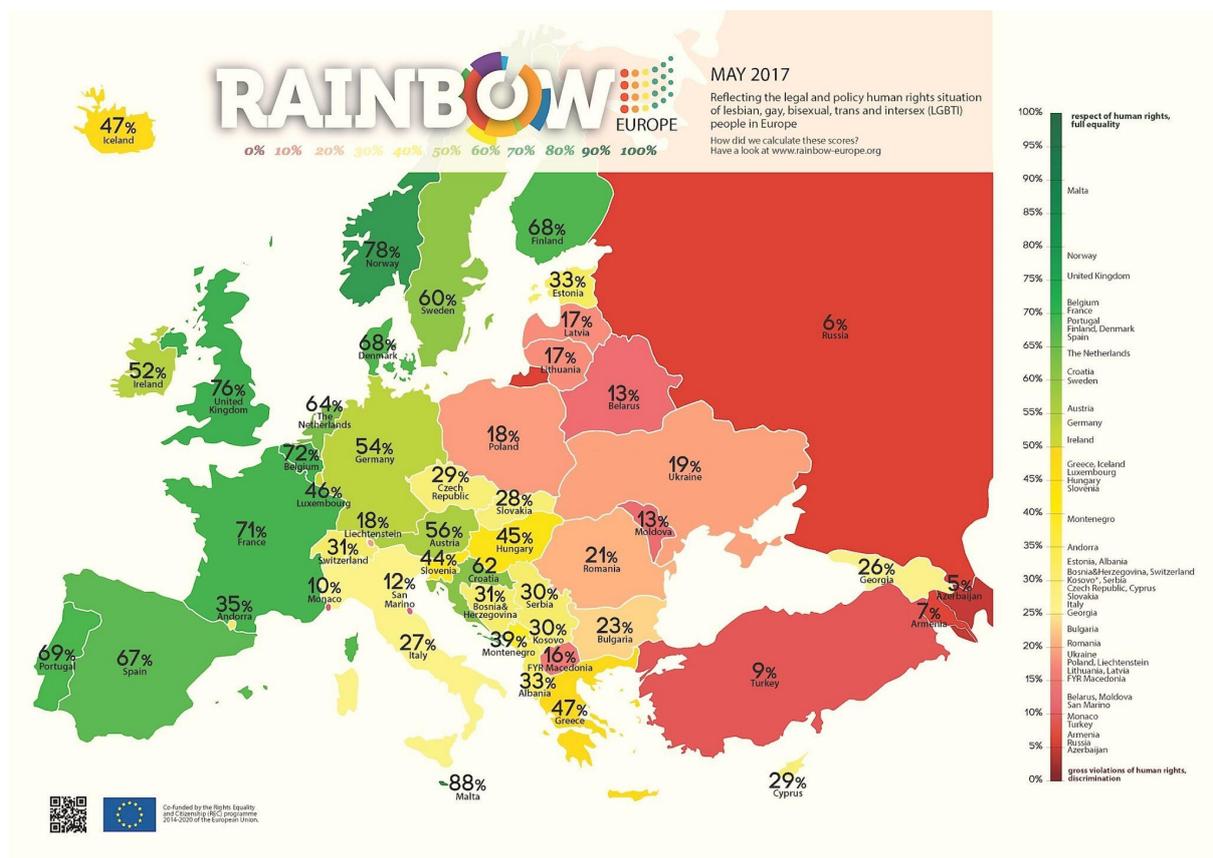
WORDS FOR INCLUSION

A EUROPEAN
GLOSSARY ON
LGBT PARENTING

0. Foreword

This booklet is the first outcome of the project: “DOING RIGHT(S). Innovative tools for professionals working with LGBT+ families” co-financed by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union. It aims at providing basic information for professionals in the field of education, social work, law, and health dealing with families where there is at least one parent who does not identify as heterosexual or is a trans person. Such information is meant to be the basis intended to help relate with respect for these people’s experience, guarantee their care and inclusion within the service system, and therefore in the society at large.

The rejection of any discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation has been a guiding principle of the European Union since the Charter of the fundamental rights (art. 21). Nonetheless, the concrete risk of being exposed to discrimination is far from being removed for LGBT+ people and their children in all the EU (FRA, 2016), with significant variety among the member states.



Last but not least, fostering inclusion and rights of LGBT+ people is not in the interest of LGBT+ people only. Since 2006, the Council of Europe asserted the importance of dealing with family issues in a pluralistic perspective in order to acknowledge the essential diversities of families and parental roles, and to create the necessary conditions for positive parenting in the best interests of the child.

Is this booklet for me?

Yes! Especially if you are a professional in the field of education, health, social work, and law. There are hundreds of thousands children of LGBT+ people in EU. So, maybe you have already met some child with a gay, lesbian, trans parent, or their parents themselves; but probably not been aware about it.

This booklet is for you, independently of your personal beliefs. Getting informed does not mean to agree automatically with a topic. And no opinion is correctly argued on hearsay.

This booklet is for you, independently of your level of knowledge. In your professional role, being informed is a duty. You may benefit from basic information, as well as additional knowledge.

Finally, this booklet is for you, if you like to pass this information to someone else!

How to use this booklet?

The booklet is divided into sections, each one addressing a main issue affecting the relationships between families and institutions or services. You can also find a glossary to acquaint yourself within the specific vocabulary of LGBT+ issues: it is a lexicon you can be unfamiliar with but it is crucial to understand properly the diversities of identities, sexual orientation, families and relationships among people, and name them accordingly. You can refer to the sections independently, depending on your particular interest or curiosity. Its content is based on scientific data: you can find a specific section guiding you in a more detailed analysis. But tools can be provided not only through reading, and sometimes you can search for the support of associations: you will find an interesting list of some of them in the appendix as well.

1. WHO ARE LGBT+ PEOPLE AND LGBT+ FAMILIES?

LGBT+ is the acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, as well as those who do not feel comfortable identifying themselves as women or men. By LGBT+ families we refer to those families where at least one parent identifies as LGBT+.

Although the traditional family model formed by a man and a woman who conceive and raise their children is still the most common, nowadays a wide range of family diversity has become more and more visible in European societies. This means that even though LGBT+ people have always existed, the increase of social acceptance of non-heterosexual relationships and the accessibility to new paths to parenthood for LGBT+ people has made their family experience more visible and recognized.

There are parents who raise their children alone, adoptive families, and families formed through assisted reproduction that do not share genetic links among all members, families with two fathers or two mothers, etc. Regardless of their composition or the way they were formed, all kinds of families can provide the safe and loving environment a child needs for his/her development.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- 5.9% of Europeans identify as LGBT+ when asked directly, ranging from 7.4% in Germany to 1.5% in Hungary?
- In Italy, one year after the approval of the law on civil unions, 2.2% of the total of marriages were gay and lesbian unions.
- In Poland, 8% of children with same-sex parents were conceived already in these families (planned families), while 82% in previous heterosexual relationships (patchwork families).
- According to the census, 1% of the couples that live together in Spain are same-sex couples.

2. HOW DO THEY BECOME PARENTS?

In Italy we could not have access to a treatment in a fertility clinic, so we did it in Barcelona. For the Italian State, I am not the mother of my child, but you can bet I am. I am there for all that she needs, I am the one that is there when she is ill, when she is sad, when she is happy, or when she needs help. Isn't this what makes you a mother?

Valentina 42 y.o.

We got married as soon as the law [that introduced same-sex marriage in Spain] was approved. And then we started the adoption process. Our child was almost 6 y.o. when we first met. Now I feel I've got the family I ever wanted.

Pablo, 42 y.o., married to Carlos, 45 y.o.

I froze my sperm before going through transition (...). It did not work and we had to turn to donation. The funny thing is that everyone says the child is just a copy of me.

Marta, 38 y.o. transwoman

I love Clara... I wish I could have known her before. She is the best dad ever!

Julia 25 y.o., daughter of a 52 y.o. transgender mother

Teresa and I wanted to be mothers. We agreed with a male friend of ours to have a baby. Marc is now a happy 6 y.o. kid, with two loving mothers and a wonderful father.

Estel, 40 y.o.

[When talking about the children] my partner says "yours" and I answer "not mine, but ours". But it is slowly changing. I say "If I do something it is not for myself or for the children but for US: for you, for Jacek [partner's biological son], and for my children too. So they are ours, not yours or mine, but ours".

Bożena, 35 y.o., biological mother of 3 children and co-mother of one

There are different ways for LGBT+ people to become parents. Some have children from previous heterosexual relationships. When they raise them with their new partners, they form what are known as step families (also called patchwork or reconstructed families). Others decide to have a child together as a couple. In that case they form what is called a "planned family". In order to do so they can turn to adoption or assisted reproduction including egg/sperm donation or surrogate pregnancy (that is, an arrangement in which a woman carries and delivers a baby for another person or couple) where it is allowed. Finally, some of them engage in private arrangements with friends that involve either heterosexual intercourse or obtaining sperm from a friend and, to a lesser extent, co-parenting (that is, sharing parental and financial responsibility). Thus, we may meet a child that has parents that do not have and have not had a love relationship but made the commitment to have a family project together. This is the case of some lesbian women and gay friends that have and raise children together. Then we can meet children that have more than two parents, i.e., two mothers and a father that does not live in the same house but is involved in the nurturing and upbringing.

LGBT+ families and Assisted Reproduction Techniques

The legal situation in relation to access to assisted reproduction varies from country to country. In Spain, for example, the law grants women access to artificial insemination and IVF, regardless of their marital status, sexual orientation, and whether or not they have a partner. Thus, single women and lesbian couples can turn to assisted reproductive techniques in order to become mothers through sperm donation and insemination, or in vitro fertilization. On the contrary, in countries like Poland and Italy, assisted reproduction techniques are available only for heterosexual couples. For this reason, some people travel abroad to get fertility treatment in a country with a less restrictive legal frame than their own. Some sperm banks offer online services so that women can buy a kit with donor sperm and do it themselves at home. Finally, some women find a donor themselves (usually a friend) and have a homemade insemination.

Besides an egg donor, male same-sex couples need a gestational carrier to use assisted reproduction techniques. Surrogacy is allowed in several EU countries such as Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Nevertheless, surrogacy laws and practices in these countries either directly exclude same-sex couples or make it very difficult for them to become parents in this way. Therefore, there is an increasing number of gay couples (and single men) that travel to other countries in order to do a surrogacy arrangement.

COUNTRY	JOINT ADOPTION BY SAME SEX COUPLES	ART LESBIAN COUPLES	ART SINGLE WOMEN
Austria	YES	YES	-
Belgium	YES	YES	YES
Bulgaria	-	-	YES
Croatia	-*	YES	YES
Cyprus	-	YES	YES
Czech Republic	-	-	-
Denmark	YES	YES	YES
Estonia	-	-	YES
Finland	YES	YES	YES
France	YES	-	-
Germany	YES	-	-
Greece	-	-	YES
Hungary	-	-	YES
Ireland	YES	YES	YES
Italy	-	-	-
Latvia	-	YES	YES
Lithuania	-	-	-
Luxembourg	YES	YES	YES
Malta	YES	-	-
Netherlands	YES	YES	YES
Poland	-	-	-
Portugal	YES	YES	YES
Romania	-	-	YES

Slovakia	-	-	-
Slovenia	-*	-	-
Spain	YES	YES	YES
Sweden	YES	YES	YES
United Kingdom	YES	YES	YES

The options available to transgender people depend on whether they have undergone sexual reassignment surgery, whether they have been sterilized, and on their sexual orientation. The preservation of fertility prior to sex reassignment surgery or hormonal treatment offers the possibility of reproducing with one's own gametes without having to resort to donor gametes. Thus, they can freeze their sperm or oocytes so that they can be used in assisted reproduction in the future. Transgender men can access parenthood through artificial insemination if they have not undergone sexual reassignment surgery, so that their bodies can carry a pregnancy. For transgender women with male partners, adoption or surrogacy are the main options because sex reassignment surgery does not provide the ability to gestate.

Families formed through adoption and foster families

Joint adoption by same-sex couples is legal in many European countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In some of these countries, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual, couples must be married in order to apply for an adoption. Few non-European countries accept same-sex couples as adoptive families, so their chances to adopt usually are limited to domestic adoption. Wherever joint adoption for same-sex couples is not allowed, one of the partners can adopt as a single parent, but this usually implies hiding their sexual orientation and/or same-sex relationships.

A special case of adoption is what is known as second-parent or step-parent adoption. It implies the adoption of the spouse's child when the child has only one legal parent due to widowhood or other circumstances such as having been adopted by a single parent or the relinquishment of parental rights by the other parent. In some countries this provision is used by LGBT+ couple to obtain legal recognition of the parental role of the parent who has no biological bonds with the child.

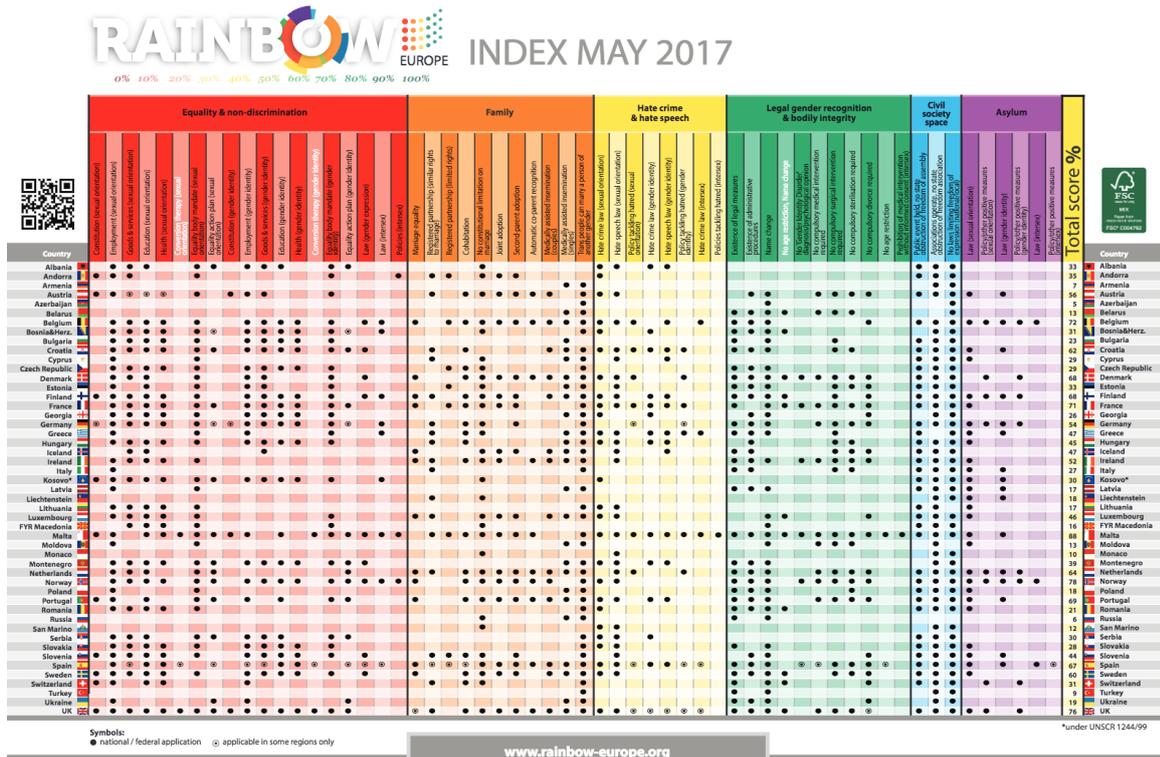
Some LGBT+ people also raise kids as foster parents. This happens when children cannot live with their family of origin and the State provides them with a foster home. Parents and children in foster families do not share surnames but it does not prevent foster families from playing the role of a true family. Sometimes, the foster arrangement is temporary, the children wait for the family of origin to overcome the situation that hinders them from taking care of them. It also happens so that foster families take care of their children until their reach adulthood.

3. What kind of legal rights do LGBT+ families have?

In 2015, the EU parliament declared civil unions and marriages between people of the same sex as fundamental human rights and voted in favour of a resolution that explicitly acknowledges families with same-sex parents and the need to adapt the legislation of European countries to LGBT+ parenting. However, the legal situation concerning rights and protection of LGBT+ people and their children still differs greatly among countries in Europe.

- In some countries LGBT+ people are granted the same rights as heterosexuals both in terms of marriage, parenting, and access to assisted reproductive technologies and adoption. It is the case of 15 out of 28 countries in the EU, such as Spain where the law on equal marriage was approved in 2005, right after the Netherlands and Belgium.
- In some countries LGBT+ people's rights are only partially recognized. It is the case of Italy where the law on civil partnerships approved in 2016 does not grant parental rights and access to assisted reproductive technologies, and adoption is forbidden to LGBT+ people.
- Some others - which are now a minority among EU countries – do not recognize any rights at all of LGBT+ couples and their children. It is the case of Poland where its opponents define equal marriage as unconstitutional and access to assisted reproductive technologies is allowed to heterosexual couples only.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... Transition itself does not modify one's parental status, nevertheless many countries in Europe - such as Poland and Bulgaria - still require trans people to be single or to divorce before their elective gender is legally recognized; and in others countries - such as Italy or Finland - if one of the partners goes under transition the marriage turns into a civil partnership.



Source: ILGA Europe - <https://rainbow-europe.org>

COUNTRY	SAME SEX MARRIAGE	SAME SEX CIVIL UNION
Austria	-	YES
Belgium	YES	YES
Bulgaria	-	-
Croatia	-	YES
Cyprus	-	YES
Czech Republic	-	YES
Denmark	YES	
Estonia	-	YES
Finland	YES	YES
France	YES	YES
Germany	YES	YES
Greece	-	YES
Hungary	-	YES
Ireland	YES	YES
Italy	-	YES
Latvia	-	-
Lithuania	-	-
Luxembourg	YES	YES
Malta	YES	YES
Netherlands	YES	YES
Poland	-	-
Portugal	YES	
Romania	-	-
Slovakia	-	-
Slovenia	-	YES
Spain	YES	YES
Sweden	YES	
United Kingdom	YES	YES

4. What happens when LGBT+ families do not have legal rights?

In those countries where there is a partial or no recognition of LGBT+ rights, such as Italy and Poland, same sex parents can face great discrimination, particularly the parent who has no biological bond with the child. In fact, without a specific provision that recognizes same sex parenting, the non-biological parent cannot be the legal guardian of the child: s/he is invisible for the law while parental rights and duties are granted only to the biological parent.

This can cause multiple difficult situations in daily lives of these families. For instance, the non-biological parent as a “non-legal” one **needs a written consent to collect the child from school** and his/her participation at school meetings is not legally recognised; **s/he cannot take parental leave at work; s/he cannot make decisions concerning his/her child’s health**, or visit regularly while it is at the hospital and, which is the worst, **s/he will not have the custody of the child in case of death of the biological parent** since courts could favour biological relatives. The lack of recognition **applies also in case of separation**: the non-legal parent does not have **any duties** – in terms of economic support and childcare – nor **any rights** – in terms of emotional continuity and shared time with his/her child in front of the law. It means **no rights for the children either**. Families often turn to private legal arrangements - like electing the non-legal parent as guardian or making mutual will that states their shared parental project - to fill the gap in the law. However, these strategies are not comparable to the full rights a law could grant and leave the non-legal parents in a very vulnerable situation.

Anna: and at some point we both made wills. Betta: my will was aimed at securing her [Anna]... I have four sisters and this house is mine so I want to leave this house to her and to our son in case [I die]... while her will secures me, meaning that it describes our relationships and our family in case something bad happens to her...

Anna and Betta, 40 and 42 y.o., mothers of a 3 y.o. son

I contacted Campaign Against Homophobia [LGBT+ association] to ask them for advice whether there was some way to guarantee the rights of the non-biological mother to take care of the child or to attempt to change the current situation [...] If she decides to fight [for custody over the child in case of Pola’s death], we must have some hard evidence that she was involved in his upbringing, supported him financially, and lived with him. Evidence such as pictures, films etc. Testimonies from witnesses such as friends or neighbours, bank transfers with information such as “For Henry” etc. won’t hurt either. Let’s hope such things won’t ever be necessary. But I would feel much better if Marta had all the necessary means and fought for him with any ammunition rather than just none.

Pola, 33 y.o., mother of 2 y.o. son

I: How did you manage it with the school?

A: Francesco [the co-father] has a proxy. Even if they know our situation and that the child has both our surnames they ask for a proxy. It’s bad that he needs my proxy, but I know if they don’t ask for it they break the law.... I don’t get angry with the school, but with the whole system that doesn’t allow him to go and pick up his son from school.

Antonio, 44 y.o., father of 4 y.o. son

And we went together to this school where our son passed the entrance exam because there was possibility to see his exam paper and we entered the room together but the woman said “parents only” but I firmly kept on sitting because I felt I was a parent, right?

Then she finally asked “who is the mother?” and Klara [partner] said that she was. Then she asked me out and I couldn’t bear it and burst into tears.

Kazia, 40 y.o., co-mother of a 18th y.o. son

We are still strangers to each other... at the hospital I was afraid for me and for Aurora [the co-mother]. I ran the risk to have a preterm delivery at 31 weeks, if she [the daughter] would have been born at 31st week they would have put her in the intensive care unit where only the parents can enter... what would have we done then? Would they have let Aurora in or not?

Marta, 29 y.o., mother of a 2 y.o. daughter

Legally speaking, I am a complete stranger to my partner’s biological child. As a result I could not get her vaccinated in my presence. They said they could only do it in the presence of a person with parental power.

Ilona, 35 y.o., co-mother of a 5 y.o. daughter

Is legal recognition enough?

Even if legal recognition is a crucial issue to grant equality and inclusion to all families, it does not guarantee the absence of discrimination on cultural and social grounds. It means that even in those countries where LGBT+ people are granted the same rights as heterosexuals, social stigmatization and homophobia are still at work and they affect LGBT+ people’s wellbeing and social inclusion.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... according to the “Survey on discrimination against and victimisation of LGBT+ people” done by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union, 47% of LGBT+ people have felt personally discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity? And this percentage rises to 69% for trans women

While the lack of rights produces direct discrimination, a cultural and social hostile environment produces indirect discrimination in all areas of life, from workplace to family life.

For example, in most countries, school documentation, enrolment, circulars, educational materials, newsletters, etc. do not take into account family diversity. LGBT+ families remain invisible in the documentation of schools and in educational materials, and their children still do not see their families represented in an inclusive manner. Moreover, in Europe 21% of trans parents who have children at schools or universities declare they have personally suffered discrimination from school staff.

Ordinary administrative procedures – like filling bureaucratic forms or applying for welfare provision – even in these countries where same sex marriage and parenting is legally recognized, assume heterosexuality as the norm turning daily activities into experiences of discrimination: for example in Spain the non-pregnant mother who claims for the birth leave has to apply for the “paternity leave” because family diversity is still not forecasted.

Once and again, in every single school form, there is this thing of “mother’s name”, “father’s name”. I must have crossed out the word “father” some thousand times.

Maria, 49 y.o., mother of a 12 y.o. daughter

When Nina started the preschool we realized there was absolutely nothing about our family in books or toys, or whatever: we were completely invisible. Therefore we brought books and other educational kit that the Rainbow Family Association created over the years to give to educators at least some tool to talk properly about our family.

Loretta, 37 y.o., mother of a 4 y.o. daughter

5. Why do LGBT+ people sometimes hide their family situation?

The level of acceptance towards LGBT+ communities differs across Europe. In some countries it is as high as it is in the Netherlands (96%), Sweden (95%), and Spain (90%). In Italy it decreases to 72%, while Poland shows up in the last place with 37%, one of the few countries in the EU where the majority of the population rejects LGBT+ rights.

Visibility – the process through which LGBT+ people and families disclose their sexual and/or gender identity, and/or their family configuration - depends on legal recognition, social acceptance, and the level of “heteronormativity” of the society, or to what extent heterosexuality is a social norm taken for granted.

In countries where there is less discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation, LGBT+ families are less reluctant to come out of the closet. In those countries where civil unions and adoption are not available to LGBT+ +, their families often try to "go unnoticed" or pretend to be a single parent family **to avoid negative reactions but also to reduce the risk of their children being hurt or bullied or even – in the worst case scenario - taken away from them.**

We don't show off because of the child. Darek [Kinga's son] lives with us and I don't want people to point their fingers at him. His well-being is now the most important thing.

Kinga, co-mother of a 18 y.o. son

We go everywhere together, we don't hide the fact that we are together, we don't hide the fact that we have a child. Well, we don't inform anybody during the first conversation but if somebody asks or has some doubts we tell that it is our child

Ela, 41, co-mother of a 2 y.o. daughter

I don't go out with a rainbow flag in the street because of the children. Because although my daughter accepts us she told me "Dad, I cannot tell nobody at school that you are with Tymon [Ireneusz's partner], because other children won't understand it." And she hides this not because she is ashamed of me but because she feels that she is in a community that might hurt her. And I understand her completely. She has already understood that this society does not accept us.

Ireneusz 40, father of 9 y.o. daughter and 5 y.o. son

And then, we had to decide about the kindergarten. We attended the "open day" of each school in the neighbourhood... hard job, I can tell you! But the funniest thing was... well, we arrived there, presented ourselves, our situation and so on, and in the end she [the educator] uttered: "you have to register him here! This is the biggest kindergarten in the area, hundreds of children, he will disappear!"

Alice 39 y.o., mother of a 3 y.o. son

At the Berlin Airport, a lady at the check-in counter was making a phone call about our flight and said to her colleague: "I have here two parents with a son, and they need...". She said it in German, and my partner and I made a remark about it in Polish, in front of our son. It happened at least 5 years ago, and our son still remembers that in Berlin they knew that we were both his parents.

Magda 40 y.o., mother of the then 5 y.o. Jakub

DID YOU KNOW THAT... According to *Families of Choice in Poland* research project (2013-2016) parenthood of non-heterosexual persons in Poland remains largely hidden; the knowledge seldom leaves the circle of the immediate family. It is probably caused by the still prevalent stereotypes concerning same-sex parenthood. Therefore, parents try to protect the child from social homophobia. The models worked out by non-heterosexual parents are based on a very selective revealing of the family situation (for the child's sake). They know that they cannot be open to all and everywhere.

Chart 121. Who in your environment knows about your child's family situation? Value for "teachers at kindergarten/school" given for children aged 3 to 19. The percentage does not add up to 100 as the respondents could choose more than one answer (n=223)

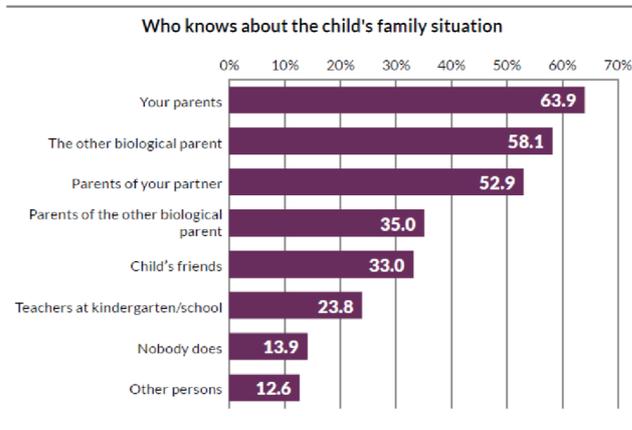


Figure 1 *Families of Choice in Poland, 2015*

DID YOU KNOW THAT... in Italy, according to the National Statistics Institute's research on the homosexual population, 77,4% of gay and lesbian people is out with friends, 55,7% is out with colleagues, and 45,9% is out with siblings, but the percentage decreases to 21,2% when it comes to being out with the mother.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... In Spain, the approval of the law that regulates same-sex marriage introduced in 2005 increased both the openness and the acceptance of same-sex parenthood. According to research, before the law, around 8% of same-sex parents had not told any relatives about their condition, but this percentage decreased to 0% after its approval. Before the law, only 35% have been completely open in their workplace about their families. In 2012, the percentage was already 71%.

There is no rule about how, when, and to whom the family should disclose the sexuality of the parents. It is believed that the best solution would be if parents could let everybody in their immediate/close surroundings know, especially those who are in contact with the child, about their family situation and count on positive reaction to it, the same as in the case of any other family model. But it is not always possible and it also depends on the social attitude towards non-normative families. Whether the family chooses to inform its immediate surroundings depends on whether members of the family feel supported and safe enough among close relative, friends, and in other social surroundings.

6. How does it work? Parental roles and family practices in LGBT+ households

In Western societies, there are still different expectations about what mothers and fathers should do to raise children properly. Their roles are perceived to be dichotomous and, consequently, male/female complementarity in the couple is represented as a rule. For instance, mother is supposed to be caring and father authoritative. However, parental roles do not mirror a “natural” attitude of females and males, but are socially constructed and reveal what a certain society thinks appropriate for them. Such expectations are not grounded in the “nature” of females and males, but are socially constructed. In real life, we daily experience situations where these roles are mixed or exchanged in the child's life, without causing any trouble to the child's wellbeing. Indeed, being a parent means to perform certain functions in children's life such as taking daily care, educating, nurturing, etc. And these functions can be performed by all genders.

How do LGBT+ parents manage their family tasks? LGBT+ parents and their families express wide diversity, just as diverse-sex families do. However, scientific research had demonstrated that LGBT+ families usually have a more egalitarian model in division of household and responsibilities among family members (see box). In LGBT+ headed families parents have the opportunity to escape the gender roles, giving space to shape and negotiate their duties basing the division more on individual dispositions, objective opportunities, convenience, and contingencies. Still, many professionals mix parental functions with parental gender roles, risking in so doing to be blind to these kinds of households, requiring from them and their children a further effort to claim their specificity as family.

Dads... there are no dads [at school] [...] I had the unfortunate idea to take part in the canteen committee, maybe twenty people in total, and I'm the only dad [...] and when they write emails, they always write in the feminine forms, all of them! Because their expectation is that on the other side there is another mom. So, it's a strange situation, I mean in the morning there are many dads bringing their children to the kindergarten [...] but in everyday life, only the mom exists. A couple of two dads is bewildering, not for mums but mostly for other dads, since they realise they have never experienced the whole life of their children, they never changed the nappy, never cooked for them, very simple things.

Alberto, 43 father of two 2 y.o. sons

There was this BBQ party with the school families. When we arrived, all women were making salads together, and all men were around the camp fire. My husband and I laughed wondering where each of us would fit better.

Joan, 49 y.o., father of a 8 y.o. son

In a typical week I work eight to four. I don't take any extra hours, I dash back home to my family [...] We always try to find an hour during the day to play together. We build with blocks, paint, or draw[...] We don't go out during the week because of Zuza [the daughter], unless there are some matters to be attended to, some shopping, but it's always just one of us, most often it's Ala [the partner]. I stay at home with Zuza then. I don't know if this is what a typical week in an average family looks like but when I listen to my female colleagues at work talking about their problems, well, they have to deal with everything on their own. We share our duties much more equally. Well, naturally, Ala deals with most of the chores because she stays at home.

Ela, 40 y.o., co-mother of 2 y.o. daughter

DID YOU KNOW THAT... Children of same sex couples benefit from the capacity of their parents to negotiate their roles within family practices, and scientific data show that they grow up more flexible about gender roles and less affected by gender stereotypes. For example, they choose more easily paths in their education, interests, non gender-bound careers, fit in many tasks not stereotypically linked to their gender, and adapt better to perform different roles.

Just as household tasks, child-rearing is not driven by our chromosomes. For example, giving birth or breast feeding are female specificities. Nevertheless, none of these actions, *per se* and automatically, develops a specific relationship once and forever.

What affects the child wellbeing is not adhering to a specific gender role model but the adults' ability to perform all the parental functions required that can be taken on by any parent in different ways and moments. Trans parents, for instance, do not lose their parental skills by transitioning.

As a matter of fact, the biological birth may not be sufficient, nor essential, to ground filiation bonds, which, on the contrary, always require a psychological process to be established. This process allows men and women enter the parenting role, and it is common to any form of parenting. A parenting role differs from that of the caregiver, since it implies the assumption on self of the other's psychic responsibility, in a very special bond that makes both parent and child mutually belonging and interdependent in their identities.

7. Who is part of the LGBT+ family?

Despite the common fear of LGBT+ families' children can grow up without any contacts with a variety of gender models. Research shows that many LGBT+ parents and their children maintain lots of relationships both with friends (straight and LGBT+) and families of origin. All of them may play an important role - both in emotional and material terms - in the growing up of the children.

For my parents there is only Paolo [the son]... they live for him, they are his grandparents, only he exists, whatever people say it's bullshit, that's it.

Andrea, 39 years, father of a 3 y.o. son

Our families have supported us a lot throughout the adoption process and when we got the call from Barcelona to go and meet Xavi, they accompanied us.

Pau 42 y.o., father of a 5 y.o. son

For Anna and Laia their grandparents and their great grandmother are very important, now we are doing the family book together.

Thais, 35 y.o. mother of two 4 and 6 y.o. daughters

Yet sometimes, especially in countries without legal recognition of LGBT+ families, families of origin can be a source of distress, and LGBT+ families can hardly count on their support due to homophobia, transphobia, and the rejection of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

My mother's comment was "I don't understand such things, and I don't want to understand" [...] They don't know Mattia, and neither want to meet him, they don't know who he is [...] my sisters saw only a picture of him .

Fulvia, 44 years, mother of three children, one son aged 17, born in Fulvia's previous marriage, two sons aged 2 and 5 (Mattia) born within the couple.

Stanislaw [son] knows a very painful example that in the moment of my coming out to my parents, actually to my mother, we lost touch with all the family. In this sense I don't have my family, I only have my partner's family. And this rejection by the family of origin was very dramatic for him.

Ada, 36 y.o. mother of 13 y.o. son

DID YOU KNOW THAT... Feeling accepted by their families is one of the basic pillars for the well-being of LGBT+ people? European Union's agency against discrimination regularly monitors the attitude of Europeans towards LGBT+ citizens. In 2015, data have reported that in Sweden 80% of the citizens would feel totally comfortable if they had gay, lesbian, or bisexual children, while only 66% would have felt the same with transgender children; Sweden was followed by the Netherlands, Ireland, and the United Kingdom as the most LGBT+ friendly among the European countries. Spain shows lower figures with percentage of 59% and 44% respectively, Italy, 39% and 26%, Poland, 27% and 25%, and in the last place there is Bulgaria with 7% and 5%.

Similarly, children with same sex parents can choose to name them less openly, especially in the teen age.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... Young kids are frequently more open to communicate their family configuration in the social context and in the peers group. As soon as they get older, they can easily change their attitude, becoming more discrete. In such circumstances, naming can get more neutral (i.e. parent's name instead of mum or dad). These behaviours are more often related to the exploration of new social environments than to the relationship with the parental figures. Adults dealing with young teens should keep in mind that the respect for the children's choice about naming is crucial for establishing a relationship based on trust and respect.

9. Are the children raised by LGBT+ parents all right?

There are three major fears regarding the well-being of the children brought up by non-heterosexual parents.

1. That the children raised by LGBT+ parents may have problems with their gender and sexual identity.
2. That these children will be more vulnerable to psychological problems or exhibit more behavioural problems than other children.
3. That children may have difficulties in social relationships, for instance, that they may have problems in future intimate relationships

These fears are not supported by any research. Most of the scientific studies show that there are no differences in wellbeing of children raised by gay and lesbian parents compared to heterosexual parents on a range of outcomes including:

- gender and sexual identity,
- general health,
- emotional difficulties,
- behavioural problems,
- interest, effort, and success in school,
- cognitive development,
- social development.

It is important to emphasize that children raised in LGBT+ families have access to many different gender role models. A parent is not, nor should be, the only male/female figure children encounter, and this applies both to LGBT+ and heterosexual families. Other family members, such as parents' siblings, grandparents, cousins, as well as friends, peers, and other caregivers (teachers, babysitters, etc.) may be gender models for the child, especially if they accept and support the LGBT+ family and play an active role in the upbringing.

I have very good relationships with my father. I visit him on holidays. Sometimes, during summer holidays I spend 3 weeks with him. He has good relationship with my mum and Marta [her partner].

Lidia, 11 y.o.

Relationships between my mum and dad are good, they are friends and, as I said, I spend 2 weeks with my mum [and her partner] and two weeks with my dad.

Claudia, 12 y.o.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... According to *Families of Choice in Poland* research project (2013-2016) children raised in LGBT+ families often have contacts with various members of their families of origin (of both sexes) and they usually stay in touch with their biological parent (in Poland and Italy most of LGBT+ families are reconstructed/patchwork families where children were conceived in previous heterosexual relationship of one of the parents). Consequently, they have access to various gender role models.

Chart 109. What are the relations of your child and its biological father? Only women (n=207)

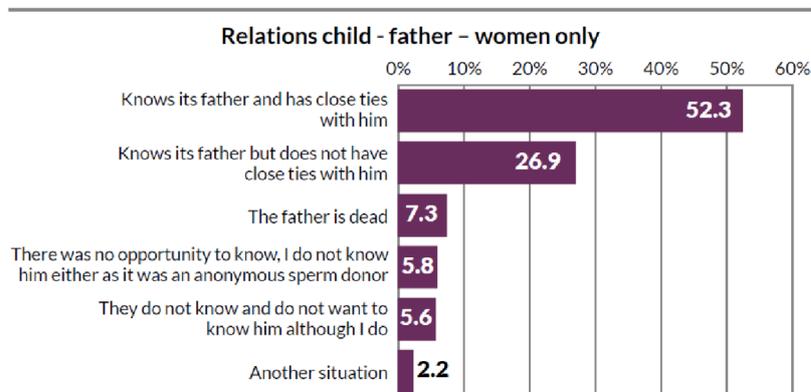


Figure 2 *Families of Choice in Poland, 2015*

In the case of LGBT+ patchwork families scientific research demonstrate:

- children raised by lesbian couples had better contact with the biological father than children of heterosexual women in new relationships after couple breakup
- most children of lesbian mothers were described as being in regular contact with their grandparents
- there were no differences in the frequency of the contacts with grandparents as a function of parental sexual orientation.

Sometimes it gets even better....

The newest scientific research demonstrated that:

- children and adolescents raised by same-sex parents were healthier and enjoyed better relations with their parents than in the case of heterosexual families
- children raised by lesbian couples are better socially adapted, more ambitious, and less aggressive than children from heterosexual families.

10. What about problems with bullying and teasing by peers?

Children from LGBT+ families may report being teased, shunned, or bullied by their peers at schools and develop different strategies to deal with this kind of problems, especially in those countries where LGBT+ communities experience higher levels of discrimination and stigmatization. It is important to emphasize that it is the prejudice and discrimination related to children's family configurations that harm children and not the sexual or gender identity of parents. In countries and communities where the discrimination of LGBT+ families is higher, the risk of this kind of incidents is higher as well. Rights, recognition, and de-stigmatization of LGBT+ family experiences are crucial to grant children safety and well-being.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... At schools that promote tolerance and anti-homophobia education it is easier for children to feel more secure and discuss homophobic behaviour of their peers openly. Also, various studies show that contacts with other LGBT+ families positively influence child's well-being.

I try not to deal with people who want to criticise my mum. I try to avoid conflicts but it is not ok when somebody offends people who are close to you.

Krzysztof, 15 y.o.

During religious education class when we discussed Sodom and Gomorrah they started to say how bad homosexuals are and that it is a sin, then I started to talk with the teacher and I told him that my mum is a lesbian and asked him if he thought that those kind of people did not have rights to live? Christianity should be a religion that tells you to love all people, why then they want to send homosexuals and transgender people to hell?

Malwina, 14 y.o.

The first time that I felt very offended was when my friend, whom I had told about my mum at my primary school, told about it to a person whom I don't like and who is very conservative. So I was pissed off and wanted to talk to him at school and confront him publicly but my girlfriend told me that I should calm down because if I overreact people would think that I have problems with that which I don't have. So I agreed with her.

Bartek, 19 y.o.

My classmates ask me very often about my parents. How I came to the world and where my mother is... because everyone has one. I must always explain to them how much my fathers wanted me and looked for me. They have crossed the whole ocean to find my mother and have me. I would like this to be explained in the classroom so that they stop asking me.

Aitor, 11 y.o., son of two fathers of 43 and 45 y.o., born by surrogate pregnancy

And what about transfamilies?

It is often believed that parents' gender transition may be upsetting for the child. Transition can be a stressful event in the parent-child relationship, although data indicate that majority of parents and

adult children reported positive relationships after transition or did not experience any changes in their relationship. The vast majority of parents maintains good relationships with their children after coming out and transition. Studies have also demonstrated that parent's transition does not affect child's gender and sexual identity, and does not impact their development. However, transgender parents do experience discrimination both in contact with social and legal services having problems in the job market or losing custody over the child, as well as experiencing distress connected to transphobia that may affect their families' wellbeing.

My older daughters know [that I'm transgender] and when I meet one of them she calls me "mum". And then we decide together what we are going to do. Sometimes we go out to eat something or we go shopping together, we take pictures; we do things that makes us happy. And she takes pictures that bring out my femininity.

Miriam, 50, mother of two adult daughters

My youngest daughter, who is 9 y.o., tells me "Dad you are half man and half woman right?" And sometimes she refers to me using female endings and this is great. Gradually, I feel that she understands that there is a woman inside me who understands her as a woman."

Anne, 40 y.o., mother of a 9 y.o. daughter

As a child of a transgender person, I have learnt a lot about life and now I have a greater understanding of gender identity and expression. My dad has been an example for me to truly be who I am, simply by being herself."

Marta, 29 y.o., daughter of a 56 y.o. transgender father

My mom came out as transgender about a year ago and I believe that things changed in our family for the better!

Miguel, 27 y.o., son of a 56 y.o. transgender mother

11. When and how should LGBT+ parents inform children about their sexuality?

Most of the scientific research confirms that children should be informed about their parents' sexuality and that **the sooner they know the better**.

The best period according to various researchers is before the child is in their teens. Small children usually have less problems with understanding the diversity of family life. Whereas for young adolescents, who are often preoccupied with their own emerging sexuality and other emotional, cognitive, and physiological changes, it is a particularly difficult time to learn that a mother is lesbian or a father is gay. Nowadays, children live in diverse family configurations and the question of having more than one mother or father is not so unusual, it also concerns children coming from patchwork/reconstructed families, more and more common in contemporary world.

Be aware that it is different if we deal with a planned same-sex headed family, where the children grow aware of their parents' intimate relationship, or in the case where the parent(s) suddenly reveal/s her/himself as a LGBT+ person.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... According to *Families of Choice in Poland* quantitative study, 67% of children were aware that their parent/s were in a same-sex relationship and usually found out about it in elementary/junior high school or kindergarten (61%). In the vast majority of cases the reaction was very positive or rather positive (83%). Most often it was the parent who informed the child about their relationships (45%) or parent and their partner (38%). All children (teenagers, adolescents, and adults) who took part in *Families of Choice in Poland* focus groups, regardless of the way they were informed by their parents (at early childhood or during adolescence), have agreed that the sooner the child would be informed the better. According to them, this kind of information would help them to avoid experiencing the greater shock and /or feeling of being cheated by their parents, which some of those who were informed later in their lives reported.

My parents got divorced when I was 6 y.o. and more or less at this time I found out [that my mum is a lesbian]. Then I did not think much about it, I simply started to live with my mum and my aunt, I called her by her name and she was like an aunt to me.

Zosia, 14 y.o., daughter of Irena, 38 y.o.

When I found out I was 12 or 13 y.o. and it was a big shock for me. And then for about a year after I found out I was in a kind of mourning. And then I tried to forget about it and not to think about it anymore.

Kamila, 23 y.o. daughter of Piotr, 47 y.o.

I always knew it, because my moms wanted me and brought me to this world. Growing up with two mums has been the most normal thing ever to happen to me! It's so brutally normal! I was raised like any other kid - to always say 'please' and 'thank you,' to tidy up my room, walk our dogs, and not to put my elbows on the table."

Bianca, 15 y.o., daughter of two mothers of 45 and 47 y.o.

My dad died a long time ago. When I was 15, my mom wrote me a letter to tell me she was in love with another woman. At first I did not know how to react but the letter was so full of love for me and my family that the only thing I wanted was to see my mother happy. From that moment on, every Mother's Day we always end up celebrating the love that we have for my moms and the love they have for each other."

Ana, 24 y.o., daughter of a 48 and 53 y.o. mothers

12. Does the child inform their peers about their family situation?

The decision whether, when, and how to disclose their family configurations is very important for many children and might cause some difficulties and fears. Therefore, they develop their own disclosure strategies to cope with this issue. For instance some decide to come out early and always, others are more cautious and selective, and they come out only to those carefully picked up as friends. Also, the strategy “I do not show it but do not hide it” have been embraced by some. Some might even never disclose their family situations to their peers, sometimes also because they want to protect their parents. Generally, it seems that the strategy of exercising selectivity is the dominant one.

It was an ordinary conversation but it gave me a lot that I could tell somebody about my father's relationship with a man.

Kamila, 23 y.o. daughter of Piotr, 47 y.o.

When somebody asks me about my family I run away because I don't want to answer.

Arek 7 y.o., son of Dorota and Anna , both 35 y.o.

I don't show off but I don't hide it either. Only once I told my teacher but my friends know about it, absolutely. When somebody asks me, then I tell the truth. At the beginning, a year ago, I hesitated whether I should tell? But when I started to trust people, then I told them.

Krzysztof, 15 y.o., son of Marcela ,40 y.o.

I differentiate a lot between those whom I tell and what. I can tell somebody very quickly but I can also not tell at all. If I don't feel comfortable then I don't tell. If I see somebody who seems an idiot or a conservative, then sometimes I like to tell something like “my mum's girlfriend is of a different opinion”. But it is such an extremum, in situation when I want to mark the territory and underline that it is normal for me, and that there is no room for discussion about it between us.

Karina, 26 y.o., daughter of Ida, 50 y.o.

DID YOU KNOW THAT... Even if the child fears to reveal their family situation it may bring him benefits. Children's silence on the topic of parental sexual orientation with peers and siblings might add to their feelings of isolation from other children. Telling friends and schoolmates may be easier for younger children and if the children know other families like theirs.

13. Useful Terms

In the list below you can find a selection of the most common terms used to identify LGBT+ people and family experience. They can be helpful both to increase your knowledge on the topic, but also to learn the appropriate language to talk about LGBT+ issues.

- **Biological parent** is the person who has biological links with the child. In the case of lesbian women, the biological mother is identified as the one who gave birth. In case of gay men, the biological father is the one that gave the sperm to carry out the pregnancy. For women, literature dealing with artificial reproduction technologies also defines differently the biological mother, the one who gave birth, and the genetic mother, the one who provided oocytes.
- **Cisgender** is someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Coming out** describes voluntarily making public one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; it is different from *Outing* which means exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity to others without their permission.
- **Co-parent (sometimes called social parent)** is the parent who has no biological links with the child but fully performs the parental role. In the case of lesbian women, it is the mother who did not give birth, in the case of gay men is the father who did not provide the sperm. In those countries where the legislation does not recognize parental rights of LGBT+ families, the co-parent is not recognized as the child's legal parent.
- **Donor** is the person who donates gametes to help someone else become pregnant. Men donate sperm while women donate oocytes. Donors can be known (that means the person can be contacted by the child born) or anonymous (that means that no contact can be ever developed) depending on the law of each country.
- **Families of choice** are families created on the basis of emotional attachment and not blood ties. Often includes friends and other important others. The conviction that they all build families is based on their choice.
- **Family of origin** is the family into which a person is born.
- **Gender identity** is a person's deep sense of their own gender which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.
- **Heteronormativity** is set of cultural norms, social practices, and institutions that promote binary alignment of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles, and assume heterosexuality as the fundamental and natural norm.
- **Heterosexism** is the assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people.
- **Homo/bi/transphobia** is the fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Biphobia is fear, hatred, discomfort, or mistrust, specifically of people who are bisexual. Similarly, transphobia is fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of trans people.
- **LGBT+** is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons.
- **Non-heterosexual persons** are all persons who engage in emotional and erotic relationships with persons of the same sex. The majority define themselves as gays, lesbians, or bisexuals; however, some do not apply any of these terms to themselves.
- **Rainbow Family** is a term that identifies LGBT+ headed families with children.
- **Sexual orientation** defines a person's emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to another person. People attracted by people of different sex are called heterosexuals; people

attracted by persons of the same sex are called homosexuals, while people attracted both by people of the same sex and of different sex are called bisexuals.

- **Surrogate pregnancy** defines a pregnancy developed by a woman to support a couple or a single person to have a child.
- **Trans** is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Some trans people decide to transition to the elective gender through a surgical sex reassignment while others feel comfortable in between the two genders and do not go through surgery.
- **Transgender man** is a term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.
- **Transgender woman** is a term used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.
- **Transition** is a term that defines the active process of aligning one's gender expression and body with their gender identity. Transition can involve medical treatments, but not necessarily.

14. Useful Resources

International research - resources in English

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International websites and NGO's

GALE <https://www.gale.info/en/right-to-education> - web site of the Global Alliance for LGBT+ Education

DIVERSITY EUROPE <http://diversityeurope.com/about/> - European website with articles, videos and tools to raise awareness about LGBT+ issues

NELFA <http://nelfa.org/> - Network of European LGBTIQ* Families Associations

WORDS SHAPE IDENTITY <https://wordsshapeidentity.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/everyday-sexism/> - blog about the importance of language for respecting gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation

COLAGE <https://www.colage.org> - American association gathering people with LGBT+ parents

FORTUNATE FAMILIES <https://www.fortunatefamilies.com> - American websites of Catholics supporting LGBT+ families' inclusion into the religious community

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LGBT+ Associations in Italy

FAMIGLIE ARCOBALENO – <http://www.famigliearcobaleno.org/it/> Association of LGBT+ parents

RETE GENITORI RAINBOW – <http://www.genitorirainbow.it/> Association of LGBT+ parents with children born in heterosexual relationships

AGEDO - <http://www.agedonazionale.org/> Association of parents of LGBT children

Associazione MIT – <http://www.mit-italia.it/> Transsexual Identity Movement

Arcigay - <https://www.arcigay.it/> National LGBT+ association

Centro Risorse LGBTI - <http://www.risorselgbti.eu> LGBT+ association specialized in research and advocacy.

Others useful resources in Italy

PORTALE NAZIONALE LGBT - <http://www.portalenazionalelgbt.it/> National website on LGBT+ rights

OSSERVATORIO LGBT - <http://www.osservatoriolgbt.eu/> Academic Observatory on gender identity and sexual orientation

OSSERVATORIO NAZIONALE SULL'IDENTITA' DI GENERE <http://www.onig.it/> National Observatory on Gender Identity

ARCIGAY - MATERIALI PER LA SCUOLA <https://www.arcigay.it/strumenti/manuali/> - LGBT+ tools in education developed by the main Italian LGBT+ association

LEGGERE SENZA STEREOTIPI <http://www.scosse.org/leggere-senza-stereotipi/> - Gender and diversity issues in children's literature

EDUCARE ALLE DIFFERENZE <http://www.scosse.org/educare-alle-differenze-rete-nazionale/> - National network of associations dealing with gender and diversity issues

ARTICOLO 29 <http://www.articolo29.it> - LGBT+ legal issues

RETE LENFORD <http://www.retelenford.it> - LGBT+ lawyers association

SIPSIS - <https://www.sipsis.it> - tools about psychological issues relating to LGBT+ life

CASA EDITRICE SETTENOVE <http://www.settenove.it/> - publisher dealing with the prevention of gender violence and stereotypes

CASA EDITRICE LO STAMPATELLO <http://lostampatello.it> - publisher dealing with the diversity of families

Resources in Spanish

Arranz Freijo, Enrique & Alfredo Oliva Delgado (coords.). 2010. *Desarrollo psicológico en las nuevas estructuras familiares*. Madrid: Ediciones Pirámide.

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LGBT+ families associations in Spain

ASSOCIATION OF LGBTI FAMILIES OF CATALONIA <http://www.familieslg.org/familieslgtb/>

FUNDACIÓN TRIÁNGULO - Foundation for the rights of the LGBT+ people and families in Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha, Madrid, Extremadura, Castilla y León, Canarias. www.fundaciontriangulo.org

GALEHI- Association of LGBT+ families of Madrid. <http://www.galehi.org/>

GALESH Association of Homoparental Families with delegation in Valencia, Alicante and Zaragoza. <http://www.galesh.org/>

SEHASKA - Association of LGBT+ families of Bilbao. <http://sehaska.jimdo.com/>

SOMOS FAMILIA - Association of LGBT+ families in Aragon. <http://www.somosfamilialgtb.org/>

SON NUESTROS HIJOS - Support Platform for Homoparental Families that access paternity for Surrogate Gestation. <http://sonnuestroshijos.blogspot.com.es/>

Others useful resources in Spain

FAMILIAS LGBT: Web for LGBT+ families nacional meetings. <http://familiaslgbt.org>.

FELGTB: Web service of LGBT+ families and with practical guide of educational tools of Family Diversity <http://www.felgtb.com/descargas/familias/Lasfamiliasenlasaulas.pdf>.

OBSERVATORIO COEDUCATIVO LGBTI: Coeducational Observatory LGBTI. www.diversidadycoeducacion.com

Resources in Polish

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LGBT+ Associations in Poland

Tolerado - www.tolerado.org - LGBT+ association from Gdańsk

Campaign Against Homophobia - <https://kph.org.pl> - National LGBT+ association

Families of Choice in Poland - <http://familiesofchoice.pl> - Families of Choice in Poland research project website

Stonewall Group <http://grupa-stonewall.pl> - LGBT+ association from Poznań

Lambda Warsaw: <http://lambdawarszawa.org> - National LGBT+ association

Tęczówka - <http://www.teczowka.org.pl> - LGBT+ association from Silesia

Fabryka Równości - <http://fabrykarownosci.com/> - LGBT+ association from Poznań

Kultura Równości - <http://kulturarownosci.org> - LGBT+ association from Wrocław

Trans-Fuzja Foundation - <http://transfuzja.org>- Trans association

Teczowe Rodziny- <http://teczowerodziny.org> - website with basic information about rainbow families

Others useful resources in Poland

Statement of Polish Sexuological Association about LGBT+ parenting: <http://pts-seksuologia.pl/sites/strona/66/stanowisko-pts-w-sprawie-zwiazkow-i-rodzicielstwa-osob-homoseksualnych-i-biseksualnych>

Guide for rainbow families (Campaign Against Homophobia): <https://kph.org.pl/rodzicielstwo-osob-lgbt-przewodnik-kph-dla-teczowych-rodzin/>

Publication about rainbow families (Campaign Against Homophobia): https://www.kph.org.pl/publikacje/raport2010_teczowe_rodziny.pdf

This booklet has been produced by six institutions coming from three different European countries. All institutions deal in their practice with LGBT+ families, either by doing research or by providing help.

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www.doingrights.eu