LGBT data issues – UN call for input

Short reaction concerning the activities of the Government of Flanders

The Flemish government has a long tradition in equal opportunities policy with regard to sexual diversity and -more recently- gender diversity. This entails an equally long tradition in scientific research in this field.

Specifically on the topic of **violence** against LGBT’s, three research projects where finished in 2014: 1) an ethnographic research project in the center of Brussels concerning the context of homophobic violence in the public sphere ([French version (PDF)](http://gelijkekansen.be/Portals/GelijkeKansen/Onderzoek/Nieuw%20Onderzoek/Le-contexte-de-la-violence-homophobe-Heleen-Huysentruyt-240215-bvl.pdf), 2) a research project on the experiences of LGB’s with violence and the aftermath (coping mechanisms, experiences reporting, etc.), 3) a research project on the nature, prevalence and circumstances of violence against transgender people. In all the reports a distinction was made between several kinds of violence: 1) verbal and psychological, 2) material, 3) sexual and 4) physical violence.

**Other recent research projects** focused amongst others on:

- the psychological well-being of LGBT people;

- the effect of a transitioning parent on well-being of the family;

- the living conditions and the social and mental well-being of transgender youngsters between the age 14 and 24 and their close environment;

- the sexual health of non-Belgian transgenders sex workers in Flanders;

- equal opportunities for gay, lesbian and bisexual persons in the educational system (sexual orientation was one of several criteria taken into account);

- experiences of LGBTI youngsters in secondary education (e.g. safety, positive environment, discrimination, etc.).

A fairly recent development is the attention for **intersex/DSD people**. This led e.g. to research into the experiences of intersex/DSD people and their parents, with a focus on their experiences with healthcare and their psychosocial wellbeing;

Moreover, **since 2005 the attitude within the Flemish society towards LGB’s** is being **monitored**. Every 2 to 3 years a module of questions on this theme is included in the survey ‘Social-cultural changes in Flanders’, a survey of a representative sample of 1500 Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Flanders and Brussels.

In 2016 for the first time a module concerning the **attitude of the Flemish society towards transgenders** has been included.

The module on the attitude towards LGB’s was also included in the survey ‘Living in diversity’(2018) in which 750 people of Belgian, Moroccan, Turkish, Polish, Romanian and Congolese descent between the ages of 15 and 85 were questioned on a wide range of integration-related topics. A follow-up research project will deepen the results from an experience-based perspective of LGBT people belonging to those ethnic groups.

From a methodological point of view, it’s worth mentioning that the Flemish government asked researchers to list and reflect on **ways that gender diversity can be adequately included as a variable in (general population) surveys and other means of data gathering**. The researchers were asked to give an overview of (best) (international) practices and needs, and to formulate concrete advices. The paper will be finished at the end of March 2019.

In most of research projects on LGBT-related topics, commissioned by the Flemish government, **civil society is closely involved**: both in steering committees and (if relevant) as a partner in reaching respondents.

It’s also worth mentioning that the Flemish Government recently introduced a **new strategy for the development, production and publication of official statistics**. This entails a new legal framework and the development and implementation of a coordinated statistical policy, focused on the flexible, helpful provision of high quality statistics to all users (for more information <https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/in-english>). One of the main principles in the new strategy is the conviction that official statistics must serve society as a whole. This implies that not only the government’s needs for statistical information will be taken into account, but also the needs of society at large. Therefore interaction with stakeholders -including LGBT-organizations- is structurally embedded in the new working process.