

# Towards more gender sensitive approaches in European youth work

This comic booklet is a toolkit for youth workers and professionals as part of the project 'New Perspectives – Gender Sensitive Approaches in Youth Work' Results, recommendations and methods



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

Co-funded by the



Bundesministerium  
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen  
und Jugend



## **Imprint**

### *Publisher*

BAG EJSA e. V.  
Wagenburgstraße 26 – 28  
70184 Stuttgart  
Germany

*Text co-edited by* Elie Demerseman

### *Graphic design*

Iurii Nechyporenko,  
Stiftung Evangelische Jugendhilfe St. Johannis Bernburg

This comic booklet can be downloaded from  
[www.bagejsa.de](http://www.bagejsa.de)

### *Photo credits:*

The comics were created in Berlin, March 2020 and in the subsequent project work of the partners



# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction .....   | 3         |
| <b>Theme 1: “So Cliché” .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| Idea 1 (IEKEP, GR) .....   | 4         |
| Idea 2 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 5         |
| Idea 3 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 6         |
| <b>Theme 2: “Toy Stories” .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Idea 1 (IEKEP, GR) .....   | 7         |
| Idea 2 (Unknown) .....   | 8         |
| Idea 3 (Unknown) .....   | 9         |
| Idea 4 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 10        |
| Idea 5 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 11        |
| Idea 6 (Centro San Viator, ES) .....   | 12        |
| Idea 7 (SKA Darmstadt, DE) .....   | 13        |
| <b>Theme 3: “LGBTTIQ Rights &amp; Discrimination: Where do we stand?” .....</b>          | <b>15</b> |
| Idea 1 (IEKEP, GR) .....   | 15        |
| Idea 2 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 16        |
| Idea 3 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 17        |
| Idea 4 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 18        |
| Idea 5 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 19        |
| Idea 6 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 20        |
| Idea 7 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 21        |
| Idea 8 (Centro San Viator, ES) .....   | 22        |
| <b>Theme 4: “Back to School!” .....</b>  | <b>23</b> |
| Idea 1 (IEKEP, GR) .....   | 23        |
| Idea 2 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 24        |
| Idea 3 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 25        |
| Idea 4 (Centro San Viator, ES) .....   | 26        |
| <b>Theme 5: “A fireman, a policeman and an air hostess walk into a bar ...” .....</b>    | <b>27</b> |
| Idea 1 (IEKEP, GR) .....   | 27        |
| Idea 2 (CMO STAMM, NL) .....   | 28        |
| <b>Conclusion: “A World without Gender?” .....</b>                                       | <b>29</b> |
| <b>Annex 1 for Youth Workers: How to make the best use of this comic booklet ? .....</b> | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Annex 2: Project Details .....</b>  | <b>33</b> |



# *Introduction*

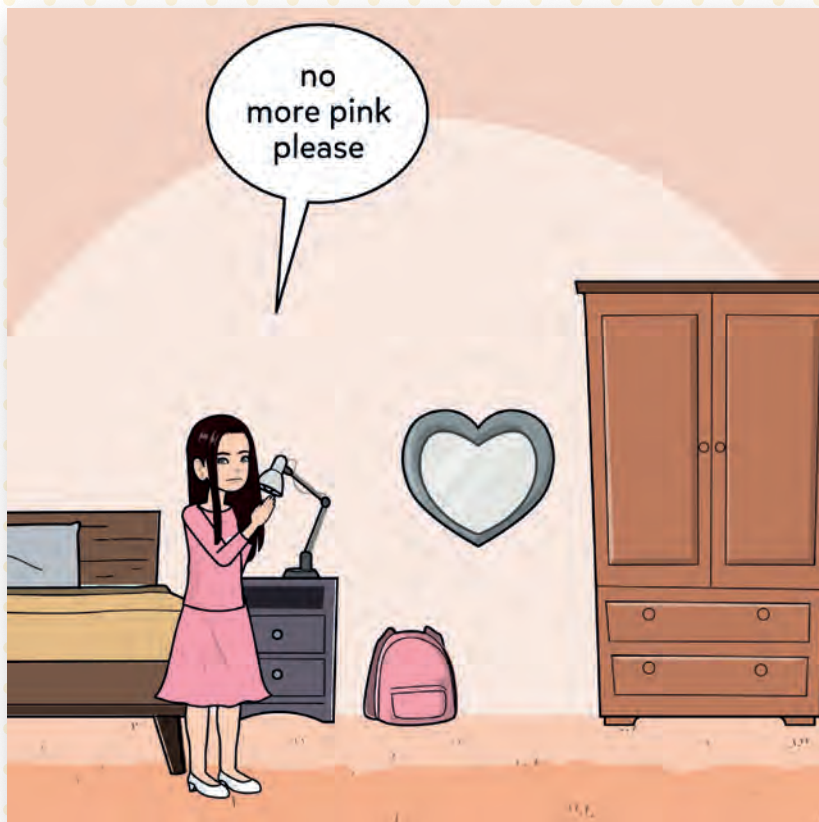
This compilation of comic-strips is based on original ideas from young people ranging from 18 to 27 years old, from Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden and from diverse backgrounds.

Gender is an important but sometimes confusing – even conflicting – aspect of one's identity. They were invited to represent their own feelings and experiences, challenges and struggles, hopes and concerns, and even questions on gender.

It's your turn now! After reading these comics, how do you feel? Are you curious, do you have any questions, can you relate to depicted situations, do you maybe need support? You're not alone!

Youth workers can help you navigate through this complex topic. They are the right people to start a dialogue with: confidentiality is a rule in their line of work, and they have the right knowledge! And if you need further support, they can point you to the right people!

# SO CLICHÉ

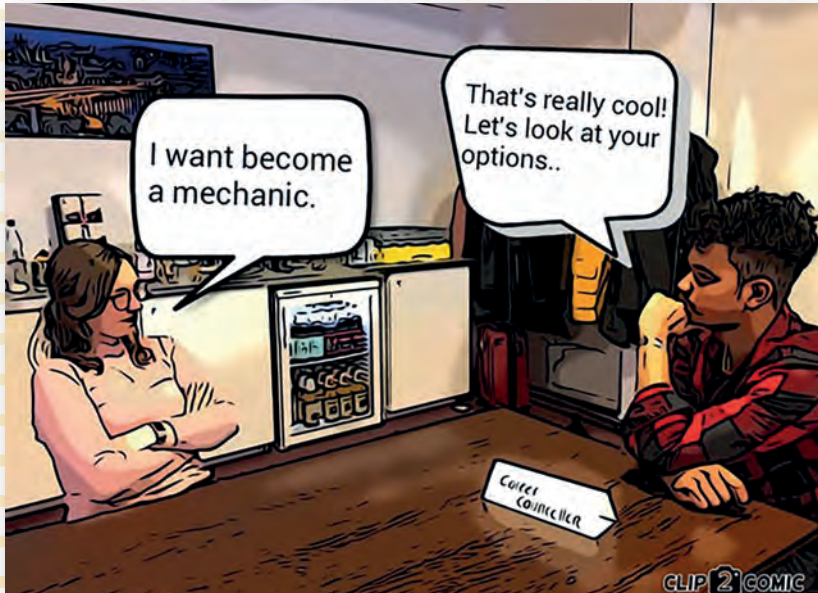


## EXPLANATIONS:

From an early age, girls are dressed all in pink, boys all in blue, and that often remains that simple. This cliché exists in all partner countries, with little to no variations in intensity, even today.

The young participants used clothing to illustrate this issue because it is the most obvious way boys and girls are taught and expected to behave in different ways. The question remains: Why?

# SO CLICHÉ



## EXPLANATIONS:

It is usually uncommon for feminine girls to become a mechanic. With this image, young participants want to start a conversation about the fact that it does not have to be uncommon.

Girls can become a mechanic without anyone saying “Are you sure?” or “But it is a man’s job!”.

# SO CLICHÉ



## EXPLANATIONS:

In the same way it is not regarded as “normal” for women to get “a man’s job”, a man can suffer from the opposite cliché if he wants to be a stay at home dad, even if it is never questioned when a woman wants the same.

In this comic strip, this young man is sure he wants to take care of his future kids. But his guidance counsellor does not approve. She says he can do anything: she thinks it is sad, even a waste, not to use the potential he has for a traditionally masculine job. Why is that?



# TOY STORIES

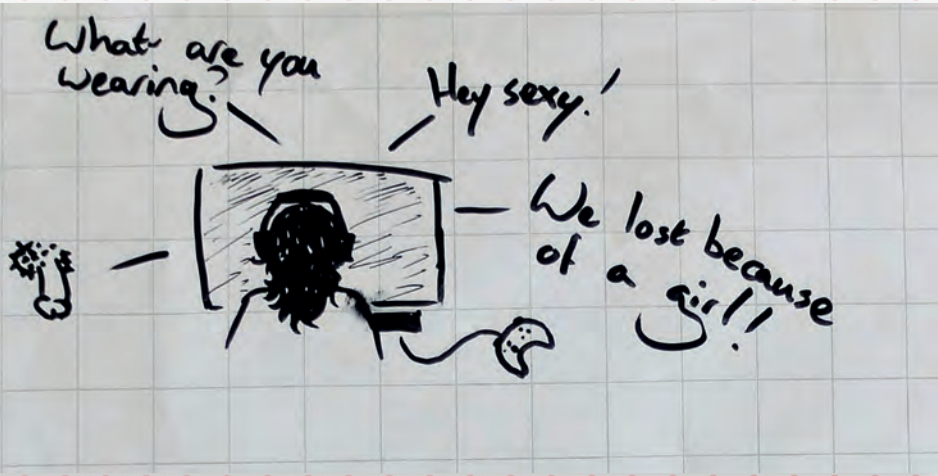


## EXPLANATIONS:

Children are taught gender clichés from an early age, through their education (family, school), and through games in which they recreate and reinforce them.

This picture is a classic example of such a situation, to which many participants could relate. It shows how difficult it is to challenge gender roles, because of the pressure “challengers” have to face.

# TOY STORIES



## EXPLANATIONS:

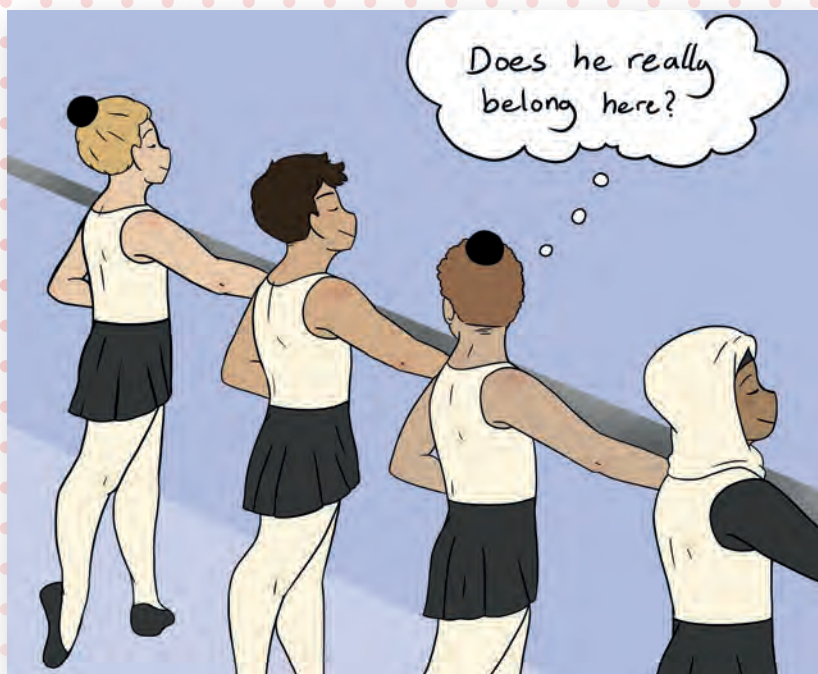
This drawing is a "leftover draft" but the young participants felt it would be a good addition to the previous draft comic strip nonetheless.

It reflects on a similar issue, showing that exclusion based on gender can take many forms: while younger girls are often excluded from "boyish" football games, they can struggle in other fields when they grow up, such as video games.

Video game players are mostly boys or men. As a result, girls and women will often face sexist reactions and remarks when they play online video games.



# TOY STORIES



## EXPLANATIONS:

This other “leftover draft” illustrates the same situation but for boys, who can also suffer from gender clichés.

A typical example is how hard it is for boys to join “girly” activities. They may face disapproval from the girls they join, for instance if they want to learn dancing, but also from their families: many parents refuse to let their son have such “girly” hobbies.

# TOY STORIES



## EXPLANATIONS:

While teens do not play with toys anymore, make-up is an example of something they 'play' with.

With this comic strip, participants wanted to start the conversation about boys wearing make-up, and the assumption that they are homosexual if they do so.

# TOY STORIES

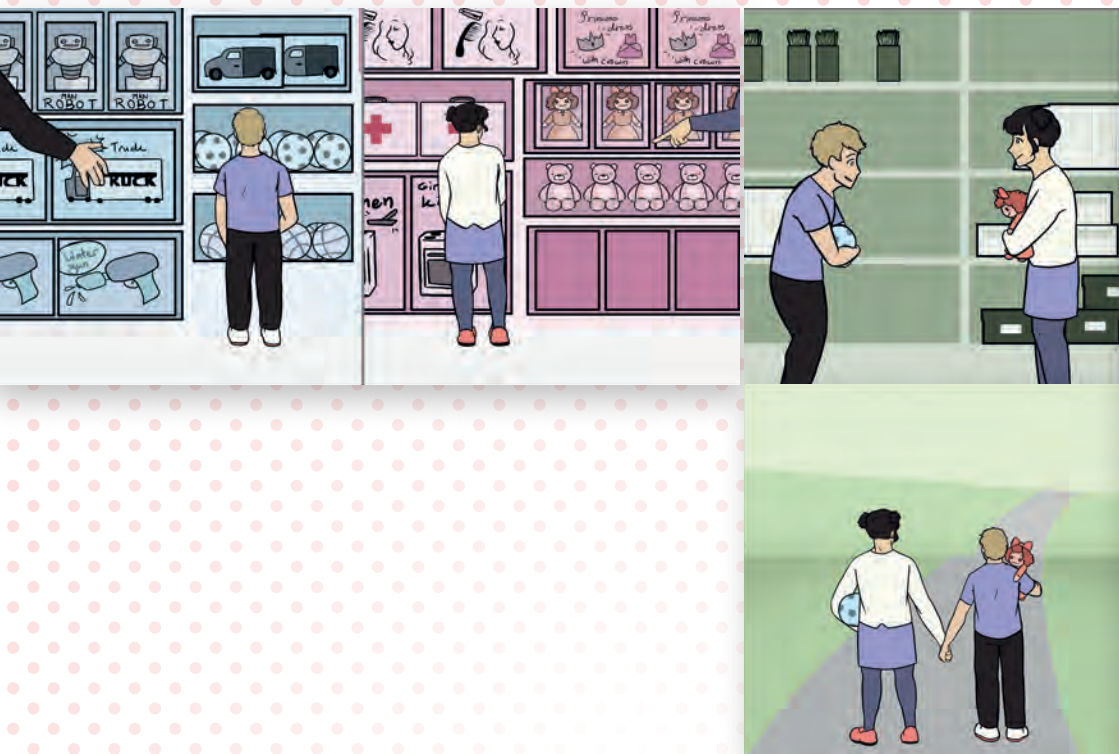


## EXPLANATIONS:

With girls it is usually the other way around (not wearing any make-up is strange or "abnormal").

Participants wanted to discuss this as well. Is it weird for girls to not wear make-up? Why?

# TOY STORIES



## EXPLANATIONS:

In toy shops and supermarkets, toys are sorted out in “Boys” and “Girls” sections. Usually, it is very striking, opposing blue toys on one side, pink toys on the other side.

This contributes to reduce children’s choices when it comes to express their preferences freely. Parents often follow these sections blindly and lead boys in the blue section, girls in the pink section, leaving no freedom to their kids. Sometimes even refusing them to have a look in the other section.

Here Centro San Viator imagined how children, who don’t have “gender prejudices” of this kind at an early age, can be the solution!



# TOY STORIES



# TOY STORIES

## EXPLANATIONS:

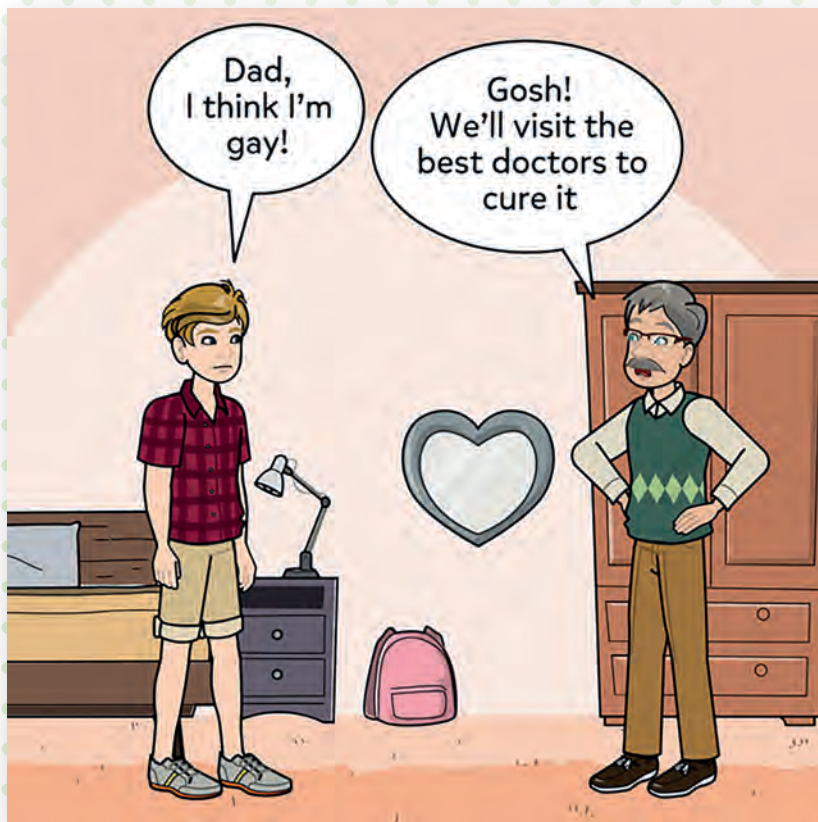
“I spy” is a guessing game where one player chooses an object within sight and announces to the other players that „I spy with my little eye, something beginning with...“, naming the first letter of the object. Other players attempt to guess what this object is.

In this comic strip, SKA Darmstadt imagined kids playing this game with a magazine showing many famous people on the same page. One of them starts the game “I spy with my little eyes: someone who has a genderfluid identity”. The other one can’t guess, because these things are not always so obvious.

So we end up on a panel showing all these celebrities telling about their own identity: they are diverse, for most of them we can’t know “at first glance” and it shows that gender identity is a lot more diverse and complex than what is usually shown and perceived.



## LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION: WHERE DO WE STAND?



### EXPLANATIONS:

With this strip, participants from IEKEP answered the question "What's wrong today?"

Homosexuality, and more generally everything "non-heterosexual" (bisexual, transgender, non-conforming, pansexual, asexual etc) is considered a disease by many, among older generations ... but not only.

Teenagers coming out of the closet will therefore not always get supportive reactions: on the contrary, they will be told something is wrong with them and should be "fixed".

## LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION: WHERE DO WE STAND?

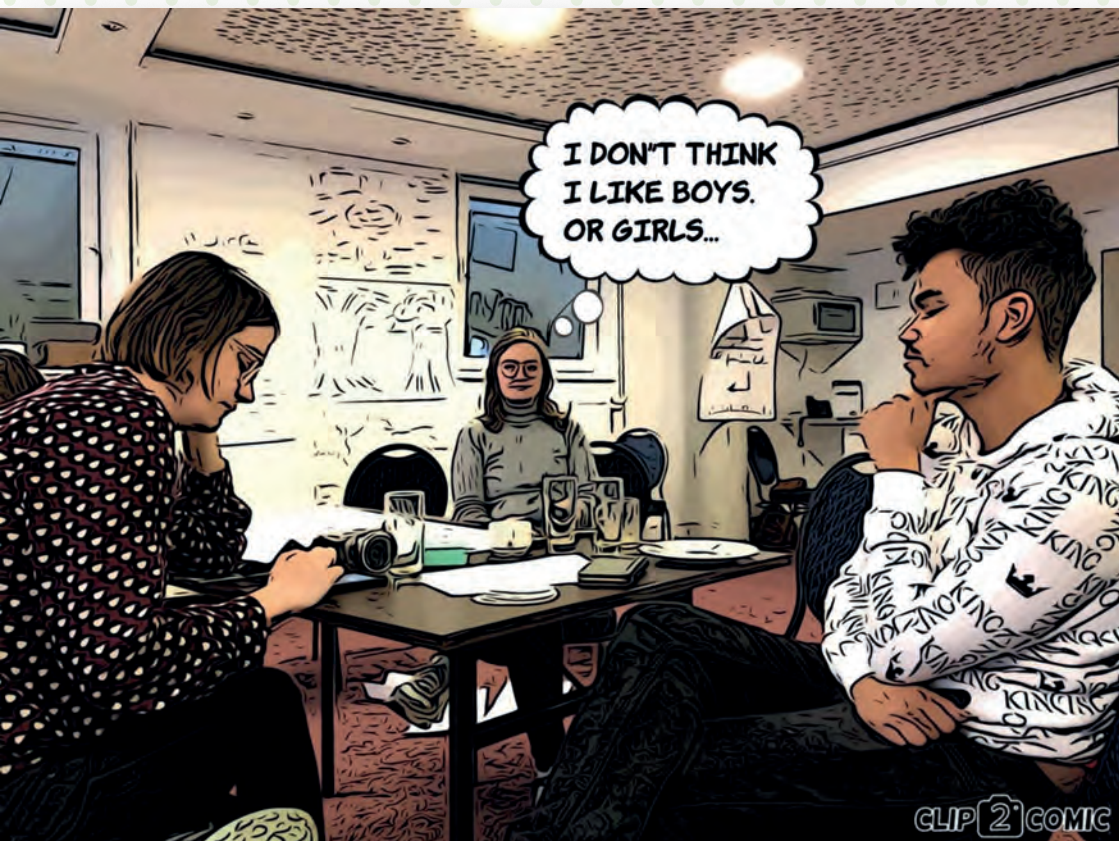


### EXPLANATIONS:

Next to the “typical” sexual orientations - gay, lesbian, heterosexual or bi are well understood concepts – it is easy to forget that there is more.

In this scene, young participants from CMO STAMM reflected on asexuality. Does this mean you cannot be in love with someone just because you don't want to have sex? Can you still feel attracted to someone but not have the desire to become sexual with this person?

*LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION:  
WHERE DO WE STAND?*



**EXPLANATIONS:**

With this comic strip and the next one, young participants from CMO STAMM also felt it was important to show that understanding one's sexual orientation can also be a very personal struggle.

So even when somebody is not facing discrimination of any kind, they may need support and someone else to talk to about their own interrogations!



*LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION:  
WHERE DO WE STAND?*



## LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION: WHERE DO WE STAND?



### EXPLANATIONS:

Here young participants imitated the movie "Mean Girls" when the characters are saying "You can't sit with us!". These three pictures are connected together: a group of gay people refuse somebody at their table because they are bisexual, and the same happens with a group of heterosexual people. So, the bisexual person ends up alone.

With this comic strip, the participants wanted to show that discrimination is a broader issue than we think. Some people don't accept bisexuality as an orientation, and it is possible to be "rejected" from both "heteronormative groups" and the homosexual community.

## LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION: WHERE DO WE STAND?



### EXPLANATIONS:

This setting is based on someone who doesn't feel like they belong to any gender at all. This can be a person who is transgender, genderfluid or maybe nonbinary.

The struggle they face on a daily basis is that the whole world is organised around binary genders, and even the most ordinary things exclude anybody who does not feel like a man or a woman.



*LGBTTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION:  
WHERE DO WE STAND?*



**EXPLANATIONS:**

This comic strip is about the fact that you can't always know someone's sexual orientation just by looking at them. It is a very common question in the LGBTTIQ community.

## LGBTIQ RIGHTS & DISCRIMINATION: WHERE DO WE STAND?



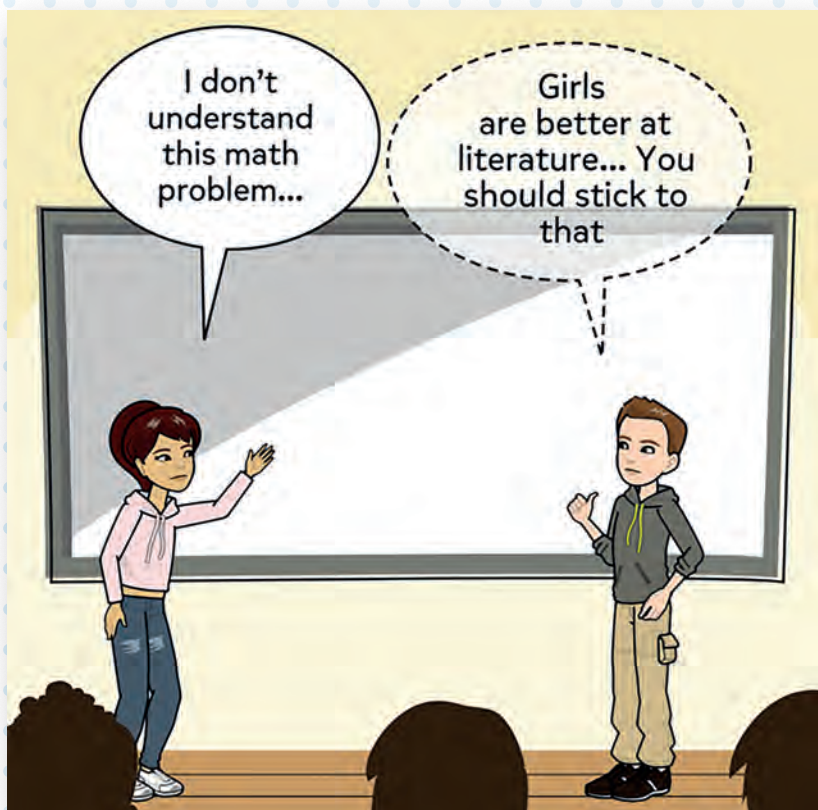
### EXPLANATIONS:

To conclude this chapter, a positive glance from Centro San Viator! A person with a neutral name, Alex, presents themselves, and they are gender fluid, expressing their identity both in a feminine and masculine way. This person feels neither just “man” nor just “woman”, but both at the same time, and it can be expressed in different ways at different times.

The second panel shows typical reactions: it is hard for most people to understand such a situation, as they are used to sort each other into two categories, “man” and “woman” or “masculine” and “feminine”, just by looking at somebody’s appearance.

However the youngest children don’t have such “heteronormative prejudices”: they have not learnt them. So their reaction is simpler and more accepting: “I only see a person”.

# BACK TO SCHOOL!



## EXPLANATIONS:

This is another example of “What’s wrong today?” by IEKEP, focused on school. Gender prejudices attribute better skills to girls in “liberal arts” (social sciences, literature, arts ...) and worse skills in “hard sciences” like maths. The contrary is usually the norm for boys.

These clichés reproduce at school among other things. Teachers tend to lead boys into “scientific sections” and girls into “literature” and such. Students behave in similar ways towards each other.

But in the end, this partly explains why engineers are still mostly males, and literature teachers mostly females.



# BACK TO SCHOOL!



## EXPLANATIONS:

The symptoms of ADHD are more often seen in men. This comic strip is an illustration of the fact that both boys and girls can have ADHD nonetheless.

But like for many disorders, professionals are more used to recognize them in boys and men rather than in girls and women, because scientific studies focus mainly on boys and men.

# BACK TO SCHOOL!



## EXPLANATIONS:

Women are often judged on their appearance, with little or no margin left for self-expression: for instance, skirts are either too short and you are a “slut”, even “asking for it”, or they are too long and you are “uptight”.

# BACK TO SCHOOL!



## EXPLANATIONS:

To conclude this chapter, once again a positive look from Centro San Viator! The participants' idea is to show "metaphorically" that people raised with prejudices reproduce this negativity and prejudiced views when they are older.

On the contrary, people raised without prejudices, with acceptance and tolerance, tend to be more accepting, tolerant, positive and supportive themselves later on.

This is about education as a whole, and not just school, but it fits well in there!



*A FIREMAN, A POLICEMAN AND AN AIR HOSTESS WALK INTO A BAR ...*



**EXPLANATIONS:**

Yet another illustration of “What’s wrong today?” by IEKEP’s young participants. They wanted a humoristic example of different reactions to the current trend towards more equality.

When women quit “traditional gender roles” (here, the kitchen!) to achieve great things and become role models, some men form a “resistance” to this change because they think women don’t belong outside their household.

*A FIREMAN, A POLICEMAN AND AN AIR HOSTESS WALK INTO A BAR ...*



**EXPLANATIONS:**

Women in the workplace often get questioned about their role in the company. Women in high positions are especially overlooked and presumed to have a lower position in their workplace.

This scene reflects real life situations women face at work.

# A WORLD WITHOUT GENDER?"

## WHAT WOULD A WORLD WITHOUT GENDER LOOK LIKE?

### SCHOOL - CLASSROOM

- a curriculum showing for the first two lessons some kind exercises/activities/ different kind of subjects
- different kind of possibilities to sit

### SUPERMARKET

- Showing Diversity in Advertisement
- no gender typical colours of Toys (blue, pink)
- no typical Gender products like shaver, soaps...

### CONSTRUCTION SIDE

- diverse Group of people working there
- handicapped people, hijab wearing people, people of small stature,

### FAMILY HOME (kitchen + living room)

- different kind of pictures frames with diverse family settings
- a refrigerator with family week plan

### JOB (conference room)

- diverse people sitting around a big conference table
- with a woman breast-feeding
- Behind the glass walls a day care with kids

# A WORLD WITHOUT GENDER?

## EXPLANATIONS:

Young participants from SKA Darmstadt went a little further to imagine a world without gender, and how it would show in different areas and situations if gender was not an issue and the concept “disappeared” somehow.

Can such a world exist? Do you think it should exist? How would you feel in the following situations?


**AT SCHOOL:** An agenda showing a student’s very diverse activities, with all kinds of topics, mixing what is usually attributed to girls (“emotions”, „cooking”) and boys (“sports”, “chemistry”).

**AT THE SUPERMARKET:** So many advertisements! But the typical “sexy girl selling soap” and “manly man shaving with a hatchet” have disappeared. There is a lot more diversity: same-sex parents, transgender model, woman selling DIY tools, man selling make-up, along with more “traditional” ads like a man and razor and a woman and diet food. Gender expression has not disappeared, but its diversity is now represented.

**AT THE TOY STORE:** You are visiting a toys’ section ... but there is now only one section in which you can find toys in all colours, not just blue and pink!







**AT THE SUPERMARKET:** Impossible to find the usual products in separate sections for men and women. These products are still there of course, but they are not in “genderized” sections and formats: razors, shavers or even toothbrushes don’t need to be blue or pink depending on who buys them!

**ON A CONSTRUCTION SITE:** In the future, construction sites don’t look the same anymore. Instead of the cliché manly men whistling at women, everybody is represented here: women work on the site too, and diversity shows both in terms of gender expression (feminine man, masculine woman, non-conforming people etc) and beyond gender (handicapped person, another wearing a hijab, small and tall people etc).

**AT HOME:** On a refrigerator at home, you can see a family weekly plan showing what everybody’s doing throughout the week. But “Home” and “Office” appear for both parents and is balanced: none of them needs to sacrifice family life to make a living, or a professional career to take care of children. Children themselves have diverse hobbies, including “non-traditional” hobbies in regards to their gender. Both girls and boys do theatre, camps, various sports, creative activities, school trips, play musical instruments, go to a ballet class etc.

# HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF THIS COMIC BOOKLET?

This comic booklet was created thanks to original ideas from young people ranging from 18 to 27 years old gathered in the framework of the Erasmus+ project “New Perspectives - Gender Sensitive Approaches in Youth Work”. Its objective is to depict European youth’s diverse feelings and experiences, challenges and struggles, hopes and concerns, and even questions on gender.

In particular, they learned, shared and discussed traditional gender roles and expectations, and the challenges they have experienced or are still experiencing as young people because of these long-lasting stereotypes.

This comic booklet is designed to remain simple, accessible, easy-to-read, and provide a creative, attractive and catchy format to youth workers who would like to start a dialogue on gender with young people they are working with.

You can therefore use it as a “conversation-starter”: build upon the reader’s reactions, questions or impressions to start discussing this topic, and assess the young person’s potential needs in that regard.

Moreover, one crucial statement in the introduction for young readers works for you as well: You’re not alone!

- The partnership released another publication targeted at youth workers directly and covering their needs when addressing the complex topic of gender. If you need further knowledge on the topic or adapted methods to address it, have a look at “IO1 – Navigating the Gender Jungle”.
- Youth workers can’t always provide young people with the support they need. In specific cases (e.g. sexual harassment, discrimination based on their sexual orientation, violence) they will need more help than you can give: you can play a crucial role by guiding them to the right people! (e.g. specialized NGOs, official public institutions, psychologists etc).

# PROJECT DETAILS

“New Perspectives - Gender Sensitive Approaches in Youth Work” is a Strategic Partnership for Youth funded by the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2, and coordinated by BAG EJSA with the support of the YES Forum (Grant Agreement 2016-3-DE04-KA205-014655).

From mid 2018 to late 2020, youth workers and young people from 5 different EU countries met and cooperated to exchange and create new tools and methods to address the topic of gender with youth in an adapted way.

A thorough presentation of the project and its outcomes, especially its two publications targeted at young Europeans on the one hand and youth workers on the other hand can be found on the YES Forum network’s website ([www.yes-forum.eu/projects](http://www.yes-forum.eu/projects)).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>P1</b> <b>BAG EJSA e. V. (DE)</b><br/>         Nationwide association of Protestant institutions of youth social work (represent the political interests of members, lobby for disadvantaged young people, promote gender equality).</p> |    |
| <p><b>P2</b> <b>SKA Darmstadt e. V. (DE)</b><br/>         Association of youth welfare and provides counseling, education and social work in Darmstadt and the surrounding area.</p>   |    |
| <p><b>P3</b> <b>IEKEP (GR)</b><br/>         A private non-profit organization in the region of Attica as an accredited vocational training center.</p>   |    |
| <p><b>P4</b> <b>Skellefteå kommun (SE)</b><br/>         Municipality of Skellefteå, Culture and Leisure Department</p>   |   |
| <p><b>P5</b> <b>CMO STAMM (NL)</b><br/>         Knowledge center for societal issues, working for residents, institutions and organizations of Groningen and Drenthe.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>P6</b> <b>Centro San Viator (ES)</b><br/>         School and center for professional training.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>P7</b> <b>YES Forum (DE)</b><br/>         European network of organizations in EU member states or programme countries working with and for young people who face disadvantages or discrimination.</p>                                   |  |



Co-funded by the  
**Erasmus+ Programme**  
 of the European Union

*The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

