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# Gender Inequality and LGBTI Issues in the Workplace

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

International Business and Logistics

Bachelor's Thesis

03 May 2019

Author Title	Viktoria Angelova Gender Inequality and LGBTI Issues in the Workplace
Number of Pages Date	32 pages + 2 appendices 03 May 2019
Degree	Bachelor of Business Administration
Degree Programme	International Business and Logistics
Instructor/Tutor	Daryl Chapman, Senior Lecturer
<p>The goal of this thesis is to answer three main questions: Why is Gender Inequality and Sexuality a relevant theme for organizations? What are the issues LGBTI people face in the work environment? And what can the HR department do to educate the staff about gender identity and prevent any forms of discrimination and inequality?</p> <p>The first part of this paper has to do with deep research towards all aspects of Gender Inequality and LGBTI issues and how those translate into organizations. The research focuses on how businesses are affected by LGBTI discrimination.</p> <p>In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, analytical approach is used in the form of geographical comparison of the issue. The research aims to show the current situation and trends related to gender inequality, sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in two European Union countries – Finland and Bulgaria. The intention is to highlight the issues some Eastern European countries still have with implementing the EU legislations against all kind of discrimination.</p> <p>As a qualitative research method an interview was conducted with an HR Manager from Finland. The interview not only gives more realistic representation of how Finnish organizations are implementing non-discrimination policies but also highlighted issues many employees still face during recruitment process and in the workplace.</p>	
Keywords	LGBTI, Gender Equality, Discrimination, HR, Workplace

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## **Glossary**

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EU	European Union
FTM	Female-to-Male
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange
GLAS	Gay & Lesbian, Accepted in Society
HR	Human Resources
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
USA	United States of America

## 1 Introduction

Gender Inequality and Sexuality in the workplace is one of the most topical subject matter in the media in the recent couple of years, but that does not seem to be enough for people to recognize the issues it raises. I have chosen this topic because I feel very passionate about it as a potential future businesswoman, as a future mother and a proud friend of couple of representatives of the LGBTI community.

Throughout the years, a certain degree of progress has been made, however men still take most work placements in business fields and in the political sphere. Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours and earn only 10% of the world's income. On a global scale, only 20% of parliamentarians and 16% of ministers are female, although these figures are slowly rising. (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade IE, n.d.)

Nowadays women surpass their male counterparts in academia by accounting for over 60% of the earned college degrees and hold a bit over half of white-collar jobs. However, they still represent a minority stake of head positions in Fortune 500 companies and especially so in male dominating industries such as technology, medicine and finance. According to the Global Leadership Forecast, companies performing financially in the top 20% have nearly twice the number of women in leadership roles compared to those in the bottom 20%. What is more, studies show that companies which have significant gender inequities tend to less competitive, productive, and innovative. (Davis, 2016)

Steadily, the social norms and the legal system is developing in favour of people identifying as LGBT, nonetheless over 53% of those people that are working in the United States, are unwilling to openly share their orientation on the workplace. What is more, around nine per cent of LGBT employees were forced to leave their occupation due to inhospitable work environment, meanwhile one in five is actively seeking other job opportunities for the same reason. During work hours, 62% of LGBT individuals in employment, reported hearing banter towards gay and lesbian people. When a minority group is repeatedly pressured by stereotypes, it creates a feeling of double standards and spreads easily across more employees. The fact that one in four employees

remained in their position thanks to their welcoming and open co-workers and superiors, goes on to say that being tolerant and inclusive in the workplace is of a high importance, as during the working day, people are usually encouraged to reveal facts surrounding their personal life. Not doing so may break any possibility of a connection between colleagues and superiors. In the United States, 29 states do not have legislation regarding the protection that is based on people's sexual orientation, whereas 33 of them lack the same on gender identity. The amount of LGBT workers that felt the need to hide the truth regarding their personal lives equals to 35%. (The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2014)

During the most recent decade in the United States, major progress has been made for the equality of LGBTI people, represented by the legal institutions and the cultural inclusion in the country. It is worth to mention that big corporation entities in the United States have led the way in terms of changes to their benefit systems for the inclusion of LGBT families and in workplace protections prior to legislators. 91% of the Fortune 500 companies have already covered LGBT people based on their sexual orientation and some 61% further the coverage for gender identity. Following the industry leaders, increasing number of private employers have done or aim to offer the same protections and create thriving environments in order to acquire top candidates. (The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2014)

## **2 Main issues and outcome**

### **2.1 The relationship between Femininity, Masculinity, and Gender Inequality**

In the book "Social Issues, Justice and Status: Masculinity and Femininity: Stereotypes/Myths, Psychology and Role of Culture" the authors Aston, J and Vazques, E discuss the stereotypes, the psychology and the role of culture in masculinity and femininity gender issues. One of the conclusions made is that despite the multitude of ways in which men and women enact gender, an increasing number of women in non-traditional work roles, and the growing number of women represented as active heroines in popular culture, stereotypes of men and women still abound. (Aston and Vazques, 2013:95-96)

In a chapter of the same book, Anna Lindqvist points out a very important argument: There is a confusion of concepts concerning sex, gender, and the relationship between the two. She writes about the division of the population into women and men and the issues it raises. She argues that the human gender is way more complicated than being simply either feminine or masculine and that division excludes all transgender, transsexual, and intersexed individuals from the analysis. (Aston and Vazques, 2013:143-152)

In the chapter “Work” in “Gender in Law, Culture, and Society: Exploring Masculinities: Feminist Legal Theory Reflections” the authors Fineman and Thomson explore masculinities in the workplace and make several conclusions after having studied the problem in different geographical regions. One of those conclusions is that “the organizations tend to assign genders to jobs, and the expectations of persons doing those jobs are built upon a traditional division of labour in the family.” The authors argue that in both blue and white-collar workplaces, the primary and most respected positions of the institution are given to male workers whereas female perform jobs that serve the role of helping men. (Fineman and Thomson, 2016:201-249)

In “Research in the Sociology of Work, 20: Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace, Volume 20” the authors Williams, Dellinger and Keister discuss another aspect of the masculine and feminine issues. In the chapter “Gendered appearance norms: An analysis of employment discrimination lawsuits, 1970-2008” they discuss the existing aesthetic and other cultural ideals, including hegemonic ideals of femininity, masculinity, and attractiveness. Their findings conclude that in most cases women are held accountable for numerous appearance norms, such as hairstyle, makeup, body size and shape and clothing. One of the main assumptions is that women’s bodies must be altered in some way and their natural state is unacceptable. For example, they found out that when women who usually wear makeup show up to work without it, are usually questioned by their colleagues about their health or energy level. Another point that was made by the authors was that men are also expected to appear “masculine” at work. The authors reference Dozier’s female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals’ study which found that “conformity to masculine norms and ideals in terms of facial hair, musculature, and other bodily signifiers was an important element on how transmen

were able to establish credibility and competence at work.” (Williams, Dellinger and Keister,2010:129-148)

## 2.2 The connection between Gender Inequality, Family Responsibilities, and Fertility Rates

The question of either and how gender inequality, motherhood and household responsibilities are connected is very controversial. In an article called “How gender equality is the friend of the family” in “The Guardian” written by Jill Filipovic she points out the fact that even though the wage gap is narrowing it is still significant- “a woman makes 77 cents to a man’s dollar (USA) for the same job and the same number of hours.” Many women are also single mothers, and a well-paid job makes the difference between material wellbeing and barely surviving. Another topic that Filipovic discusses is the reality of stay-at-home moms. Many people nowadays have a misconception about what being a stay-at-home mom is like. They usually picture them as the wealthy women on reality TV who take care themselves while their husbands provide for the family. But is staying at home a choice in the real world or is it just more financially viable than doing a low paying job and taking care of a child? This article gives a very positive perspective of the relationship between gender equality and family, using statistics which shows increase in the importance of parenting in the last 15 years for both women and men. Balancing between career and family is not easy, but the author argues that women can have it all, pointing out that especially since modern men are much more likely to help. Of course, that will be easier if certain policies change (family leave, healthcare, social benefits for low-income households and childcare). (Filipovic, 2012)

There is a positive correlation between shared parenting and gender equality but, women still do most of the childcare and housework. The general perception and expectations of society that the household chores and childcare is “women’s job” has a big effect on the gender inequality rates especially when girls are raised with those values.

Tracy McVeigh cited Nick Pearce, the director of IPPR, in her article “Forty years of feminism – but women still do most of the housework.”:



Women still shoulder the overwhelming burden of household tasks, particularly after they have had children. When they earn more, their bargaining power with their partners increases, so closing the gender pay gap would help. On most key issues, the route to modern feminist goals must pass through fathers. Men should work more flexibly, take greater responsibility for caring for their children and their homes, and have the right to reserved parental leave. (McVeigh, 2012)

Another reference supporting the view that men should be more involved in fighting for gender equality is found in Andrew Edgecliffe-Johnson's article in Financial Times - "Gender inequality in the workplace is men's work too". The author suggests that men are noticing that the women in their own workplace do not speak up enough at meetings or if most of them are assigned for lower status "pink collar" jobs. Johnson also points out that female CEOs run only six of the FTSE 100 companies. According to the author there are so many things men can do in their workplace, regardless of their position, to help their women co-workers feel more confident and less discriminated. (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2015)

The article ends with the following statement: "*You already know you are part of the problem, but you can be part of the solution too. Oh, and when you get home, do the dishes.*" (Johnson, 2016), which shows a similar view with my previous references regarding the issue. The change must come from within, from how men treat the women in their lives.

The relationship between fertility rates and gender inequality in the workplace is rather complicated but very crucial for this research. In an interview with the Summer Harvard School, Mary Brinton - sociology professor at Harvard University and instructor of Inequality and Society in Contemporary Japan, made some very interesting and important arguments on the issue. She argues that one of the greatest problems when it comes to workplace inequality is that young adults end up trying to balance between work and family life and in most cases, women are the ones to carry most of the responsibilities. But the most crucial subject that is discussed is the declining fertility rates in post-industrial countries and its connection to gender equality in the workplace. (Harvard Summer School, n.d.)

As the interviewee notes fertility rate (birth rate) of 2.1 is necessary for a country to naturally replace its population. And since the 1980s, fertility rates have declined around the world, giving examples of the United States (1.9.) and Southern Europe and

East Asia (below 1.3.). Brinton also talks about Japan, where firm attitudes about women in the workforce and as mothers are contributing to the low birth rate. As she points out motherhood is very difficult for women with careers, because of the pressure on being the ideal mother and the corporate culture that demands long working hours. Increased gender equality—both in the workplace and at home—is an important part of the solution to declining birth rates. Increased gender equality—both in the workplace and at home—is an important part of the solution to declining birth rates. She explains why an increase in the gender equality - both in the workplace and at home - is an important part of the solution to declining birth rates. Brinton says that the countries with high female labour force participation rates have higher birth rates. (Harvard Summer School, n.d.)

### 2.3 Women not supporting other women

The article “Women still reluctant to help each other” by Eve Tahmincioglu in the NBC News website was featured in a Forbes article. Tahmincioglu used a 2007 study by the Workplace Bullying Institute which showed that 37 percent of the U.S. workforce is being bullied at work and among the bullies, women were more likely to target other women (71 percent) than men were to target other men (54 percent). Tahmincioglu featured a gender studies teacher at Marymount Manhattan College- Susan Shapiro Barash thoughts on the matter. She believes that because we live in a male-dominated society, women feel like they are fighting for the smaller piece of the pie which feeds jealousy and resentment among them. Her research shows that women are more likely to help other women if there is a big age difference between them because they feel less threatened. Tahmincioglu featured another study by the department of management at the Great Valley School of Graduate Professional Studies at Penn State University. They found out that male mentors do a better job providing career development than female mentors, but women appeared to do a better job than men when it came to role modelling. (Tahmincioglu, 2010)

On the other hand, in “Research in the Sociology of Work, 20: Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace, Volume 20”, the authors Williams, Dellinger and Keister feature a study by Andrew M. Penner and Harold J. Toro-Tulla with some interesting conclusions. They used a survey of 2000 small businesses to examine how gender differences in wages

vary among establishments with male and female owners. They found no systematic differences between the levels of gender wage inequality in female owned small businesses and male owned small businesses. (Williams, Dellinger and Keister, 2010)

## 2.4 LGBT issues in the workplace

As Emir Ozeren says in his systematic review of literature on Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Workplace, even though today's workforce is becoming more diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, and religion as well as in sexual orientation, sexual orientation remains the –so-called “last acceptable and remaining prejudice” in modern organizations. Hence, LGBT employees are presented with numerous issues on a daily basis. (Ozeren, 2013)

### 2.4.1 Coming out

The term, “coming out” refers to an individual's disclosure of his/her sexual orientation (i.e., the individual openly reveals his/her sexual orientation). Self-disclosure of sexual orientation or sexual identity might be considered one of the most critical decisions a GLBT employee can make. (Ozeren, 2013)

Before whom and when an LGBT person should come out is one of the biggest issues those people face in their personal and working life. The problem has been reviewed by many authors in different articles and books which comes to show how serious the issue is.

In his “Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Workplace: A Systematic Review of Literature”, Emir Ozeren discusses the issue very deeply. Ozeren points out that coming out hides many risks and consequences, especially in the workplace. Ozeren referenced several authors (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Griffith & Hebl, 2002) who noted that LGBT workers who identified themselves as ‘out’ in the workplace possessed higher organizational commitment and greater job satisfaction as well as fewer work and home conflicts. It also becomes clear that more LGBT employees will come out at work if companies adopt specific non-discrimination guidelines based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The author featured an empirical study by Everly, Shih, and Ho (2012) which showed that the employees partnered with openly gay co-workers

achieved better results on cognitive and sensory-motor tasks than their peers who were unsure of their partners' sexual orientation. Several authors referenced by Ozeren reach almost the same conclusions. Although job performance is unaffected by one's sexual orientation, LGBT employees can experience a decline in their work performance due to unnecessary stress invoked by trying to hide their true sexual orientation. (Ozeren, 2013)

Undoubtedly, every coming out experience is different. For example, Harvard Gazette featured an article by Robert Mitchell, who wrote about Chris Edwards's journey from female to male. Even though Edwards had hard childhood and college years he described his coming out to his co-workers as "overwhelmingly supportive". (Mitchell, 2016)

Different views are presented in the article by Josh Spero "Old and young see rights in contrast" in Financial Times (2016). The article features positive coming out stories but also shows a different aspect of the issue – not all generations feel the same way. Spero argues that for some of the older workers coming out after hiding for a long time can be awkward. Many older representatives of the LGBT community dislike being labelled. Ruth Hunter (director at consultancy PwC) says in the article: "It's not the only thing or the main thing about me; Kate Clark (technology project manager at Sainsbury's) says: "I don't put myself in any of the boxes". Spero points out that coming out again and again to new teams can be frustrating. (Spero, 2016)

#### 2.4.2 Transgender and Intersexual issues in the workplace

Transgender issues in the workplace can be truly unique and often neglected, as most company diverse policies are targeting mainly gay and lesbian issues.

Already in the induction of the book "Sexual Orientation and Transgender Issues in Organizations: Global Perspectives on LGBT Workforce Diversity", the editor Thomas Köllen points out one of the biggest issues of transgender employees in the workplace. He explains that companies using the term "LGBTI" in their diversity policies, implies that they are including not only people with different sexual orientation (gay, lesbian,

bisexual) in their non-discrimination protection, but also people with diverse gender identity (transgender and intersex persons). (Köllen 2016)

Turns out in reality that is not the case. According to Köllen if one is to examine closer the implemented by organizations, concrete actions on this issue, one would reveal that usually the targeted group turns out to be reduced to lesbian, gay and “(partially)” bisexual employees. In very rare cases in organizations are implemented actions specifically addressing transgender employees, and most times intersexuality is not even considered to be included in the conversation. The author argues that often when the term “LGBTI” is included in company’s diversity policies, the intent is to be more “politically correct” when addressing the community, rather than actually considering the full dimension of what the term represents. (Köllen 2016)

In the chapter “Sexuality, Sex and Gender”, Köllen referencing Oakley (1972) and Gatens (1983), explains:

Distinguishing between sex and gender has become a widespread standard in social sciences. It differentiates sex, as the biological bodily aspect, from gender, the socially constructed, cultural aspect of being a man or a woman, or of being masculine and feminine respectively. (Köllen, 2016)

He then goes onto explaining how the words “sex” and “gender” are used interchangeably in many different languages, especially in passports or when filling out forms, where one must choose being a man or a woman. In most cases the word “gender” is perceived as the embodiment of two only types of opposite genders: femininity and masculinity. And even though trans-identities could be aligned to some degree with this understanding of genders, intersexuality on another hand is much more complex. According to the author, trans-identities (transsexuality and transgenderism) represent the contradiction between one’s biological sex and one’s gender identity. (Köllen, 2016)

The first step of implementing actions particularly targeting transgender and intersex issues in the workplace is understanding and educating managers and employees of the full meaning of these terms.

Some of the main issues transgender employees face in the workplace relate to their transition. Transitioning from one identity to another presents numerous challenges and it is an extremely stressful and sensitive time in a transgender person's life. There are, however, actions organizations can take in order to contribute to an easier transition and supporting transgender employees.

In the chapter "Recommendations for Creating Trans-Inclusive Workplaces" of Köllens book, there are multiple examples of actions suggested for companies to take in order to better the work environment for trans employees. One of the most important things recommended is for companies to adopt name change policies for transgender employees. It is suggested that employees should be educated on using the proper pronoun, which shows commitment and effort in making sure the transitioning person feels comfortable, accepted and supported from their co-workers. Another big issue addressed in the book is the lack of gender-neutral restrooms and degendered spaces in companies. Deciding which restroom to use while transitioning could bring unnecessary stress for the person at work, which is why it is important for these spaces to be provided. Another issue mentioned is the need for neutral dress code, which is another way to show support for the transgender employees. And last, but not least, educating staff about transgender issues and educating transgender employees of the potential challenges they might face in the workplace, can improve the overall environment in the company. (Köllens, 2016)

#### 2.4.3 How is Business affected by LGBTI Discrimination on the Workplace?

There are two forms of Discrimination based on sexual orientation: formal and informal. The formal discrimination involves firing or failing to hire an individual solely because of his/her sexual orientation, not providing equal wages for homosexual and heterosexual employees and exclusion of LGBT employees from other benefits. Informal discrimination involves verbal harassment, homophobic jokes, loss of credibility, and lack of acceptance and respect by peers and managers. Both types of sexual orientation discrimination can create severe consequences for both LGBT employees and the organizations in which they work. (Ozeren, 2013)

When a business is trying to grow and generate profit the only focus, when it comes to recruitment, should be to find the best talents out there. Including non-discrimination policies for LGBTI employees will not only help a company to attract and keep those talents but also shows it is a place where other people of minorities can feel safe and included. (Work it Out, 2017)

In a research paper for The Williams Institute (UCLA School of Law) the authors manage to highlight some of the biggest benefits for businesses when it comes to protecting and retaining LGBTI employees:

A well-motivated and productive set of employees is essential for business success. Today, businesses' employees are increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, national origin, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation, among other characteristics. The impact of that diversity is much discussed in the global economy, and the "business case for diversity" has become a modern business mantra. In short, the business case posits that a diverse workforce (or in more nuanced versions, a well-managed diverse workforce) will lead to lower costs and/or higher revenues, improving the corporate bottom line. If the business case is correct, then employers have economic incentives to take actions that will create and maintain a diverse workforce. (Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, Mallory for The Williams Institute, 2013)

In one part of same research paper the authors focus on highlighting the links between sexual orientation and gender identity non-discrimination policies and businesses. It is pointed out that the implementation of diversity policies has different outcomes for the organization and the LGBTI individuals, who are a part of the organization. (Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, Mallory for The Williams Institute, 2013)

Some immediate outcomes for the LGBTI employees could be increased productivity levels and retention rates. A positive environment can be a reason for the LGBTI people to be more open and comfortable with who they are at the workplace, which can decrease their stress levels. In the paper it is suggested that these primary effects could cause secondary positive effects in the workplace-related outcomes. These secondary effects could be creating healthier work environment, improving job satisfaction, and creating stronger relationship with co-workers and supervisors. On their own these factors have impact on employer cost reductions. (Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, Mallory for The Williams Institute, 2013)

When it comes to the organizational outcomes, the paper suggests that more diverse LGBTI policies could lead to cost reductions and higher revenues, which leads to improving profits. The authors show how the individual outcomes create positive organizational outcomes for example:

- Improving the overall health state of the employees leads to lower health insurance costs;
- Less discrimination means lower legal costs associated with employee legal claims;
- New business partnerships, both with public entities and individual consumers, who want to only do business with socially responsible companies with non-discrimination policies. (Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, Mallory for The Williams Institute, 2013)

It is very clear that LGBTI employees will be more productive in their work duties if they feel safe and accepted at work. Implementing inclusive policies makes it more likely for employees to stay in the same workplace for longer which also saves money that would otherwise be spent on recruiting and training new talents. On the other hand, companies with clear non-discrimination policies and inclusive work environment are more attractive for new potential employees.

### **3 Analytical approach**

In order to be able to analyse and answer my research questions in this paper I focus on geographical comparison of the issue. To be more concrete I am comparing the current situation and trends related to gender inequality and sexual orientation discrimination in two European Union countries – Finland and Bulgaria. My intention is to highlight the issues some Eastern European countries still have with implementing the EU legislations against all kind of discrimination. It is important to compare how two different cultures are impacting the HR decisions of the big organizations.



### 3.1 Current situation

#### 3.1.1 European Union

When it comes to gender inequality the European Union actions and legislations are mostly focused on the unequal pay problem. In 2012, the EU average pay gap was estimated at 16% and it the same today. The situation in the Member States regarding this matter is very different. The gender pay gap in Slovenia, Malta, Poland, Italy, Luxembourg and Romania is less than 10% and in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria- 20%, and reaching 30% in Estonia. (European Commission, 2016)

Since women have different working patterns according to the European Commission:

...in countries where the female employment rate is low (e.g. Italy), the pay gap is lower than average". This could be considered as an outcome of the small proportion of low-skilled or unskilled women in the workforce. "A high pay gap is usually characteristic of a labour market which is highly segregated, meaning that women are more concentrated in a restricted number of sectors and/or professions (e.g. Czech Republic, Estonia and Finland), or in which a significant proportion of women work part-time (e.g. Germany and Austria). Finally, institutional mechanisms and systems on wage setting can influence the pay gap. (European Commission, 2016)

The EU also has legislation, treaties and directives concerning equal pay and equal work since 1957. Victims of discrimination can take legal action and all EU countries "must eradicate all discrimination from their national rules and laws and inform workers that they have done so and how." (European Commission, 2016)

Discrimination based on sexuality is still a big problem in the organization across the European Union. There is official legislation like Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, while Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union allows taking appropriate action to combat this type of discrimination. But the in-company laws are different in the different member states. (European Commission, 2016)

A 2015 Eurobarometer survey on discrimination, commissioned by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication, paints a very good picture of the current situation regarding different types of discrimination in the EU. Here are some of the findings which I found relevant and useful: Discrimination based on sexual orientation across the 28 member states is 58%, gender identity 56%, and gender 37%. 67% of the respondents said that they would be at ease if one of their work colleagues was a transgender or transsexual person. "There is widespread support for measures in the workplace to foster diversity, such as training on diversity issues (80%), monitoring of recruitment procedures (77%), and monitoring the composition of the workforce (69%). Most European workers feel that enough is being done to promote diversity in their workplace for young people (58%) and in terms of gender (58%). However, respondents are less likely to think that enough is being done in relation to other characteristics, in particular sexual orientation (42%) and gender identity (33%)." One of the most important findings of the survey is that "the polarisation of attitudes among countries is particularly high when it comes to opinions and perceptions on LGBT people." (Equinet European Network of Equality Bodies, 2015)

### 3.1.2 Bulgaria

Article 5 of the Law on Protection from Discrimination explicitly forbids harassment and sexual harassment since that is considered discrimination.

According to the European Commission the gender pay gap in Bulgaria is at 13.5% and the gender overall earnings gap is 22.9%. The three biggest issues women face are: lower hourly earnings; working fewer hours in paid jobs and lower employment rates. There are many reasons for this pay gap and the main one is that most of the management and supervisory positions are held by men. Also, men are more often promoted than women, and paid better consequently. Household work and caring for children are only some of the important unpaid tasks that women in Bulgaria do on a far larger scale than men. Mainly due to maternity leaves women spend more periods off the labour market than men which can influence not only their hourly pay, but also impact future earnings and pensions. Also, like most of the Eastern European countries,

in Bulgaria in some sectors and occupations, women tend to be overrepresented, while in other men are. (European Commission, 2015)

According to the findings of the Gender Equality Index 2017 research, the employment rate (20-64) is 64% for women versus 70% for men. (Gender Equality Index 2017)

Since the adoption of the Law on Protection from Discrimination in 2004, in Bulgaria the discrimination on a broad range of grounds, including on the ground of sex/gender is prohibited.

The book "Youth, Education and Sexualities. An International Encyclopaedia" by James Sears contains a chapter "Bulgaria, LGBT Youth and Issues" written by Monika Pisankaneva, which gives critical and very realistic view of the situation in the country. In her chapter Pisankaneva makes one particularly major point - the human rights of the LGBT legislation in the country is improving, that does not mean the social perception is changing drastically but the visibility and awareness of the LGBT issues are surely growing. The access of information is increasing but actual support for LGBT is only offered in the bigger cities which is one of the reasons why people with different sexual orientation choose to move to more urban locations where people are less conservative.

There are couple of nongovernmental organizations offering help but again located in the capital. In Bulgaria, there is a big issue of harassment and bullying of LGBT youths in schools, military and work placements. The harassment often happens in secrecy and due to fear of social criticism and torture victims prefer not to report the incident. Although people in Bulgaria are not very religious people prefer to look up to Christian norms of gender and sexuality. That is one of the main reasons why internalized homophobia is one of the main issues for LGBT in the country. (Pisankaneva, 2005)

In this paragraph I will present relevant findings of a survey conducted by TNS opinion & social at the request of the European Commission and Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers in 2017 on Gender Equality, Stereotypes, and Women in Politics. 81 % of the respondents from Bulgaria agree that the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family. According to the same survey respondents in Bulgaria

are the most likely to stereotype based on gender - 12.4 (in comparison with Finland – 6.1). (Special Eurobarometer 465, 2017) These findings represent the Bulgarian cultural ideology around the traditional family. Religion plays an enormous role in the opinions of the Bulgarian people regarding LGBTI issues and gender equality.

Eastern Orthodox churches are autocephalous, there is consensus on official LGBTQ policy. For example, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese lists homosexuality beside fornication, adultery, abortion and abusive sexual behaviour as “immoral and inappropriate forms of behaviour in and of themselves, and also because they attack the institution of marriage and the family. (Human Rights Campaign, 2018)

On 27th of July, 2018 the Bulgarian Constitutional Court voted to declare the Istanbul Convention unconstitutional. The Convention is the first instrument in Europe to create a comprehensive framework for the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence. (Euractiv, 2018) The 2011 Istanbul Convention has so far been endorsed by 18 European Union member countries. The majority of the Constitutional Court Judges in Bulgaria think that the convention has a hidden agenda to purposefully blur the lines between the two sexes, thus according to them make the fight against domestic violence even harder. (Euractiv, 2018) The acceptance of the Istanbul Convention would have been a step forward towards protecting women from domestic violence.

In a Reuters article it was also discussed the translation of the Conventions text into Bulgarian. The definition of “gender” used in the treaty represents the “social roles, behaviours, activities and characteristics that a particular society considers appropriate for women and men”. (Reuters, 2018)

The Bulgarian version of the treaty translates “gender” with the Bulgarian meaning for “sex”, which represent the biological difference between woman and man, as the Bulgarian language does not have an equivalent for the word “gender”. (Reuters, 2018)

### 3.1.3 Finland

The Nordic countries have always stand out when it comes to implementing gender equality and sexual identity and sexuality acceptance.

Gender equality as a very important aspect of the Finnish culture. Since 1906 women in Finland have the right to vote. Finland's Equality Act first came into force in 1987, promoting equality between men and women and to prohibit gender-based discrimination. The act's goal is to also improve women's status, especially in working life. There is also Employment and Equality Committee in the Finnish Parliament, which meets four times a week during the parliamentary session to discuss issues like the labour force, employment issues and gender equality. (Finnish Institute of Occupation Health, n.d.)

According to The Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Finland actively promotes women's and girls' rights and gender equality in all its foreign and security policy activities, laying special emphasis on women's political and economic participation, the elimination of women's discrimination, and their sexual and reproductive health and rights." (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, n.d.)

When it comes to LGBT issues through official legislations Finland does not support discrimination in the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Homosexuality, gender change (surgery required), same sex marriage (comes into effect in 2017), serving in the military as openly homosexual are legal. LGBT discrimination and employment discrimination are illegal. (Equaldex, 2014)

By law discrimination and unfair treatment in working life are prohibited. Under the Non-Discrimination Act, employers may not discriminate against employees based on age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activities, trade union activities, family ties, health, disability, sexual orientation, gender or other personal characteristics. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, n.d.)

The prohibition of discrimination includes the recruitment process, must continue during the employment relationship until the employment is terminated. Finnish employers at workplaces of all sizes also must promote non-discrimination. And employers who are providing regular employment for minimum of 30 persons are obligated to prepare a plan for promoting non-discrimination. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, n.d.)

## 3.2 HR practices for dealing with gender and sexuality issues

### 3.2.1 In general

In Deborah Ashton's article in Harvard Business Review, "What HR Can Do to Fix the Gender Pay Gap" she gives some examples of what companies are doing and what they can do more to fill the pay gap. According to her monitoring promotions and raises ensures they are bias-free. Performing an annual pay equity analysis can determine if pay is based on relevant variables such as market value and experience. Discussing and defending the distribution of employees' will force managers to set realistic goals with their staff. Supporting transparency in compensation and being explicit about who is responsible for equitable pay is an information that is fair to be shared with employees. (Ashton, 2014)

In the recent years, the HR has been facing many challenges when it comes to LGBT employees, but the biggest ones seem to be the transgender issues. There is an obvious problem with people having prejudice to recruit transgender talents, but it looks like it is an even bigger problem when a worker decides to transition and start living his true self at the workplace. An article by Society of Human Resource Management gives some valuable information on the problem and suggestions how can the HRM department be of more help. The article states that HR can "support employees undergoing gender transition and legally protect the organization by having a thorough understanding of anti-discrimination law and by keeping an eye on developing case law and proposed legislation. HR should ensure that those protections are incorporated into the organization's policies, practices, training and communication initiatives." In the article is discussed the importance of educating and controlling all the co-workers in the organization since even though everyone is entitled to their own opinions a simple respect and tolerance must be shown towards the person in transition. Keeping in mind that non-discrimination policies are different in different countries, "HR should prepare its policies, so it is ready if an employee makes a gender transition, or if a new hire is a transgender person. Preparation includes first updating existing policies and procedures, then creating guidelines for handling gender transition issues. HR departments must also remember to cover these issues in employee training and communications." (Society of Human Resource Management, 2016)

### 3.2.2 Bulgaria

Despite the political and social negative environment, the LGBTI community must face, in the recent years, couple of foundation in the country have been making a tremendous difference.

One of the most active non-governmental organization in Bulgaria GLAS (Gays and Lesbians Accepted in Society), was founded in 2014. The foundation's main goal is to integrate LGBT people in the work environment, promote tolerance and campaign against homophobic hate crime. The organization offers support and information for parents of LGBT people and is on a mission to create a positive change in the community's life. The company held numerous public campaigns with the goal to open a discussion and raise awareness for LGBT discrimination. One of the most important aspect of the foundation's work has been their efforts to break the LGBT's community usually negative portrayal in the Bulgarian media. GLAS also created the business platform Work it OUT, the first network for diversity and equality for LGBT employees in the workplace. This campaign raises awareness through diverse activities and assist local and international businesses in their efforts to diversify their work environment. Work It Out is currently cooperating with 18 organizations including Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise, EY, British Council, SAP and others. (GLAS Foundation, 2019)

Work it Out also released an LGBTI employee manual with information and guidance which can be used from managers and companies. The manual starts with explaining what sexual orientation and sexuality is and why sexual orientation matters in the workplace. It highlights what are the employer benefits of understanding LGBTI employees and touches on the legal framework regarding employee discrimination. The manual then continues giving advice regarding recruitment, promotion and harassment of LGBTI employees and the importance of educating all employees about these issues. Advice is given on how managers can offer support to their LGBTI employees. (Work it Out, 2017)

It is important to mention that it is not easy to find much information on the gender equality and LGBTI discrimination at the workplace topic. Bulgarian media is not very open to write articles on the progress made or the lack of it, but instead focuses on criticising. Often the media tends to cover the controversial events in foreign countries

instead of focusing on domestic issues. For example, using the search word “LGBT” and in Bulgarian “ЛГБТ” in the mainstream media outlets most of the news articles are covering LGBTI topics taking place outside of the country. (see appendix 1a)

There was only one professional media outlet Capital.bg (“Капитал”) which provided intelligently written, educational articles, news and interviews with LGBTI activists. The only downside is that this outlet has a niche audience as it covers mainly economical and business topics. Unfortunately, most of the Bulgarian people are not going to this outlet to read their daily news but hopefully it helps businesses in the country achieve progress when it comes to broadening their LGBTI policies. (see appendix 1b)

The biggest companies in the country have no information on their non-discrimination policies and most of the work towards equality improvement in the country is done by NGOs and activists.

### 3.2.3 Finland

Most of the biggest Finnish companies address their diversity and non-discrimination actions in their annual reports.

For example, in 2018 the Finnish airline Finnair released a new equality and non-discrimination plan for the years 2019-2020. In the report they address the issues of recruitment, wellbeing at work, harassment and inappropriate treatment and their plan for improvement in those areas. (Finnair, 2018)

Many organizations do projects and campaigns to promote diversity and are open to adopt new untraditional ways of recruitment and selecting personnel, which in their nature are less discriminative.

In 2018 the Confederation of Finnish Industries coordinated the launch of equality and non-discrimination campaign #EISYRJI. The main goal of the campaign is to spread awareness to different forms of discrimination in the workplace and give companies the opportunity to take part in standing up against discrimination. More than 400 corporations from different industries became partners. (eisyry.fi,2018)



One of the companies who became a partner was Neste, a Finnish oil refining company and the world's largest producer of renewable diesel. (LinkedIn Neste) In a blog post on their website, written by Hannele Jakosuo-Jansson (Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Safety, Neste), they announced that one of their development areas will be diversity, and more specifically equality in the recruitment process. Jansson shared that an external consultant conducted personnel data analysis in the company for the period 2009 to 2016 and the results were encouraging. The data showed that in Neste gender has no impact on career advancement and the number of women working as supervisors has increased since 2006. In the post Jansson shares her passion for fair treatment in the workplace but admits that real results come from day-to-day actions and constant monitoring. (Neste, 2018)

When big companies show growth in the field of advancing their diversity actions, others usually follow. Setting an example is important for this issue to be taken more seriously.

Finnish cities are also opening to the idea of experimenting with new ways of recruitment processes in order to fight recruitment discrimination. According to a local news agency "Yle", capital region cities experimented with blind recruitment and saw encouraging results. (Yle, 2018)

#### **4 Quantitative Research Method**

Many things can be said about diversity in theory but for this paper to represent the reality of the situation an interview was conducted with a successful and highly experienced HR Manager. It was an important requirement for the interviewee to be naturally passionate about helping people and someone who has built their career by aspiring to better the workplace environment. It was also important to have a woman's perspective on the diversity and gender equality issues.

#### 4.1 About the interviewee

My interviewee decided to stay anonymous in order to protect her privacy and professional status. Introducing and sharing the interviewee's background is an important aspect of understanding her answers and humanizing the HR department. Her personal journeys have a deep impact on her professional views.

The interviewee studied Social Psychology and Communication in Helsinki University; a degree very fitting to her natural interest in working with people. Despite achieving her dream to study psychology, being a therapist seemed too "mathematical and illness focused science". She ended up working for 10 years as a Communications Manager for different magazines, and even though she enjoyed the work she knew this was not what she was meant to do. She and her husband lived in Copenhagen for some years, during which she worked briefly as web editor. They later moved to Frankfurt she spent three and a half years as a stay at home mom, taking care of her three kids. The family returned to Finland in 2005 and that was when she decided it is time for her to focus on HR and "start truly working with people". Thanks to her education and motivation she managed to find a job as a recruiter. According to her the three-year period she spends there was a great learning experience and after that she moved on to become HR Consultant in several companies. This aspect of her career makes the interviewee's opinions of great value for the outcome of the interview, as it is extremely important that she was able to observe the environment in many different companies. Today she is a HR Manager, responsible for all HR activities in the company and she shares she is finally at a place where she feels like she is fulfilling her desire to make working life a better experience in Finland.

#### 4.2 Interview Outcome

The interviewee answered all my questions sharing only her personal experiences. As the topic of gender inequality, harassment and discrimination since sexual orientation and gender identity are sensitive topics, the questions asked are more focused on her observations of the overall situation in Finland, rather than focusing on specific cases.

The interviewee answered she has never had a negative experience as a woman in her industry since HR is a very female dominated position and that she only once felt discrimination on the workplace, when she was first pregnant. She was not given important clients due to her approaching maternity leave and her salary did not get as high as she was promised during the recruitment process.

Pregnancy discrimination is a sensitive topic but one worthy of discussion. In 2018 the Equality and Human Rights Commission of England, Scotland and Wales published the results of a study, conducted by YouGov, which showed some alarming findings.

A third (36%) of private sector employers agree that it is reasonable to ask women about their plans to have children in the future during recruitment.

Six in 10 employers (59%) agree that a woman should have to disclose whether she is pregnant during the recruitment process.

Almost half (46%) of employers agree it is reasonable to ask women if they have young children during the recruitment process.

40% of employers claim to have seen at least one pregnant woman in their workplace 'take advantage' of their pregnancy.

Four in 10 (41%) employers agreed that pregnancy in the workplace puts 'an unnecessary cost burden' on the workplace.

Half (51%) of employers agree that there is sometimes resentment amongst employees towards women who are pregnant or on maternity leave.

Around a third (36%) of employers disagree that it is easy to protect expectant or new mothers from discrimination in the workplace. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018)

In her thesis work "Women Working in Finland: Experiences of Discrimination in the Workplace and in Recruitment", Kiira Joutsen (2019) conducted an anonymous survey aiming to find out what types of discrimination women have experienced in Finland. The women were asked in an open question if they had experienced any discrimination during the recruitment process. According to Joutsen's survey most of the women who had experienced discrimination revealed that the situations were generally about women's current family situation and future family planning. (Joutsen, 2019)

In the interview, conducted for this paper this issue was addressed and the interviewee was asked for her opinion and experience. She shared that she has not faced these questions nor situations, but she points out that might be because she advises the other interviewers not to ask any discriminating questions. The interviewee adds:

In general companies search mainly certain, specified talent, not a woman nor man. In engineering companies it's even positive if there are female candidates, and the choice between two equally talented and experienced candidates often is that the female will be chosen.

On the question whether there is more to be done for women to be treated equally in the workplace, the interviewee answered that in Finland, especially when it comes to equal pay in most companies the salary ranges are well in line between the genders. She mentions that only in start-up companies there might be differences in what women and men are payed. She goes on to share that in her opinion it is very much up to the women to decide if they want to pursue a career or ask for higher pay:

It's also a question of self-esteem and self-confidence: the more women value their talent and experience, the more the others do too.

The interviewee mentions that the situation is different in the public health and school sector since most employees are women and the salaries are traditionally low, but the change in this sector depends on political decisions.

On the matter of how LGBTI persons are treated in workplace in Finnish companies the interviewee shared that in her experience she has not faced any discriminating situations herself. Coming out in the workplace environment as argued already in this paper is one of the biggest challenges for LGBTI employees and the interviewee shared she had the same observations. On the matter of what are the usual measures HR departments take when LGBTI employees are being harassed, the interviewee made it clear that not following the No Discrimination Act is unacceptable. If discriminative behaviour is notice in the workplace the Manager (or HR if Manager is absent) the first action would be a verbal warning and then a written one. If the harassment is to continue after that, the bullying employee can get fired. The interviewee also commented on companies updating their diversity practices:

Yes, companies must have the annually revised legal plans regarding equality and parity at the workplace. Also, statistics about gender, salary comparison between men and women in same jobs, etc. are done on yearly basis. Recruitment policy

also says that LGBTQ topics can't be a reason for rejection in the recruitment process.

The interviewee's views on the topic of how Finnish companies and Finland as a country are progressing when it comes to LGBTI employee issues, are that even though there is progress made compared to previous year, there is certainly more to be done. She noted that it also might be a matter of which part of the country we are taking into consideration. In her opinion the people living in the main regions tend to be more liberal and tolerant, but the situation may be different in the more remote parts of the country. According to my interviewee when companies employ people with different background, it diversifies the working place and that becomes the new normal.

In an open question the interviewee was asked to share anything she would like to address regarding gender equality and discrimination at work and this is what she had to say:

There is less talk about good experiences than bad ones, and I'm sure there are more positive than negative stories about equality these days. Another thing is that there is the biological fact that men can't have babies, but they are able to take care of them after the birth. The choice of staying at home should be easier for men and to make this economically possible for young families, women should be more ambitious and courageous to proceed to better paid jobs. I think women are sometimes too kind and shy to stand for their rights, and also to believe in themselves: I can do this, I'm a true professional and I'm worth this amount of salary.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis work managed to answer the research questions to a large extend. The first part of the paper, which is a collective research of the main issues regarding Gender Equality and LGBTI topics, laid the foundation of the deeper understanding of these terms.

Exploring the relationship between Femininity, Masculinity and Gender Inequality proved the idea that stereotypes of men and women and what they should represent are deeply rooted in our society. That directly correlates with why so many people still have a hard time recognizing that the human gender dimension is way more complicated than simply being either male or female. These stereotypes are often

translated in the workplace and that is why they are so important for organizations to consider.

The research explored the LGBTI issues that can occur in the workplace and how businesses can be affected by the discrimination of these employees. The logical outcome from this analysis was that for organizations to be able to implement the correct actions for protecting their LGBTI employees, they need to be familiar with the specific issues' lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons could face. Educating Managers and co-workers is the most important step in achieving diverse work environment. A deeper research was conducted focusing on transgender and intersex employees work struggles. Unfortunately, the research showed that even when companies are implementing LGBTI inclusive policies, very rarely those actions are targeting transgender and intersex issues.

Analysing the current situation regarding equality issues in Finland and Bulgaria was crucial for this thesis to be able to answer to some extent the question: "What more can the HR do to diversify the workplace?". Comparing two countries both within the European Union and yet so different in their focus of what is important when it comes to developing society was a very interesting quest. This comparison showed that even though there are equality and non-discrimination laws existing in both countries, there is a difference of how these laws are implemented in organizations.

In Bulgaria there is still an existent gender pay gap and culture and religion have a massive impact on people's opinions. The media in the country has very little positive or educational coverage of the LGBTI community and declaring the Istanbul Convention unconstitutional, mainly because it was misunderstood, was a big step backwards for the society. Most of the information, education and improving the overall situation of LGBTI persons is a task done by NGO's in the country.

In Finland, except from the existing equality and protective laws, it becomes clear that most of the organizations really try to promote and focus on diversity. Local municipalities also show initiative to improve the conditions of the recruitment process.

The interview conducted as a quantitative research method was extremely helpful for exploring the situation beyond the law. The woman interviewed, has such an interesting career and the fact that she worked as an HR Consultant in many companies was particularly important as she observed many different work environments. The outcome of the interview was positive in the sense that it did become clear that Finnish companies do try to follow the laws and are inclusive of LGBTI, but also because the interviewee admitted there is still more to be done. That is important because there is always more to be done and if HR Managers realize that, then there will always be room for progress.

Here are some example actions, suggested by Work it Out in their LGBT employers guide, which companies can adopt to diversify the workplace and fight discrimination. The improvement starts with the recruitment process, so companies can observe and find out if their current employees and job applicants are diverse in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity. Companies should have clear non-discrimination policies and educate their staff on LGBTI issues and protection. Including the organizations position on equality when listing a job position, can help attracting talents from different minority groups, thus diversify the recruitment process and later the workplace. Managers should be trained in recognizing and dealing with any type of harassment. Different ways of filing a harassment complaint should be available, including anonymous reporting so LGBT people who are not out in the workplace, still feel like they can be protected. An ongoing program for educating the current and future staff how LGBTI persons should be treated needs to be adopted. All employees should also be encouraged to signal if they witness any inappropriate behaviour toward any of their co-workers. Organizations should also monitor all parts of their business, analyse the data and take actions on improving the diversity situation. And most importantly superiors need to take advice from their existing LGBTI employees, which will show that the company is truly trying to do their best to protect them and make it a better place for the future LGBTI employees. (Work it Out, 2017)

Organizations around the world need to never stay satisfied with the progress they have made towards inequality and discrimination, but instead always thinking of what is there more to be done! Laws need to change in many countries for this world to one day achieve full equality, but organizations should create their own rules and protect

their employees from discrimination, even if they are not protected by the law. Through research this paper proved that businesses can only gain from diversifying their environment and staff, thus this should become a priority.

On average people spend 13 years of their life at work (Huffingtonpost, 2017) which makes the workplace one of the most important environments in peoples' day-to-day life. People spend years preparing for their work lives and everyone should be given the same opportunity to be chosen for a job and to be able to feel safe and productive once at the workplace. Work environment should be diverse and only concerned with peoples' work value and productivity levels.



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## LGBT mainstream media coverage in Bulgaria

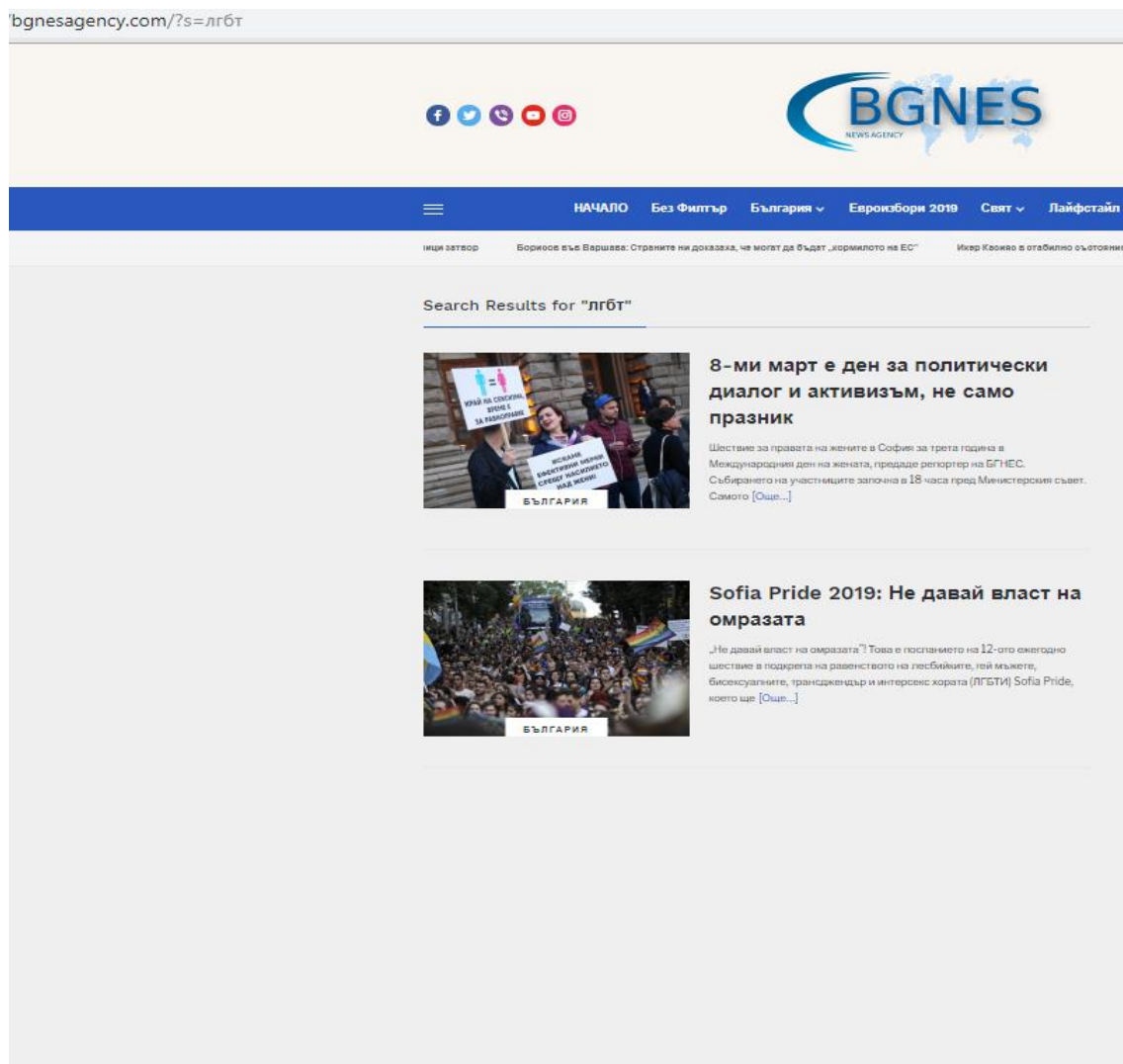


Image 1. The single two search results for LGBT in the BGNES news agency website.

https://www.24chasa.bg/Search?what=лгбт

**ТЪРСЕНЕ (ЛГБТ)**

**Тейлър Суифт дари 113 000 долара на гейове**  
 Възход и падение | 09.04.2019 16:55; 24 часа онлайн 756;  
 Певицата Тейлър Суифт дари 113 000 долара на ЛГБТ организация, за да помогне в борбата ѝ срещу законодателството в щата Тенеси за ограничаване на правата на гейовете и транссексуалните, събщи Ройтерс, цитирана от БТА Организацията Проект за равенство в Тенеси се стреми да спре приемането на закони, ограничаващи правата на ЛГБТ общността,

**Хомосексуалните политици в САЩ вече няма нужда да се крият, за да успеят на избори**  
 Свят | 04.04.2019 15:50; 24 часа онлайн 566;  
 В наши дни в САЩ, поне в Демократическата партия, хомосексуалността вече не е пречка пред политическата кариера: във вторник лесбийка беше избрана за първи път за кмет на Чикаго, а изненадващо появил се кандидат за надпреварата за Белия дом е млад кмет гей. На парламентарните избори през ноември вече беше подобрен един рекорд.

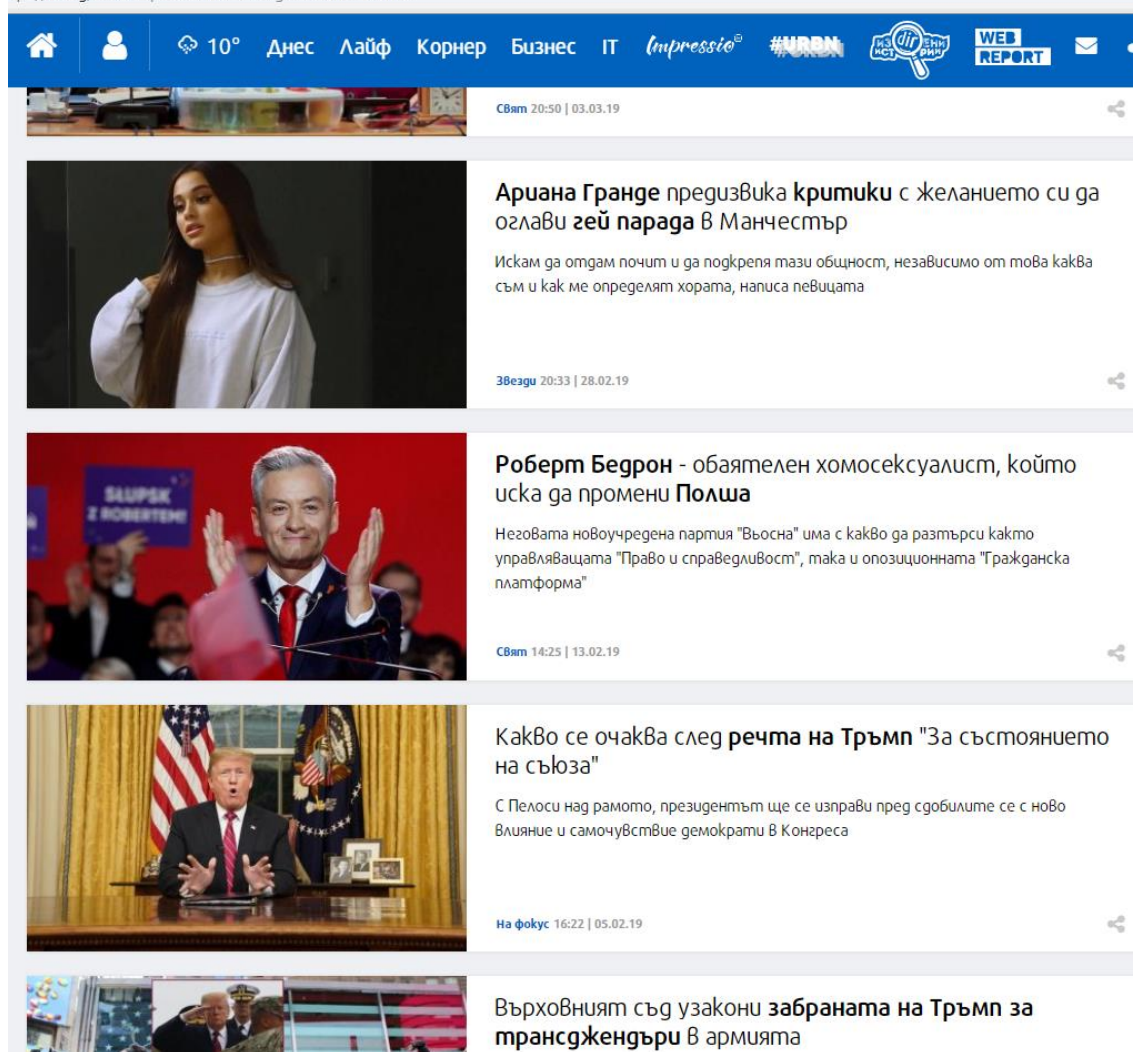
**Първият гей парад в Босна и Херцеговина е планиран за 8 септември в Сараево**  
 Свят | 02.04.2019 10:33; 24 часа онлайн 240;  
 Първият гей парад в Босна и Херцеговина е планиран за 8 септември в Сараево, съобщиха организаторите, цитирани от агенция Франс прес и БТА. "Босна най-сетне ще има свой Парад на гордостта, който е протест против неравенството и нарушаването на човешките права на ЛГБТ общността", заяви Бранко Чулибрък, един от организаторите,

**Крайната десница в Украйна става все по-видима с приближаването на президентските избори**  
 Свят | 27.03.2019 15:58; 24 часа онлайн 1904;  
 С приближаването на президентските избори в Украйна ултранационалистките групи в страната стават все по-видими, което представлява проблем за Запада. По-рано този месец хиляди крайнодесни активисти демонстрираха пред сградата на администрацията на сегашния президент Петро Порошенко, като скандираха против предполагаемата корупция и хвърляха

**Черна гора даде 11 700 евро за промяна на пола на свой гражданин**  
 Свят | 27.03.2019 08:49; 24 часа онлайн 1172;  
 Черногорският Фонд за здравно осигуряване /ФЗО/ е одобрил миналата година на член на ЛГБТ общността (лесбийки, гейове, бисексуални, транссексуални) да промени пола си на разноски на държавата, съобщава черногорският в "Дневне новине". Операцията е извършена в клиника в Бялград, а разходите за нея са стовъжали на фона на 11 700

Image 2. Search results from the website of mainstream newspaper "24hours"

https://dir.bg/search?q=лрбт&site=&range=&order=&date=



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the dir.bg website with icons for home, user profile, weather (10°), and various news categories: Днес, Лайф, Корнер, Бизнес, IT, Impresio, #HBDN, WEB REPORT, and a search icon. Below the navigation bar, four search results are displayed, each with a thumbnail image, a headline, a short summary, and a timestamp.


- Result 1:** Ariana Grande is featured in a video thumbnail. The headline is "Ариана Гранде предизвика критику с желанието си да оглави гей парада в Манчестър". The summary states: "Искам да отдам почит и да подкрепя тази общност, независимо от това каква съм и как ме определят хората, написа певицата". The timestamp is "Свят 20:50 | 03.03.19".
- Result 2:** Robert Biedron is shown in a video thumbnail. The headline is "Роберт Бедрон - обаятелен хомосексуалист, който иска да промени Полша". The summary states: "Неговата новоучредена партия 'Въсна' има с какво да разтърси както управляващата 'Право и справедливост', така и опозиционната 'Гражданска платформа'". The timestamp is "Свят 14:25 | 13.02.19".
- Result 3:** Donald Trump is shown in a video thumbnail. The headline is "Какво се очаква след речта на Тръмп 'За състоянието на съюза'". The summary states: "С Пелоси над рамото, президентът ще се изправи пред събилите се с ново влияние и самочувствие демократи в Конгреса". The timestamp is "На фокус 16:22 | 05.02.19".
- Result 4:** A video thumbnail shows a man in a military uniform. The headline is "Върховният съд узакони забраната на Тръмп за трансгендъри в армията".


Image 3. Search results from the website of a mainstream online media "dir.bg"





https://www.capital.bg/search.php?advsearch=&text=лгбт&tAction=Търсене&fromdate=&todate=&rubrid=0&searchinto=0&backurl=&selfurl=&for\_n  
 вката на Капитал за Google Chrome. С нея получавате известия за избрани от вас новини от Капитал директно в брауъра.


поставени теми като правата на ЛГБТ общности и правото на жените  
5394 прочитания


7 окт 2018 // СВЯТ /  
 Йоан Запрянов  **Брет Кавано бе одобрен за върховен съдия в САЩ**  
 поставени теми като правата на ЛГБТ общности и правото на жените  
4199 прочитания

6 окт 2018 // МНЕНИЯ /  
 Капитал  **Мнения Daily: Референдумът в Румъния - обикновена хомофобия или политическа ...**  
 записан и в конституцията. Румънската ЛГБТ общност е силно притеснена от  
4188 прочитания

2 авг 2018 // ЛИЦА /  
 Капитал  **20 въпроса: Деница Любенова**  
 , част от Младешка ЛГБТ организация "Действие". Призоваването на ЛГБТ семействата в България  
34612 прочитания

30 юли 2018 // БЪЛГАРИЯ /  
 Капитал  **Вечерни новини: Съдебна победа на екозащитници за "Пирин", Гинка Върбакова ...**  
 нахлува в няколко популярни про ЛГБТ настроени нощни клубове с официален  
6017 прочитания

27 юли 2018 // NEXT GENERATION /  
 Гюргана Михайлова  **ГЛАСът на различните**  
 ", "Действие" или БИЛИТИС? Като други ЛГБТ организации и при нас движещи  
56099 прочитания

10 юли 2018 // МЕДИА И РЕКЛАМА /  
 Сирна Пенкова, Кристиан Стефанов  **Седмичен бюлетин за маркетинг и реклама (10 юли)**  
 съдържа зов за подкрепа на ЛГБТ движението, заради което е била  
3035 прочитания

1 2 3 4 »

Image 4. Search results from the website of mainstream business newspaper "Capital.bg"

## Interview Transcript

Q. 1. Can you give me a little background on your career? Why did you choose to work in HR?

I'm a people-person and I always wanted to work with and for other people. After the high school (and after one gap year in Paris) I started to study social psychology and communication at the Helsinki University. I had always dreamed of studying psychology, but it seemed to be too mathematical and illness focused science, and I didn't want to work as a therapist for the rest of my life which I thought that time was the mainstream for graduated psychologists. I also liked to write stories and edit others' texts, so after graduating by coincidence I started working for communications agencies as a Communications Manager, editor and writer for different magazines for almost 10 years. It was great fun, teamwork with photographers and other creative people. But this wasn't what I had been planning to do...

After meeting my husband and the birth of our first child, my husband got an offer to work in Denmark where we moved in 1997. Our second child was born there, and I continued to work for my employer from home in Copenhagen. In 1999 we realized that we didn't want to return to Finland, yet, so I quit my job and found a new job in Copenhagen as a web editor in a totally new branch that time. After 2,5 years part-time employment my employer closed the Copenhagen office. This was perfect timing because my husband was offered a job in Frankfurt, Germany, where we moved at the beginning of 2002. There our third child was born in 2002 and I was 100% housewife / home mom i.e. fully employed by my family Great 3,5 years, I must say even I didn't have any choice (not in Germany).

After returning to Finland in 2005 I decided to focus more on HR and start truly working with people. I started to look for HR positions. It took a while and wasn't easy with basically zero HR experience, but thanks to my education, motivation and good contacts I succeeded in finding a job as a recruiter at Mercuri Urval. That was an excellent 3-year-period to learn a lot about recruiting and after that period I've been working as a HR Consultant in several companies through my employer Accountor

HR4. Today I'm a HR Manager responsible for all HR activities in the company and full filling my desire to make better working life in Finland.

Q.2. Have you ever had any negative experiences as a woman in your industry?

No, never (80% of HR people are women...)

Q.3. Have you ever felt discriminated in your workplace?

Only once, when I was first time pregnant and my employer said that they can't give me the most important customers because of the approaching maternity leave. Also, due to my pregnancy my salary didn't get as high as they promised during the recruitment process.

Q.4. Have you had cases of women being harassed or discriminated in their workplace?

No, I haven't taken care any of these incidents myself, but I've heard that my colleagues have, unfortunately.

Q.5. Have you had any experiences with LGBTQ employees during your career?

Some, but they have been treated equally and been part of the employee group. Often, they have not been openly lesbians/homos.

Q.6. What are your observations regarding how LGBTQ employees are treated in a workplace environment?

I've not so much experience of these situations but for LGBTQ people it's also difficult to be openly themselves in the working environment. But in most of the companies they are treated equally and as a part of all the employees.

Q.7. What are the tools HR departments are actively using in order to protect LGBTQ employees on being harassed at their workplace?

We are not allowed by law to discriminate anyone due to his/her sexual preference, religion, age, political opinions, etc. That's an absolute no-go. If such behaviour is noticed in the working place, Manager (or HR if Manager is absent) must at once take an action and talk to the person(s) not behaving accordingly. The first action is to give a verbal warning and then a written one. For the next harassment incident, the bullying person can get fired.

Q.8. Do you have any observations if companies are updating their HR practices as the world evolves when it comes to LGBTQ rights in the workplace?

Yes, companies must have the annually revised legal plans regarding equality and parity at the workplace. Also, statistics about gender, salary comparison between men and women in same jobs, etc. are done on yearly basis. Recruitment policy also says that LGBTQ topics can't be a reason for rejection in the recruitment process.

Q.9. In your opinion, is Finland progressed enough when it comes to protecting LGBTQ employees?

There is a lot of progress compared to previous years, but is it enough, I'm not sure. Not in all branches, and the geographically differences are huge. Within Ring 3 (Kehä 3) people are very liberal and tolerant, and highly educated, but f. ex. in North Karelia the situation can be very different.

Q.10. As a professional, do you think there is more to be done for women to be treated equally in the workplace?

In most companies the salary ranges are well in line between the genders. Only in small and start-up companies it might be wilder, and more differences can be found between men and women. In my opinion it's very much up to the women themselves if they want to make career and ask for more salary. It's also a question of self-esteem and self-confident: the more women value their talent and experience, the more do the others, too.

The situation in the public health and school sector is another story: most of the employees are women and salaries are traditionally low. But it's a political decision to make improvements here.

Q.11. Finland is a country which strongly promotes gender equality. Finnish women in general are well educated and strive for independency. Despite the general impression that in Finland women have equal rights, I have repetitively been told by my female peers that when it comes to the recruitment process, women still face discrimination. Women are often asked inappropriate questions while on a job interview, f.ex. if they plan on having children soon. Can you comment or give your opinion on this subject?

I have not faced these questions nor situations. It's perhaps I tell the other interviewers not to ask discriminating questions but yes, some interviewers do ask these, either they don't know what is allowed and what's not or they just don't care. In general companies search mainly certain, specified talent, not a woman nor man. In engineering companies it's even positive if there are female candidates, and the choice between two equally talented and experienced candidates often is that the female will be chosen.

Q.12. As an HR professional with years of experience, what do you think should be done more or differently, so gender and sexual orientation discrimination does not take place in a work environment?

Companies should employ more people with different backgrounds; no matter of the gender, age, sexual preference, nationality, religion, political opinions, etc. When we have diversity around us, it becomes a new normal and this way, we'll have more equal and tolerant working environment and company culture. The same applies to the Finnish society.

Q.13. If there is anything you consider important for the subject and I did not address, please do not hesitate to add.

There is less talk about good experiences than bad ones, and I'm sure there are more positive than negative stories about equality these days.

Another thing is that there is the biological fact that men can't have babies, but they are able to take care of them after the birth. The choice of staying at home should be easier for men and to make this economically possible for young families, women should be more ambitious and courageous to proceed to better paid jobs. I think women are sometimes too kind and shy to stand for their rights, and to believe in themselves: I can do this, I'm a true professional and I'm worth this amount of salary.