

IENE 9 Project: Developing a Culturally Competent and
Compassionate LGBT+ Curriculum in Health and Social Care
Education

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Abstract

Introduction. The IENE projects (2008-2022) aim to promote a model for developing intercultural dialogue and enhance the ability to provide culturally competent and compassionate care for the health and social care professionals at national and European levels. The IENE 9 project, named “Developing a culturally competent and compassionate LGBT+ curriculum in health and social care education”, builds on the work developed in the previous IENE projects and emphasises the importance of addressing LGBT+ issues in health and social care education. **Method.** Through an innovative Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), professionals will learn the skills to work towards building an LGBT+ inclusive health and social care system. **Result.** Notwithstanding the progress made in recent years on LGBT+ issues, research indicates that too little attention has been given to LGBT+ needs in health and social care settings, and these remain substantial issues that are often ignored. **Conclusion.** This letter to the editor aims to present the IENE 9 project given that greater efforts are needed to improve professionals’ skills regarding sexual and gender minority population. We strive to continue our efforts in promoting the well-being and mental health of LGBT+ people in health and social care education.

Keywords: LGBT+, compassionate curricula, health and social care, research, intercultural education

**IENE 9 Project: Developing a Culturally Competent and
Compassionate LGBT+ Curriculum in Health and Social Care Education**

Dear Editor,

The “Intercultural Education for Nurses, and other healthcare professionals, in Europe” (IENE) EU-funded projects aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of professionals in health and social care settings, promoting intercultural dialogue and the development of the ability to provide culturally competent and compassionate care at national and European levels. Overall, since 2008 there have been ten projects within the IENE programme, demonstrating the interest of the European ERASMUS+ programme to improve culturally competent compassion attitudes of health and social care professionals. Such attitudes can be acquired by undergoing specific training, resulting in better awareness, knowledge, and competencies (*Author blinded*, 2006, 2018; Taylor et al., 2011).

The ninth research project, named “*Developing a culturally competent and compassionate LGBT+ curriculum in health and social care education (IENE 9)*”, aims to enable professionals to enhance their competence regarding LGBT+ topics through the development of a culturally competent and compassionate LGBT+ curriculum in seven European countries: United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Germany, Cyprus, Italy, and Romania. Research shows a lack of coverage of LGBT+ needs in health and social care settings (Ercan Sahin & Aslan, 2020; McCann & Brown, 2018): The official public health agencies (Baiocco et al., 2021; Bränström & van der Star, 2013) indicate that health and social care professionals must provide quality services that are free from discrimination and sexual stigma (Baiocco & Pistella, 2019; Hässler et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2019). Thus, the need to have a more inclusive and supportive health and social care curriculum to include LGBT+ issues is key to education (Higgins et al., 2019; Nagrale et al., 2020).

Through an analysis of challenges faced during recent years (laws protecting LGBT+ people from discrimination, research reports, scientific literature, resources, etc.) at the

national and European level, the IENE 9 project emphasises the importance of addressing LGBT+ issues in health and social care education. Indeed, during the last decades, official public health agencies called for bias reduction programmes addressing the specific needs of LGBT+ patients (Baiocco & Pistella, 2019; Bränström & van der Star, 2013; Morris et al., 2019), given that evidence showed there was a need to ensure that health and social care professionals are competent to deliver care to LGBT+ individuals (Carr & Pezzella, 2017; Higgins et al., 2019; Youatt et al., 2017). Despite this increased awareness from public agencies, the discrimination against LGBT+ people in health and social care continues to occur (Baiocco et al., 2021; Davy & Siriwardena, 2012; ILGA, 2020; Sherriff et al., 2019), as well as a lack of resources and teaching material on LGBT+ issues (Donaldson & Vacha-Haase, 2016; Youatt et al., 2017).

IENE 9 promotes innovative methods and pedagogies by developing learning materials and tools and an innovative Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for Culturally Competent and Compassionate LGBT+ training of health and social care professionals in Europe. The free MOOC aims to improve the quality of care delivered by health and social care professionals, increasing the knowledge on the needs of LGBT+ patients and the role of sexual prejudice and discrimination (Baiocco et al., 2021) and acquiring relevant competencies, such as intercultural, social, and digital skills (*Author blinded*, 2018). Thus, through the development of a culturally competent and compassionate LGBT+ curriculum, the health and social care professionals will acquire the skills to build an LGBT+ supportive and inclusive health and social care system (*Author blinded*, 2018; Sekoni et al., 2017).

In particular, the MOOC comprises of five modules (Figure 1) corresponding to fundamental issues in creating a beneficial and effective practice for LGBT+ service users (*Author blinded*, 2006, 2018): (1) Module 1 on *culturally competent and compassionate awareness*, will deepen the relevance of the sexual orientation, gender identity, stereotypes and sexual stigma; (2) module 2 on *culturally competent and compassionate knowledge*,

focuses on culturally competent and compassionate language, barriers and facilitators to meet LGBT+ patients' health and social care needs and learning needs; (3) module 3 on *culturally competent and compassionate sensitivity*, focuses on interpersonal communication, tolerance and compassion in health and social care settings, (4) module 4 on *culturally competent and compassionate practice*, training the professionals about phenomena of homophobic and transphobic discrimination, safeguarding and advocacy, and; (5) module 5 that is a synthesis and assessment module.

Insert Figure 1 around here

Limitations and Clinical Significance

To conclude, the evidence seems to suggest that health and social care professionals must be trained to adopt strategies that reduce stereotypes and negative attitudes towards sexual and gender minority individuals, increasing access to care by LGBT+ people and reducing health disparities (Baiocco & Pistella 2019; Ercan Sahin & Aslan, 2020). We believe that too little attention has been focussed on LGBT+ issues in health and social care education. Therefore, more significant efforts are mandatory to improve the awareness and knowledge about LGBT+ issues, and culturally competent and compassionate interventions are needed to enhance professionals' specific and relevant skills (Baiocco et al., 2021; Papadopoulos et al., 2016; Yarhouse et al., 2018). In response to these challenges, the IENE 9 project is promoting the inclusion of LGBT+ issues within health and social care curricula: Despite progress made in recent years, we are aware that much work remains to be done regarding the LGBT+ issues in European health and social care settings, but we strive to continue our efforts to reduce the sexual stigma and improve the well-being of sexual and gender minority individuals.

The "IENE projects" can be accessed through these links: <http://ieneproject.eu/>

The "IENE 9 project" can be accessed through this link: <https://iene-lgbt.com/>

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Data Availability Statement: The dataset generated for the IENE projects are available on project webpages (<http://ieneproject.eu/>; <https://ienerefugeehub.eu/>; <https://iene7.eu/>; <https://iene-lgbt.com/>).

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