

LGBT Denmark

The Danish National Organisation for Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender persons

An NGO working with gender identity and sexual orientation

Sensed and expressed

Gender is more than male and female. Sexual orientation is more than heterosexuality. A society which does not recognise this is excluding and discriminating.

We all have a sense of our own gender and to which gender we are attracted. Some of us come to understand that we do not fit the gender the majority attribute to us, or are not attracted to the gender the majority think one is attracted to. We can then start to express the gender we sense or express the attraction to our own or both genders – the step from sensed to expressed – the coming out.

Biology and law

Our society and law is to a large extent based on the understanding that the world consists of males and females who breed with each other. Gender is considered to be given at birth and permanent. A couple consists of a man and a woman, and a family is a father and a mother and their children. The law adheres closely to this biologicistic philosophy. A few exceptions have been made regarding e.g. gender reassignment and same-sex couples. But these are precise exceptions. The reason, of course, is that to the majority of the population the biological, the sensed, and the expressed gender is one and the same, and the majority is attracted to the opposite gender and forms families accordingly.

We disagree. Gender identity and sexual orientation are social and cultural constructs. We recognise that there is a biological side to gender in the form of e.g. chromosomes and sexual organs, but not, however, that the biological sex is above sensed and expressed gender. We recognise that there is a biological side to reproduction, but not that a family is defined on the basis of this. We recognise that many people prefer to live in a nuclear family, but not that a nuclear family should consist of only one or two adults and possibly children.

The three pillars

LGBT Denmark has three pillars:

Political work: Through political work on all levels we seek to improve the understanding and recognition of an inclusive and diverse perception of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counselling and information: Through personal counselling we help people to understand themselves and their situation. This can be in relation to personal issues as well as to laws and regulations etc. Through providing information we seek to ensure that society is well educated about LGBT-persons.

Social activities: Things happen when people get together. Therefore we create networks and groups. Because we embrace a very broad group, there is often a need or wish for smaller forums, e.g. lesbian seniors, transgender people, gays with cultural interests, political bisexuals, or families with children. All this we implemented in the following policy agenda.

Policy agenda for

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Vision

Our vision is

a world and a society with equal opportunities for all regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation, and where this is implemented in human rights, which are endorsed and respected by all.

All humans should have equal opportunities to make use of their potentials to live their lives for the benefit of themselves and society. Also people who experience having another gender identity or sexual orientation than the majority should have these possibilities in full. Human rights is a living thing, which develops continuously e.g. in the form of conventions and case law. In a society which gives equal opportunities to all regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation, this is reflected in the human rights, which are recognised by all.

Mission

Our mission is

- *to work on local, national, European as well as an international level for the development of the political, economic, social and cultural structures to respect a diverse and inclusive understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation.*
- *to be an advocacy organisation and defender of persons who are discriminated against because of gender identity or sexual orientation in any level of society.*
- *to work to ensure security and to help the individual to live and act in accordance with gender identity and sexual orientation.*

As an organisation we wish to influence all societal structures to promote an inclusive world in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation. This we consider a gain to the individual as well as to society.

We do this because there are people who presently do not have equal opportunities, and we work to safeguard the interests of this group.

Rights are hollow if they cannot be applied by those concerned. Too often it is seen that persons do not have the possibility to make use of a formal right to live in concordance with one's gender identity and sexual orientation. Therefore we wish to ensure safety and give each person the possibility to influence his or her own life.

Values

We emphasise and work according to these values:

- *respect for, and recognition of, human rights,*
- *respect for, and recognition of, diversity,*
- *solidarity with other groups discriminated against,*
- *openness, transparency, and inclusion in our work.*

Human rights is and shall be the common language in which we express rights. Without a common language nothing can be achieved.

Society is diverse, and this diversity must be acknowledged and reflected. Therefore principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment must be mainstreamed and implemented in all public and private enterprise and in the development of regulations and policies.

Discrimination is basically the same regardless of its reason. It does not make sense to rank the possible grounds for discrimination, and it is pointless to fight discrimination based on some grounds but not on others. All discrimination must be fought including multiple discrimination.

It is important to us that an organisation is open, transparent and based on active participation in a democratic process to make room for people and opinions. Only in this way we can constantly develop.

Rights principles

We base our work on two rights principles.

- *Individual rights: each person has the right to recognition and respect of gender identity and sexual orientation.*
- *Life-sharing rights: society must acknowledge and respect different life-sharing structures.*

A person's gender identity and sexual orientation is the result of an individual realisation. It is never for other people to define.

A person's gender identity is based on a multifaceted gender: the biological, the sensed and the expressed gender. Similarly the sexual orientation is the relation between the sensed gender of the individual and the expressed gender of the person one is attracted to.

It is the sensed and the expressed gender, and the sensed and expressed sexual orientation, which should be the subject of rights formulations and regulations.

Many people live together in families, e.g. couples or parents with children. The parties themselves are the ones to define the family. Families might look in different ways: it can be, for example, couples of the same or different sex, more adults living together, or a family with children and two or more parents. Families must have equal opportunities and must be recognised equally with due regard to individual rights including children's rights.

Methods

We use these methods to achieve our goals:

- *Lobbying on all political levels: local, national, European and international.*
- *Cooperating with other organisations for discriminated groups.*
- *Pooling and disseminating information.*
- *Informing and educating.*
- *Counselling and supporting individuals, groups, institutions and companies.*
- *Social networking.*
- *Making discrimination on grounds of gender identity or sexual orientation visible.*

To achieve our goals it is necessary for a broad approach with many instruments. We base all our work on objectivity to assure a solid basis for e.g. decision-makers and communicators, and to ensure that anyone can feel safe seeking information and support from us.