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Slovenia

National Report

**Good practices on legal & policy
interventions regarding LGBTQIA+
inclusion**

December 2024

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1. Aim of the National Reports

The aim of national reports is to map -starting from desk research- existing good practices and positive legal and/or political interventions in partners' countries in regard to the support given to the LGBTQIA+ communities, with emphasis to young people and the compliance with the EU standards, in order to identify problematic areas.

Desk research has been conducted by each partner organization for mapping the current situation and existing good practices at local/regional/national level. In particular, partners identified the following common criteria for the identification of good practices:

- Identification of at least 10 good practices per country;
- Emphasis on the mental health of LGBTQIA+ young people and their experiences;
- Provision of a detailed description for each good practice, so as to inspire policy recommendations.

Partners analyzed the existing practices based on the following:

- Typology of practice (legal, policy, action plan, etc.);
- Level of the initiative (local, regional, national);
- Sector (education, work, etc.);
- Target group(s)/beneficiaries;
- Promoter(s);
- Responsible and contact person(s)/body.

2. Introduction to Slovenian Report

This report compiles ten exemplary practices that aim to support the mental health of LGBTIQ+ youth in Slovenia. Our investigation was conducted on a nationwide scale, initially focusing on policies developed to enhance the mental well-being of this community. However, during the course of our research, it became evident that there is a scarcity of comprehensive, policy-based initiatives dedicated specifically to LGBTIQ+ mental health. This gap highlighted the need to broaden our approach to include a wider range of practices.

In response, we expanded our investigation to incorporate good practices from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions, which have been instrumental in addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ youth at the community level. These grassroots and institutional efforts offer practical, innovative solutions and create supportive environments where LGBTIQ+ youth can thrive.

NGOs in Slovenia have been pivotal in filling the void left by the lack of formal policies, offering essential services such as counseling, safe spaces, and advocacy. Their work often extends beyond traditional mental health support, integrating social inclusion, empowerment, and community building, which are crucial for the holistic well-being of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

Schools have also played a critical role in fostering an inclusive culture and providing direct support to LGBTIQ+ students. Initiatives such as LGBTIQ+ clubs and affirming school policies create safe havens within educational settings, promoting acceptance, reducing stigma, and offering tailored support that caters to the unique challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ youth.

By including these practices from NGOs and schools, this report aims to showcase a broader spectrum of approaches to supporting LGBTIQ+ youth. These examples underline the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in fostering a society where all young people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can enjoy mental well-being. The practices highlighted in this report serve as a testament to the proactive and compassionate efforts within Slovenian communities to support LGBTIQ+ youth, providing a blueprint for future initiatives and policies.

3. Good Practices in Slovenia

1. Resolution on the National Youth Program for 2013-2022

Typology of practice:	<i>national program</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>
Sector:	<i>Government / Public Policy / Youth Services</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>Slovenian youth aged 15-29, including specific focus groups such as youth with special needs and those at risk of social exclusion.</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport (MIZŠ), Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZ)</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	MIZŠ: gp.mvi@gov.si MDDSZ: gp.mddsz@gov.si

Description of the good practice:

The **National Youth Program for Slovenia 2013–2022 (ReNPM13–22)** outlines a comprehensive framework to improve the lives of young people, focusing on their education, employment, and societal participation. Adopted by the Slovenian Parliament, it provides a nine-year strategic direction, complemented by actionable two-year implementation plans. The document reflects the nation's commitment to fostering youth development through tailored policies, targeted measures, and systematic investments aligned with the state budget and European structural funds.

The plan prioritizes enhancing youth competencies, integrating formal and non-formal education systems, and recognizing diverse forms of learning. It promotes lifelong learning and practical training opportunities, encouraging collaboration

among educational institutions, social partners, and cultural organizations. A central aim is improving education quality and reducing early school leaving, particularly in vocational and secondary education.

Employment and entrepreneurship are addressed through initiatives designed to ease transitions from school to the labor market. The program emphasizes mentorship, practical placements, and employer engagement, especially for vulnerable youth groups. Financial resources are allocated to support innovation in learning environments, increase digital competencies, and expand career guidance networks.

Youth mobility receives particular attention, with efforts to promote international exchange programs and attract foreign expertise. Programs like Erasmus+ and Ad Futura enhance global learning opportunities, enriching youth skills and employability. Meanwhile, support mechanisms aim to reverse brain drain by fostering ties between Slovenians abroad and domestic enterprises.

Social inclusion and diversity are other focal points. Projects prioritize the needs of marginalized groups, including Roma and young people with disabilities, integrating them into education, cultural activities, and local communities. Financial support, policy reforms, and intersectoral cooperation ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The ReNPM13–22's implementation relies on clear performance indicators, regular evaluations, and coordinated efforts among ministries and stakeholders. With specific funding allocations and targeted measures, Slovenia's youth policy strives to empower its young population, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate contemporary challenges and contribute to society.

Aims:

- To improve the competences and employability of young people.
- To foster social inclusion and support for youth with special needs.
- To enhance the quality of education and promote lifelong learning.
- To support the transition from education to the labor market.

Strengths:

- Comprehensive approach covering multiple aspects of youth development.
- Specific focus on vulnerable groups, such as youth with special needs.
- Inclusion of both educational reforms and direct support measures.

Barriers and challenges:

- Ensuring effective coordination between different ministries and stakeholders.

- Securing sufficient funding for the long-term sustainability of initiatives.
- Addressing the diverse needs of youth across different regions.

Results:

The plan contributed to improved outcomes in youth employment, education, and social inclusion. Specific measures, such as career centers and training programs, helped equip youth with necessary skills and knowledge. Continuous monitoring and evaluation ensured the adaptation of measures to meet evolving needs.

Resources:

The program was funded through national budgets, European structural funds, and other international grants.

2. Pending Resolution on the National Youth Program for 2024-2023

PREDLOG PREDPISA

RESOLUCIJA O NACIONALNEM PROGRAMU ZA MLADINO ZA OBDOBJE 2023-2032





V MEDRESORSKO USKLAJEVANJE IN NA SVZ
28.2.2024
(pred približno 11 meseci)

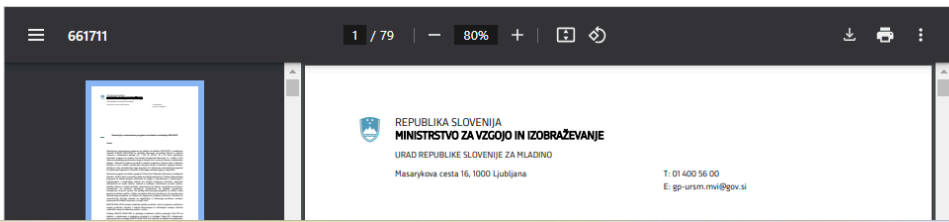
VRSTA PREDPISA
Predlog

EVIDENCA VLADNEGA AKTA
2023-3350-0055

PREDLAGATELJ
Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje

PREDLOG

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1.8 MB



Typology of practice:	<i>national program</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>

Sector:	<i>Government / Public Policy / Youth Services</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>Slovenian youth aged 15-29, including specific focus groups such as youth with special needs and those at risk of social exclusion.</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport (MIZŠ)</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	<i>MIZŠ: gp.mvi@gov.si</i>

Description of the good practice:

The **Resolution on the National Youth Program for 2024–2032 (ReNPM 2024–2032)** represents Slovenia’s forward-thinking initiative to enhance the quality of life for its young population, aged 15 to 29, by addressing critical issues such as inclusivity, well-being, and mental health. As a cornerstone of the country’s youth policy, the resolution is closely aligned with broader national objectives outlined in the **Slovenian Development Strategy 2030**, which seeks to ensure a high quality of life for all citizens through sustainable development and social inclusion. By integrating these priorities into a focused framework, the resolution aims to address systemic challenges while fostering the empowerment of youth from all backgrounds, particularly those belonging to marginalized communities such as LGBTQ+ individuals.

LGBTIQ+ youth often face compounded challenges, making them particularly vulnerable to mental health issues. Stigma, social exclusion, and identity-based violence are prevalent issues that significantly impact their psychological well-being. Studies, including those from the **Mladina 2020** report, reveal that this demographic experiences disproportionately high rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual peers. These disparities are often exacerbated by societal rejection, family conflicts, bullying, and a lack of supportive infrastructure, particularly in schools and healthcare settings.

In response, **ReNPM 2024–2032** adopts a multi-faceted approach aimed at creating a more inclusive and supportive society for LGBTQ+ youth. The resolution recognizes that fostering mental well-being for this group requires more than just access to mental health services—it also demands systemic changes in education, community support, and societal attitudes. By promoting policies that challenge discrimination and normalize diversity, the resolution seeks to dismantle barriers and ensure that LGBTQ+ youth have the same opportunities to thrive as their peers.

Education is a key area of focus in this effort. Schools are identified as pivotal environments for fostering acceptance and addressing mental health needs. The resolution outlines measures to train educators, counselors, and staff to recognize and respond to the unique challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ students. Anti-bullying campaigns, safe spaces, and inclusive curricula are among the strategies aimed at creating a supportive educational environment.

Community engagement also plays a critical role in the resolution's vision. ReNPM 2024–2032 emphasizes the importance of partnerships with youth organizations, advocacy groups, and local communities to provide peer support networks, mentorship programs, and access to mental health resources tailored for LGBTIQ+ youth. These collaborative efforts aim to build resilience and provide spaces where young people can express themselves freely and without fear of judgment.

Moreover, the resolution includes specific provisions for addressing the intersectional challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ youth who belong to other vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities, those from rural areas, or those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. By adopting an intersectional lens, ReNPM 2024–2032 ensures that its policies are comprehensive and equitable.

In summary, the **Resolution on the National Youth Program for 2024–2032** signifies Slovenia's commitment to creating an inclusive society where all young people, including LGBTIQ+ individuals, can access the support and resources they need to lead fulfilling lives. By addressing systemic inequities and fostering a culture of acceptance, the resolution lays the groundwork for long-term social change, ensuring that mental health and well-being remain at the heart of youth policy initiatives.

Aims:

- **Promote Mental Health and Well-Being:** Focused programs on creating safe spaces in educational and community settings to support mental health.
- **Foster Inclusivity and Diversity:** Implement policies that combat discrimination and promote equal rights for LGBTIQ+ individuals.
- **Provide Support Mechanisms:** Establish counseling, peer-support networks, and training for educators to recognize and address the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ youth.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Collaborate with schools, local organizations, and national bodies to ensure tailored interventions.

Strengths:

- **Comprehensive Framework:** The resolution integrates mental health as a critical component, recognizing the unique stressors faced by marginalized youth.
- **Collaboration Across Sectors:** Coordinated efforts among educational, health, and social ministries ensure a holistic approach.
- **Data-Driven Design:** Policies are informed by studies like the **Mladina 2020**, highlighting youth mental health challenges and needs.
- **Focus on Equity:** Includes specific measures for vulnerable groups, ensuring LGBTIQ+ youth are explicitly supported.

Barriers and challenges:

- **Social Stigma:** Despite progressive policies, entrenched societal biases against LGBTIQ+ individuals persist.
- **Resource Allocation:** Limited funding and staffing can impede the implementation of specialized programs for LGBTIQ+ mental health.
- **Awareness and Training Gaps:** Insufficient training for educators and health professionals to address LGBTIQ+ issues effectively.
- **Measurement Difficulties:** Assessing the impact of mental health programs, especially those targeting marginalized groups, remains complex.

Results:

(Expected Outcomes)

- **Improved Mental Health Indicators:** Reduced instances of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues among LGBTIQ+ youth.
- **Increased Social Acceptance:** Enhanced societal attitudes toward LGBTIQ+ individuals through awareness campaigns.
- **Empowered Youth:** Better support systems enabling LGBTIQ+ youth to navigate personal and social challenges.
- **Policy Integration:** Institutionalizing practices that address LGBTIQ+ mental health as part of broader youth policies.

Resources:

Funding:

- State budget allocations and EU structural funds (e.g., Erasmus+ and European Social Fund).
- Support from local municipalities and NGOs.

Staff: Increased numbers of school counselors and social workers with specialized training.

In-Kind Contributions:

- Educational materials, workshops, and awareness campaigns provided by public and private institutions.
- Support from youth organizations and advocacy groups.

External Experts and Organizations:

- Collaboration with local and international organizations specializing in LGBTIQ+ rights and mental health.

Additional resources:

Comparative Analysis of ReNPM 2013–2022 and ReNPM 2024–2032

The **Resolution on the National Youth Program 2013–2022 (ReNPM 2013–2022)** marked a pivotal moment in Slovenia's youth policy development, providing a structured framework for addressing key challenges faced by young people. However, its approach to LGBTIQ+ youth mental health was relatively generalized, with limited direct acknowledgment of the unique stressors and systemic barriers affecting this demographic. While it sought to address mental health broadly, specific measures targeting the LGBTIQ+ community were often subsumed under general inclusivity initiatives, leaving significant gaps in support and implementation.

In contrast, the new **Resolution on the National Youth Program 2024–2032 (ReNPM 2024–2032)** demonstrates a marked improvement in its focus on LGBTIQ+ youth mental health. Drawing upon insights from research such as the **Mladina 2020 Study**, which highlighted the prevalence of mental health challenges among LGBTIQ+ youth, the new resolution adopts a more targeted and inclusive approach. It explicitly acknowledges the heightened vulnerability of this group to mental health issues and introduces specific measures to address these challenges.

Key Improvements in ReNPM 2024–2032

1. Explicit Recognition of LGBTIQ+ Needs:

The 2024–2032 resolution includes direct references to the mental health needs of LGBTIQ+ youth, acknowledging the unique impact of discrimination,

bullying, and social exclusion. This is a significant shift from the earlier resolution, which lacked such specificity.

2. **Tailored Interventions:**

The new resolution emphasizes tailored support systems, including specialized counseling, peer-support networks, and school-based programs designed to create safe and affirming environments for LGBTIQ+ students. In contrast, the earlier resolution primarily relied on broad measures that were less likely to address the specific challenges faced by this community.

3. **Education and Awareness:**

ReNPM 2024–2032 includes mandatory training for educators and mental health professionals to recognize and respond to the unique challenges of LGBTIQ+ youth. This represents a significant improvement over the previous resolution, which lacked robust provisions for capacity-building among key stakeholders.

4. **Intersectional Approach:**

The new resolution adopts an intersectional framework, recognizing that LGBTIQ+ youth may face compounded challenges due to additional factors such as socioeconomic status or geographic location. The earlier resolution did not explicitly address these overlapping vulnerabilities.

Remaining Challenges

While ReNPM 2024–2032 makes notable strides, challenges remain. Implementing these targeted measures requires sustained funding, comprehensive training, and robust monitoring mechanisms. Cultural resistance and lingering stigma may also hinder the full realization of its goals. Additionally, the resolution's success will depend on effective interministerial collaboration and partnerships with external organizations specializing in LGBTIQ+ rights and mental health.

Conclusion

The **ReNPM 2024–2032** is a significant improvement over its predecessor in addressing the mental health needs of LGBTIQ+ youth. By explicitly recognizing these challenges and introducing targeted measures, the new resolution reflects a more inclusive and progressive approach. However, realizing its full potential will require addressing implementation barriers and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively. With continued focus and commitment, the new resolution has the potential to create meaningful and lasting change for Slovenia's LGBTIQ+ youth.

3. Resolution on National Mental Health Program 2018–2028



Typology of practice:	<i>resolution</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>

Sector:	<i>healthcare</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>general public, professionals</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>Ministry of health, Republic of Slovenia</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	Ministry of Health, Štefanova ulica 5, Ljubljana, Slovenia +386 1 478 60 01 gp.mz@gov.si

Description of the good practice:

The document represents a best practice in addressing mental health issues among young LGBTQIA+ individuals by integrating a community-based approach with interdisciplinary collaboration aimed at promoting mental well-being and preventive care. Notably, it includes the establishment of mental health centres for children and adolescents (CDZOMs), embedded within health centres across Slovenia. These centres are designed to provide accessible services and holistic support at the community level, facilitating a localised, inclusive approach to care. This model also emphasises early intervention, where mental health professionals work closely with educational and social institutions to provide emotional and psychological support tailored to young people, particularly those in marginalised groups like the LGBT community.

The document addresses numerous challenges faced by LGBT youth. Among these, peer violence and bullying are highlighted as significant issues within school environments, exacerbating feelings of isolation and leading to negative mental health outcomes. Additionally, the stigma surrounding sexual orientation or gender identity compounds discrimination, making it harder for these young individuals to seek and receive the support they need. By focusing on anti-bullying initiatives and creating safe, inclusive learning environments, the program aims to reduce discrimination and stigma, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in educational settings. Supportive networks are also being developed, both within schools and in broader social contexts, to enhance social inclusion and provide young LGBT people with community-based support systems.

Currently, the National Program for Mental Health (RNPĐZ) 2018–2028 is in its implementation phase, with monitoring and evaluation processes underway to assess its impact and effectiveness. The resolution includes a detailed action plan with clearly defined indicators to measure the success of its goals and initiatives. To ensure the program's success, RNPĐZ places strong emphasis on interdisciplinary and interdepartmental cooperation. This collaborative approach seeks to engage

various stakeholders—educational, health, and social services sectors—ensuring that mental health services reach individuals across all regions and communities.

Through continuous evaluation and adaptation, the RNPdZ aims to identify and overcome potential barriers to service access, ensuring that all individuals, especially vulnerable groups like LGBT youth, receive comprehensive, timely, and community-centred mental health care. The commitment to reducing institutionalisation and promoting community-based rehabilitation for those with mental health issues further highlights Slovenia's dedication to providing a dignified, supportive environment for all its residents.

Aims:

The primary aim of the document is to strengthen the mental health of Slovenia's population through accessible, community-based mental health services. The program seeks to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma and discrimination, and create supportive environments in educational and social settings. It also aims to develop effective interdisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation that includes mental health professionals, educators, and social services to ensure that young people facing discrimination and mental health challenges receive timely, inclusive support. In some points it does specifically mention marginalised groups as especially vulnerable and aims to strengthen non governmental services that support them.

Strengths:

One of the key strengths of the initiative is its emphasis on a community-centred approach. By establishing mental health centres for children and adolescents (CDZOMs) across various regions, the program enhances accessibility and localised support.

Another strength lies in the program's focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together health, educational, and social services to create an integrated support system. The document's commitment to anti-bullying programs and stigma reduction further strengthens its capacity to create safer, more accepting environments for LGBT youth.

Barriers and challenges:

The program faces several challenges, primarily around societal stigma and discrimination that LGBT youth may experience. Such stigma can deter individuals from seeking mental health support. Additionally, disparities in access to resources across different regions of Slovenia present logistical barriers, particularly in rural or

less-developed areas where mental health services may be limited. Furthermore, a shortage of trained mental health professionals, especially those experienced in working with LGBT youth, poses an ongoing challenge to delivering effective and timely care.

Results:

Currently, the program is in its implementation phase, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. While concrete outcomes are still being measured, early efforts have focused on establishing mental health centres and integrating anti-bullying initiatives within schools, which are expected to foster a more inclusive atmosphere for LGBT youth. The document's indicators for success include improved access to mental health services, reduced rates of stigma, and the establishment of effective partnerships across health, educational, and social sectors, all of which are designed to create lasting positive outcomes for mental health at the community level.

Resources:

The implementation of this program relies on several key resources, both financial and human. Funding is allocated from national health budgets, supplemented by support from European Social Funds (ESF) and European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), which are designated for mental health initiatives and the deinstitutionalization of mental health care. These funds are essential in establishing the regional centres for children and adolescent mental health (CDZOMs) and in training staff to provide specialised care.

The program also depends on a diverse team of professionals, including mental health specialists, social workers, and educational staff. The interdisciplinary teams at each centre require psychologists, clinical social workers, and counsellors trained in mental health care for youth, with some staff members specialising in LGBT-inclusive approaches. Additionally, external organisations—such as NGOs focused on LGBT rights and mental health advocacy—play a significant role in providing expertise and supporting outreach efforts.

In-kind resources include the use of community spaces, such as schools and health centres, where mental health programs and workshops can be held to reach young people directly within their environments. Partnerships with external mental health organisations and advocacy groups further enrich the program, offering specialised training, resources for public awareness campaigns, and research insights. This collective approach ensures that resources are maximised to provide broad-reaching, community-based mental health support.

4. Municipality of Ljubljana Youth Strategy 2016-2025

Strategija Mestne občine Ljubljana za mlade 2016-2025

Ljubljana — mesto mladih
in za mlade



Mestna občina
Ljubljana



Typology of practice:	<i>strategy</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>local</i>
Sector:	<i>youth</i>

Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>youth</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>Municipality of Ljubljana</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	<i>Please provide the name and contacts of the responsible person and/or the contact person/body for this initiative (if applicable)</i>

Description of the good practice:

The Municipality of Ljubljana Youth Strategy 2016-2025 highlights several best practices in mental health support for young LGBT individuals. This strategic framework fosters inclusive mental health practices by addressing various challenges faced by LGBT youth, such as social stigma, marginalisation, and mental health disparities. The strategy emphasises creating safe spaces in youth centres and integrating comprehensive social and educational services. Specifically, it promotes mental well-being and social inclusion for marginalised groups, including LGBT youth, aligning with values of equal treatment and respect for diversity.

This Strategy addresses some of the challenges for LGBT youth, including societal stigma, exclusion from traditional support systems, and mental health issues exacerbated by social isolation. It aims to mitigate these barriers by fostering inclusive practices across educational, social, and community services that specifically consider the needs of LGBT youth. It is implemented through various local initiatives in Ljubljana, including the development of youth centres and support networks that provide safe and affirming environments. It also incorporates collaboration with educational institutions and community organisations to broaden access to mental health resources.

The strategy remains active through its dedicated support of diverse youth services and continuous assessment of program effectiveness. The city has fostered a well-structured network of youth centres with regular activities aimed at strengthening the mental health and social resilience of young people. Within its framework the first and only LGBTQIA+ youth centre was created and is still run by Association Legebitra.

The strategy also promotes sustainability by embedding mental health support within the local government framework, securing long-term funding, and fostering partnerships with NGOs and mental health professionals. These collaborations ensure the ongoing relevance and adaptability of services to meet evolving youth needs.

Aims:

The primary aim of the Strategy is to enhance the quality of life for young people in Ljubljana, with particular attention to supporting marginalised groups. This involves fostering inclusive, supportive environments within youth centres and providing accessible mental health services. The strategy seeks to promote social inclusion, mental well-being, and equal opportunities, ensuring that LGBT youth feel safe and respected within their communities.

Strengths:

The strategy's strengths lie in its inclusive and community-centered approach. By integrating LGBT-inclusive services into existing youth centers and youth programs, the strategy ensures that LGBT youth have access to safe spaces and support

networks. The emphasis on intersectoral collaboration, including partnerships with schools, social services, and NGOs, strengthens the framework and provides a holistic approach to mental health and social support.

Barriers and challenges:

The strategy faces several challenges, including societal stigma and limited awareness about LGBT-specific issues. Additionally, the availability of resources, especially in rural areas, may impact the reach and accessibility of mental health services. Limited funding and the need for more trained professionals who understand LGBT issues also pose challenges to the strategy's full implementation.

Results:

The strategy has successfully implemented various programs through Ljubljana's youth centers, where inclusive mental health services and support are accessible. Positive outcomes include greater participation of LGBT youth in community activities, enhanced mental health awareness, and a growing network of inclusive spaces. The continuous feedback and adjustment process allows the strategy to evolve and remain relevant to the needs of young people.

Resources:

The Strategy is funded by the Municipality of Ljubljana, with additional support from national funds for youth development. Human resources include youth workers, social workers, and mental health professionals trained to work inclusively with diverse youth populations. In-kind resources come from the use of community spaces within youth centres, while partnerships with NGOs like Legebitra and mental

health organisations provide expertise, training, and outreach, enriching the program's scope and effectiveness.

5. LGBTIQ+ Youth Center



Typology of practice:	youth center
Level of the initiative	local
Sector:	youth
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	youth, LGBTIQ+ youth
Promoter(s):	Municipality of Ljubljana: https://www.ljubljana.si/sl/moja-ljubljana/mladi-v-ljubljani/aktivnosti-za-mlade/mladinske-organizacije/ Network of youth center's of Ljubljana: https://www.mrezaljubljana.si/kdo/

Responsible and contact person/body:	<i>Please provide the name and contacts of the responsible person and/or the contact person/body for this initiative (if applicable)</i>
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Description of the good practice:

The Youth Center (MC) Legebitra is the first LGBTIQ+ youth center in Slovenia. The center's purpose is to provide a safer, more inclusive and supportive environment in which young people with non-normative sexual identities, orientations and/or gender expressions engage in diverse activities, explore their identity and experiences, and thus empower themselves for life in society. In addition to young LGBTIQ+ people, other young people are also welcome at the youth center, subject to the rules of the youth center.

Within the Legebitra Youth Center:

- there is an information point for LGBT+ youth (and allies of the LGBT+ community), where popular and professional materials are available in the field of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and the intersection of mental health;
- There is a systematized and structured volunteering program, within which young people are properly trained in mental health first aid and facilitation and fostered to enhance their mental health and social resilience together with participants of the youth center;
- Young people can participate in clubs, leisure, social, cultural, educational and similar activities that often have a topic addressing our mental health (such as Rainbow Friday's II: Self image and self acceptance, Polygon of crisis intervention, Queer solidarity with asylum seekers: breathe together, etc.);
- Young people can participate in educational camps or an international youth exchanges (in the year 2024 they approached both sexual and mental health at LetSEXplore youth exchange);

The program is intended for all age groups of young people between 15 and 29 years old, but according to Logbook data for 2023, the MC is most often visited by participants between 20 and 25 years old.

Aims:

The purpose of the youth center is to provide young people with opportunities to socialize, have fun, and connect, and through that to help them acquire skills with which they can help themselves address the consequences of growing up in an environment that is often negative towards people with non-normative sexual identities and orientations. It wants to provide them with a safe, supportive, and accepting environment in which they can spend their free time, and through their

active participation, offer them support in the area of mental health and develop their resilience for continued independent living and step into adulthood.

Strengths:

The strength of the youth center lies in both its community-center approach to youth participation as well as its communal space located in the heart of Ljubljana and afternoon working hours through the weekdays, making it an accessible possibility for mental health support of its youth. With the broad range of activities and information accessible through materials and employees alike it creates a tight supportive network for all its participants.

Barriers and challenges:

The youth center still battles the existing stigma and limited knowledge and awareness towards LGBTIQ+ topics in society, which comes to light when working with different stakeholders in the general society. When referring the youth to additional mental health support services to professional help outside of the youth center that they need there are sometimes specific bottlenecks - such as long waiting times in healthcare facilities, mental health support programs that are outside of the scope (either geographically or financially) of its participants reality or there are very scarce services available (such as for youth facing the question of homelessness, youth in the process of acquiring a living permit, etc.). Oftentimes also is the question of mental health closely tied to the youth's living conditions (such as precarious living conditions, financial instability, unsupportive familial environments etc.) - questions which are outside of the scope of the youth center's capabilities of direct assistance.

Results:

Some numbers from the youth center's activities in 2023:

- 263 information activities were carried out in the amount of 1520 hours, in which they informed 2,244 people.
- In 2023, they carried out 68 events and activities for young people in the amount of 225 hours. 1048 people participated.
- In 2023, they carried out 8 Café Evenings and other cultural and artistic activities for young people and with young people, organized together with the Q Cultural Center - ŠKUC. 261 young people participated in them annually.

Resources:

The youth center is funded by the Municipality of Ljubljana, as well as Erasmus+ and CERV financial mechanisms through various projects. They have 2 employees (a coordinator and youth worker). They are part of the Network of youth center's of Ljubljana as well as international networks such as IGLYO, ILGA and TGEU to enhance their resources and consequently the resources of their youth.

6. LGBTIQ+ Psychosocial Counselling Program



Typology of practice:	<i>counselling program</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>
Sector:	<i>NGO, counselling</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>LGBTIQ+ community, LGBTIQ+ youth</i>
Promoter(s):	Associaton Legebitra
Responsible and contact person/body:	Sebastjan Sitar, president (info@legebitra.si) Eva Margon Baloh, Program coordinator

	(eva.margon@legebitra.si)
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Description of the good practice:

The psychosocial counseling program has been implemented in its current form since 2015, before that the program was implemented on a smaller scale since 2008. With continuity of work, we provide our users with regular professional psychosocial support. The LGBTIQ+ population has recognized specific needs that are not met by other facilities/programs, so it is crucial and fundamental that we respond to the specific needs of this population with the program.

The program meets the needs of users for:

- a safe space to share experiences
- reducing negative psychosocial consequences of discrimination and non-acceptance on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity, which manifests itself through the experience of violence, harassment and other forms of intolerance
- learning how to successfully deal with the above-mentioned situations
- controlling distress related to sexual orientation, sexual expression and sexuality identity
- education and informing about the help network
- general mental health of users
- awareness and the knowledge of professionals and institutions about LGBTIQ+ topics

The entry point to the program is an information point (in person, by phone or online), which operates according to the principle of first social assistance and, if necessary, is the basis for further treatment of the user. Our professional work is based on an individual approach, which provides the individual with psychosocial support in all areas of life that are important to them (interpersonal relationships, safety, quality of life, etc.). We provide them with support for problems that may stem from hardships they experience due to their sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity, as well as support in the current life situation they are facing and need additional help or support to successfully resolve it.

In addition to individual counseling, we also run various support groups, which, depending on the needs of the users, are adjusted on the fly both in terms of content and frequency of meetings, as well as relief meetings with the aim of connecting and creating social contacts.

The activities of the program are aimed at all LGBTIQ+ people who find themselves in need and their loved ones who need support in understanding and accepting their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Aims:

1. Improved coping strategies for LGBTIQ+ people involved in the program.
2. Provided a safe space for users to talk and share experiences.
3. Improved quality of users' social contacts.
4. Informed relatives of LGBTIQ+ persons.
5. Educated and informed professional staff of other organizations about sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression.

Strengths:

The program offers professional psychosocial help, which is free of charge, so we are accessible to all LGBTIQ+ people, regardless of their financial capabilities. Accessibility is even easier because individual counseling takes place both live and online, for all those who cannot attend live meetings due to geographical distance.

Barriers and challenges:

We perceive an ever-increasing need for individual services, which we are no longer able to address on an ongoing basis due to personnel capacities. When referring the LGBTIQ+ people to additional mental health support services outside of our programs there are sometimes specific bottlenecks - such as long waiting times in healthcare facilities, mental health support programs that are outside of the scope (either geographically or financially).

Results:

In 2024, more than 60 people joined the individual sessions and continuously attended counseling. Around 120 people participated in group support activities.

Resources:

The LGBTIQ+ Psychosocial Counselling Program is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, as well as Municipality of Ljubljana. We have 3 employees.

Additional resources:

<https://legebitra.si/aktivnosti/psihosocialno-svetovanje-za-lgbtqi-osebe/>

7. Legal counselling for LGBTIQ+ people



LEGEBITRA | PRAVNA SVETOVALNICA
LGBTIQ+

**BREZPLAČNO
PRAVNO
SVETOVANJE**

- posredujemo osnovne informacije o pravnem položaju in pravicah LGBTIQ+ oseb, parov in njihovih družin;
- nudimo splošne usmeritve za uveljavljanje pravnega varstva glede diskriminacije;
- dajemo mnenja h konkretnim osnutkom vlog za uveljavljanje pravic, ki jih pripravijo uporabniki sami ...;

Ne sodelujemo pa neposredno v konkretnih pravnih postopkih in vas ne moremo zastopati pred sodišči, upravnimi organi ali drugimi organizacijami.

pravna.svetovalnica@legebitra.si

+386 40 494 858

Osebni kontakt: po predhodnem dogovoru.

Typology of practice:	Legal counselling
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Law
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	LGBTIQ+ people and their families
Promoter(s):	Legebitra Association
Responsible and contact person/body:	Sebastjan Sitar (president), info@legebitra.si Maša Jeričević Šušteršič (program coordinator),

	<i>masa.jericeviv@legebitra.si</i>
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Description of the good practice:

In Slovenia, discrimination based on, among others, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristic (SOGIESC) is prohibited by the Protection against Discrimination Act, an umbrella anti discrimination piece of legislation. Several other acts regulating different areas of everyday life (e.g. education, employment, access to healthcare and health services, housing, social security ...) prohibit discrimination based on SOGIESC.

Even though there have been a great progress in the field of human rights for LGBTIQ+ persons (equal marriage and common adoption since 2022 and access to reproductive health techniques in 2024), there are legal gaps in some other areas such as legal gender recognition, gender confirmation health care, unnecessary operations performed on children born with intersex characteristics. Some of these issues have not yet been fully researched, therefore we are not fully familiar with all the difficulties and risks of discrimination LGBTIQ+ persons may face. Resolving these issues would require a horizontal approach, cooperation of several ministries and public institutions. Therefore a central body is needed within the government that would lead the dialog with civil society and coordinate the efforts of different ministries and public institutions.

LGBTIQ+ people are a minority group that was historically persecuted by authorities and therefore there is still a lack of trust from both sides. Fundamental Rights Agency LGBTIQ+ survey (2019 and 2023) shows that more than 90 % of respondents from Slovenia did not report the last incident of hate-motivated physical or sexual attack to the police, or any organisation or institution, there is also underreporting of discrimination as more than 90 % respondents from Slovenia stated that they themselves nor anyone else reported the last incident when they (the respondents) felt discriminated against anywhere.

Aims:

The aim of the LGBTIQ+ Legal Counselling is to tackle these issues as comprehensively as possible. We pursue the following goals:

- To inform LGBTIQ+ individuals, couples, families and asylum seekers about their rights, obligations stemming from different pieces of legislation and procedures with which these rights and obligations are implemented;
- To support LGBTIQ+ individuals, couples, families and asylum seekers in legal and administrative procedures;
- To address with policy and decision makers the legal gaps and vagueness in legal regulations and in their implementation;
- To raise awareness among LGBTIQ+ people about the need to report to authorities hate crimes and discrimination based on SOGIESC;

- To support LGBTIQ+ people in reporting to authorities hate crimes and discrimination based on SOGIESC.

Strengths:

Legebitra's legal counselling is important because it is the only specialised LGBTIQ+ legal advice centre in Slovenia, at the same time as it is accessible to all, as it is free of charge. Another important thing is that it is accessible remotely, both by email and by phone. The service is important also for Slovenian citizens living abroad and for foreign citizens who have a link with Slovenia.

Barriers and challenges:

Regarding barriers and challenges, it should first be mentioned that we do not have direct funding for our legal advice service at Legebitra. Moreover, as a consequence, the programme is run with only one lawyer who manages the legal counselling service and handles all the cases. We also note that it is difficult or time-consuming to establish a network of experts/contacts in public institutions, which is crucial for the success of our work.

Results:

We handle at least 60 individual legal cases a year. In addition, we handle hate crime and hate speech reports and handle around 30 cases a year as part of this service. We also provide accompaniment to police stations, to cases filed to the Equality Advocate and to other public institutions. We also provide internships for students of the Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana, who intern with us every year. We report to international organisations on the situation of LGBTIQ+ rights in Slovenia.

Resources:

The Legal Counselling is staffed by one lawyer. Approximately 7 law students per year intern with us in cooperation with the Law Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. As mentioned above, the biggest problem is the lack of funding for the Legal Counselling.

8. Programme for Minority Stress Relief Sqvot



Typology of practice:	<i>Social Welfare Services</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>National/International</i>
Sector:	<i>Social Welfare / NGO / LGBTQAI+ community</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>LGBTQAI+ youth, professionals</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>Ljubljana Pride, info@ljubljana prid.org Vesna Štefanec, leading expert: vesna.stefanec@gmail.com</i>

Responsible and contact person/body:	info@ljubljana.pride.org Vesna Štefanec, leading expert: vesna.stefanec@gmail.com
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Description of the good practice:

The *Programme for Minority Stress Relief* was established in response to pressing needs identified within Slovenia's LGBTIQ+ community, particularly among youth. This initiative emerged from a project that facilitated structured dialogue between LGBTIQ+ youth and decision-makers. Housing issues and the mental health impacts of inadequate living conditions were key concerns highlighted in the guidelines created by LGBTIQ+ youth representatives.

In the initial development phase, a national study on housing and related issues was conducted with a focus on LGBTIQ+ youth. All LGBTIQ+ individuals aged 16 to 30 residing in Slovenia were invited to participate in an online survey. The findings revealed that inadequate and unsustainable housing for LGBTIQ+ youth extended beyond physical safety concerns and highlighted the need for a comprehensive framework to address these challenges.

The programme's services were developed using the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, with a focus on housing exclusion as a form of homelessness. This typology recognizes insecure housing—such as living in environments with exposure to violence—as a manifestation of homelessness and offers guidelines for addressing underlying social dynamics contributing to housing instability.

Following the establishment of the program framework, which incorporated community-identified needs, research findings, theoretical insights, and preliminary service drafts, an implementation and testing phase was launched. The services provided included free, accessible, and affirmative counselling for LGBTIQ+ youth experiencing housing exclusion, legal and administrative support, awareness-raising activities, and, most importantly, a grassroots, community-based emergency accommodation service. This emergency service offered immediate, short-term housing provided by volunteer hosts for LGBTIQ+ youth in need. It was developed through consultations and focus groups with volunteer hosts who contributed to drafting its initial legal, social, and practical framework.

After a two-year testing period and comprehensive evaluations—engaging expert teams, participating LGBTIQ+ youth, and volunteer hosts—the emergency accommodation service was discontinued. This decision was due to limited

resources and the absence of long-term solutions that could render this short-term support pragmatic.

Aims:

The Programme aimed to address the pressing housing and mental health challenges faced by Slovenia's LGBTIQ+ youth. It sought to establish a supportive framework providing both immediate relief through emergency accommodations and longer-term solutions by promoting awareness, legal support, and affirming counselling services. The program also aimed to tackle the root causes of housing exclusion and the social dynamics contributing to housing insecurity and homelessness among LGBTIQ+ youth.

Strengths:

A key strength of the program was its foundation in comprehensive research that directly involved LGBTIQ+ youth and decision-makers in its design, ensuring that services addressed real, community-defined needs. The program's use of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion provided a robust theoretical basis that framed insecure housing as a form of homelessness. Additionally, the grassroots nature of the emergency accommodation service—developed in consultation with volunteer hosts—added a flexible, community-driven approach to the support network, fostering trust and local engagement.

Barriers and challenges:

The program faced several barriers, primarily related to resource limitations that affected its ability to provide long-term solutions. The lack of sustainable funding and limited availability of trained mental health and housing experts specialized in LGBTIQ+ issues posed challenges to the program's implementation and continuity. Societal stigma surrounding LGBTIQ+ issues and housing insecurity further complicated efforts to achieve widespread support and engagement from the community at large.

Results:

During its two-year testing period, the program provided essential support to LGBTIQ+ youth facing housing exclusion, offering immediate shelter, legal assistance, and counseling services. Evaluations indicated positive feedback from youth participants and volunteer hosts, with noted improvements in participants' mental well-being and a strengthened support network. However, the evaluation also highlighted several shortcomings: volunteer hosts faced challenges in being consistently flexible with immediate accommodations, and many reported emotional

stress due to the demands of hosting. Additionally, the short-term nature of the accommodation service proved insufficient without stable, long-term housing options, creating a recurring cycle of instability for participants. Despite these limitations and the program's eventual discontinuation, it successfully highlighted critical needs within the LGBTIQ+ community and laid the groundwork for future policies and interventions focused on sustainable housing solutions.

Resources:

The program received financial support from national funds allocated for social programs, supplemented by grants from European agencies supporting marginalised communities. Human resources included counsellors trained in LGBTIQ+ issues, legal experts, and a network of volunteer hosts who provided emergency accommodations.

9. Harm Reduction in Nightlife and Drug Use Prevention



Typology of practice:	<i>advocacy service</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>

Sector:	<i>social justice</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>LGBTIQ+ community, LGBTIQ+ youth</i>
Promoter(s):	<i>DragArt:</i> <i>DrogArt Association is a private, non-profit, volunteer organization established in 1999 with the aim of reducing the harmful consequences of drug and alcohol use among young people. Its main areas of activity include providing information, counseling, and psychosocial support; outreach work in nightlife settings; daytime outreach with psychosocial assistance for young drug users; conducting training and workshops aimed at harm reduction related to drugs and alcohol among youth; publishing activities; researching the prevalence and characteristics of alcohol and drug use among young people; and developing new responses to these issues.</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	<i>DrogArt: info@drogart.org</i> <i>Anja Mihevc, anja@drogart.org</i>

Description of the good practice:

The programme focuses on harm reduction related to alcohol and drug use, especially in nightlife settings. It includes on-site information and harm reduction activities in nightclubs and public spaces, online interventions through social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and in-person support at information points. These services are complemented by psychosocial support for individuals over 25 and specific outreach to the LGBTIQ+ community. The initiative also runs a day center for youth aged 15-25, providing psychosocial support, workshops, and informal socializing.

Aims:

The programme aims to reduce the harmful consequences of alcohol and drug use, provide support for those looking to reduce or stop usage, and ensure inclusive services for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Strengths:

Comprehensive approach to harm reduction, including on-site, online, and in-person interventions.

Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals in all activities, ensuring a safe and supportive environment.

Regular training for staff on LGBTIQ+ issues, facilitated by organizations like Legebitra, Zavod Transakcija and Parada ponosa.

Barriers and challenges:

- Ensuring sustainable funding for ongoing support services.
- Overcoming stigma associated with drug use and the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Balancing the need for anonymity and confidentiality with the provision of comprehensive support services.

Results:

The programme has effectively reached diverse groups through its various activities and interventions. It has contributed to a decrease in the harmful consequences of substance use among participants and provided a supportive network for the LGBTIQ+ community. Continuous evaluations help in adapting the services to better meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

Resources:

The programme is supported by national funds, grants, and a dedicated team of trained professionals and volunteers.

10. Good practices of LGBTIQ+ inclusion and support in schools



Typology of practice:	<i>awareness raising activities, inclusivity practices, school culture</i>
Level of the initiative	<i>national</i>
Sector:	<i>primary and secondary education</i>
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	<i>students, LGBTIQ+ youth, and allies</i>

Promoter(s):	<i>due to pressure from certain parents and religious and right-wing groups creating pressure on schools they wish to stay anonymous. The contacts and more information available through: vesna.stefanec@legebitra.si</i>
Responsible and contact person/body:	<i>contact: vesna.stefanec@legebitra.si</i>

Description of the good practice:

The LGBTIQ+ affirming and inclusive practices within the school environment represent a significant step towards fostering inclusion and supporting the mental well-being of students with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. In a society where stigma and discrimination towards the LGBTIQ+ community still exist, such initiatives provide a much-needed safe haven for young individuals to explore and express their identities freely.

Led by two dedicated teachers, the club serves as both a supportive environment and a platform for empowerment. By offering a confidential and understanding space, the club helps students navigate the challenges they may face due to their identities. Members have the opportunity to connect with peers who share similar experiences, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging that is essential for mental health. For many students, the club becomes a refuge where they can develop confidence and resilience while building meaningful friendships.

The importance of such practices cannot be overstated. Adolescence is a critical period for identity formation, and for LGBTIQ+ youth, this process is often complicated by societal pressures and prejudices. School-based programs like the LGBTIQ+ Club provide a counterbalance to negative influences, promoting self-acceptance and equipping students with coping mechanisms to deal with external challenges. These practices also help to reduce the stigma surrounding LGBTIQ+ topics within the broader school community by encouraging dialogue and fostering empathy.

In addition to the club, the school has also cultivated an LGBTIQ+ affirming culture through comprehensive training for staff, students, and parents on topics such as anti-bullying, diversity, and inclusivity. This dual approach ensures that LGBTIQ+ students feel safe, supported, and valued in their educational environment. The integration of such practices into school policies underscores the institution's commitment to equality and inclusion. Policies that actively support LGBTIQ+ students send a clear message that discrimination and prejudice have no place in the

school environment. This institutional backing strengthens the effectiveness of initiatives like the LGBTIQ+ Club, ensuring their sustainability and impact.

Moreover, the presence of an LGBTIQ+ Club within the school acts as an educational tool for the entire school community. It fosters awareness and understanding, breaking down stereotypes and encouraging respectful interactions among students of all backgrounds. The collaborative nature of the club, which includes partnerships with local organizations, further enriches the experience for participants and enhances the resources available to them.

Aims:

- To provide a safe space for LGBTIQ+ students through regular club meetings.
- To foster an inclusive and supportive school culture that affirms LGBTIQ+ identities.
- To educate the entire school community about diversity, inclusion, and anti-bullying.

Strengths:

- Regular club meetings provide ongoing support and community for LGBTIQ+ students.
- Comprehensive training for all school stakeholders promotes understanding and reduces prejudice.
- Active engagement with parents ensures that inclusivity extends beyond the school environment.

Barriers and challenges:

- Overcoming resistance from some community members or parents who may hold biases.
- Ensuring consistent participation and support for the LGBTIQ+ club.
- Securing resources and time for ongoing training and support initiatives.

Results:

The programme has led to a noticeable improvement in the school's environment, with increased acceptance and support for LGBTIQ+ students. Feedback from students and parents highlights a reduction in bullying and a more inclusive atmosphere. Regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms ensure the programme evolves to meet emerging needs.

Resources:

Support from national education funds, collaboration with LGBTIQ+ organizations, and dedicated time from trained educators and staff.



Creating Space for LGBTQIA+ Youth to Thrive