



Room for diversity in the community

LGBT+ action plan 2022-2025

An abbreviated version

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The full Danish version of the report is available on the
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Preface

Far too many LGBT+ persons still experience discrimination, unhappiness, loneliness, violence, and sexual abuse, simply because they are themselves. This does not just happen in distant countries abroad but also in Denmark. We have a responsibility to stop it. No one should be made to feel inferior. No one has to put up with hatred and bullying.

Historically, Denmark has been active in taking the lead and securing rights for LGBT+ persons. We have a strong civil society, which has contributed greatly to the progress and acceptance of LGBT+ rights. Many may therefore assume that it is easy to be an LGBT+ person in Denmark. While it is certainly easier than in many other countries, we have far from reached the goals. This is clearly reflected in the statistics, studies, and testimonies that show how young LGBT+ persons, transpersons, bisexuals and LGBT+ persons with a minority ethnic background are especially at risk.

When we do not recognize and accommodate diversity in families and their many different constellations. When children and young people with an LGBT+ identity fear being open, and do not thrive in schools. When violence, abuse, suicidal thoughts and attempts among LGBT+ people are still far, far higher than for the general population. Then, it is clear that we have far from reached our target.

We must foster a society with respect for the individual. Where sexual orientation or gender identity is not decisive for the individual's well-being and opportunities in life. We must stand firm on the right to be, who you are, to love who, you do. We must insist that there must be equal opportunities and room for diversity. This does not only benefit LGBT+ persons. It also benefits everyone in Danish society.

With this action plan, we act on a broad spectrum of issues by launching 39 initiatives that will increase the safety and well-being of LGBT+ persons, and promote equal opportunities regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

This action plan must contribute to making life better for LGBT+ persons, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, or where in the country they live. Because in Denmark, we all have a responsibility to make room for diversity in the community.

Happy reading,

Trine Bramsen

Minister for Equal Opportunities

Introduction

International studies show that Denmark is a leading country when it comes to the rights of LGBT+ people. These rights have led to a social and cultural acceptance of LGBT+ people in Danish society.

Therefore, many LGBT+ persons thrive and experience few or no challenges because of their LGBT+ identity. However, studies show that the group is still comparatively unhappy, lonely, experience more self-harm suicide attempts, and sexual assault and violence in both their relationships or in the form of hate crimes.

LGBT+ persons continue to face discrimination. Many feel they cannot be fully open to their family, workplace, or at their school or educational institution. Some experience that the current legislation does not recognise their family form. Furthermore, we see that, within the group of LGBT+ persons, young people, transgender, bisexual, and ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable.

The parties behind the Finance Act for 2022 have allocated 24.8 million kroner (3.3 euro) to the LGBT+ action plan. Hereby, the plan will continue the efforts to promote safety, equal rights and opportunities for LGBT+ people up to and including 2025.

The contents of the action plan has been formulated across 11 ministerial different areas on the basis of the wishes from civil society, input from professionals, international experience, and existing knowledge from studies in the area.

The action plan focuses on five areas:

✓ We must recognize LGBT+ families

In Denmark, all families must feel recognized. No one – not the least children - should experience that their family is wrong. Families consisting of two fathers, two mothers, or multiple parents ought to be on equal terms with families consisting of one mother and one father. We have to accommodate that in the best possible way.

✓ We must take responsibility for the well-being of LGBT+ children and young persons

Children must be able to develop freely without being bullied or lonely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT+ children and young persons must be met as the persons they are, whether it be by classmates, teachers, pedagogues, parents or anyone else around them.

✓ We must fight partner violence, sexual assault, and hatred against LGBT+ persons

As a society, we must never accept intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or hatred towards others, regardless of who they are. Speaking up is a shared responsibility. This entails that we must be better at preventing and helping vulnerable LGBT+ persons in our society.

✓ We must improve the health and well-being of LGBT+ persons

Everyone must have the opportunity to live a good and healthy life. Sexual orientation and gender identity should not be a barrier to one's well-being, which is why LGBT+ persons should not continue to stand out negatively in the health statistics. Therefore, we must actively support the well-being and health of LGBT+ people.

✓ We must stand firm on the right to be who you are both at home and abroad

Around the world and even in Europe, the rights of LGBT+ persons are under pressure. Therefore, Denmark must stand firm and make progress for rights and equity for LGBT+ persons globally.

1. We must recognize LGBT+ families

Families in Denmark are different, and today there are many ways to be and form a family. No parent or child in Denmark should experience that their family is considered "wrong" or less valuable. Different family forms must be recognized and accommodated as best as possible both in our legislation and in everyday life.

The number of LGBT+ families with children, where the parents are in same sex marriage or registered partnership, is growing. The number has more than doubled in the last 20 years.

Although we in Denmark have come a long way in recognizing different family forms, a survey from 2018 shows that one in four Danes believes that families, with same sex partners, provide poorer opportunities for children's development and upbringing. Additionally, one in ten think that homosexuals should not be able to get married in the Danish church.

The concept of co-father does not currently exist in the Danish Children's Act, since there can at most only be two legal parents of a child, and the woman giving birth will always be one of the two legal parents until an adoption can be carried out. Co-fathers therefore do not possess the same rights and duties towards the child as other parents in families with a father and a mother or a mother and a co-mother.

Some LGBT+ families consist of more than the two legal parents. However, we have limited knowledge about the extent of and possible challenges that these families face in for instance in navigating public services and legal requirements.

Therefore, we need more knowledge about and to the benefit of LGBT+ families. Doing this, we must create a better framework for LGBT+ parents to take part in parenting, when it is in the best interests of the child.

Initiatives

- Co-paternity is be recognized from the child's birth when using surrogacy
- Study of LGBT+ families with more than two parents
- Better framework for being a LGBT+ parent in LGBT+ families with more than two parents
- Strengthened advice on family formation for LGBT+ families
- Possibility of sharing parental leave in LGBT+ families with more than two parents

2. We must take responsibility for the well-being of LGBT+ children and young persons

Far too many LGBT+ children and young people are unhappy. Children and youth must meet, as who they are, without experiencing prejudice and bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Studies show that more than half of all LGBT+ students feel sad at least once a week, and six out of ten have or have had suicidal thoughts. Many do not feel they can be fully open about who they are and feel that they are met with a lack of understanding.

Ideas and feelings about the LGBT+ identity often arise before or early in adolescence. However, it can take a long time before LGBT+ children and youth share these thoughts with someone else, often because they fear that their lives will become more difficult, if they talk about it. Many LGBT+ children and youth fear that others will not accept it, or that they will be bullied. All the while, almost all LGBT+ pupils experience homophobic and transphobic slurs being used at school.

Schools, institutions and society in at large must meet and support LGBT+ children and young people, so that they experience acceptance and are not mistreated because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Initiatives

- Study of the well-being of LGBT+ pupils
- Political negotiations on sex education as a subject in the education of primary school teachers
- Dialogue meeting on an LGBT+ focus in anti-bullying strategies for primary schools, secondary education, and preparatory basic education (FGU)
- Fund to battle prejudices towards LGBT+ children and youths through information, advice, and support
- Series of webinars on the work with equal treatment and diversity in day care, primary schools and at FGU institutions
- Inspirational material on gender, sexuality, and diversity for educational staff in the day-care sector
- Possibility of assigning a new social security number to transgender minors
- Investigating the possibility of a ban on conversion therapy for minors

3. We must fight partner violence, sexual assault, and hatred against LGBT+ persons

Many LGBT+ persons still experience discrimination and hate crimes. At the same time, LGBT+ people are more often exposed to intimate partner violence, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual assault than others are. Both the LGBT+ community and society at large has a responsibility to prevent this from happening and to offer the right support.

Although Danish legislation explicitly prohibits discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech against LGBT+ persons, these offences are still prevalent. At the same time, only a small proportion of these crimes are reported.

Studies indicate that gay men are 2.5 times as often exposed to partner violence as heterosexual men. Similarly, around one in five transpersons have been in an abusive relationship. At the same time, there exists cultural understandings and norms in society and in the LGBT+ community that can make it difficult to recognize and break with partner violence.

Studies also show that around a third of LGBT+ persons have, at some point, been subjected to sexual assault. LGBT+ persons with a minority ethnic background are particularly vulnerable. At the same time, fewer ethnic minority LGBT+ persons are open about their sexual orientation, or gender identity. Following this, one in ten have experienced threats of violence from their family or the family's circle of friends.

In general, LGBT+ persons feel unsafe about using the existing options for advice and help, because they are nervous about or experience a lack of knowledge among the staff in for instance crisis centres, in counselling services and homeless shelters, etc.

Therefore, there is a need for targeted offers along with knowledge dissemination to relevant organisations, actors, and professionals in order to be able to provide better advice and help to vulnerable LGBT+ persons.

Initiatives

- Upskilling of professionals in the field of violence and social issues in handling vulnerable LGBT+ persons
- Fund to strengthen counselling for minority ethnic LGBT+ persons
- Fund to prevention of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and violations against LGBT+ persons
- Upskilling in the LGBT+ skills for staff at asylum centers
- Upskilling the police in identifying and registering hate crimes
- Increased focus on handling transpersons in prisons and detention centers
- LGBT+ perspective in the study of safety in public transport

4. We must improve the health and well-being of LGBT+ persons

LGBT+ persons are affected by anxiety, depression, loneliness, self-harm and suicidal thoughts to a far greater extent than others are. This applies in particular to transpersons, bisexuals and minority ethnic LGBT+ persons. Physical and psychological well-being should not be determined by your sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is an important part of thriving that you can be yourself and part of the community. Nevertheless, many LGBT+ persons still cannot be fully open in their workplace. On top of this, one in five LGBT+ person does not feel part of the community in sports associations.

Transgender persons are particularly vulnerable. Close to eight out of ten trans men and more than six out of ten trans women have had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives. Almost one in four have attempted suicide. At the same time, a study shows that around a quarter of the group have had signs of depression within the past two weeks.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of transpersons who have needed examination and treatment in the healthcare system. This trend is expected to continue.

HIV is still associated with a significant burden in terms of both mental and physical health. There are still prejudices about HIV and HIV-infected people, even among healthcare personnel. This is despite the fact that patients with well-treated HIV infection cannot infect others. In Denmark, there are around 100 new cases of HIV infection annually. Over half of the newly infected are among men who have sex with men.

We need to continually ensure that the public sector offers the right options for LGBT+ persons and that we support well-being in the group. At the same time, there must be a focus on the challenges that LGBT+ persons face for instance in the labour market and in sports.

Initiatives

- National action plan for the elimination of HIV in Denmark
- Investigation of possibilities to ease the quarantine period for blood donation for men who have sex with men
- Better gender confirming treatment for transgender persons
- Supplementary counselling for transgender persons who are in pre-treatment or undergoing gender confirming treatment
- Knowledge centre for gender confirming treatment
- Educational material on LGBT+ issues for staff in elderly care
- A follow-up study on the living conditions of LGBT+ people
- Discussion with the leaders of the professional programs in the welfare area about LGBT+ knowledge in the programs
- Discussion in the Working Environment Council on LGBT+ perspective in working environment efforts
- Focus on well-being for LGBT+ people in association sports

5. We must stand firm on the right to be who you are both at home and abroad

Around the world, the rights of LGBT+ persons are under pressure, and in several countries, retrogression is taking place. Denmark will continue to stand firm on equal rights and opportunities for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Discrimination, hatred, and violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity is widespread around the world. This is severely limiting for LGBT+ persons ability to freely realize themselves and is a consistent cause for fear, insecurity, and mistreatment.

Homosexuality is illegal in many countries and still carries the death penalty in some countries. Additionally, many countries have legislation that restricts the freedom of expression and information about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Even within Europe countries, we see examples of legislation that limit the freedom and equal opportunities of LGBT+ person. No one should experience being wrong or being discriminated against, because of who, they are, or whom, they love.

Therefore, the efforts to promote rights, security and equal opportunities for LGBT+ persons are high on the Danish agenda in forums such as the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe, and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Denmark will continue to protect and promote the human rights of LGBT+ persons globally and support civil society in countries where their freedom of action is limited.

Initiatives

- Support for LGBT+ organizations in Poland
- Danish participation in the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC)
- Danish involvement in the UN LGBTI Core Group
- Danish hosting of the IDAHOT Forum
- Danish involvement in the EU's LGBTIQ Equality Group
- Danish participation in the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion
- Denmark cooperates in the Nordic Council of Ministers on the LGBT+ agenda
- The Danish diplomatic representations take the lead on bringing LGBT+ issues to the forefront
- Danish support for civil society organizations' fight for LGBT+ rights around the world