

Rainbow people in working life and as customers

Practical tips for employers and service providers



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**TUETTU ULKOMINISTERIÖN
KEHITYSYHTEISTYÖVAROIN**

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To the reader

The closet door is open. In recent years, sexual and gender minorities have come to the fore in our society. Belonging to these minorities is no longer a taboo or a secret, and the same goes for working life. As companies realise how each employee's ability to be true to one's self is also beneficial for the business, "diversity is richness" no longer sounds like a cliché.

However, in spite of the leaps forward that have been made in terms of progress, there is still room for improvement in working life. Staying in the closet at work remains the most attractive option for far too many members of sexual or gender minorities. However, such secrecy only has the appearance of a good solution.

Key players in working life should become more aware of the diversity of staff, customers and stakeholders, strengthen equality values, and develop practical measures so that no one needs to conceal their own identity.

This information package, prepared by the human rights organisation Seta, Accenture, IBM and FIBS, provides information on sexual and gender minorities, key legislation regarding working life, information on a management and work culture that is sensitive to LGBTIQ issues, advertising, and commercial benefits. At the end of this guide, there is a list of good practices that can be applied, depending on the needs of your working community.

LGBTIQ glossary

The term LGBTIQ refers to sexual and gender minorities. The abbreviation stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer. It is an umbrella term that also includes other identities whose initial letters are not specifically mentioned. Similar initialisms are used in other contexts and in different uses. Instead of using letters, you can also talk about sexual and gender minorities or free rainbow people.

The most common LGBTIQ terms are described on the following page. This glossary brings together basic concepts related to sexual and gender minorities. Since language and perceptions continually change over time, it is important to understand that this glossary will also evolve. Each person's experience of themselves and their identity is unique, and the terms will never be able to convey this great diversity. Respect for the terms used by the people and for their inner dignity must be the starting point in any interaction.

Links:

For a more comprehensive rainbow glossary compiled by Seta, go to:

<https://seta.fi/sateenkaaritieto/sateenkaarianasto/>

An example of an English glossary can be found here:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>

Sexual orientation

Gay

A person who has an emotional and/or sexual interest in members of the same sex. The word “homosexual” is an outdated term that adds unnecessary sexualisation.

Lesbian

A woman who has an emotional and/or sexual interest in members of the same sex.

Bisexual

A person who has an emotional and/or sexual interest in both men and women or to whom the gender of the person in whom they are interested is not relevant.

Pan

A person to whom the gender of the person in whom they are interested is not relevant.

Straight

A person who has an emotional and/or sexual interest in the opposite sex.

Queer

An **umbrella term** that accommodates a wide variety of experiences of diversity of sexual orientation and gender. Queer is not a term intended to be defined or fitted into narrow categories, but rather emphasises a broader, more changeable or flexible definition.

Gender diversity

Trans

An umbrella term for various trans identities.

Transvestite

In most cases, a man who occasionally feels the need to express his personality by also styling himself as a woman, dressing in female clothes, or putting on make-up.

Transsexual

A person whose experience of their gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary

A person who can be both a man and a woman, somewhere between masculinity and femininity, or outside of this division.

Intersex

A wide range of body variations in which chromosomes, genital organs, hormonal function, or other sexually explicit features are not unequivocally female or male.

Cisgender

A person for whom the gender identity assigned at birth generally matches the expectations of their gender and gender expression.

Gender identity

A person's sense of their own gender.

Gender expression

How a person chooses to express their gender through clothing, behaviour, etc.

Gender and sexual orientation diversity

Sexual orientation refers to people experiencing either a sexual or emotional attraction, or both. The definition pertains to the gender of both you and the object of your attraction. The most common definitions are lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight, but there are others. Gays, lesbians and bisexuals belong to sexual minorities. It is estimated that about one in ten people identifies as something other than straight.

It is important to recognise that everyone has the right to decide if they want to define their sexual orientation or not. Everyone has the right to be open about it or to remain “in the closet” – people cannot make this decision on behalf of others. For most people, sexual orientation is

” **Everyone has the right to decide if they want to define their sexual orientation or not.**

permanent, but it can change during their lifetime. It cannot be changed by external influences. Those belonging to sexual minorities are often sexualised, i.e. sexual orientation identity is thought to be strongly related to sex and sexuality. In this case, sexual orientation is ignored in terms of social identity: homosexuality does not provide

any more information about a person than heterosexuality. When work colleagues, who have opposite-sex partners, meet around a coffee table at work to chat about family life or relationships, the same matters can be discussed with colleagues who have same-sex partners.

The expression “**gender diversity**” indicates that gender is a complex phenomenon that is not simply divided into two opposing genders that are clearly distinguishable from each other – male and female – but that gender manifestations are in fact diverse. In this context, plural forms of gender diversity may also be used. This refers to the fact that gender cannot only be regarded as binary; a non-binary gender experience must also be considered. Gender diversity as a concept thus includes both sexual minorities and majorities. Gender diversity can be discussed at an individual level in different ways: it can be observed that each person’s gender consists of unique and individual characteristics and is therefore diverse. On the other hand, gender diversity may be regarded as a feature that is representative of gender minorities.

The term “**gender minorities**” is used to refer to trans and intersex persons. The “trans” umbrella term incorporates many different identities, which are often summarised in three categories: transvestism, transsexualism and non-binary. People’s experiences of their gender are not necessarily limited to these categories, but can be very individual. Likewise, ways of naming your own gender identity can be manifold.

“**Rainbow family**” is an umbrella term for families with children where one or more parents belong to sexual or gender minorities, or both, and where the parents themselves define this. The range of rainbow families is wide, and families can be very diverse in terms of their structures and parenting.

LGBTIQ rights as part of human rights

In Finland human rights are fundamental rights that are indivisible and belong to everyone. They are also part of international law. The rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights include freedom of opinion and expression, the right to privacy and the protection of family life, and the prohibition of discrimination. No religious values or cultural traditions can take precedence over human rights.

In regard to human rights, the UN has formulated five standards of conduct which businesses can draw on to tackle discrimination against LGBTIQ people.

UN standards of conduct to tackle discrimination against LGBTIQ people

- 1. Respect human rights at all times.** Businesses also have a responsibility to respect human rights, including the rights of LGBTIQ people. Businesses are expected to create policies and practices that respect human rights, as well as exercising due diligence.
- 2. Eliminate discrimination in the workplace.** Employees and other people with whom the business engages have the right to enjoy non-discriminatory treatment.
- 3. Provide support in the workplace.** LGBTI individuals work in various business roles, yet many of them face great difficulties in gaining workplace acceptance. This standard requires businesses to go beyond guaranteeing equal benefits; rather, businesses are expected to provide a positive environment where the specific needs of LGBTIQ people are considered.
- 4. Tackle other human rights violations in the workplace.** Businesses should ensure that they do not discriminate against LGBTIQ customers, suppliers or other stakeholders, and that they do not discriminate either. If a business's partner discriminates against LGBTIQ people, the company should use its influence to remedy the situation.
- 5. Act publicly in the community.** Businesses are encouraged to use their influence to help stop human rights violations in the countries in which they operate. Such steps can include public advocacy and working with local communities and LGBTIQ rights organisations.

A link to a comprehensive UN report can be found at the end of this guide.

Nokia Case Study: the first Finnish company to sign the United Nations Standards of Conduct for Business



Nokia was the first Finnish company to sign the UN Standards of Conduct for Business and pledge support for LGBTIQ rights. Nokia continues its efforts to build an inclusive work community, to achieve a positive social impact, and to respect the equal and fair treatment of every individual, including the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexual, intersex people and other minorities. Nokia places a strong focus on inclusion and wants to ensure that every employee can feel safe and accepted. Everyone must have equal opportunities to build a meaningful career at Nokia. Signing up to these standards shows our customers and partners that respect and tolerance are an important part of our corporate culture.

We communicate about this matter both internally and externally. Many of our customers gave positive feedback on our announcement and we are now actively engaged in a rainbow discussion with our customers. After signing the Standards of Conduct, we will evaluate the rights of sexual and gender minorities in our company. We hope this evaluation will give us new information on the obstacles our rainbow minority employees face in everyday life so that we can change the status quo.

Anneli Karlstedt
Head of Inclusion & Diversity, Nokia

Legislative protection and obligations

In working life, in particular, the prohibition of discrimination is an important right. In Finland, sexual and gender minorities are guaranteed more specific protection from discrimination than the Constitution under **the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Non-Discrimination Act** provides protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation. In addition to direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and instructions or orders to discriminate all constitute discrimination. It should also be noted that discrimination is prohibited regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person him/herself, or another person. It is therefore irrelevant whether a person who is discriminated against is “really gay” or whether it is a mere assumption.

In addition to the prohibition of discrimination, the law obliges employers to promote equality. Employers must assess how to achieve equality in the workplace and in working conditions, as well as develop methods that are complied with, while taking into account the needs of the workplace and staff. Under the law, the promotion of equality must be effective, expedient and proportionate, taking into account the operating environment, resources and other circumstances. An employer who regularly employs at least 30 people must have a plan setting out the necessary measures for the promotion of equality.

The prohibition of discrimination based on gender and the promotion of gender equality is governed by **the Act on Equality between Women and Men**. This act, also referred to as the Equality Act, also protects gender minorities against discrimination. The law prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression, as well as discrimination based on the fact that an individual’s physical gender-defining characteristics are not unambiguously female or male. Therefore, among other things, dismissal on the grounds of gender correction or transvestism is illegal. It would be beneficial, particularly in large workplaces, to have practices in place for when a gender-minority employee decides to undergo gender transition. However, the employee is under no obligation to inform the employer that he or she has committed to a gender transition, or that he or she will come to work as a different gender from the one which the employer is used to. If the employee initiates the change themselves, it is good to discuss some practical steps with them. These may include arrangements for changing rooms and toilets, announcing a change of name, or informing colleagues and customers about the process. Sick leave and absences related to assessments and treatment during the transition process are handled in accordance with usual workplace practices.



It would be beneficial, particularly in large workplaces, to have agreed practices when a gender-minority employee decides to undergo gender transition

The Equality Act also obliges employers with at least 30 employees to draw up an equality plan. A high-quality equality plan will consider gender minorities, gender identity and gender expression.

” Creating a plan is not the same as promoting equality and non-discrimination

It is important for gender equality and non-discrimination plans to be living, practical documents, not just a set of formalities required by law that are forgotten about and kept in a drawer or on the intranet. The plan needs to be prepared on a broad basis in

cooperation with staff representatives and effectively implemented. Sometimes it may be advisable to incorporate it into other company's practices, such as co-determination with staff or HR planning. Sometimes it may be necessary to focus on the plans by placing them in their own framework, for example by compiling them into a comprehensive diversity plan, the creation and follow-up of which is the responsibility of the cooperative diversity working group.

Links: A link to the FIBS equality planning guide for the private sector can be found at the end of this guide, in the section containing additional information. In addition, you can familiarise yourself with the websites of the Equality Ombudsman (<https://www.tasa-arvo.fi>) and Non-discrimination Ombudsman (<https://yhdenvertaisuus.fi/>). These sources provide guidance and advice on the process of drawing up plans, as well as their structure and content. To promote equality of members of rainbow minorities, it is necessary to incorporate practical measures and goals into the plans – ideas for good practice can be found in this guide.

It is worth noting that creating a plan is not the same as promoting equality and non-discrimination. Plans are one form of promotion, but there should be others. Promoting equality should be a way of thinking that is not limited to the measures in a plan. In the same way, if possible, promotional measures should not be limited to the letter of the law, such as family leave. It is also necessary to be aware that the Ombudsman for Equality and the occupational health and safety authorities recommend that employers issue employees who correct their gender with new certificates of employment containing their new personal information. The employer can verify personal information using the employee's civil status document, for example. The same recommendation applies to certificates for studies and qualifications.

If you have experienced discrimination in your workplace, you should discuss it with your supervisor or another employer representative, such as HR, and ask for an explanation. If you have faced harassment, ask your employer to intervene. Depending on the workplace and the situation, you can also talk to an occupational safety representative or a shop steward. If the matter is not resolved, you can contact the Regional State Administrative Agency and ask it to clear the matter up.

Business benefits

Conscious acknowledgement of LGBTIQ people in the workplace is not only a fundamental human rights issue, but, according to research,¹⁻² also brings clear, measurable benefits for businesses:

Well-being	Increased employee well-being
Efficiency	The employee is able to give their best in their daily work
Creativity	The employee seeks new solutions to problems
Cooperation	Improved team interaction and teamwork – both internally and in customer relations
Abilities	Easier recruitment and retention of the best people in the company
Brand	Develop a more positive image of the company

The clarification of business benefits is especially important for companies, as it makes a human rights perspective visible, as well as setting out the specific, company mission-related basis for the promotion of LGBTIQ rights: it is good for business and not just empty words or values promised by the senior management that could be easily dismissed in difficult economic times.

The benefits for the brand are especially significant for consumer companies. Active acknowledgement of sexual and gender minorities is part of the social responsibility that consumers are increasingly demanding – regardless of their own identity. Directly targeting LGBTIQ consumers in pursuit of “pink money” has also become more common on a global level. On average, LGBTIQ people are more loyal customers, willing to pay more and have more money to spend because they have fewer family responsibilities than the average population.³ In Finland, the participation of companies in events such as Helsinki Pride has exploded in recent years. However, without implementing the necessary measures in its own organisation, statements about the status of sexual and gender minorities can appear to be hypocritical and a business’s attempt to cash in on pink money.

Financial success is not a direct consequence of acknowledging LGBTIQ people, but successful companies are more open to LGBTIQ issues. In a recent study by Credit Suisse,⁴ the stock market prices of companies that ran an LGBTIQ initiative were 3 percentage points higher over the six-year observation period, and the return on equity was 1.4 percentage points higher than in other companies. In a study conducted at the University of Vaasa, a comparison was made between the financial figures of 600 large American stock market companies and the HRC’s Corporate Equality Index (a benchmark for LGBTIQ workplace). A positive correlation was found: companies with a positive attitude towards sexual and gender minorities were more

profitable and had a higher market value, and this positive correlation was present even in conservative areas⁶.

” Detachment is a common feeling for all people, regardless of identity. If a person does not have a sense of belonging to a specific minority, promoting equality creates a broader sense of safety in the workplace.

Active inclusion of LGBTIQ people in the workplace provides the same benefits as promoting diversity: non-discriminatory recruitment ensures harnessing the best talent and diverse staff who understand the needs and perspectives of a diverse community of customers and suppliers. In a working environment demanding continual innovation, meeting non-stereotypical and unanticipated kinds of people has the proven advantage of stimulating creative problem-solving abilities.⁷⁻

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Most importantly, it is in everyone's interest to promote equal rights for rainbow people. Exclusion is common for all people, regardless of identity. If a person does not have a sense of belonging to a specific minority, promoting equality creates a broader sense of safety in the workplace. If you see that members of minority groups are considered, it is easier to feel that the employer also appreciates you, while at the same time feeling a sense of belonging and being seen as an individual. Positive employee experience is therefore seen as an important factor for promoting a comfortable working environment and the retention of employees in the workplace. A person's experience of a positive, all-embracing community culture is likely to promote a positive employee experience.

Management and work culture

Recognition of rainbow minorities is part of a wider range of diversity and inclusion initiatives in business. In Finland, women's rights were the first step; for people with disabilities have been considered through providing accessibility, and recognition of different cultural backgrounds in large enterprises are already standard practice. Although there is still much to be done in those areas, managing diversity has to be understood as a broader concept, under which new areas continue to emerge that need to be addressed in the workplace.

When it comes to diversity, sexual and gender minorities are distinguished by the fact that rendering them visible and removing the stigma attached to them are of great importance. Only 15% of Finns who belong to sexual and gender minority groups feel they can be completely open about it in their workplaces. Twenty-four per cent completely disguise who they are at work. Less than half of them are open about their identities to managers and only one third are open about it to their clients.⁵

The distinction between the "I" of everyday life and working life is a psychological burden that is detrimental to an individual, and employers should raise the issue of invisible minorities on their own initiative. If an employer remains silent, the business lacks the common language and measures necessary for dealing with this matter. In the absence of a common language, the individual themselves will judge the company's approach to this matter and the threshold for revealing the truth remains high, which in turn both maintains and strengthens a culture of silence. As well as removing the stigma and making sexual and gender minorities visible in the workplace, the stigma attached to mental well-being is also something that is increasingly open to discussion – a fact that benefits the entire work community.

Awareness and elimination of strict gender norms in the work culture benefit the entire work community. Standards are often maintained through social control and sanctioning. Jokes, exclusion from the community, and bullying, are examples of such sanctions. Jokes about gay

” For as long as there is a stigma associated with being part of a minority, “coming out” is a continuous task each time new people meet.

people stem from heterosexual norms and strengthen a certain narrow image of masculinity. Intervening in jokes and a broader deconstruction of norms gives individuals space to be themselves in the work community, regardless of whether they belong to a sexual and gender minority or not. Experiencing psychological security in the work community can encourage everyone to be true to themselves. The lack of such safety makes an invisible minority prone to remaining in the closet

for fear of discrimination or harassment – a fear that openness may cause problems for career advancement or even continuing to work in their role.

For as long as there is a stigma associated with being part of a minority, “coming out” is a continual task each time new people meet. Fear of discrimination can make you think twice: what would you typically say over coffee at work about your rainbow family's weekend? Who

present already knows? Does everyone have a positive and inclusive attitude? Can I speak openly or is it best to disguise myself?

The promotion of equality of sexual and gender minorities can also be used as a visible example of the implementation of values. It is of benefit to both the employee and the employer when the issue is normalised and when at the same time the company shows it is putting its values into practice – many companies include responsibility, equality and staff development in their values.

Leading by example is a way to show the company's commitment to diversity. An even better solution is to encourage employees – from either management or other levels – to tell their own story while showing their own faces. It is easier to identify with another person than with a concept or a generalisation; a personal story helps to gain a deeper understanding of the matter. Obviously, the past history of the company must be taken into account in this respect: if the company does not normally highlight individual cases, doing it in this context, may seem artificial.

Accenture Case Study: why did I join the rainbow network?



I did not see any rainbow role models around me, so I decided to start being one myself. It is important to make the treatment of minorities and their stories visible and give it a face. People identify with people. As a gay white man I am in a privileged position – it is less difficult for me to share this story than it is for many others and my work community supports me – therefore I feel bound to use my voice in support of others as well.

I joined Accenture Finland's rainbow network two years ago and since then our operations have grown fast. Not everything is ready yet, but in a short time we have normalised the acknowledgement of rainbow people and the discussion about it as part of Accenture's wider inclusion and diversity programme. We no longer ask why these things should be discussed in the workplace.

I am also happy to tackle my own prejudices – how I underestimated other people's willingness and ability to improve the situation of rainbow people. At first, I was afraid I'd be known for "just this thing", but this fear turned into a resource. I am glad to be recognised for this. Promoting rainbow minorities and honesty about myself in the workplace has been the best career decision I've made.

Antti Rekola

Senior Consultant, Accenture Strategy

Training staff and raising their awareness is key to their involvement. Training is also a way of creating and consolidating a work culture that truly values diversity. The issues of sexual orientation and gender diversity in staff training sessions should be addressed in different

contexts, such as through induction and refresher trainings. Training increases awareness of company values and policies. It provides an understanding of, as

well as questions, prejudices and normative, stereotypical thinking from the point of view of both employees and customers. Management and managerial training are also important in raising awareness of the impact of conscious bias on issues such as recruitment and career development. Training also allows for a meaningful discussion on rainbow minority matters when the terminology has been mastered.

Training also makes it possible to bring out any **unconscious bias** in the workplace – even when it is not related to sexual and gender minorities. This relates to people's willingness to work, to ask for advice, and it involves people in decision-making processes on the same level. People subconsciously form groups of "us" and "them" based on their own assumptions, which do not necessarily have a true impact on the real world – let alone people's real abilities or work input.

” Training staff and raising their awareness is key to their involvement

GA Telesis Engine Services Case Study: the need for staff training

” In modern times, many previously hidden or neglected phenomena in the workplace get the attention or intervention they need: harassment cases, inequalities, or toxic masculinity – a narrow concept of masculinity – have always existed, especially in male-dominated areas, but they have never been adequately addressed.

We wanted to update our competence with regard to gender and sexual orientation diversity, and we decided to start with our managerial group – they are going to have a great need for such skills to deal with these matters in the workplace. For example, training sessions on harassment cases used to be separate from basic training, but our aim was to combine them. I had heard positive feedback about the training provided by Seta, so we chose to go with them since Seta was sure to have the most up-to-date information.

Many valuable discussions have emerged in our work community after the training; we are not in the Stone Age, but many of us felt that we gained new insights and ideas on the subject. With some participants, the discussions and training led to changes in previously held opinions. In the future, we are planning to expand our basic training for all our staff and to improve our leadership team skills.

Leevi Pylkkänen

Repair shop manager, GA Telesis Engine Services Oy

Sexual and gender diversity in advertising

Traditional gender and heterosexual standards are still largely present in Finnish advertising catalogues. **Inclusive marketing** aims to highlight various people, cultures and social structures in a way that is as truthful, respectful, and stereotypical as it is challenging. IKEA's catalogues, for instance, have long featured same-sex couples and their children, and the Lunette menstrual cup is not only targeted at women, but at "anyone who is menstruating", thus taking into account the gender diversity of its customers. In another example of inclusive ads, female and male couples are presented in everyday situations that disassociate over-sexualisation and normalise sexual and gender minority imagery and discussion.

Dealing with diversity in advertising is not always an easy task. Inclusive marketing requires an understanding of the history and structures of discrimination, the connotations of different images, symbols and words, and international cultural contexts. Ads that relate to sexual and gender minorities can sometimes be "**gay vague**" when they typically feature rainbow people or signs of rainbow culture; however, they are pieced together in such a way that the rainbow content may as well be denied. Such advertising does not aim to provoke the conservative target group, but tries to paint hints of the rainbow. Such "gay vague" advertising may be seen as "playing it safe"; however it appears, at its worst, as unethical and homophobic.

On the other hand, a failure to acknowledge diversity is also a choice that leaves a large proportion of consumers out of marketing. Carefully and respectfully implemented inclusive marketing is an important way in which a business can communicate its values and reach important consumer groups.

S Group Case Study: "Minut itseni kanssa" ("Me as myself") campaign

” The S Group's Best Place to Live programme includes one hundred responsibility acts for Finland, and one of them is to promote diversity through communication. The S Group's Prisma hypermarkets have become the most popular clothing store in Finland. In our opinion, fashion belongs to everyone, and that is why at Prisma, we introduced fashion for people of all ages, sizes and styles. The message of Prisma's "Me as myself" campaign – promoted through many channels and events – is that diversity should not be feared, and that fashion should not be a shell that creates uncertainty. On the contrary, fashion should let everyone be free to be exactly who they are.

The stories told by the faces fronting our campaign can be found here:
<https://www.prisma.fi/fi/prisma/minut-itseni-kanssa>.

Päivi Hole
Head of Assortment Selection, S group

Rainbow employees abroad

Rainbow people working abroad is an acid test for the employer's ability to take into account sexual and gender minorities. It may involve specific challenges, whether it is a business trip abroad, a posted worker, or a local worker in a foreign subsidiary. More than half of the countries in the world do not guarantee proper protection of workers against discrimination (e.g. in Russia), and there are countries, especially in the Middle East and Africa, where homosexual acts are illegal and can be punished by long prison sentences or even death.

If a rainbow employee is posted by their employer to such a country, special awareness of the human rights situation in that country should be raised. It is crucial to realise that the employee's freedom, health or even life may be at risk here. Travelling to such countries should be on a totally voluntary basis and the employee must know what actions could cause undesirable consequences imposed by hate groups or even by the local authorities in the country of destination. For example, the ILGA's website (<https://ilga.org/>) and country-specific travel information releases from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://um.fi/>) provide information on the laws of various countries. It may also be necessary to discuss this with local key players in the defence of LGBTIQ rights.

A Finnish employer may also expand its operations by establishing a subsidiary in such a country. This may require some balancing: if you wish to operate in a given country, you normally have to comply with mandatory legislation. However, on the other hand, it is clear that the company must also follow its own values and policies to promote diversity in all countries where it operates. If the law is hostile, how can the company resolve such conflict?

It is crucial to know the local legislation and the practical realities of the situation. For example, if homosexual acts are punishable, but an individual who identifies as such, or meetings with a minority are not punishable, the employer can – at least on its own premises – allow networking and peer support, as well as the provision of an environment where everyone can be true to themselves. It is usually impossible for an employer to provide protection outside of their premises, so particular caution must be exercised in respect of personal data in order to prevent

"Ally"

A person who does not necessarily belong to a minority, but expresses support for its members

its dissemination – for example, the creation of a list of participants who attend events may be a bad idea as it might fall into the wrong hands.

If identification with LGBTIQ poses a threat, the **"straight ally"** programme may be one possible way to show support. **"Allies"** are people who do not necessarily belong to a discriminated

minority, but express their support for it and thus contribute to diversity in the workplace. The example of company management, in particular, can be a powerful factor here.

Even though a company has to comply with local legislation, it can contribute to change because businesses, especially large or successful companies, have the potential to influence the surrounding society. In chambers of commerce and other business networks, for example,

” When a Finnish company operates abroad, it is important to ensure that its values and practices supporting rainbow people are genuinely present in all its operations abroad

one might act as a role model and raise human rights views and share individual positive experiences about the benefits of diversity for the business, thereby having an impact on other companies. It may also be possible to hold discussions with the authorities on how discriminatory legislation and the social climate hamper the recruitment or posting of the best workers abroad and discourage companies from making local investments.

When a Finnish company operates abroad, it is important to ensure that its values and practices supporting rainbow people are genuinely present in all its operations abroad – even when the host country’s operating environment would not otherwise be favourable to human rights and diversity.

IBM Case Study: a business can also take a stand



Promoting diversity in IBM is based on our values – one could even say that it is part of our DNA and a crucial key success factor for over a hundred years.

Internal written policies and everyday practices ensure this and are therefore very important, but sometimes it is good to turn our attention outwards and take a public stand on values.

IBM has expressed its support for many projects promoting LGBTIQ rights, such as the recent same-sex marriage bills in Northern Ireland and the Czech Republic, and its opposition to discriminatory acts such as the Israeli law on surrogacy and the so-called “bathroom bill” in Texas. In Finland, we were involved in launching the collaboration that resulted in the creation of this guide.

Acts and words shape reality. It is good to act and speak out loud.

Esa Torniainen
HR Partner, IBM Suomi

Good practices in the workplace

The following is a brief list of well-established successful practices in the workplace. Their suitability for each work organisation depends on many factors, so it is worth looking at the list as an exemplary list of ideas that can help develop practices appropriate to your organisation.

- It is advisable to include a diversity programme in the company's written policies, staff guidelines or similar, so that the LGBTIQ perspective is clearly expressed.
- Include the LGBTIQ perspective in all instructions and policies: for example, does the family benefits policy also take into account rainbow families or just straight ones?
- In questions about gender in, for example, staff systems or surveys, are there only "male" or "female" options available, or is there room for other gender identities?
- Small changes can deliver important messages: if "ladies and gentlemen" are welcomed, does that mean that others are not? When you consider diversity in speeches, everyone then feels involved, and at the same time you communicate the company's active desire to keep everyone engaged.
- Introducing volunteer LGBTIQ role models for staff, and especially for management through their own stories, is a powerful message: if they dare to be open about themselves, why shouldn't I?
- Organisational management support is essential. The management may wish to set up an LGBTIQ group ("diversity council") as its discussion partner, which will help management understand this aspect and its promotion in different areas of operation and decision-making. There are good experiences to be had from reverse mentoring, where an LGBTIQ person is a discussion or sparring leader.
- Encouraging and supporting internal volunteering ("employee networks", "diversity networks", "employee resource groups"), such as the LGBTIQ network, allows peer support among participants and helps the company understand LGBTIQ people's perspectives and needs on different issues.
- In some large companies, "ally" programmes have been established as open and active supporters of LGBTIQ rights in the workplace community, which contributes to a positive atmosphere. This can be supported, for example, through specific training.
- Training, including induction training for new employees, leadership training and other staff training, should consider LGBTIQ perspectives when dealing with diversity issues.
- It is good to purposely keep the LGBTIQ perspective as part of the company's internal diversity communication – when the minority is "invisible", it may be easily forgotten.
- In external communications, a value-driven speech that is also diversity-friendly and respects human rights is a strong signal of corporate ethics – examples of this include speaking in appropriate forums for other businesses, spreading information on good practices and experiences, participation in events (such as Pride), and other public "signalling".
- In the supply chain, the customer may require suppliers of goods and services to commit to respecting human rights, including LGBTIQ, and to promote equality through their own activities.

Facts and myths about rainbow minorities

There are only two biological genders. Why do you have to come up with more?

The binary gender model is a simplification invented by humans, but it is not biologically true: for example, intersex people's external body features do not necessarily determine gender, and even genetics no longer limits the question to the textbook XX and XY division.

There is no homosexuality in nature, so why should it be tolerated by humans?

Mating of same-sex individuals is also observed in animal species. Comparison of the behaviour of animal species is irrelevant – few animal species use, for example, written language like humans.

It is as acceptable to be tolerant as it is to be intolerant – it is simply a question of opinion.

In the case of sexual and gender minorities, the main question is not tolerance but accepting and respecting people. Human rights are not opinions and people have no right to restrict the existence of sexual and gender minorities. The word “tolerance” presumes an interaction where one party acts as a dictator and the other is at the mercy of their decision. This is contradictory to the fact that members of sexual and gender minorities are unquestionably sovereign individuals as much as any other person.

Work is not a place for bedroom matters! Homosexuality is each individual's own business that should not be trumpeted around!

Sexual and gender minorities are primarily a question of social identity, human relationships and, consequently, everyday activities where sex is not emphasised any more than it is in straight, cisgender people's lives. Everyone has the right to come out of the closet if they wish to do so and to share their private life as much as others – regardless of their own or their partner's gender.

Gays are easy to recognise by their stereotypical clothing, body language, behaviour and career choices.

Gay people are not similar to each other, any more than straight people are. Some gays may want to express their orientation through, for example, a certain style, and self-expression is part of their individual freedom.

Why would a transsexual person not change their sex in order to become straight instead of just being gay?

Transsexual people do not change their genders but correct them. It is a matter of gender identification and gender conflict that has nothing to do with sexual orientation.

Transvestites can do whatever they want at home, but why should they scare away the customers?

The Equality Act provides protection for everyone against discrimination based on gender expression. It is estimated that there are more than 50,000 transvestites in Finland, so customers will certainly meet

transvestites as well as people who value gender diversity in the workplace.

We lose our professional credibility if we employ transsexual people!

Gender identity, expression or sexual orientation are not linked to skills or expertise. On the other hand, training and work experience are.

Interested? Would you like to learn more?

More information:

<https://seta.fi> Seta is a national umbrella organisation that aims to change society so that human rights and well-being are respected, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

<https://transtukipiste.fi> The Trans Support Center (now: Gender Diversity & Intersex Centre of Expertise) provides psycho-social support services to all intersex, trans people and their friends and family, and serves as an expert in gender diversity.

<http://ypinaction.org> The website on international Yogyakarta Principles and their implementation provides comprehensive information on the treatment of sexual and gender minorities.

<http://tgeu.org/human-rights-gender-identity-best-practice-catalogue/> Transgender Europe Guide includes best practices for the inclusion of trans people.

<http://www.unfe.org/standards/> UN guidance “Standards of Conduct for Business” – the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in business, summarised into five principles.

<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3720-8> “The Equality Act, workplaces and gender diversity” – publication of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

https://www.fibsry.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FIBS_yhdenvertaisuusopas_final.pdf FIBS’s equality planning guide for the private sector. FIBS’s website also includes other extensive material, including events on the topic of diversity.

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