



The status of intersex people in Greece

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Thanasis Theofilopoulos

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Foreword

The overall objective of the “BRING-In” project is to prevent and combat discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics, by building the capacity of social and health care professionals in order to better meet the needs of intersex people and provide them with high quality support services and avoid abusing and discriminatory practices. Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences and NGO Symplexis brought together experienced partners from Bulgaria, Hungary, Cyprus and the UK to implement a ground breaking project - one of the few at European level – to promote social inclusion and positive visibility for intersex people, that is people who “are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male” (IGLYO, OII Europe & EPA, 2018:31).

In general, according to relevant literature, intersex people can “at every age” face “stigma, structural discrimination, harassment, lack of adequate medical care, lack of access to needed medication, lack of access to justice, and the invisibility of their bodies in our society” (Ghattas, 2019:13). Moreover, intersex people

often face employment discrimination based on their appearance or gender expression. Due to hospitalisation or trauma-related mental health problems, intersex people may need to take time off. Gaps in their education or employment history might be difficult to explain to employers. There is a reportedly higher risk of poverty due to lack of education as a result of pathologisation and related trauma (Ghattas, 2019:13).

A crucial task of the “BRING-In” project was to obtain reliable and valuable information for the status of intersex people - one of the most socially invisible population groups - in Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the UK, as the limited number – or in some case the total lack - of relevant scientific studies. To complete this task, “BRING-In” project’s partners conducted a combination of desk and field research on the basis of the research protocol prepared by Panteion University. The latter includes semi-structured personal interviews with representatives of relevant bodies/institutions/organizations, stakeholders and experts.



The results of this research – probably, the first in Greece - are included in the present publication. The research team consisted of social anthropologist Dr Andromachi Bouna and sociologist Thanasis Theofilopoulos from Panteion University and psychologist Eva Spinou from NGO Symplexis. All interviews were recorded after having received the signed informed consent of all participants. Due to the break of COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of protective measures, some of these interviews were conducted through video meeting/conference applications. Excerpts from the interviews that are included in this report were transferred from the respective audio files without being processed - in any way - by the researchers.

Part 1 includes the desk research results while part 2 include the field research results. Finally, the publication includes a summary of the main conclusions of the research.

Chapter 1. Desk research results

1.1. The status of intersex people in the country

Intersex people in Greece could be described as an “invisible” population group, since there is a total lack of evidence – either from official/state or scientific or civil society sources – regarding their population size as well as their sociodemographic profile. Similarly, we don’t have a clear picture regarding hate crime, hate speech and discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics, although the evidence suggests that that the Greek society could hardly be described as friendly and/or safe towards intersex people.

Since 2012, the members of the Racist Violence Recording Network – RVRN¹ (2012 March 21; 2013 April 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020) have recorded hundreds of homophobic, biphobic and/or transphobic hate crimes in Greece, but still, no hate crimes against intersex people have been recorded. There is also a lack of data regarding discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics. Since 2017, the Greek Ombudsman (n.d.) which is “the national equality body with a mandate to combat discrimination and promote the principle of equal treatment”, prepares and publishes its annual equal treatment report. In 2017, the Greek Ombudsman (2018:15, 19) received 738 complaints but just 1% of them were discrimination incidents on the grounds of gender identity or sex characteristics. Furthermore, the exact number of reported cases of discrimination on the ground of sex characteristics is not made clear. In 2018, the Greek Ombudsman (2019:17) received 899 new complaints while in 2019 the same authority received 1176 (2020:15). Both years just 1%

¹ The Racist Violence Recording Network - RVRN (2020:8) - established in 2011 by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR) – is, today, comprised of 47 NGOs - including LGBTQI+ ones - while the Greek Ombudsman and the Migrant Integration Council of the Municipality of Athens, also participate as observers (Racist Violence Recording Network (2020). Annual Report 2019, p. 8. Retrieved from: <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>). RVRN was established on the basis of the following two findings: “a) the identified absence of an official and effective data collection system on racist violence and b) the need to coordinate organisations which recorded, on their own initiative, incidents of racist violence against people who sought their services” (Ibid, p. 8).

out of these complaints were discrimination incidents on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or sex characteristics but is not clear exactly how many complaints belonged to the latter category (The Greek Ombudsman, 2019:17; 2020:15).

The results of the largest ever - at EU level - research on the perceptions and experiences of LGBTI² people that was carried out by FRA³ (2020), reveal the extent of discrimination against and insecurity towards LGBTI people in Greece while highlighting the need for measures and policies to prevent and combat these phenomena. However, this survey does not provide any detailed information about the status of intersex people (in particular) in the country.

According to survey's results, 9% of the Greek respondents aged 15 years or older who describe themselves as LGBTI experienced physical and/or sexual attack for being LGBTI, in the five years before the survey (FRA, 2020:40), while 33% experienced harassment due to being LGBTI, in a 12 months period before the survey (FRA, 2020:44). Moreover, 43% of LGBTI Greek respondents said that they were almost never open about being LGBTI (FRA, 2020:24).

Furthermore, Greece has the highest rate (71%) - at EU level - of trans and intersex respondents aged 15 - 17 years old who felt discriminated against in at least one area of their life in the 12 months before the survey (FRA, 2020:33). According to FRA (2020:33): "This shows a need for policy measures targeting children and young people belonging to these groups". Finally, 19% of Greek LGBTI respondents said that they "felt discriminated against due to being LGBTI when looking for work in the 12 months before the survey" (the respective EU average was 10%), while 31% of them

² This is the term used in FRA's LGBTI Survey II of 2020.

³ From May until July 2019, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA (2020:57), conducted the largest ever EU Survey on the perceptions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, with 139.799 respondents from EU 28 members states (UK included) together with respondents from North Macedonia and Serbia (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA (2020). EU-LGBTI II. A long way to go for LGBTI equality. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 57. Retrieved from: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-lgbti-equality-1_en.pdf). Intersex people as well as respondents aged 15 to 17 years old took part for the first time in the FRA's EU LGBT survey (Ibid, p. 57). In total, 4502 Greek LGBTI people took part in this research but just 76 (2%) of them were intersex (Ibid, p. 58).

“felt discriminated against due to being LGBTI at work in the 12 months before the survey” – the respective EU average was 21% (FRA, 2020:32-33).

Clearer – and quite alarming – evidence regarding the status of intersex people in Greece are provided by European Commission’s Eurobarometer Discrimination in the European Union (European Commission, 2019 May), which shows a lack of acceptance of intersex people in Greece and the existence of negative attitudes towards them. Greece has the third biggest percentage of respondents in the EU (including the UK) who believed that “discrimination on the basis of being intersex” is “total widespread” in the country: 54%, while the EU average was 39% (European Commission, 2019 May:45). When asked how they would feel if an intersex person held the “highest elected position” in Greece, 45% of respondents replied “total uncomfortable” which is the eighth biggest rate in EU28, while the EU average who would feel the same was more than half - 21% (European Commission, 2019 May:49).

Furthermore, when asked how they would feel if a colleague of theirs with whom they were “in daily contact” was “an intersex person”, 44% responded “total comfortable” which was the 7th lowest percentage at EU28 level and far from the EU28 average which was 66% (European Commission, 2019 May:57). Finally, when asked how they would feel if one of their children – whether they really had children or not – was in a “love relationship” with “an intersex person”, 70% of the respondents replied that they would feel “total uncomfortable” which was the second – together with that of Lithuania - highest rate at EU28 level, while the respective EU28 average was 31% (European Commission, 2019 May:60).

1.2. National legal framework

In April 2015, Malta passed the ACT No. XI of 2015 “for the recognition and registration of the gender of a person and to regulate the effects of such a change, as well as the recognition and protection of the sex characteristics of a person” and “became the first EU Member State to provide protection

against discrimination explicitly on grounds of ‘sex characteristics’” (FRA, 2020:52). According to Ghattas (2015 December:7), at the time, Malta was “the first country in the world to protect intersex people’s physical autonomy and bodily integrity on the ground of ‘sex characteristics’ “. The same year, Greece became the second country in Europe to “explicitly protect intersex people against discrimination” (Ghattas, 2015 December:7,15).

In more detail, according to Article 21 of Law No. 4356 of 2015, Article 81A of the Greek Penal Code was amended. The new Article 81A regarding “criminal acts with a racist motivation”, provided stricter penalties (imprisonment) for criminal acts motivated by prejudice/bias against the victim’s sex characteristics, in comparison with penalties imposed for the same criminal acts but without the prejudice/bias motivation. The Penal Code was later ratified by Law 4619 of 2019. The “new” Penal Code includes Article 82A which similarly provides harsher penalties (imprisonment) for hate crimes on the grounds of sex characteristics in comparison with penalties imposed for the same - but not bias/prejudice motivated - crimes.

On the other hand, this new Penal Code has two major drawbacks. According to Article 82A, penalties imposed for bias-motivated felonies are now less strict than those that could be imposed according to the provisions of the previous Penal Code. Moreover, Article 361B according to which the exclusion of people from goods or services (or the announcement of such exclusion) because of their sex characteristics was a punishable act, is now repealed.

In 2016, Law No. 4443/2016 was passed. According to the so called “anti-discrimination law”, discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics – among others – is forbidden in the employment sector (both private and public) as well as “during sales of goods or provision of services to the public”. The law also includes an explicit reference of the “supposed characteristics” (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, national or ethnic origin, religious beliefs etc.) of the victim, thus it is the perpetrator's motivation that matters and not if the “characteristic” of the victim is “actual” or “real”. Furthermore, the perpetrator is the one who has

to prove that he/she did not actually, discriminate against the victim. The law also provides the victims with protection against any kind of retaliation. Yet again a major legal gap can be found. Law No. 4443/2016 does not include an explicit reference to sex characteristics as protected ones against discrimination in a number of sectors namely social protection, social benefits, tax reliefs, education, housing.

Legal registration after birth, is regulated according to the provisions of Law 344/1976. Article 22, provides that the birth certification of the newborn must include the child's sex. No other details are provided but as we are going to see at the following Parts of the present research, newborns are categorized either as males or females, in other words there is no such thing as a "third" or "x" choice/option for gender marker.

Regarding medical procedures performed on the bodies of intersex minors without their consent, Law 3418/2005 on "Code of Medical Ethics" has major gaps that lead to the violation of intersex people's human rights. While according to Article 2, medical services are provided with "absolute respect for human life and human dignity" and they are "addressed to all people without discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, age, sexual orientation, social status or political ideology", there is no explicit reference to sex characteristics - as well as to gender identity - as protected features against discrimination.

Articles 12 of Law 3418/2005 refers to the "informed consent of the patient". According to the provisions of this Article, a doctor "is not allowed to perform any medical procedure without the prior consent of the patient". On the other hand, if "the patient is a minor", then "consent is given by those who exercise parental responsibility or custody". The opinion of a patient of a minor age "is also taken into account", but only if "he/she - according to the doctor's opinion - has the age, mental and emotional maturity to understand his/her health status, the content of the medical act and the consequences or the results or the risks of this act". In other words, according to the law, if a new-born baby - or a child - is identified as an intersex person, the parents are the ones to provide

consent for medical procedures related to the baby’s sex characteristics. Intersex people have no right to their own bodies until they become adults. Others have the right to make decisions for them - decisions that may lead to dire consequences that will follow intersex people for the rest of their lives.

Since 2017, the Greek Transgender Support Association (2017 October 26) is calling the Greek Government(s) to transpose the provisions of Resolution 2191 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly “Promoting the human rights of and eliminating discrimination against intersex people” to the national legal framework, and, in particular, the prohibition of unnecessary sex “normalization” surgeries, sterilization or other treatments applied to intersex children without their consent in as well as the inclusion of sex characteristics as protected characteristics against discrimination in all areas of life as well as and the provision of specialized and holistic health care practices to intersex people⁴.

⁴ According to this Resolution:

“(…) the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:

7.1. with regard to effectively protecting children’s right to physical integrity and bodily autonomy and to empowering intersex people as regards these rights:

7.1.1. prohibit medically unnecessary sex-“normalising” surgery, sterilisation and other treatments practised on intersex children without their informed consent;

7.1.2. ensure that, except in cases where the life of the child is at immediate risk, any treatment that seeks to alter the sex characteristics of the child, including their gonads, genitals or internal sex organs, is deferred until such time as the child is able to participate in the decision, based on the right to self-determination and on the principle of free and informed consent;

7.1.3. provide all intersex people with health care offered by a specialised, multidisciplinary team taking a holistic and patient-centred approach and comprising not only medical professionals but also other relevant professionals such as psychologists, social workers and ethicists, and based on guidelines developed together by intersex organisations and the professionals concerned;

7.1.4. ensure that intersex people have effective access to health care throughout their lives;

7.1.5. ensure that intersex people have full access to their medical records;

7.1.6. provide comprehensive and up-to-date training on these matters to all medical, psychological and other professionals concerned, including conveying a clear message that intersex bodies are the result of natural variations in sex development and do not as such need to be modified;

7.2. with a view to assisting intersex people, their parents and the people around them in dealing with the challenges posed, *inter alia*, by social attitudes towards variations in sex characteristics:

7.2.1. ensure that adequate psychosocial support mechanisms are available for intersex people and their families throughout their lives;

7.2.2. support civil society organisations working to break the silence around the situation of intersex people and to create an environment in which intersex people feel safe to speak openly about their experiences;

Regarding legal gender recognition, in 2017, the Greek Parliament enacted the Law No. 4491 which describes the legal procedure that transgender persons must follow in order to change their identity card as well as the rest of the identification papers. While the law allows trans persons to proceed to the legal recognition of their gender identity without the obligation to undergo any kind of medical procedures or treatments, the Greek Ombudsman (2018:105) has highlighted that this law “does not fully comply with the European and international requirements” because it is not in line with the relevant recommendations “for the establishment by the State of quick, transparent and

7.3. with regard to civil status and legal gender recognition:

7.3.1. ensure that laws and practices governing the registration of births, in particular as regards the recording of a newborn’s sex, duly respect the right to private life by allowing sufficient flexibility to deal with the situation of intersex children without forcing parents or medical professionals to reveal a child’s intersex status unnecessarily;

7.3.2. simplify legal gender recognition procedures in line with the recommendations adopted by the Assembly in Resolution 2048 (2015) and ensure in particular that these procedures are quick, transparent and accessible to all and based on self-determination;

7.3.3. ensure, wherever gender classifications are in use by public authorities, that a range of options are available for all people, including those intersex people who do not identify as either male or female;

7.3.4. consider making the registration of sex on birth certificates and other identity documents optional for everyone;

7.3.5. ensure that, in accordance with the right to respect for private life, intersex people are not prevented from entering into a civil partnership or marriage or from remaining in such a partnership or marriage as a result of the legal recognition of their gender;

7.4. with regard to combating discrimination against intersex people, ensure that anti-discrimination legislation effectively applies to and protects intersex people, either by inserting sex characteristics as a specific prohibited ground in all anti-discrimination legislation, and/or by raising awareness among lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges and all other relevant professionals, as well as intersex people, of the possibility of dealing with discrimination against them under the prohibited ground of sex, or as an “other” (unspecified) ground where the list of prohibited grounds in relevant national anti-discrimination provisions is non-exhaustive;

7.5. collect more data and carry out further research into the situation and rights of intersex people, including into the long-term impact of sex-“normalising” surgery, sterilisation and other treatments practised on intersex people without their free and informed consent, and in this context:

7.5.1. conduct an inquiry into the harm caused by past invasive and/or irreversible sex-“normalising” treatments practised on individuals without their consent and consider granting compensation, possibly through a specific fund, to individuals having suffered as a result of such treatment carried out on them;

7.5.2. in order to build a complete picture of current practice, keep a record of all interventions carried out on children’s sex characteristics;

7.6. carry out campaigns to raise awareness among the professionals concerned and among the general public as regards the situation and rights of intersex people.

8. Finally, the Assembly invites national parliaments to work actively, with the participation of intersex people and their representative organisations, to raise public awareness about the situation of intersex people in their country and to give effect to the recommendations made above” (Council of Europe - Parliamentary Assembly (2017 October 12). Resolution 2191 (2017) Promoting the human rights of and eliminating discrimination against intersex people. Retrieved from: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=24232&lang=en>).

easily accessible procedures for changing the identity card and other identification documents of the transgender persons on the basis of the principle of self-determination”.

Moreover, under Law 4491/2017, minors under 15 years old are not allowed to correct their - assigned at birth – gender in their documents, while minors between 15 and 17 years old have to receive the consent of their parents or guardians as well the approval of a scientific committee, in order to be allowed to proceed to the legal recognition of their gender identity. The Greek Ombudsman has stressed (2018:105) that the legal recognition of gender identity of minor trans persons is “a decisive step for the prevention of them being targeted”.

Furthermore, Greek LGBTQI+ organizations have identified many gaps in Law 4491/2017, including those related to intersex and non-binary people.⁵ For example, Greek Transgender Support Association (2017 October 10) has highlighted the total lack of protection measures for intersex people, while Colour Youth (2017 October 10) referred to the exclusion of intersex and non-binary persons from the legal gender recognition procedure because of the lack of a third/alternative sex option in public/official papers⁶.

⁵ Article 7 of the draft version of Law 4491/2017 explicitly prohibited medical surgeries on intersex infants and at the same time provided a clear legal framework for the legal recognition of gender identity in case of medical procedures. But, when the draft finally submitted, Article 7 was missing and was replaced by the new Article 7 "Other provisions" which does not concern intersex people. Dr. Nikoletta Pikramenou argues that the "mysterious" deletion of Article 7 as well as the global trend for illegal protection of intersex people reveals the complexity of gender issues as they touch on ideals, values and ideals deeply rooted in modern society that are difficult to overthrow (Pikramenou, N. (2019). *Intersex Rights. Living Between Sexes*, Springer, p. 178-181).

⁶ According to the personal blog of Vassilis Sotiropoulos - alternate member of the National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA) and the lawyer who handled the case - in September 2020, a Greek Court ruled – for the first time in the country – that a non-binary person could change their first and last name in their documents/papers (E-Lawyer (2020 September 17). Recognition of non-binary gender identity by the district civil court of Kallithea [“Αναγνώριση μη δυαδικής ταυτότητας φύλου - non binary από το Ειρηνοδικείο Καλλιθέας”]. Retrieved from: <http://elawyer.blogspot.com/2020/09/non-binary.html>). The decision of the court was based on Article 5 of the Greek Constitution regarding the “free development of personality, personal freedom”, the provisions of Law No.344/1976 regarding registration acts (e.g. birthday, marriage and death certificates), Article 782 of the Code of Civil Procedure as well as on Law 4491/2017 (ibid).

One of the positive aspects of the Law is Article 7 by which Articles 1 and 2 of the “anti-racist” Law No. 927/1979 were amended. According to this last amendment, sex characteristics were added as a protected characteristic. Law No 927/1979 was first amended by Law No. 4285/2014. The amended Law No. 927/1979 provides that imprisonment and fines up to 20.000 euro can be imposed against anyone “who intentionally, publicly, orally or through the Press, the Internet or any other means, incites, provokes, induces or urges, acts or actions that may cause discrimination, violence or hatred against a person or group of persons or a member of such a group who are defined base to (...) sex characteristics”, but only if this incitement etc. occurs “in a way that put public order into danger or if it includes threat against the life, the freedom or the physical integrity of the above mentioned persons”. In other words, after the amendments of Law No. 4285/2014, hate speech may be punished only under certain circumstances for example if it jeopardizes public order.

In 2019, the Greek Parliament voted on a law that includes provisions against stereotypes and inequality in the media sector and content. While gender identity and sexual orientation are explicitly referred in some provisions of this Law, the same does not apply for sex characteristics: according to Article 24 of Law No 4604/2019, “in codes of conduct drawn up by public service broadcasters, in self-employment contracts that may be concluded by them and in the self-regulatory rules that are established and perhaps approved by the competent authorities, regulations aiming at the realization of the equal treatment principle and the elimination of stereotypes on the grounds of gender, gender identity and sexual orientation are mandatorily adopted in the field in which they operate”. Moreover, while the same Article includes provisions regarding the “equal representation of the female gender in all areas of the country’s social, economic, cultural and political life” by all TV and radio stations as well as the inclusion of thematic issues “contributing to the promotion of Gender Equality, the identification and elimination of discrimination, and the fight against stereotypes”, no explicit reference is made to sex characteristics as well as to gender identity and sexual orientation.

Additionally, while - according to the same Article - speech “involving discrimination on the grounds of gender, as well as any other reference with a relevant verbal or other behaviour” when “reproducing advertising, television or radio messages” is prohibited, there is no relevant provision regarding sex characteristics, sexual orientation or gender identity. Finally, according to the same Article, the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) publishes directives “on integrating the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, gender identity and sexual orientation into the broadcasted programs of radio and TV broadcasters” - as well as on the aforementioned provisions of the same Article - but yet again not on the grounds of sex characteristics. Sex characteristics are partially or not at all included in national legal framework, highlighting the invisibility of intersex people at the legal level as well and failing to effectively - in legal terms - to protect their human rights.

1.3. National central policies and good practices

No central policies focusing on the prevention of hate speech, hate crime and/or discrimination against intersex people or on the promotion of their social inclusion and protection of their human rights, are known to have been implemented in the country.

One important initiative of the Geek State, addressing the roots of discrimination and abuse of intersex people but not focusing particularly on intersex issues (although including them), was the “Thematic Week” for secondary education schools. It involved training and awareness raising activities in many topics including human rights. This initiative was introduced in 2016 and was organized by the Institute of Educational Policy of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, in collaboration with other bodies, organizations and institutions, including LGBTQI+ organizations. For example, during the Thematic Week 2018-2019, the Rainbow School NGO - which promotes the inclusion and equal treatment of LGBTQI+ pupils/students in school environments - prepared and provided the awareness and educational material “Awareness of students on Sexual Orientation,

Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics issues” targeting secondary school students.

In January 2020 though, it was announced by the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education (2020 January 31), that, during 2019/2020 and from now on, the Thematic Week will no longer be implemented. Finally, in March 2021, the Rainbow School NGO announced that that educational material “Moving Forward - Awareness of students on issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics” which has been developed by the NGO and which is addressed to high school students, received approval from the Ministry (Rainbow School, 2021 March 18).

Regarding intersex-focused initiatives from other organizations or institutions, besides the “BRING-In” project no relevant projects are known to have been implemented in the country whether by the academic/research community or the civil society sector. Intersex people will usually find support to some LGBTQI+ organizations but the only civil society organization for the sole purpose of defending the human rights of intersex people is “Intersex Greece” - a newly established as an Association (the from August 3 2021 organization’s statute was approved by the decision no. 477/2021 of the Athens County Court) which consists of intersex people, members of their families as well as other defenders of the human rights of intersex people. Other organizations that have advocated - and still do - the human rights of intersex people include - mainly - the Greek Transgender Support Association that promotes the rights and freedoms of trans, gender-diverse, intersex and LGBTI persons in general and, incidentally, Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community.

When it comes to official reporting procedures, if a discrimination incident on the grounds of sex characteristics occurs, a person may file an official complaint to the Greek Ombudsman which is the national equality body that combats discrimination and promotes the equal treatment principle. One of this Independent Authority’s departments is that of the Equal Treatment, responsible for

handling cases of discrimination (and) on the grounds of sex characteristics. A person may submit a report online (through a special electronic form), by post, email or at the Authority's premises during a meeting with a staff member of the Equality Department. The procedure is totally charge free and the Ombudsman does not proceed to any interventions without the informed consent of the person that filed the report.

In case of a hate crime on the grounds of sex characteristics, a person can file an official report to the Police Service for Combating racist crime, which operates a 24hr special and charge free line and also provides the option of an online complaint submission. The procedure is also charge free and police officers working in the Service have participated in training and awareness activities of LGBTQI+ organizations, regarding human rights and/or anti-LGBTQI+ hate crime⁷. But while there are available options for intersex people to officially report hate crimes and discrimination incidents on the grounds of sex characteristics, the abusive and/or discriminatory behaviors from some police officers against members of the LGBTQI+ community⁸ seem to undermine the trust towards Police

⁷ For example, members of this Police Service participated in training and awareness workshops regarding anti-LGBTQI hate crime, organized by Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community and deliver by the then Project Manager Thanasis Theofilopoulos - along with invited experts - in the framework of the Project "Come Forward: Empowering and Supporting Victims of Anti-LGBT Hate Crimes", funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union (Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community (2018 September 28). PRESS RELEASE "Come Forward" training Workshops. Retrieved from: <https://www.colouryouth.gr/2018/10/01/come-forward-deltio-typou/>). During the workshops, participants became familiar with key concepts such as "intersex" and "sex characteristics" - among other LGBTQI+ terms and concepts - the current legal framework for racist crime and discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics. etc.

⁸ For example, LGBTQI+ and other human rights organizations denounced the involvement of Police officers to the abuse -and perhaps the death – of the well known LGBTQI+ activist Zak Kostopoulos in 2018 and the homophobic verbal and physical attack against a couple of gay men in 2019 (Proud Parents, Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community, Rainbow Families, Greek Transgender Support Association, Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece OLKE, Proud Seniors Greece, Rainbow School, LGBTQI+ Employment Support Group, Athens Pride, Positive Voice and Praksis (2018 September 28). PROTEST - MARCH OF LGBTQI+ ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE MURDER OF ACTIVIST ZAK KOSTOPOULOS ["ΔΙΑΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ – ΠΟΡΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΛΟΑΤΚΙ+ ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΕΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΚΤΙΒΙΣΤΗ ΖΑΚ ΚΩΣΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ"]. Retrieved from:

<https://transgendertextsupportassociation.wordpress.com/2018/09/28/%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%b1%cf%81%cf%84%cf%85%cf%81%ce%b9%ce%b1-%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%b5%ce%b9%ce%b1-%cf%84%cf%89%ce%bd-%ce%bb%ce%bf%ce%b1%cf%84%ce%ba%ce%b9-%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%b1/> / Greek Transgender Support Association, Athens Pride, Rainbow Families, Proud Seniors Greece, Rainbow School, Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community, Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece OLKE (2019 September 9). PRESS RELEASE: "Joint statement by LGBTQI organizations regarding a homophobic racist attack on two citizens by Riot Police men" ["ΔΕΛΤΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ: «Κοινή

and this is one of the reasons for underreporting of cases (Theofilopoulos et al. 2018:125). This implies the need for continuing training and raising awareness activities on LGBTQI+ people in general - and intersex people in particular - targeting at police officers on a broader scale (not only the officers of the aforementioned special police service) as well as the need for (independent) research and prosecution of illegal police violence and/or discriminatory practices.

1.4. Useful contacts

Intersex organizations:

- Intersex Greece

E-mail: intersexgreece@gmail.com

Website: www.intersexgreece.org.gr

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IntersexGr/>

LGBTQ(!) organizations:

- Athens Pride (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 6974 18 73 83

δήλωση LGBTQI οργανώσεων σχετικά με ομοφοβική ρατσιστική επίθεση σε βάρος δύο πολιτών από άντρες των ΜΑΤ»]. Retrieved from:

<https://transgendersupportassociation.wordpress.com/2019/09/02/%ce%b4%ce%b5%ce%bb%cf%84%ce%b9%ce%bf%cf%84%cf%85%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%85-%ce%ba%ce%bf%ce%b9%ce%bd%ce%ae-%ce%b4%ce%ae%ce%bb%cf%89%cf%83%ce%b7-lgbtqi-%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%b1%ce%bd%cf%8e%cf%83%ce%b5/>.

The Greek Racist Violence Recording Network has also recorded cases of anti-LGBTQI+ hate crimes by police officers (Racist Violence Recording Network (2014). Annual Report 2013, p. 8. Retrieved from: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Report2013_EN.pdf / Racist Violence Recording Network (2015). Annual Report 2014, p. 13 Retrieved from: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Report_2014eng.pdf / Racist Violence Recording Network (2016). Annual Report 2015, p. 21-22. Retrieved from: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Report_2015eng.pdf / Racist Violence Recording Network (2020). Annual Report 2019, p. 24. Retrieved from: <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>).

E-mail: contact@athenspride.eu

Website: www.athenspride.eu

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/athenspride

- Colour Youth –Athens LGBTQ Youth Community (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 6945 58 33 95

E-mail: info@colouryouth.gr

Website: www.colouryouth.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ColourYouth

- HerPride (ex LGBTQ+ Crete Pride) (Heraklion, Crete)

E-mail: herpride2019@gmail.com

Website: herpride2018.wordpress.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/herpridefest

- G-All, Gender Alliance Initiative

E-mail: g.all.initiative@gmail.com

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/GenderAllianceInitiative

- Greek LGBT PwD (Athens)

E-mail: info@loatamea.gr / greeklgbtdisabled@gmail.com

Website: www.loatamea.gr

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/loatamea

- Greek Transgender Support Association (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 210 92 10 697

E-mail: contact@tgender.gr / transgender.support.association@gmail.com

Website: www.transgender-association.gr / www.tgender.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GreekTransgenderSupportAssociation

- OLKE - Gay and Lesbian Community of Greece (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 6931 47 15 67

E-mail: info.olke@gmail.com

Website: www.olkegr.blogspot.gr

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OLKEorg>

- Orlando LGBT: Mental Health beyond the Stigma (Athens)

E-mail: contact@orlandolgbt.gr

Website: www.orlandolgbt.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/orlandolgbt.gr

- Patras Pride (Patras)

E-mail: pridepatras@gmail.com

Website: www.patraspride.blogspot.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/patraspride

- Proud Parents (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 6977 83 90 37

E-mail: proudparentsgreece@gmail.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/proudparentsgreece

- Proud Seniors Greece

Tel: (+30) 6973355124

E-mail: proudseniorgreece@gmail.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/proudseniorgreece

- Rainbow Families (Athens)

E-mail: ouraniotoksofamilies@gmail.com

Website: www.rainbowfamiliesgreece.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ouraniotoksofamilies

- Rainbow School (Athens)

Tel: (+30) 6931 47 15 67

E-mail: info@rainbowschool.gr

Website: www.rainbowschool.gr

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/RainbowSchoolGR

- Thessaloniki Pride (Thessaloniki)

Tel: (+30) 231 1 289320

E-mail: contact@thessalonikipride.com

Website: www.thessalonikipride.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ThessalonikiPride

Network of the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality for women who have experienced / are experiencing discrimination or gender-based violence:

- 24hr Helpline: 15900

Counselling Centers of the Research Center for Gender Equality (KETHI)

- Athens Counselling Center (Polykentro)

Tel: (+30) 210 52 02 800

E-mail: polykentro@isotita.gr

- Athens Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 33 17 305-6

E-mail: isotita4@otenet.gr

- Corfu Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26610 47396

E-mail: kerkyra@isotita.gr

- Herakleion Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2810 341387

E-mail: irakleio@isotita.gr

- Ioannina Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26510 77449

E-mail: ioannina@isotita.gr

- Komotini Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 25310 33290

E-mail: komotini@isotita.gr

- Kozani Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 24610 49672

E-mail: kozani@isotita.gr

- Lamia Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22310 20059

E-mail: lamia@isotita.gr

- Larisa Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2410 535840

E-mail: larisa@isotita.gr

- Mytiline Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22510 34470 / F: 22510 34471

E-mail: mytilini@isotita.gr

- Patras Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2610 620059

E-mail: patra@isotita.gr

- Piraeus Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 4828970, 4825372

E-mail: peiraias@isotita.gr

- Syros Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22810 76496

E-mail: ermoupoli@isotita.gr

- Thessaloniki Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2310 528984, 528988

E-mail: thessaloniki@isotita.gr

- Tripoli Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2710 241814

E-mail: tripoli@isotita.gr

Municipal Counselling Centers

- Alexandroupoli Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 25510 25629

E-mail: isotita@alexpolis.gr

Website: www.isotitalexpolis.blogspot.com

- Arta Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26810 77400

E-mail: skgarta@gmail.com

- Athens Center for Combating Gender-Based Violence and Multiple Discrimination

Tel: (+30) 210 8625355, 21086255858

E-mail: kentrokatapolemisdiakriseon@athens.gr

- Chalandri Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 6899916

E-mail: womenaidhalandri@gmail.com

Ιστοσελίδα: www.womenaidhalandri.wordpress.com

- Chalkida Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2221 351826-7

E-mail: skg.xalkideon@dchalkideon.gr

- Chios Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22713 50040

E-mail: womanaid@outlook.com

- Corinth Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 27410 74670

E-mail: skgyndk@otenet.gr

- Florina Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 23850 24081

E-mail: symv.kentro.flo@gmail.com

Website: www.womenaidflorina.blogspot.gr

- Fyli Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 2483360

E-mail: ksfylis@fyli.gr

- Eleusis Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 213 160 1437

E-mail: violence@1822.syzefxis.gov.gr

- Kalamata Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 27210 99212, 99225

E-mail: ksg@kalamata.gr

- Karditsa Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 24410 71594, 24410 77122

E-mail: info@wck.gr, wckarditsa@gmail.com

Website: www.wck.gr

- Kastoria Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 24670 22122

E-mail: counsellingwomenkastoria@gmail.com

Website: www.supportwomenkastoria.blogspot.gr

- Katerini Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 23510 36678

E-mail: womenaid@katerini.gr

- Kavala Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 2513 500440, 2513 500441, 2513 500442, 2513 500443

E-mail: womensaid@dkavalas.gr

- Kefalonia Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26710 20022/Φ: 26710 20025

E-mail: kesy@kefallonia.gov.gr

- Keratsini – Drapetsona Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 4614575

E-mail: skkeratsini@gmail.com

Ιστοσελίδα: www.womenaid.wix.com/keratsini

- Kos Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22420 67420

E-mail: women@kos.gr

- Peristeri Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 5783265

E-mail: skg@peristeri.gr

Website: womenaidperisteri.blogspot.gr

- Preveza Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26820 24444

E-mail: womenaid@1485.syzefxis.gov.gr

- Pyrgos Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26210 20532

E-mail: pirgoswomen@outlook.com

- Rethymno Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 28310 56607

E-mail: isotitavia.reth@gmail.com

- Rhodes Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22410 67155, 67120, 67128

E-mail: ksymbouleytikorodou@gmail.com

- Salamis Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 210 467 2665

E-mail: women@salamina.gov.gr

- Serres Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 23210 22253

E-mail: womenaid@serres.gr

Website: www.womenaidserres.wordpress.com

- Thebes Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 22620 89574, 89576

E-mail: symvouleutiko@thiva.gr

Website: www.sumvouleutikothivas.blogspot.gr

- Trikala Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 24310 27943

E-mail: skg@trikalacity.gr

Website: www.supportwomen.trikalacity.gr

- Veroia Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 23310 65304

E-mail: isotita@veria.gr

- Zakynthos Counselling Center

Tel: (+30) 26950 25997

E-mail: symvouleftikozakynthos@gmail.com

National Social Support Service:

- National Centre of Social Solidarity EKKA (emergency psychological and social support services to children, adolescents, adults, families and socially vulnerable groups in a state of emergency, social exclusion and crisis)

24hr Helpline: 197 (24hr)

Website: www.ekka.org.gr

National Equality Body:

- The Greek Ombudsman

The Greek Ombudsman is the national equality body with a mandate to combat discrimination and promote the principle of equal treatment irrespective of sex (among others) characteristics. The Department of Equal Treatment is competent for handling cases of discrimination as they relate to

access of employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions, in both in the public and the private sector, including contractual employment, self-employment, work and pay.

Tel: (+30) 2131306600

Online Complaint Submission: www.synigoros.gr/?i=submission-system.el

Website: www.synigoros.gr

Police Services:

- Cyber Crime Unit of the Hellenic Police

The Unit's responsibilities include the investigation of racist content on the internet.

Tel: 11188 (24hr)

E-mail: ccu@cybercrimeunit.gov.gr

Website: www.cyberkid.gr (for children and their parents)

www.cyberalert.gr/feelsafe (for fraud in online environment)

- Police Service for Combating Racist Violence

Tel: 11414 (24hr)

Online Complaint Submission:

http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&&perform=view&id=18224&Itemid=0&lang=

Chapter 2. Primary research results: interviews with representatives of relevant bodies / institutions / organizations, experts and stakeholders

2.1. Background and profile of interviewees

The research team conducted a total of eleven (11) interviews out of which ten with representatives from relevant bodies, institutions, organizations and one with a member of the academic-research community with a long-lasting and proven teaching and research experience on Gender and LGBTQI+ issues. In particular, interviews were conducted with representatives/spokespersons from:

- five (05) LGBTQI+ organizations - three of which have a legal status and the rest are informal groups, while four of them are based in Greece and one is based in another EU member state but has a Greek “branch”
- two (02) women’s rights organizations with legal status
- one (01) gender equality focused organization (again with a legal status)
- one (01) independent human rights body
- one (01) independent equality body

Due to the protective measures against covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via teleconference applications - and were recorded with the (signed) consent of the interviewees.

All spokespersons/representatives of the represented LGBTQI+ organizations were members of their boards and/or founding members. Four out of five of them have a humanistic sciences educational background and hold their current positions from three years to over a decade. The spokespersons/representatives of the women’s rights’ organizations hold management and/or support services positions – one of them for two years and the other one for nine years - and have

social sciences educational background. The spokesperson/representative of the gender issues organization has a social sciences educational background too and is both a founding member of their organization in which he holds a management position for about a year.

Moreover, the representative/spokesperson of the human rights body is a member of the board for a year and has a law science educational background. The representative/spokesperson of the equality body also has a law science educational background, but is a member of the equality department for the last four years. Finally, the participating expert is a university professor (humanistic studies) for two decades.

2.2. Basic knowledge of terminology and legal framework

In this first section, researchers focused on the identification of the level of knowledge and awareness of interviewees regarding basic terminology related to the issues addressed by this project - namely “intersex”, “sex characteristics” and “discrimination”, “hate crime” and “hate speech” on the grounds of sex characteristics – as well as the existing anti-discrimination and patients’ rights (=due to the widespread phenomenon of the violation of intersex people’s body integrity, by performing medical procedures on them without their consent) national legal framework.

Most interviewees provided (correct) definitions of “intersex” and “sex characteristics”. On the other hand, three interviewees – two from LGBTQI+ organizations and one from a women rights’ organizations - found it difficult to provide clear definitions for “intersex” and/or “sex characteristics”. One of these three interviewees also added that they could hardly understand what intersex means.

When asked about “discrimination”, “hate crime” and “hate speech” on the grounds of sex characteristics, most of the interviewees could not provide accurate definitions or identify the

differences between those acts/behaviours, but answered by giving examples of these acts and behaviors. An interviewee from a women’s rights organization provided only short definitions for hate crime and discrimination, arguing that hate crimes are *“crimes that come from prejudices”* while discrimination has to do with different kinds of *“limitations”* a person may face to different sectors of life due to their characteristics. Two interviewees – both from LGBTQI+ organizations – argued that hate crimes are more *“serious”* than hate speech, while one interviewee also from a LGBTQI+ organization argued that discrimination is the basis for hate speech and hate crimes and, similarly, an interviewee from a women’s rights organization said that hate speech leads to hate crime.

Those interviewees who chose to provide examples in order to define the above-mentioned terms, referred to:

- *“institutional”* discrimination against intersex people, discrimination in everyday life – for example using the bathroom or going at the beach
- discrimination in education (*“acceptance from the school environment”*)
- discrimination when born (*“surgical operations”* without their *“consent”*)
- hate speech through media and /or by *“politicians, journalists, priests who can verbally target people, use problematic and abusive speech or call on other citizens or groups of citizens to exclude these people, to target them and to have a punitive attitude towards them”* as one interviewee said
- hate crimes such as the - well-known case in Greece - of a gay (or perceived as gay) young student who was bullied, tortured and then murdered.

When it comes to the national legal framework on discrimination - and especially in relation to sex characteristics - only four out of the eleven interviewees were aware of the relevant law and could provide some information. The rest either were not aware of it or - falsely – replied that there is no such legal framework in the country or even provided wrong information. Moreover, only one from the aforementioned four interviewees represented an LGBTQI+ organization and one was a

representative of a women’s rights organization. The rest two were a representative of equality and human rights bodies, both with a law science background.

Both representatives of the equality body and the human rights body stated that the national legal framework is “sufficient” and/or that “it covers many topics”. But the latter one added that even “the world’s best law is not enough if it is not implemented properly” and that there is no great experience of implementing the law in cases of violations that refer to sex characteristics. The first one added that it is questioned whether the law for legal gender recognition covers intersex people and that “an expanded interpretation of the existing provisions [of the legal gender recognition law] could include intersex people”.

The only representative from a LGBTQI+ organization that was quite aware of the relevant legal framework on discrimination, highlighted that the inclusion of sex characteristics as a protected feature was made possible due to the fact that “it occurred a bit accidentally, because they [the MPs] did not understand what they were voting for when they passed it - but - anyway - this is another discussion”. The representative from the LGBTQI+ organization also added that sex characteristics are “theoretically protected by law – [what happens in] reality is another issue”, and that the legal gender recognition law may include “some reference to sex characteristics” but “has many gaps and does not even cover trans people”. Similarly, a spokesperson from a gender issues organization also referred to law on legal gender recognition, arguing that there no provision for intersex people exists.

When it comes to patients’ rights - related to the human rights of intersex people – six out of eleven interviewees were able to provide information, while the remaining five had no such knowledge or provided false information. Interviewees were also asked what happens – according to their knowledge and/or personal professional experience - when a baby born in the country is identified as intersex as well as if there are any standard procedures, protocols and/or practices. Almost all interviewees agreed that there are no such standard/specific protocols and procedures – or they

have never heard anything about such protocols and procedures - and that is up to the parents to decide, based on the advice and guidance of the medical staff.

A human rights body spokesperson said that they are guessing that *“what will happen, is what the parents have decided without many procedures and this is the reason why there are no specific medical protocols, because there is no protocol, the doctor doesn’t have to record [what it will be done]”* and added that *“There is a total difference between a doctor who has to lie about something he/she has kept a record of from not saying anything at all. It is an enormous freedom not to have to say anything...”*. The equality body representative also said that from the knowledge he/she obtained from *“intersex people and their representatives, the medical community and some parents, usually, parents are asked at the maternity hospital if the one or the other sex will prevail”*. He/she added that intersex community is asking to put an end to such medical procedures after birth – an opinion he/she agrees with – adding that there is no relevant legal framework in Greece.

Regarding the interviewees’ claim that there are no medical protocols focusing on intersex people, this is not exactly true. Indeed, no medical protocols referring to “intersex” people have been identified - unfortunately, intersex people are not referred as "intersex" by the medical community while intersex diversity is not treated as a natural one. There are some medical guidelines focusing on “disorders of sex development” (such as hypospadias, clitoridomegaly etc.) as – unfortunately - all intersex diversities are still called and treated by the most members of the medical community. Terms such as "disorders of sex development", "hermaphroditism" / “pseudo-hermaphroditism” etc. pathologize intersex characteristics and bodies as "abnormalities" or "diseases", thus justifying medical interventions, even when they are not medically necessary.

The equality body representative argued that patients’ rights is *“a very big issue”* and a complicated one *“because it is related to the access to health services, the medical care, the hospitalization etc.”*, adding that they believe that like transgender people, intersex people continue to face *“problems”* related to *“access to health services”* and the *“effective pharmaceutical care”*. The human rights



body's representative argued that the existing legal framework is “generic enough”, but somebody could be based on it in order to develop “protocols”, such as “medical” ones. But they added that they are “almost sure” that “we don't have medical protocols for intersex people”.

Four out of five interviewees from LGBTQI+ organizations claimed that intersex people remain unprotected in terms of patients' rights, while the rest said that they had no knowledge. One of them argued that when an intersex child is born, the parents together with the doctor(s) will make decisions regarding its sex. Another interviewee argued that there is no special care for intersex people, while a different one stated that “these people are invisible”. Two out of these four interviewees also argued that there are no specific medical protocols for intersex people implemented in the country.

2.3. Status and support of intersex people in the country

When asked about the seriousness of anti-intersex hate speech, hate crime and discrimination in the country and compared to other EU member states, four out of eleven interviewees argued that no relevant data are available. As the interviewee from the human rights body stated, “it is a completely unknown phenomenon”, Similar was the statement of an interviewee from a gender equality NGO who argued that intersex people are an “invisible community”.

Almost all interviewees – ten out of eleven – including those that highlighted the fact that there no relevant data available, agreed that intersex people face hate speech, hate crime and/or discrimination in the Greek society and the extent of the phenomenon is quite serious. Indicatively, an interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization said that we are not able to make a specific assessment, as there are no official numbers and statistics, but they added that “we can speculate based on the stories of the intersex people themselves but also from what we see from society about hate crimes and hate speech in general”, meaning that discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics does exist in the Greek society.

A LGBTQI+ organization representative considered that intersex people experience hate crimes in Greece, the most serious of which is that *"others decide for them from the moment they are born"*, while another LGBTQI+ organization representative wondered *"whether the school would be able to accept it [an intersex child], its friends, [and the] the wider society"*.

Compared with other EU member states, one women's rights organization representative argued there is no high level of anti-intersex discrimination in Greece – especially during recent years – but two interviewees from LGBTQI+ organizations argued that the status of intersex people in Greece is worse – or much worse – than in other EU member states. One of the other LGBTQI+ organizations representatives said that both in Greece and in other European countries, intersex people are socially invisible even within secure and inclusive contexts such as those of LGBTQI+ organizations – a phenomenon that has its roots in conditions of guilt-based secrecy cultivated by the way intersex people are treated by doctors and the latter's advice to the intersex persons' parents:

"There is a very strong culture that [being intersex] is something that we will not discuss about in the family, we will not discuss it further (...) that is actually said to parents when the doctor says that the child is intersex; it is something that parents were told for many years - "don't say it in the outside world, don't discuss about it" (...) there is generally a lot of secrecy, there is a lot of "shame" about the whole thing, so even today, even in LGBTQI+ organizations we see that (...) Intersex people will hardly come out and say that they are intersex, that is, the intersex people who are "out" are very few both in the activist sector and generally".

When asked about dominant social perceptions and stances towards intersex people in the country and the possible reasons behind them, almost all – ten out of eleven interviewees – believed that they are *"negative"* or *"mostly negative"*, while one interviewee from a human rights body argued that they (perceptions and stances) are *"nonexistent"* because people *"don't know what it [intersex] is"* but he/she was optimistic that *"society is much further ahead"* than what one would expect.

Regarding the reasons behind these negative perceptions and stances, the interviewee from the equality body argued that these reasons include the *"fear of the different/other"*, which *"always exists in the Greek society"*, as well as the lack of the *"society's education, in order to accept every*

human being, to be open as society, to protect everybody's rights". An interviewee from a gender equality organization also referred to dominant perceptions and stances in society, which affect intersex people and these are the prevailing attitudes in the Greek society *"in trying to homogenize and categorize and classify people in a duality"* and then *"the dominant culture intervenes - also through the sciences - on these bodies [of the intersex people], without the individuals themselves having the right of choice, self-determination and time [to decide] if and when something might happen"*. According to the same interviewee, these dominant perceptions - which also affect intersex people - are based on the patriarchal culture, which is *"deeply rooted"* in the Greek society and creates gender stereotypes and sexism. An interviewee from a women's rights organizations similarly suggested that there are many discriminatory beliefs in the Greek society regarding gender identity and sex, so intersex people could not be excluded. She/he added that other reasons for these negative perceptions and stances towards intersex people include ignorance – both among professionals and the public - and not enough (positive) visibility.

On a similar note, most of the interviewees also referred to ignorance and/or lack of visibility of intersex people. For example, while an interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization argued that these negative perceptions and stances towards intersex people are just representative of the respective perceptions and stances towards the LGBTQI+ in general, he/she added that there is an *"enormous ignorance"* for intersex people in particular, which is greater than for other people belonging to the LGBTQI+ spectrum and plays an important role and *"leads to very bad behavior towards these people"*. Similarly, a women's rights' organization's spokesperson referred to the ignorance regarding intersex people, adding that this lack of knowledge is bigger than the one for other people belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. On the same note, a LGBTQI+ organization's spokesperson referred to the lack of visibility of intersex people in Greece that is responsible for a great confusion about what intersex means, to the point that *"many people think that intersex people are trans people"* and that it is *"as if they do not exist"*. An LGBTQI+ organization's representative also referred to ignorance as the main reason for these negative stances and perceptions, adding the lack of

“visibility” and the lack of provisions for the protection of intersex people to the national legal framework.

The interviewee expert (university professor) referred also to the prevalence of “very big ignorance” about intersex, which according to them is a new term that is “not often discussed” and even for their students it is difficult to understand anything outside the traditional/stereotypical gender binary. Another interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization also referred to the combination of ignorance and misinformation, which leads to negative perceptions and stances towards intersex persons. They added though the lack of representation of intersex people in media content or the way they are portrayed in it also plays an important role to the reproduction of negative perceptions and stances towards them: *“Whether there will be no references at all, there will be no [intersex] characters (...) and if there are, they will be portrayed in a negative way with the use of the old terminology [“hermaphrodite”] and there will be abusive jokes”*. An interviewee from another LGBTQI+ organization highlighted the lack of education as the main cause of these perceptions and stance, which is visible among teachers and, consequently, children.

Interviewees were also asked to identify whether the human rights of intersex people are well respected and protected (in the country) in different areas of life - namely health care, education, employment, legal gender recognition, gender marker/registration after birth, anti-intersex hate speech and hate crime, access to justice and redress.

Most interviewees - more than half of the total sample - focused on violations of human rights regarding registration after birth in connection with medical procedures without the consent of the intersex person. As a LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson said:

“Since his/her/their birth, an intersex person is deprived of the right to make any choice. That is - as it is well known - very invasive procedures which are performed on [intersex] babies (...) without these procedures to be medically necessary. [These procedures are performed] just to “match” the main external sex characteristics and to make them look like to those of either a boy or a girl (...) to attach [to the intersex person] a “label” that society has decided that it must fit to which is - obviously - a big violation of the rights of these people. That also creates health

issues afterwards, it may create – perhaps - a problem in their health for the rest of their lives... such as that (...) they will have to receive hormones as well many, many other problems”.

Similarly, a gender issues organizations spokesperson wondered *“what impact this may have on the person’s life... what will that do to their identity, to their orientation...”* when *“intervening to make a person the way you want so that they will fit the norm”*. An interviewee expert argued that most doctors approve such medical procedures, while a women’s rights organization spokesperson went further by suggesting that they believe that the *“medical community”* actually performs *“experiments”* on intersex people. Another women’s rights organization representative also referred generally to violations of intersex people’s human rights in the health sector, while a LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson added that intersex people face challenges when they ask for specific medical examinations which are linked to a specific biological/anatomical sex e.g., *“a mammogram”* (i.e., an X-ray picture of the breast).

Almost half of the interviewees also referred to challenges faced by intersex people regarding the legal recognition of their gender identity. A human rights body spokesperson argued that legal gender recognition is the *“most basic [issue]”, since “everything starts from the [legal recognition of] the gender identity”,* because legal gender recognition is linked with the *“access to education, access to healthcare”*. But for intersex people the case is complicated, since an intersex child cannot be asked regarding their gender identity and even, they asked, *“he/she/they does not know who he/she/they is/are, what he/she/they are doing in this life, what he/she/they want(s) to do”,* as he/she claimed. The latter claim is problematic, as children may know their gender identity from an early age (Keo-Meier, C. & Ehrensaft, D., 2018). Furthermore, the *“method of therapeutic care”* of the gender affirmative model, *“includes allowing children to speak for themselves about their self-experienced gender identity and expressions and providing support for them to evolve into their authentic gender selves, no matter at what age”* (Ehrensaft, 2017).

Interviewees from LGBTQI+ organizations also argued that the relevant national legal framework *“is not yet as it should be”,* does not allow someone to be registered as *“gender fluid”* or – as one of

them said – *“in relation to their sex characteristics nothing is recognized”* by the existing law. Similarly, the interviewee expert from the academic/research community argued that legal provisions regarding (protection of) sex characteristics and (protection of) body integrity are an issue that *“has been left behind enough”* in Greece’s national legal framework.

Some interviewees also made remarks regarding the education sector. A representative of a LGBTQI+ organization said that in this sector *“there is a great violation”* of the intersex people’s human rights *“and no care”* for them. Another LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson also referred to the fact that *“not even the mention of their existence [of intersex people] is made”* at school, while a women’s rights organization representative said that teachers have a total lack of knowledge on such issues. In this context, a LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson said that every intersex child is exposed *“in the beliefs and convictions of every teacher”* and discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics occurs *“from the moment the [intersex] child sets foot in school”*, because the child *“is not recognized as an individual”* and must be *“either a boy or a girl and in fact with certain social standards”*. In any other case, according to the latter interviewee, *“you will either be bullied or discriminated against”*.

When it comes to the employment sector, a LGBTQI+ organization argued that intersex people are protected (from harassment, discrimination or hate crime) just because they are socially invisible and, of course, this *“does not mean that they are psychologically satisfied with what is happening”* in relation to attitudes and stances in the employment sector. A women’s rights organization spokesperson also said *“when you reveal the intersex identity [in employment sector] I think then you face obstacles”*. Another LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson argued that intersex people must make a double effort to prove their worth.

Regarding access to justice and redress, only an equality body interviewee argued that the *“reflexes”* of the justice system are *“slow”*. The same interviewee also added that, in general, the whole public administration system has adopted a *“phobic”* stance towards intersex issues. Some interviewees

also referred to protection against hate crime and hate speech on the grounds of sex characteristics but appeared to have lack of the relevant knowledge. Three interviewees from different LGBTQI+ organizations argued that sex characteristics are not protected under the relevant legal framework – which is not true – or that they don't know whether they are protected or not.

An LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson argued that the basic rights of intersex people are covered in terms of access to education, health services and employment as well as legal gender recognition – which is not true as we have already seen in the previous part of the current report and as we are going to see to the next part - and the problem is the society's lack of education that can create difficulties to intersex people's lives. Also, an interviewee expert while arguing that there is a “*primary protection*” of the rights of intersex people in the national legal framework, the problems begin during the “*interpretation*” of the existing legal framework by the judges as well as the “*conservatism*” that dominates in the legal and judicial community.

When asked if an intersex person or a close family member of their close family has ever sought for their support, what was the case/request and what procedures, protocols etc. were followed, most of the interviewees responded negatively. A LGBTQI+ organization's representative said that it was only once that an intersex person had asked for their support and the request was more about the intersex person's “*socialization*” and “*psychological support*”. It is worth noting that this intersex person “did not clearly say that they were intersex” but this was made understood through “*discussion*” with him/her - in fact, according to the interviewee “*the person himself/herself did not know that he/she was an intersex, (...) there was ignorance about themselves by themselves; about what exactly is happening to them*”.

Regarding the existence of protocols, guidelines, etc. about the reception and support of intersex people by the organization they represent, the interviewee said that there no specific protocols/guidelines focusing on intersex people used in the organization, but some existing guidelines for proper behavior towards trans people can be also applied to intersex people e.g., “*we*



respect [make proper use of] *pronouns*". According to the same interviewee, the organization's general behavior guidelines towards LGBTQI+ people - such as "*not outing* [“reveal” a person's gender or sexual orientation without his/her consent]" or "*not ask offensive questions*" - also covers intersex individuals.

An interviewee from another LGBTQI+ organization also referred to the cases of two intersex people who joined the organization – one of whom is a college student and learned about being intersex only recently and the other one is a school student who knows about their intersex status but cannot "*come out*" at school. The organization members just conduct research to find bodies and institutions where they can refer intersex people for focused support. The interviewee representing the equality body, referred to a case of an intersex school student who faced harassment and stigmatization at school due to their gender expression which did not follow the registered at birth sex. The equality body managed to meet the schools' staff, students, and the students' parents to educate and raise their awareness on intersex issues and the need for respect and support.

Another problem is the fact that when a child is born in Greece, the sex must, obligatorily, be registered as either male or female. The same interviewee referred on the lack of a gender marker - as third option other than male or female - that could represent intersex people after birth. Because of this lack of option - according to the equality body representative - "*the biologically dominant or visible in any case [sex] is the one that is registered*". And this practice – according to the same interviewee – will create many health problems to the child. Similarly, a LGBTQI+ organization spokesperson argued that such practices will lead to "*very bad consequences later in the life of the intersex person*". According to the equality body representative, it is necessary to abolish medical procedures without the consent of the intersex person: "*it is clearly a matter of free development of anybody's personality to decide what he/she wants for his/her life, his/her body and, in general, his/her life*". Two interviewees representing LGBTQI+ organizations also referred to the fact that doctors may also suggest abortion, if the unborn child is identified as intersex. In general,

being intersex is perceived by medical staff as something repulsive or as an interviewee put it: a "monster of nature".

When they were asked to name public and/ or private organizations/institutions/bodies in the country which are specialized in intersex issues and/or provide support services for intersex people, many interviewees named "Intersex Greece". According to interviewees who provided more information, it is a group without a legal status that advocates the human rights of intersex people and organize education and awareness activities as well as advocacy activities including interventions in the European Parliament.⁹ Other interviewees also named the LGBTQI+ NGO "Orlando LGBT – Mental health beyond the stigma" that according to them can provide psychological support to intersex people.

Moreover, the following organizations, bodies, institutions were named by at least one interviewee (not the same interviewee each time) although - for some of these organizations, bodies, institutions - it is doubtful whether they actually have knowledge and / or experience in supporting intersex people: the LGBTQI+ organizations "Colour Youth Athens LGBTQ Youth Community", "Proud Parents" and "Greek Transgender Support Association", the National Centre of Social Solidarity (EKKA), the National Organization against Drugs (OKANA), the (public) Athens Office of Health Education of Secondary Education. Interviewees who referred to these organizations and bodies/institutions did not provide any information regarding the available services. One interviewee also referred to an organization called "Rainbow" - perhaps, he/she was referring to the LGBTQI+ NGO "Rainbow Families" - which according to them supports parents, while another interviewee referred to the School of Public Health that may conduct relevant scientific research. It is worth mentioning that an interviewee representing a LGBTQI+ organization argued that, in

⁹ See also the joint submission of Intersex Greece and Dutch NGO "NNID Foundation - Netherlands organisation for sex diversity" of the Report "The Rights of Intersex Children in Greece" to the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child (Intersex Greece & NNID Foundation - Netherlands organisation for sex diversity (2019 November 1). *The Rights of Intersex Children in Greece*. Retrieved from: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/GRC/INT_CRC_NGO_GRC_40838_E.pdf).

general and although they “usually have a slightly better picture of them [the interest issues]” even LGBTQI+ organizations, “compared with organizations of unrelated objectives”, present limited knowledge on the matter (knowledge “is still little”).

Finally, when asked where an intersex person can file an official report/complaint or at least unanimously record a case of discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics, half of the total number of interviewees named the Greek Ombudsman. One of them provided detailed information about the procedure that is followed. Discrimination incidents on the grounds of sex characteristics in employment, education, health and social protection sector can be reported by both individuals and legal entities, online, by fax, post or after a scheduled meeting and after the report is submitted. The Ombudsman will contact both the person who submitted the report and the body/institution etc. against whom the report was submitted in order to “solve the problem” – while another interviewee said that Ombudsman does not only accept reports but has the right to “intervene”. In fact, Greek Ombudsman may attempt to resolve a problem through a mediation and / or to suggest to the competent authorities to impose penalties, in case of violation of the law. In other words, the Independent Authority cannot impose penalties. Three interviewees also referred to the Racist Violence Recording Network – without providing more information - and three interviewees also referred to LGBTQI+ organization Colour Youth – one of them clarifying that the organization receives anonymous reports of hate crime and discrimination cases.

Two interviewees also referred to the helpline 11528 – which is coordinated by LGBTQI+ organization Orlando LGBT – but again they did not provide more information. Moreover, two interviewees referred to the Police Service for Combatting Racist Crime – one of them said that the procedure is “charge free” – which is correct because previously people who reported hate crimes had to pay a fee (“paravolo”) - expected from a public service – but was not sure if a person can report an incident anonymously. Interviewees also referred to the following organization, bodies, institutions and services: the “Prosecutor”, “any police officer”, NGO Intersex Greece, civil Society groups in general, Greek or pan-European (such as OII Europe) LGBTQI+ organizations in general,

responsible public bodies for receiving reports on discrimination incidents again, in general. In this case also, they could not provide any information about the procedure that is followed. One interviewee could not name a body, institution etc. at all, not even make a general or vague reference like some of the aforementioned.

2.4. Recommendations

In this final section, interviewees were asked to recommend measures and policies in different areas of life - namely health care, education, employment, legal gender recognition, gender marker/registration after birth, anti-intersex hate speech and hate crime, access to justice and redress – in order to improve (or ensure) the protection of the target group’s human rights and promote their social inclusion and equality.

The interviewee from the human rights body suggested the development of *“recording protocols”*, in order to collect data regarding the intersex population in the country e.g., *“how many of them are out there”* or *“how many [intersex] babies are born”*. The same interviewee suggested that we can build up focused measures based on these data e.g., *“a support procedure”* or *“network for parents [of intersex children] and [intersex] children”*, taking into consideration that based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the child cannot decide on his/her own (without the parental consent).

The representative of the equality body suggested the implementation of an educational and awareness campaign on intersex issues targeting the *“responsible bodies/stakeholders”*. The objective of this activity would be *“intersex people to be treated with respect”*, *“insults against them to be avoided”* and intersex people *“not to be discriminated in the future”*.

Two interviewees from women’s rights organizations, one interviewee expert and one representative from a LGBTQI+ organization also suggested the organization of *“information”* and

"awareness activities" targeting the general public. The latter also noted that "*a big [major] factor in all types of discrimination is people's ignorance*". The interviewee from the equality body added that the State and the body where they work could be involved in the organization and delivery of such campaign/activity.

Regarding medical procedures after birth, a spokesperson/representative of a LGBTQI+ organization and representative from a women's rights organization highlighted the need for legislative regulations to ensure the protection of the human rights of intersex people in the health sector from the day they are born, in order to put an end to practices such as the interventional medical procedures. Similarly, two more interviewees from different LGBTQI+ organizations argued that it should be up to intersex people themselves to decide regarding any medical procedures on them related to their sex – no procedure should take place without their informed consent.

When it comes to gender marker/registration after birth, two interviewees from LGBTQI+ organizations, two interviewees from women's rights organizations and one interviewee expert suggested that the option "*other*" or "*empty*" or "*neutral*" - and, general, a "*third*" option - for sex marker should be available during registration after birth and/or during legal gender recognition later. Regarding legal gender recognition, an interviewee from a women's rights organization suggested that the procedure should be easier, while an interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization similarly – but in more detail - suggested the improvement of the legal gender recognition process in order to make it easier and extrajudicial, noting that "*self-determination should be something that we respect and that it needs neither a court nor anything else*". They also suggested that an explicit reference to sex characteristics should be included in every law that protects human rights.

Regarding health care, the representative of the equality body expressed their anxiety about the health care received by intersex people, including the place that they will be referred to and the kind of treatment that they will receive. An interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization argued that medical "*examinations, surgeries and [health care] access should not be based only on the registered*



sex” of a person because this practice creates obstacles to intersex people as some medical examination/procedures are covered by public insurance as ones used only to/for men or women. Another interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization suggested that all medical procedures for intersex people should be covered by the public insurance system. Finally, a representative from a gender issues organization, suggested the development of “specific” medical “protocols” regarding intersex people and the “supervision” of their proper implementation.

Moreover, some interviewees referred to the need for training of professionals. The representative of the equality body suggested that while current and future (police academy students) police staff are trained “almost per semester” on LGBTQI+ issues, this could be done in a more “systematic” way. He/she also added that all public sector’s “involved bodies” - namely “teachers”, staff working in “[public] administration”, “the police”, “justice” – as well as “each one of us [the general public]” should be trained. Similarly, a representative of a women’s rights organization suggested training activities on human rights of intersex people for all relevant professionals.

A spokesperson of a LGBTQI+ organization and a spokesperson of a gender issues organization highlighted the need for training and awareness activities on intersex issues, targeting – in particular - both education and health care professionals as it is “the most important thing” and “there is a lack of it” as one of them stated. The spokesperson of the gender issues organization also suggested the training and awareness “of teachers, parents’ schools, training of officials, people working in municipalities, in public administration”. The expert interviewee (university professor) also suggested training activities for teachers and education staff in order to “deconstruct themselves the stereotypes” they have and then “deal with the equality issues” in the education sector.

When it comes to the education sector, the interviewee from the equality body argued that such subjects (intersex related issues) “should not be considered taboo” in education. He/she also said that the body where he/she works has already asked from the Ministry of Education to inform and train school staff on how to handle cases of intersex students (in order to support them), because

even when school staff is willing to be involved and support these students when challenges/obstacles emerge, they deny to do anything without a relevant instruction from the Ministry of Education and/or because they are afraid about the possible reaction of other students and/or students' parents. Unfortunately, he/she said, the Ministry of Education authorities have not yet responded to this request/suggestion of the equality body and keep repeating that they will think of it.

Two more interviewees - both from LGBTQI+ organizations - also suggested the organization of awareness and training activities for teachers on intersex issues and "how to speak and approach children, so that they feel they are in a safe environment" as one of them clarified. One of these two interviewees also suggested that stereotypical gender divisions should be ended and children's self-determination as well as their right to choose the activities they want in school without gender segregation should be respected. Another interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization suggested that the education should – in general - include focus to the respect for and "acceptance" of the "Other" while an interviewee from a women's rights organization suggested the inclusion of intersex issues in school books.

Some interviewees also referred to higher education and/or the academic/research community. A representative of a women's rights organization who is a social worker, stated he/she was never taught about intersex related issues during their studies. Another interviewee expert (university professor) also stated that there are no scientists in the country that deal with relevant issues, including gender stereotypes.

Regarding access to justice or appeal to justice after hate crime/hate speech incidents, a representative of a LGBTQI+ organization argued that intersex people will not appeal to justice and "pay lawyers when they know from the beginning that because of stereotypes and ignorance money is wasted and they will be abused". A representative from a LGBTQI+ organization noted that "there are very few ways to report an incident [hate crime or discrimination]" and stressed the need to

“make the reporting process easier, friendlier”. Another interviewee from a LGBTQI+ organization suggested that even judges should be trained to distinguish between hate crimes and other “common” crimes. An interviewee - also from a LGBTQI+ organization - referred to the “distancing” stance of the (Greek Christian Orthodox) Church. He/she added that the Church fuels hate speech because of the fact that members of the clerk “do not accept these [intersex] people”. The same interviewee also suggested legal measures against those who use hate speech - because education may not be always an effective tool against hate crime in which hate speech leads - and legal protection for their victims.

An interviewee representing a gender equality organization, although they suggested that sex characteristics should be protected under the law for hate speech and hate crimes - which is false because they are already included in the relevant legal framework – they then expressed concern about freedom of expression, claiming that many law scientists believe that if the relevant law becomes stricter, then this “can backfire to us” explaining that they meant restrictions to freedom of expression. But this is a rather unfounded fear, as neither hate crimes nor hate speech fall into the category of freedom of expression. Another interviewee from a LGBTQI+ suggested the acceleration of all justice proceedings and the formulation of a protective for intersex people legal framework in general.

Finally, in relation to the employment sector, only one interviewee - a spokesperson of a LGBTQI+ organization -made a relevant recommendation, arguing that people whose gender expression is not stereotypically feminine or masculine – or is a mix of them - could hardly work - for example - as public sector employees, meaning that only “normative”, stereotypical gender expressions are welcome in specific working environments.

Epilogue. General conclusions

“Social invisibilisation”, “ignorance”, “non-inclusive” or “hostile social environment” are the key words which could describe the status of intersex people both in institutional and social context in Greece.

Sex characteristics are protected under the law(s) for hate crime and hate speech, but – outside the employment sector - no explicit reference is made about their protection against discrimination in other major sectors of human activity and life. Furthermore, a Penal Code’s article, that prohibited exclusion of people from goods or services (or the announcement of such exclusion) because of their sex characteristics, was recently abolished.

Newborns in Greece are registered either as males or females – no other option is available. Moreover - and most importantly - based on the existing legal framework, unnecessary and irreversible medical procedures, related to sex characteristics, are allowed to be performed on intersex minors without their informed consent. Still there are no legal provisions against such major violations of the human rights of intersex people. Also, interviewees were not aware of specific medical protocols implemented - and thus, supervised – in the country, focusing on intersex people. As we saw in the relevant section, this is not exactly the case, as there are guidelines for the so-called "disorders of sex development" - as intersex diversity is wrongly called and treated.

Research shows that it is up to the parents to make crucial decisions regarding the life of their new born intersex child, after having received recommendations from the medical staff who are most of the times - if not all the times – against the protection and respect of the body integrity of the intersex person. Research shows that it is up to the parents to make critical decisions about the life of their newborn intersex child, having received recommendations from medical staff, which - most of the time if not always - are against the respect and protection of the intersex child’s body

integrity. Medical staff will also often, if not always, suggest the termination of a pregnancy if the unborn child is identified as intersex.

While there is no available data regarding recorded hate crimes and/or discrimination incidents on the grounds of sex characteristics, both interviews with relevant stakeholders/experts as well as FRA's (2020) data, indicate that these phenomena do exist in the Greek society. Similarly, results from both the European Commission's (2019, May) Eurobarometer and the "Bring-in" project's field research, indicate that the stance and perception of Greek society towards intersex people moves between ignorance, (medical) pathologisation and hostility. Hiding being intersex and/or harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics in everyday life – and particularly in health, education, and employment sector – are aspects of an intersex person's life in Greece. At the same time, the most crucial violation of their human rights occurs when they are born and identified as intersex: non-medically necessary / non-consensual medical interventions are performed on them and the negative consequences of these practices will follow them for the rest of their lives.

The social invisibility of and ignorance for intersex people are also highlighted by the lack of any specific/focused central (state) policy particularly focusing on intersex people as "Bring-In" research has shown. Most of the times, intersex people may seek support to LGBTQI+ organizations, but even some of them – according to the findings of interviews with stakeholders and experts – do not always seem to have the knowledge and/or capacity to properly support them and advocate their rights, despite their - undoubtful - good will to do so. Furthermore, there is only one organization which is exclusively focused on the human rights of intersex people - namely the informal group "Intersex Greece".

"Bring-in" project's research participants recommended the formulation of a supporting network including parents and children. They also suggested improvements in the national legal framework and policies regarding legal gender recognition and the right to self-determination. In this respect,

stakeholders and experts suggested the introduction of intersex people's body integrity protective provisions to the national legal framework and making available a third (or empty) option for sex registration in all public papers/documents. Stakeholders and experts also suggested other policy measures such as the adoption of positive and protective provisions in health care and insurance system targeting intersex people - such as the formulation of medical protocols focusing on the needs of intersex people and the full insurance coverage of all medical procedures that adult intersex people may need.

Moreover, interviewees focused on the need for research as well as training activities regarding the human rights of intersex people. In particular, they suggested awareness and training activities for all relevant stakeholders and professionals (health professionals, teachers, public administration employees etc.) as well as the introduction of the gender identity and sex characteristics perspectives in academia and university curricula namely law science and social sciences. Recommendations of stakeholders and experts also include the identification of the social/demographic profile of intersex people in Greece, through relevant research and data collection.

Furthermore, interviewees suggested awareness activities on issues related to intersex people targeting the general public. They also focused on the education system, suggesting to combat gender and binary stereotypes and prejudices at school environment and promote the inclusion and respect towards intersex students. Recommendations of the same interviewees suggested that combating hate speech may be also achieved by imposing (harsh) penalties.

Finally, interviewees pointed out the need to combat abusive behaviors from public officials/servants and facilitate the access of intersex people to reporting services and the justice system by making the relevant procedures easier and faster. The existence of recording options for hate crimes/discrimination incidents or legal provisions (e.g., protecting the human rights) is not enough: intersex people - as every other human being – will be encouraged to exercise their rights



and make use of the provided options only if they know that they will be treated with unconditional respect, dignity and professionalism.

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