

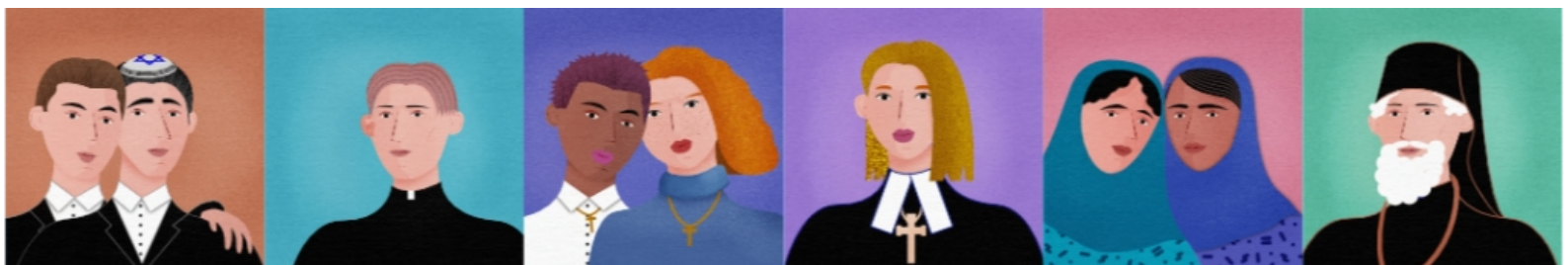


Final report

UTC2 - United towards the change 2

**Developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families of
different religions**

July - December 2021



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Part I
Project brief

Introduction

A.GE.D.O. is a non-confessional Italian NGO that provides support to family members and allies of LGBT+ people. During the years, it has focused a significant part of its efforts on disseminating evidence-based information on sexual orientation and gender identity among civil society and through educational projects delivered in schools. This project is borne out of a long-standing experience; many years of work with relatives of LGBT+ people has taught us that religion can play a considerable role in how families deal with their children. Therefore, we felt the need to reach out to LGBT+ people with a religious background that are often discriminated against and little visible, especially in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic that has exacerbated the complexities experienced by LGBT+ people, forcing many of them to live in isolation or hostile environments. We concluded that intervening in support of these groups was a pressing need. This project takes its name from the project *United towards the Change* organised in 2011 by one of the organisation's local branches in Sicily named *A.GE.D.O. Palermo*. Unlike the previous edition, the key objective of *United towards the change 2* is to promote knowledge within *A.GE.D.O.* and other NGOs to foster a more inclusive approach when providing support to family members of LGBT+ people with a religious background. In this first part of the report, we will detail all the steps we took to implement the project and achieve our goals.

Networking activity

After a few preparatory meetings among the project coordinators, we decided the focus of each of the five webinars and what kind of speakers involve. It was decided that we first needed to contact grassroots interfaith organisations or organisations supporting LGBT+ people with a religious background. These groups would have acted as gatekeepers to get us in contact with progressive ministers of faith and theologians. In the project's first phase, we activated *A.GE.D.O.*'s contact networks. Thanks to our organisation's members and other organisations' support, we got in contact with some potential speakers. For example, the contributions of Anna Battaglia (president of *A.GE.D.O. Ragusa*), Mario Caproni (president of *A.GE.D.O. Trentino*, and *A.GE.D.O.*'s delegate for public relations with the Churches), Fiorenzo Gimelli (president of *A.GE.D.O. Nazionale*), Francesca Marceca (*A.GE.D.O.*'s volunteer), Mario Parrinello (member of *A.GE.D.O. Nazionale*'s board and responsible for public relations with religious leaders at a local level), and Dea Santonico (*A.GE.D.O.*'s volunteer) were crucial. They helped coordinate the project and put us in contact with Italian organisations such as *La Tenda di Gionata*, activist groups, and ministers of faith. Similarly, *ENP (the European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Persons)* vouched for us with European organisations.

We further broadened our network, reaching out to as many religious LGBT+ organisations as possible. These were identified using *ILGA-Europe*'s list of member organisations; other experts were identified through a literature review on intersections of sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious belonging. We reached out to around 30 experts and organisations in Italy, and around 50 in other countries (UK, Malta, Austria, Germany, France, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Israel, and Turkey). After many video calls, phone calls, email exchanges with organisations and experts, we finalised our list of 46 speakers: 14 ministers of faith and theologians, 27 representatives of organisations, 5 scholars and experts. The majority of participants belong to Christian denominations (Catholic Church, Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Waldensian Church, Protestant Churches, Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ), others from Islam and Judaism. At that point, we agreed with the speakers on the specific themes and titles for their speeches. We asked them to fill in a consent form (see Appendix I) where they agreed to participate in the webinars, be recorded, and make the recordings available online on *A.GE.D.O.*'s social media channels or website. Participants were also asked to fill in a participation form (see

Appendix II) providing a brief biography and a brief description of the organisation they are members of (when applicable); this information was necessary to update the project's webpage.

Goals achieved

- Contacted a total of 80 organisations and experts with expertise in LGBT+ topics and religions; of these 30 are from Italy and 50 from other countries; Arranged the participation of 46 speakers from Italy and other European countries (UK, Malta, Austria, Germany, France, Finland, Spain, Poland, and Sweden);
- Managed to structure a well-functioning communication system between the coordinators and the involved experts and organisations;
- Broadened our network making contacts with many Italian and European LGBT+ NGOs.

Graphic design and launching of the web landing page

Different sets of graphic materials were produced, such as graphics for the web landing page, fliers to promote the project, Facebook posts, and other material for the webinars (for examples of such materials, see Appendix III). As set out in the Agreement, creating a web landing page was essential for two reasons. Firstly, to advertise the project goals and activities; secondly, to make the documentation produced during the project available for download. The web landing page was created and is accessible at the following link <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2en/>. It contains detailed information on the project, the webinars, speakers bios, participant NGOs, recordings of the webinars, flyers, speakers' slides and texts, postcards, final brochure, and final report. It has been regularly updated with news on the project and with material about it. The speakers and the audience have been informed of all the updates. Moreover, participants have kept sharing other documentation deemed valid to be uploaded on the *UTC2* webpage. The availability of documentation to the public is a crucial aspect of the project, its aim is to facilitate the circulation of good practices and promote cultural growth within and among organisations and civil society.

Goals achieved

- Produced a large and diverse set of graphic materials to inform the public about the project and promote its visibility;
- Finalised the creation of the web landing page and officially launched it;
- Created and updated clear content on the project for the web landing page.

Visibility campaign

To reach the highest number of participants as possible, we adopted multiple strategies to advertise the project and its activities. For example, we set up an online visibility campaign on social media using the graphic materials previously designed. We boosted events' visibility from the period starting before the first webinar and ending after the last one; we reached out to more than 1660 people. We also advertise the project through Google Ad Grants (a free service for non-profit). Furthermore, we issued a press release to advertise the project in local and national newspapers. Our network of contacts helped us increase the project visibility in Italy and abroad. In addition to this, we created a mailing list of around 500 email addresses consisting of organisations and people potentially interested in the webinars. Thanks to the software YAMM, we emailed these people with news on the project, reminders on the webinars' contents and dates, and info on how to join the webinars. Through the webinar registration form for the audience, we collected email addresses that were used to inform the public about upcoming events and news on the project. In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that all the advertising material redirects readers to the web landing page of *UTC2*,¹ where detailed information is available.

Goals achieved

- Achieved an excellent project's visibility; 1666 people were reached through advertising on Facebook, 4531 through Google Ad Grants, and 500 through mailing lists;
- Maintained a constant flux of information and updates with the (potential) audience of the project;
- Improved and reshaped our organisation's communication competencies and strategies while managing a social media visibility campaign.

¹see <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2en/>

Online seminars

During the preparatory meetings with the project coordinators (Anna Battaglia, Mario Caproni, Selena Demarchi, Fiorenzo Gimelli, Francesca Marceca, Mario Parrinello, Alessandro Previti, and Dea Santonico), we regarded the ongoing pandemic. For safety concerns, we opted for organising online events. Due to this, we dismissed role-play activities because more suitable for in-person events. After significant networking activity, we assembled 46 speakers: representatives of NGOs, ministers of faith, theologians, scholars, and other experts.² Based on participants' specificities and fields of expertise, we decided to structure the programme of the five webinars as follows (see Appendix IV). The first webinar focused on Catholic LGBT+ organisations' dialogue with the Catholic Church and their work to support Catholic LGBT+ people. The second webinar concentrated on the theological discussions within the Catholic Church on LGBT+ people and on welcoming them. The third webinar discussed sexual orientation and gender identity within other Christian denominations. The fourth webinar approached perspectives on LGBT+ topics within Judaism and Islam. The fifth webinar addressed some final considerations on the work that ministers of faith and organisations have done and still have to do to better support LGBT+ people with a religious background.

During the webinars, organisations and ministers of faith shared their experience in welcoming religious LGBT+ people; theologians presented the official lines of religious denominations, and discussed different interpretations of the sacred scriptures concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. Scholars and experts conveyed knowledge on anti-gender movements and good practices that NGOs can enact to welcome and support LGBT+ people with a religious background. The speakers contributed to deconstructing unconscious bias towards religious groups and helping audiences avoid stereotypes; they emphasised the importance of understanding religious differences and their roles in the construction of group identities. Besides informing the public on the topics mentioned above, these webinars promoted the visibility of organisations and ministers of faith. Moreover, at the end of the webinars, speakers and audience were asked to fill in a questionnaire providing feedback on

² For more info on speakers, see: <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2en/speakers/>; for more info on involved organisations, see <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2en/organizations/>.

different aspects of the webinars (see Appendix V); these data will serve to enhance the quality of future events.

Goals achieved

- Delivered the five webinars as planned and with no delays;
- 46 speakers participated in the webinars, nearly twice the number we planned to reach in the Grant Agreement;
- Excluding the speakers, we reached out to a good number of people; in fact, we had on average 53 viewers per webinar with peaks of more than 70 and a decrease of about one third during the last hour due to the excessive length of each webinar;
- Created a new network with organisations and ministers of faith through building trust and interest in our mission;
- Strengthen collaborations and ties already in place with NGOs;
- Stimulated new synergies and collaborations among participants;
- Received very positive feedback from participants who filled in the questionnaire; the overall satisfaction on the themes approached and the angle given to the webinars has been very high; nonetheless, some respondents voiced some criticism on the webinars' length, suggesting more sessions but shorter.

Production of informative material

Among the expected outcomes for this project is producing informative material to be distributed among participants and made available to the public on the *UTC2* web landing page. Postcards depicting images and key sentences referring to the project were designed (see Appendix VI). On their back, they display the *UTC2* web link where more information on religious LGBT+ organisations can be found. These postcards were printed and shipped to all participants, they are also available on the *UTC2* webpage³ where can be freely downloaded. Other material can be downloaded from the web page: fliers and videos used to advertise the project;⁴ video recordings of the webinars;⁵ graphic material and contents for the digital brochure.⁶

What is more, documentations we received from participants, such as slides, preparatory texts for speakers' speeches, and informative fliers, have been uploaded in a dedicated section of the *UTC2* web page⁷ and are freely downloadable by the public. We aim to keep this section of the web page up to date with documents that the organisations involved in the project will keep sharing. Updating the website will bring forward the transformation process that the project will have set in motion, facilitating the circulation of good practices and the promotion of cultural growth within and among NGOs and civil society. All the informative material uploaded on the *UTC2* web page has been promoted through *A.GE.D.O.*'s social media accounts and the mailing lists previously set up to advertise the webinars.

Goals achieved

- Designed, produced, and shipped to participants postcards of the project;
- Designed and produced a digital brochure and a final report of the project;
- Edited video recordings of the webinars;

3 See <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2/graphics-slides/>

4 See <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2/graphics-slides/>

5 See <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2/i-webinar/>

6 See <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2en/>

7 See <https://www.agedonazionale.org/utc2/slides-e-testi/>

- Made all the informative material freely available online on *UTC2* web page (advertising videos, recordings of webinars, advertising fliers, final brochure and report);
- Promoted the visibility and dissemination of the informative material through social media posts and mailing lists;
- Facilitated the circulation of good practices and the promotion of cultural growth among NGOs and civil society.

Conclusions

To summarise, it can be said that the expected impact of the project has been articulated on three levels: impact within the organisation, impact among organisations, impact among the broad public. At an organisational level, *UTC2* is helping us develop and spread new expertise across *A.GE.D.O.*, this is being achieved through the knowledge presented during the webinars, the brochure, and all the informative material. Thanks to the awareness that the project is raising, *A.GE.D.O.*'s volunteers are acquiring the ability to deconstruct unconscious bias, as well as understand multiple standpoints embodied by people with a religious background. This knowledge will improve the overall quality of the support provided to these groups, especially by respecting their needs and belief systems. Thanks to this project, *A.GE.D.O.* will become more skilled to welcome, and provide support as well as advice to people with a religious background.

UTC2 is having an impact also among the organisations that we involved. In fact, webinars have stressed the importance of acknowledging religious diversity when dealing with LGBT+ topics; participants have exchanged good practises and shown how organisations operate differently in different countries. The project has strengthened old and created new relationships between organisations, with some already planning events together, and others requesting to share their contacts with other participants. The project is affecting also the broad public. In fact, thanks to the project visibility and the dissemination of the informative material, we are reaching out to religiously diverse groups that may need information and support, especially at this time when the Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the isolation and hurdles experienced by LGBT+ people. To conclude, the project has achieved the goals set out in the Grant Agreement, and it has also followed the estimated duration of each activity apart from some that lasted more than originally predicted (see Appendix VII). This had no negative repercussions on the main objectives, indeed changes to the timeline were beneficial to improve the quality of the project outcomes.

Part II

Learning outcomes

Introduction

This second part of the report summarises the learning outcome of the project. Each chapter focuses on a webinar, and it condenses each speaker or organisation's contribution to the project.

1st webinar - Conversations with the Catholic Church

NGO “Rete 3 Volte Genitori” (Italy) - Roberto Stevanato, Adriana Bustreo, Alessandro Pizzoleo, Maria Rosaria Quaranta

The organisation *Rete 3 Volte Genitori* consists of Christian parents of LGBT+ people that lobby to raise awareness on homoaffectivity and gender identity within civil society and Christian Churches in Italy. The organisation was born to support LGBT+ people and their families with a religious background that experience marginalisation, especially from the Catholic Church. Their objective is to help members overcome feelings of isolation and solitude. Since 2016 the *Rete 3 Volte Genitori* has been building a network and organising events with other Catholic groups and ministers of faith. A significant part of their networking activity is aimed at finding contact points within local churches trying to involve priests and bishops. Periodically, they organise meetings where LGBT+ people and their families can meet with ministers of faith; there, they can listen to each other and provide support.

NGO “La Tenda di Gionata” (Italy) - Innocenzo Pontillo, Mara Grassi, Andrea Diacono, Beatrice Sarti

The organisation was founded based on the awareness that welcoming LGBT+ people within Catholic communities is very often only partial; the organisation wishes that Christian communities would become sanctuaries for everyone regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. To tackle the discrimination and exclusion that LGBT+ people and their families experience from the Catholic Church, *La Tenda di Gionata* organises welcoming moments where LGBT+ people and their families can meet with religious people and lay people to destructure prejudices and stereotypes. They organise spiritual retreats where inclusive priests warmly welcome and support LGBT+ people and their parents who cannot find support from their parishes and dioceses. Moreover, the organisation actively works on pastoral workers' theological and pastoral education to tackle discrimination against LGBT+ people and their parents. They spread scientific information on sexual orientation and gender identity and share stories of Christian LGBT+ people, their families, and the journey of those Christian communities that welcomed LGBT+ people. Among the organisation's achievements is having been invited to meet Pope Francis; this can be interpreted as a sign that, to some degree, there is recognition by the Catholic Church of the work done by the organisation, and there might be some scope for change.

On many occasions, volunteers of *La Tenda di Gionata* and other religious groups gained insight into the lives of LGBT+ Catholics and their families discovering how dramatically they struggle to make their religious beliefs coexist with LGBT+ identities. They realised that many religious people needed to be listened to without judgement, comforted and reassured that it is possible to be LGBT+ and Catholic. From this acknowledgement, *La Tenda di Gionata*, together with other groups, started the *Mi fido di te* project. They set up an empathic listening and emotional support service for LGBT+ people and their families. Volunteers for the project receive training on the main problematic aspects of the Catholic doctrine towards LGBT+ identities, offer spiritual accompaniment, share their personal experience, and refer people to other Christian groups for further help when necessary. These are fundamental steps towards families' healing.

NGOs “Drachma” and “Drachma Parents” (Malta) - Christopher Vella, Louisa Grech

Drachma and *Drachma Parents* are a Catholic LGBTI+ group and parents' group in Malta. Religious orders played a role in supporting *Drachma*, whose engagement with the Catholic Church has generally been positive although at times problematic. The current archbishop and cardinal of Malta have been involved with the organisation, and the dialogue is ongoing and proficuous. The mere fact of meeting LGBT+ people in person and having the opportunity to talk with them and know their stories firsthand has been pivotal in helping ministers of faith overcome the anonymity of the LGBT+ population and get to perceive them as individuals. Thanks to this, the then bishop of Malta apologised for the Church having excluded LGBT+ people and their parents. On some occasions, the Church apologised for not having endorsed *Drachma's* positions, while on other occasions, *Drachma* openly opposed the Church's stances. Dialogue with the Catholic Church is a process with ups and downs. Although there are some constructive moments, homotransphobia and hate speech in the Church are still present.

NGO “Cammini di Speranza” (Italy) - Andrea Rubera

Cammini di Speranza is an ecumenical organisation made of Christian people, of which the majority is Catholic. LGBT+ Christian people in Italy started to build a network at the beginning of the 80s to create safe spaces for Christian LGBT+ people that were not welcomed in parishes. From this networking activity and contact with European LGBT+ groups, they learnt that no Church was initially open towards LGBT+ people. Following the

2000 Rome World Pride, an ever-increasing number of LGBT+ Christian people started claiming the right to freely live their sexual orientation and gender identity; it followed the emergence around Italy of many new organisations. As a consequence of this mobilisation, dialogues started with the local dioceses, sometimes with positive outcomes and some other times with negative ones. In 2010 the group organised a vigil against homophobia, inviting the Rome parishes. The Rome diocese requested parishes not to join the wake that was organised nonetheless. After that, the Rome vicar was asked the reason of that denial; this launched an institutional dialogue with the Rome diocese. *Cammini di Speranza* organised a seminar on how the Church can become more inclusive; at the follow-up seminar, many representatives of the Catholic Church were present. The organisation also drafted texts and guidelines enumerating possible actions that the Church could put in place to help LGBT+ people.

NGO “My, Rodzice” (Poland) - Agnieszka Penczek, Aleksandra Jakubczyk

The LGBT+ communities in Poland are struck by homotransphobia, discrimination, and exclusion by the Roman Catholic Church, pervaded by stereotypes regarding LGBT+ people. Moreover, the Church backs the government's propaganda against LGBT+ people. Lack of scientific knowledge among the Church, the promotion of conversion therapy, false beliefs about homosexuality and transgender people, hate speech against LGBT+ people, all these factors play a role in LGBT+ people feeling threatened, stigmatised and rejected by the Church. Consequently, some LGBT+ people and their families resign from religious practices or sometimes, parents choose to maintain good relations with the parish at the cost of rejecting their LGBT+ children. Although the struggle for an inclusive Church is very tough in Poland, in 2019, *My, Rodzice* held a meeting with other organisations to exchange ideas on advancing the Church's inclusion of LGBT+ people. They drafted some guidelines: to abandon homophobic thinking; stop homophobia in the Polish society; improve the Church scientific knowledge about LGBT+ people; firmly object to political and social attacks towards LGBT+ people; provide pastoral care to LGBT+ people; change the current official teachings on sexual ethics and gender identity; change the definition of family; withdraw support to conversion therapy; accept same-sex unions; start the blessing of same-sex couples; give baptism and other sacraments to LGBT+ people.

2nd webinar - Spaces of dialogue in the Catholic Church

Francesco Lepore (Italy)

Former presbyter is currently chief editor of the online magazine *Gay News*; they also work for the magazine *L'inkiesta*, writing on topics concerning the Vatican. They argue that in the past, the condemnation of homosexuality has always referred to homosexual acts and that it is only recently (with the 1975 document *Persona Humana*⁸ issued by the former Holy Office), that for the first time, it is offered a separation between homosexual acts and the homosexual condition. In the document, the former is qualified as intrinsically disordered. In 1986, the prefect of the Holy Office, Joseph Ratzinger, in a letter on the care of homosexual people,⁹ framed homosexual affectivity as depravation. Ratzinger also stressed that *Persona Humana* had encouraged too positive interpretations of the homosexual orientation. This letter was then used as a reference point for catechism with many adverse effects on LGB people. The current Magisterium holds an entirely different approach towards LGB people: Pope Francis made clear that God welcomes everyone.

On the other hand, Pope Francis expressed traditional views. For example, when he was archbishop in Buenos Aires, he explained to be favourable to the legal recognition of civil unions for LGB couples as a manoeuvre to avoid the risk of an LGB wedding law being approved in Argentina. Similarly, in 2021 after visiting Slovenia and Slovakia, Pope Francis remarked that sacramental weddings should not be open to LGB couples. Clearly, Pope Francis has voiced a variety of stances and nuances regarding LGBT+ people. While on some aspects, he is progressive, on others is conservative. Nonetheless, it seems that he has inaugurated more liberal paths for the Catholic Church.

Aristide Fumagalli (Italy)

Professor of Moral Theology at the Theological Faculty of the Italia Settentrionale University and presbyter provides an overview of the Roman Catholic Church approaches to LGBT+

⁸ *Alcune questioni di etica sessuale*, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_it.html.

⁹ *Lettera ai vescovi della Chiesa cattolica sulla cura pastorale delle persone omosessuali*, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_it.html.

people based on the official line of the Roman Catholic Church. According to this, love is possible when there is otherness. Therefore, the other person's otherness should be recognisable; otherwise, the other is just an alter-ego. Based on the official doctrine, in same-sex relationships, the absence of sexual difference impedes recognising the other person as separate from oneself, and therefore love is unattainable. Moreover, due to the lack of sexual difference, procreation is impossible; this contravenes the doctrinal conditions for love. The Catholic doctrine does not deny that homosexual people can love, but it states that they lack the doctrinal conditions for the Church to accept this love in its sexual expression.

Regarding transgender identities, the Catholic doctrine identifies criticalities in the disassociation of gender from biological sex. For the Catholic doctrine, biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but cannot be separated. Fumagalli argues that while the Catholic Church steers away from cultural constructivism and biological essentialism, for the Catholic doctrine, the separation of gender from biological sex implies a fluidity that makes it very difficult to identify the sexual identity of people. This, in turn, makes it difficult to establish authentic love relationships because, as previously stated, it requires people to be recognisable in their otherness. Fumagalli also adds that the Catholic doctrine condemns every act of hate or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. He concludes that the Catholic doctrine on human sexuality is not static but in a dialogical relationship with its worshippers. Therefore, it is essential that social movements advocating for an LGBT+ Christian way keep pushing the Church to check the adequacy of its doctrine to present-day society, and where appropriate, revise it to become more suitable to transmit evangelical teachings.

Giuseppe Piva (Italy)

They are a Jesuit priest who became aware that the lack of education among pastoral workers, widespread ignorance on homosexuality and transgender topics are the main hindrances to welcoming LGBT+ people. With pastoral workers, priests, and laypeople, Piva created an informal network for LGBT+ people to share experiences and work on educational processes. This year they have worked on a course for pastoral workers that touches upon anthropology, pastoral care, and theology to develop skills to welcome and support LGBT+ people; the final scope is to help spread inclusive pastoral approaches. One of the course modules focused on explaining that homosexuality is a trait of one's person that is not positive nor negative per se.

During another module, pastoral workers and bishops shared their experiences on what kind of pastoral practices can be implemented towards LGBT+ people. Piva argues that there is resistance within the Catholic Church from a doctrinal standpoint and that there should be a theological deepening on aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Gian Luca Carrega (Italy)

Carrega is a presbyter in the Turin Diocese and lecturer at the Theological Faculty of the same city; they praise Catholic LGBT+ advocacy groups' importance for LGBT+ people. The Turin diocese was the first in Italy to kick-start a path of pastoral care for LGBT+ people in 2006 when the then Archbishop Severino Poletto engaged in dialogue with local LGBT+ Catholics. Carrega, who is responsible for the pastoral care of LGBT+ people in their diocese, had been officially instructed by the local archbishop in 2013. In their role, they provide empathic listening towards LGBT+ people. Education of pastoral workers is also among priorities because overcoming widespread ignorance and debunking false beliefs are essential to overcome intransigence. In their role, Carrega acts as a bridge between LGBT+ grassroots organisations and the Catholic world; they think that it is crucial to put the counterparts in dialogue with each other. They also underline that sometimes there are discrepancies between what representatives of the Catholic Church's hierarchies think and what they publicly say. For example, it is common to receive informal encouragement in private, and then the same people officially voice opposition to welcoming LGBT+ people. They conclude that LGBT+ topics are overshadowed within the Catholic Church, especially positive aspects are rarely discussed.

NGO "LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council" (UK) - Martin Pendergast

Pendergast was a member of the Carmelite order and the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales Social Welfare Committee. Today is a Communications & Media Member of *LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council*. A monthly Mass welcoming LGBT+ Catholics, parents, families, and friends began in May 1999. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor proposed in 2006 that such pastoral provision should be embedded within a parish and a Diocesan framework. A Consultation Process began that led to an agreement that from March 2007, Masses welcoming LGBT+ Catholics, parents and families would be celebrated as part of the Sunday schedule at the Church of the Assumption in Soho. When protests emerged against these Masses in 2010, Cardinal Vincent Nichols condemned them, as did the

Archbishop of Birmingham. The Catholic Church in England & Wales developed a pragmatic approach to homosexuality because of these countries' social and religious context. After the publication of *Persona Humana*,¹⁰ and the 1986 letter to bishops,¹¹ the Bishops of England & Wales, in 1979, produced *An Introduction to the Pastoral Care of Homosexual People* to offer damage limitation in the face of harsher Vatican tones. The document depicted homosexuality as a state or condition of the individual and, therefore, morally neutral. It argued that the goodness or badness of sexual acts between same-sex people could be judged morally only by considering intentions and circumstances. It was also stated that homosexual people have the same right to sacraments as heterosexual people.

When the Civil Partnerships law was approved in 2003, the Catholic Bishops of England & Wales recognised their human and social value. The Catholic Bishops Conference Marriage & Family Department has also promoted non-discriminatory good practice through a series of leaflets. The Bishops Conference has also published a guide for Catholics to put into practice Equality Law. The Catholic Education Service has also co-sponsored and circulated a document to combat homophobic bullying in schools and colleges. The Bishops of England & Wales have published relatively affirming statements addressed to trans Catholics. Their pragmatic approach and various teaching and policy documents are a clear example of the local Church contributing to the broader Magisterium. Pendergast argues that other dioceses can adopt their model, but such a pastoral provision should not be imposed from above. The strength of their Westminster experience is that it has grown from grassroots pastoral praxis, discerned and reflected upon by Bishops and people together, and seen to embody principles of welcome, value, respect, integrity, honesty, and a solid commitment to be at one with the Church. This task could begin by recommending a global, national, and diocesan listening process. The pastoral needs of LGBT+ Catholics, parents and families can receive not a one-size-fits-all pastoral model but a response that goes beyond the straight and narrow. Their pastoral challenge explores the sexual ethics of doing no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice.

10 *Alcune questioni di etica sessuale*, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_it.html.

11 *Lettera ai vescovi della Chiesa cattolica sulla cura pastorale delle persone omosessuali*, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_it.html.

Antonio De Caro (Italy)

Educator, translator, and author of books on theology, they collaborate with the *La Tenda di Gionata* and the Catholic weekly magazine *Adista*. In their 2020 book *Violence does not belong to God*, they argue that those passages of the Sacred Scriptures that have been historically used to condemn homosexuality can have different meanings if read in a historical-critical approach. In the passage Gn 19.1-29 of the Ancient Testament, it seems that God burned down the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because inhabitants were practising sodomy. In the publication *What is a man*, the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 2019 states that Sodom and Gomorrah passage has nothing to do with homosexual relationships but rather has to do with sexual violence and rape against foreigners, seen as a violation of the rules of hospitality. Nonetheless, the CDF is still arguing that the Sodom and Gomorrah passage condemns homosexual relationships. In the passage Lv 18.22 and 20.13, it is said that a man should never lie with another man. This can be better explained in a historical perspective as an attempt to guard against neighbouring populations idolising pagan divinities and practised sacred prostitution.

In the New Testament, the passages that refer to homosexuality are from Paul. In Rm 1.24-27, Paul condemns homosexuality not based on sacred texts but referring to currents of thought of the time coming from Judaism, Platonism and stoicism. In 1 Cor 6.9-10, Paul provides a catalogue of the mortal sins, among which he mentions men who lie with other men. In Paul's time, sacred prostitution was common, and free men could have homosexual relationships with their slaves and in a relationship of dominance. In Cor 6.9-10 and Tm 1.9-10, these kinds of behaviours are condemned because they are seen as a violation and exploitation of human beings (slaves). The Bible condemns homosexuality when seen as a humiliation because a man takes on a passive feminine role. Therefore the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality echoes the Bible's misogyny. In the passages herein explained, homosexuality is condemned not as an existential condition (as we look at it today) but rather as a form of domination. In the Bible, what goes closer to the category of transgender people are eunuchs, which are mentioned in Lv 21.20; Dt 23.2; Is 56.3-5; Sap 3.14; Mt 19.12; and At 8.26-39. In Lv 21.20 and Dt 23.2, eunuchs are prohibited from entering into the sacred temples of God. This prohibition expresses a patriarchal culture and the need for the Israelian people to reproduce themselves and increase their military power.

On the other hand, in Is 56.3-5; Sap 3.14, God welcomes religious eunuchs that follow his rules. In Mt 19.12, Christ talks about eunuchs saying that some of them are born that way, some that other men make eunuchs, and some that choose to be for the heavenly kingdom. In At 8.26-39, Philippus, moved by the spirit, is sent to meet a powerful and wealthy eunuch to whom Philippus says that he too is welcome in the kingdom of God. De Caro concludes by saying that Christ on many occasions defended those that are oppressed and abused.

3rd webinar - The perspectives within other Christian denominations

NGO “The European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Persons - ENP” (Europe) - Marisol Ortiz, Joseanne Peregin

Ortiz and Peregin are board members of the umbrella organisation *ENP*. From their experience, they observed that a vast majority of LGBT+ people in Europe feel their Christian or Catholic Churches do not welcome them. The doctrinal documents consider sexual and gender diversities as destroyers of the family. All this is causing profound harm to LGBT+ people and their families. Parents feel somewhat paralysed, finding it difficult to accept their children’s sexual and gender diversity because it challenges them personally in their religious beliefs. This experience often translates into feelings of fear, confusion, shame, and isolation even from their faith community. However, when such parents can find support from others struggling with their faith, it becomes more of a shared journey of growth and friendship. Parents associations can offer these nourishing connections.

In several Spanish cities, the Ignatian community has created inclusive realities. Through dialogue and sharing personal testimonies, they explained to other religious members the suffering society, doctrine, and the Church were causing to LGBT+ people. The process was also that of listening to those that were reluctant to welcome diversity. This dialogue resulted in the publishing of Christian Life Community Spain’s manifesto, saying that sexual and gender diversities are welcome in the community. Support and training to inclusive pastoral workers are also provided. Ortiz and Peregin argue that building bridges between LGBT+ people and the institutional Church is essential. Since 2008 efforts have been made to build a proficuous dialogue with Malta’s Archbishops and Bishops. When one door opened, other possibilities arose in the Diocese. Although building trust with religious leaders and officials is not easy, it is the linchpin of any change. Ortiz and Peregin argue that it is also essential to make religious leaders aware of the negative impact official documents or communications have on LGBT+ communities (such as suicides in some instances). Church leaders must feel accountable and persuaded to change their approach. On the other hand, parents can bridge with their respective religious leaders, showing how their family experience is challenging and enriching at the same time. Parents can show that families are good and healthy and want to contribute to the Church and the wider community.

Daniela Di Carlo (Italy)

Pastor of the Waldensian Church of Milan, Di Carlo directed the Agape International Ecumenical Centre in Prali and is a member of the Commission on Faith, Gender, and Sexuality of the Baptist, Methodist, and Waldensian Churches (BMW). The Commission has the mandate to relaunch the debate in the Churches on homosexuality by producing four fact sheets on the following topics: who are homosexuals; the Bible and homosexuality; how to welcome and value diversity; love relationships beyond schematism. The fact sheets propose the idea that homosexuals are people like any other; that the few biblical passages concerning homosexuality must not be interpreted literally, but in their historical and cultural context; that the Churches must be prepared to accept each person's diversity without discrimination or prejudice; and finally that any love relationship must be valued as an expression of God's love. Di Carlo recounts that some of the first reactions to the fact sheets showed some difficulties. Part of the BMW Churches followers had the idea that homosexuality is a sin or a structural flaw of the individual, that it is dangerous for society, and that only a hermeneutical stunt that would discredit the Bible can lead one to consider otherwise.

The relationship with the Sacred Scriptures is not a literalistic one for the BMW Churches. Scriptures should not be looked at as precise ethical indications and answers to questions that arise today in different terms than when they were written. Di Carlo points out that the Italian Protestant Churches have been reflecting and working on these issues for several years now, strongly condemning homotransphobia and aiming to welcome and bless homosexual people in the Baptist, Methodist, and Waldensian Churches in Italy. Work is being done on training Churches to adopt an inclusive language; to accompany them in welcoming and integrating LGBT+ people into the community; to prepare for the day against homobitranphobia. Some years ago, the Tavola Valdese asked the Waldensian and Methodist Pastoral Body whether there were obstacles to consecrating LG people to the pastoral ministry. There was unanimity in not seeing the problem, and it was pointed out the need to address the issue of blessing homosexual unions. Within BMW Churches, there is agreement on the fact that sexual orientation is one of the characteristics that make up the particularity of each person together with gender and character, and that it has no relevance with regard to the conditions of admission to any ministry in the church.

Elizabeth Green (Italy)

Green is a pastor of Italy's Baptist Evangelical Christian Union serving in Cagliari. They say that in Italy, outside the BMW churches, there are many Evangelical Churches, many of which are Pentecostal, and others so-called free Churches that are very little welcoming towards LGBT+ people. In other words, whether or not Evangelical Churches welcome LGBT+ people depends very much on the type of Church one comes across. In non-inclusive churches, women are often excluded from leadership positions; sexual identities other than heterosexual are considered a choice; and there is adherence to a static interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures, which are considered to have been directly inspired by God. This means that the ancient texts are not read with their historical context in mind. Because some of these texts condemn same-sex sexual relationships, homosexuality is considered a sin and reparative therapy is encouraged. Some Churches have not undertaken any awareness path on gender identity and sexual orientation and are therefore suspicious of the topics. These are not necessarily homophobic. In this scenario, parents' associations can plead their case with these Churches by telling their stories as parents or children. There are particular contexts in which these stories can be told, for example, during ecumenical vigils against homophobia. Vigils speak a language that Churches can understand; they can be a moment of encounter between the Church and organisations. For Green, it is vital during these encounters not to engage in lengthy and abstruse reasoning on the biblical texts but rather to try to have a broad view of the Gospel in its entirety. When faced with reticent Churches, they suggest asking the following question "what would Jesus have done?". It is a fact that in the Gospels, Jesus is depicted as always on the side of marginalised people.

NGO "National Association of Ecumenical Groups for Christian LGBTQ People - EKHO" (Sweden) - Robin Paulonen

Paulonen is chairman of *EKHO*, a Swedish non-profit, ecumenical Christian organisation advocating since the late 70s for LGBT+ rights. They explain that the conversation in Sweden is focused on queer theology and the role of LGBT+ people in Christian Churches; there is an ongoing dialogue with Christian leaders, although it is a critical time when many Churches embrace transphobia, homophobia, and xenophobia. Although huge steps forward have been taken with LGBT+ rights, the struggle with faith is still present. *EKHO* tries to cure homesickness to make the Church a home again for LGBT+ people. It provides support to friends, family, and allies of LGBT+ people; it is creating the "rainbow hotline SOS" for

LGBT+ where it will provide support to those who went through biblical violence. *EKHO* set up the “rainbow key” that is a model for Churches to become inclusive; it organises safe spaces for Christians and camps for children. They publish books on making Churches more inclusive of LGBT+ people. Another problem that Paulonen identifies is that Swedish media outlets often forget they are talking about people and propose a uniform image of LGBT+ people as sad and broken. *EKHO* is trying to rewrite these narratives.

NGO “Ökumenische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche - HuK” (Germany) - Michael Brinkschröder

Brinkschröder is a sociologist and a Catholic theologian. They have published several articles on gay/queer liberation theology and are a member of *HuK*, the Ecumenical Task Force Homosexuals and Church. Since 2011 they have been (co-)chair of the *Catholic LGBT+ Committee* in Germany, which coordinates queer politics within the frame of the Roman Catholic Church. Brinkschröder recounts that when *HuK* was founded in 1977, there were already some cases of gay pastors suspended and then fired by the Protestant Church. In light of this, *HuK* started signature campaigns and protests becoming visible to the Church. Synods were the organisation’s entry points to influence delegates and start a dialogue. In the 90s, the main discussion was whether homosexuality was a sin or an expression of love. The liberal approach gained the upper hand. This liberal understanding led to other discussions, such as the blessing of same-sex partnerships. In 2002 it became possible to have the blessing ceremony in public and churches, and then in 2013, the Church recognised full equality between heterosexual and same-sex couples. Another critical issue was the legal status of the pastors and whether gay or lesbian pastors could live together in the vicarage: this was hotly debated and finally accepted. In 2013 the national umbrella organisation of the Protestant Church launched an orientation paper arguing that a family is where love exists and mutual care is given. This document rejected the normative literal understanding of the family as coming from the Bible, also saying that nobody should be reduced to biological markers.

Brinkschröder moves on to discuss the German Roman Catholic Church. In 1991, the first gay parish in Frankfurt was created that became a role model for other communities in Germany. They started organising their activities without waiting for acceptance from the Church’s hierarchies. In 2011 the *Catholic LGBT+ Committee* was founded with the primary objective to establish blessing ceremonies for same-sex couples and to establish responsible persons for

LGBT+ pastoral work in every diocese nominated by the bishops. These pastoral workers meet twice a year with grassroots organisations that have task forces to work on issues hand in hand. Brinkschröder thinks this is a promising approach. They are developing a curriculum for the education of pastoral workers on how to work with LGBT+ people, how to help parishes become welcoming, and what could be done to avoid ultra-conservative bishops from destroying the good reputation that LGBT+ pastoral work now has in Germany. The other big target is to grant blessing ceremonies for same-sex couples. *HuK* started a series of annual meetings with the chair of the Pastoral Committee of the Catholic Bishop Conference in 2011. In 2021 the CDF opposed these liberal impetuses saying no to blessings of same-sex couples. This costed a toll in Germany. There has been a signature campaign from ministers of faith and theology professors, rainbow flags were hung from Churches, and some priests did blessing ceremonies to same-sex couples risking being sanctioned. Similarly, bishops and vicars gave their support and criticised the CDF decision.

NGO “Homosexuelle und Glaube - HuG” (Austria) - Andreas Raschke, Heinz Schubert, Claudia Marlen Schröder

Andreas Raschke is chairman of the Vienna branch of *HuG*; Heinz Schubert is a historian and the speaker of the Graz branch of *HuG*; Claudia Marlen Schröder is a natural scientist and activist for trans rights in the Protestant Church. Schubert explains that the Lutheran Church in Austria has a presbyteral-synodal constitution with democratic elections and a balance between laypeople and clergy. In the 1980s, female priests were ordained, the discussion on homosexuality started in the mid-1990s with the coming out of a gay pastor. At the beginning of the dialogue on gay and lesbian people’s acceptance in the Lutheran Church in Austria, the Synod sent a discussion paper to all parishes that invited gay and lesbian people to start a dialogue. Consequently, the Synod concluded that homosexual people must not be discriminated against in the Church. In 2014 the Church published a leaflet on *Pastoral care for homosexual people*, and from 2015 parishes can apply for a seal of quality if they fulfil queer-friendly standards. From 2019 ecclesiastic marriage of same-sex couples is allowed, but only if the parish votes in.

Raschke describes the Reformed Church in Austria as having greater autonomy of congregations than in the Lutheran Church. In 1999, through the Synod, the Church decided to bless non-civil partnerships making no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual

people. The Synod in 2019 approved marriage for same-sex and heterosexual couples and blessings for registered partnerships. All congregations now grant this right. Schröder highlights that the situation of trans people in the Austrian Protestant Church is more complex than that of gay and lesbian people. They explain that, in general, there is nearly no theological guidance for pastors on how to deal with these groups of people. Pastoral workers are not trained on trans people's needs and how they can be included in religious congregations. Although some single congregations and pastors are very active, coordination from the Synod is generally missing, and activities are left to volunteers. They all conclude by saying that personal encounters of the Church's representatives with LGBT+ people and their relatives are a crucial factor for a mind-change within the Church.

Agostino De Caro (Italy)

De Caro is a priest of the Ecumenical Church of Christ, part of the independent Catholic movement. They were discriminated against twice in their life, firstly by the Roman Catholic Church that pushed them away because of their homosexuality, and then by the LGBT+ community that discriminated against them because of their religion. Thanks to the Ecumenical Church of Christ, they rediscovered their faith. This religious denomination is fully inclusive regardless of gender or sexual orientation. During the last synod, they discussed same-sex couples marriage and support adoption for same-sex couples. The Ecumenical Church of Christ very often welcome LGBT+ people that have been deeply hurt by society and religious institutions that rejected them. On this aspect, in Italy and other countries, the Roman Catholic Church plays a significant role in creating sufferance among LGBT+ people: it tends to reject LGBT+ people, they cannot enter the seminary, and same-sex couples cannot be blessed.

4th webinar - Voices of dialogue within Judaism and Islam

NGO “Il Grande Colibrì” (Italy) - Rosanna Sirignano, Michele Benini

Sirignano has a PhD in Islamic Studies, is a member of the Rome mosque, and is a spiritual guide (the female version of the imam). They explain that Islam is a holistic system where there is no separation from the religious and the public spheres; everything is done in the name of God. Although judgment belongs only to God in Islam, a subtle judgment comes from religious spaces and families that make it difficult for LGBT+ people to expose themselves and express their experiences. In Islam, it is clear that no one should force anyone to follow the religious path in a specific way; there is subjectivity with how one adheres to religion. Religious minorities and sexual minorities very often share similar experiences of oppression and disadvantage, and it is a duty not to reiterate discrimination against other minorities. *Il Grande Colibrì* created spaces where people from different cultural backgrounds can meet religious and lay people and others from sexual minorities or majorities.

Benini argues that the media portrayal of Islam presents us with an intensely intolerant religion: women are discriminated against, subjugated and forced to wear covering face scarfs, terrorist groups justify their acts with religion, homosexuals are seen being hanged. In many Muslim-majority countries, there is, at least formally, some form of legal discrimination against LGBT+ people, which makes most people think that it is the religion that does not accept homosexuality. This is partly misleading because, in countries like Saudi Arabia, homosexuality is tolerated if practised by some castes but punished with death when practised by immigrants from the Far East. As far as religious texts are concerned, the best-known episode that mentions homosexuality is that of Lot's people. It is first mentioned in the Qu'ran in the VII sura, called Al-A'raf (Limbo), the theme returns in other suras, but the episode cited is essentially always the same. In addition to the Qur'an, which is the primary sacred text for Muslims, there are the historical-legal traditions ('Afiadith), which collect the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. These constitute the second source of Islamic law. Not all texts have the same importance, nor they are unanimously accepted. However, within these collections, homosexuality is addressed in several points and is explicitly condemned. However, none of these passages is classified by scholars as definitely authentic (sahih). It is worth noting that the alleged intolerance of homosexuals in the scriptures is quantitatively limited and, in many cases, uncertain or a product of the time when the sacred

texts were written. Benini's opinion is that LG believers should approach the issue with a simple point of view: Allah created them LG, and God cannot be wrong.

Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed (France)

Zahed is an imam and international consultant in Psychology, Anthropology and Inclusive Theology; they created the first European inclusive Mosque in Paris in 2012 and started working with progressive Muslims in Europe, America, Africa, and Indonesia. After the Charlie Hebdo attack, he founded the *Calem Institute* in Marseilles. There, they train progressive imams, publish manuals, inform the Muslim community, and try to understand how to transmit progressive representations of Muslim tradition to queer, straight and progressive people. Zahed explains that new Islamic contemporary reform currents are progressive and inclusive in the sense that they do not exclude anyone. These currents promote gender equality and positively deal with the issues related to homosexuality and trans identities, unlike Wahhabism (more commonly known as Salafism) or Takfirism (more commonly known as jihadism). These two latter currents have advocated for stigma and sometimes even dehumanisation of gender or sexual minorities since the last century.

Zahed argues that generally, discriminations are products of the social context, and these bring with them a cultural, religious and pseudo-scientific facade. In these cases, the Islamists' use the most violent apocryphal hadiths to justify a fascistisation of identities on both sides of the Mediterranean. They deny the most inclusive hadiths, that are more consistent with the rest of the Islamic spiritual traditions. Their strategies are in every way in line with those of all fascist groups, applying their policy of scapegoating (LGBT+) minorities. To conclude, homosexuality is not condemned anywhere in the Qur'an. The terminology itself was invented in Europe in the 19th century and not by sodomites 5000 years ago. Zahed concludes by saying that Khalifs condemned so-called sodomites, who were not transgender or homosexual, but pagans who perpetuated the traditions of their patriarchal ancestors, mixing violent sexuality and idolatrous spirituality.

NGO "Ahati" (Spain) - Rodrigo Araneda Villasante

Villasante is a psychologist and president of the Spanish NGO *Acati*. The organisation proposes accompaniment in faith and provides meeting spaces for LGBT+ people of faith who are asylum seekers and refugees persecuted in their home countries. Villasante explains

that many of the people *Acathi* welcomes are refugees due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Many have a particularly complicated relationship with religion, and they all experience it differently. It all depends on their life stories and how arguments are used in their countries of origin to restrict and even promote the aggression of LGBT+ people. It is also not uncommon for people to use religion to justify discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Barcelona is a multicultural and multireligious city, and *Acathi* believes that to bring communities together, form alliances and coalitions with other groups, build a society based on respect and appreciation of diversity, it is necessary to foster engagement with various communities and contexts. People view their faith as a source of guidance and inspiration, and LGBT+ people are no different. More and more believers can promote dialogues on LGBT+ equality and seek ways to reconcile religious practice, sexual orientation and gender identity. This reconciliation can be achieved not despite one's religious beliefs but because of them. Villasante explains that these approaches are at the base of *Acathi's* initiatives. They promote the well-being and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgender believers; favour spaces to express their sexuality and gender identity and their relationship with their religious practice; fight against hate speech related to religious practice; and promote decolonising, intersectional, feminist, and queer perspectives through dialogue.

The organisation pursues the following specific objectives. To increase participants' awareness of their own identity in terms of religion, belief, gender, and sexuality; to develop literacy and self-expression by addressing the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality; to foster an appreciation of equal rights for all; to develop skills and strategies to confront sexism, homophobia, and religious discrimination. The method that *Acathi* proposes aims at moving from abstract interreligious dialogues, where few concrete results are expected, to individual and joint positive actions in which religious and spiritual practices are worked on. A peer-learning methodology is used, focusing on specific case studies and life experiences of the participants. Villasante concludes by mentioning the actions undertaken for the project *Faith for Rights*. For it, *Acathi* has identified internal and external stakeholders who could support the creation of an LGBT+ interreligious dialogue and action; has developed ways and opportunities for meeting; has developed a network among stakeholders; has created a permanent space for mutual study-training-knowledge about religious practice and rights.

Fabrizio Cipriani (Italy)

Cipriani is a rabbi whose rabbinic tradition is rooted in the Italian and Hasidic traditions. They are a former member of the rabbinical assemblies and rabbinic tribunals of the Masorti/Conservative and Reform/Progressive Jewish movements. Cipriani is the founder of the *Etz Haim* movement in Italy for a Judaism without walls. They explain that, as is well known, homosexuality has always been heavily condemned by the religious world based on two verses of the Torah: Lev. 18:22 and Lev. 20:13. Many translations of Lev. 18:22 are oriented towards an absolute prohibition. This constitutes a filter through which every other reference to the subject is generally read. Nonetheless, they argue that the Torah does not speak of female homosexuality, probably because only the act of penetration between men was seen as problematic. However, he continues, scriptures should be read in light of the context. In fact, Lev. 18 opens with a general prohibition to reproduce pagan Egyptian and Canaanite customs. Because homosexual relations were present among these groups as a cultural expression, the prohibition may refer only to the ritual sphere as a typically pagan expression.

Cipriani cites the American rabbi Jacob Milgrom, a biblical researcher and specialist on Leviticus, who relativised the biblical prohibition using two main arguments. They argue that the biblical prohibition reflects the concerns of a nascent nation, where procreation is paramount. In such a framework, homosexual relationships would risk hindering reproduction and are seen as an obstacle to the group's future. Milgrom believes that nowadays, such an idea would be unthinkable in an overpopulated world. They also suggest that the prohibition could be linked to incestuous heterosexual relationships, as mentioned by the biblical text in the immediately preceding section (Lev. 18:6-21). For Milgrom, there would also be reasons to think that the prohibition applies only to heterosexual men who choose to have relations with other men due to the danger it might pose to family stability. On the other hand, Cipriani says that the Torah is silent about female homosexuality. The first allusion to sexual contact between women is found in a post-biblical midrash commenting on the book of Leviticus and referring to Egyptian and Canaanite customs that Israelites are forbidden to follow. Later, the Talmud will refer to possible sexual contact between women without giving it much importance.

Regarding transgender people, Cipriani argues that the sages explain that in the Creation narrative (Gen. 1:26-27), God created the first human being as an androgynous person, containing both male and female characteristics. Consequently, from the very beginning of the Torah, gender was something quite complex and not at all obvious. Indeed, and surprisingly, the Jewish legal tradition identifies no less than six distinct genders, including designations that today would be called intersex identities. These genders, as described in Hebrew terms, are the following. The "androgynous", who has both male and female characteristics; the "tumtum", whose biology is unclear; the "aylonit", who identifies as female at birth but at puberty develops male characteristics; and the "saris", who appears as male at birth, but later takes on more typically female biological characteristics. It is evident that traditional Jewish wisdom has imagined transgender possibilities. Cipriani concludes by saying that LGBT+ people's affectivity should be considered something natural for Jewish theology, which expression should be supported with no reservations. They argue that the Jewish people were born slaves and foreigners in Egypt to become familiar with abuse and oppression. This awareness should make Jewish people avoid perpetuating injustices towards other groups and be on the side of those who risk being subjected to discrimination. Homosexuals, both men and women, have suffered abundantly and continue to suffer regularly everywhere, paying a very high price.

NGO “Magen David Keshet Italia” (Italy) - Raffaele Sabbadini

Sabbadini is the vice-president of *Magen David Keshet Italia (MDKI)*, the first independent Jewish LGBT+ organisation in Italy. It was founded in 2015 and affiliated with the *World Congress of LGBT Jews (Keshet Ga'avah)*, a worldwide network connecting the most important Jewish LGBT+ realities in North and South America, Europe, and Israel. The organisation promotes, within and outside Jewish communities, full equality of LGBT+ people in coherence with the Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam* (to repair the world, correcting injustice as far as humanly possible). *MDKI* helps young people emancipate, helping them understand that one can be a good Jew while living their homosexuality. *MDKI* work to contrast episodes of discrimination or homophobia in Jewish communities and anti-Semitism in the national LGBT+ movements. Sabbadini explains that Italian Judaism is diverse from a religious point of view and from historical, social, and cultural ones. The first Jewish communities in Italy were in Rome, where Jews have been present since Ancient Roman times; in Turin, the first Jews arrived in the 15th century; in Milan in the 19th century; and in

Florence in the 15th century. The origins of the various Italian Jewish communities are varied, and today there are fewer than 30,000 Jews in Italy.

Positions towards LGBT+ topics among Italian Jews are as varied as the community's origins. Views depend on culture, traditions, and religious orientations. In general, however, some common tendencies can be identified among Italian Jews, such as the denial of the issue and its dismissal as a marginal problem. Although from the 1960s onwards, LGBT+ people's coming out has involved an increasing number of Jewish families, officially, a significant component of the community preferred not to talk about it and not to address the issue. Many LGBT+ people preferred to remain on the fringes of the Jewish community, to leave the community, or to remain while concealing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Today Jewish LGBT+ people come out in family and social contexts more welcoming than in the past but still unprepared. Jewish LGBT+ people experience many difficulties reconciling their religious identity with their being. In this regard, families and community's approach is fundamental. Italian Jewish communities are characterised by a more substantial social cohesion and control than in other Jewish realities. These characteristics lead to amplifying the "don't ask, don't tell" behaviour. Great strides have been made in the most Jewish progressive families, as has happened among progressive Italian non-Jewish families. The same has happened among Jewish of progressive orientation. Small steps are also being taken within the more orthodox Italian communities. To conclude, Sabbadini argues that the challenge today is in the field of education. It is of the utmost importance to spread correct information among young people to counter stereotypes and homobitransphobia.

5th webinar - A change is possible

Massimo Prearo (Italy)

Researcher at the University of Verona, Prearo, has long studied the anti-gender movements and is currently a lecturer in Political Sciences. Prearo explains that the anti-gender phenomenon is different in the various national contexts and has local specificities. The first anti-gender demonstrations in Italy took place in 2013 with sit-ins against the Cirinnà bill. They advocated against the recognition of same-sex couples and their adoption rights; they also fought against the Scalfarotto bill aimed at criminalising homotransphobia. The first “Family day” was organised by the movement’s exponents Gandolfini, Malan, Giovanardi, and Pillon. Some politicians immediately supported them. The movement moved from the streets to parliament in just five years. After that, the inter-parliamentary group *Life, family and freedom* was founded and coordinated by the extra-parliamentary member Massimo Gandolfini and others.

Some stages of the movement can be identified. The first phase goes from 2013 to 2015, when the construction of the anti-gender cause took place. A functional narrative was built to mobilise people within Catholic spaces. The second phase goes from 2015 to 2016 and is that of structuring and organising. The committee *We defend our children* was founded, and it will become the core of the movement’s entrepreneurship, where communication strategies and targets are decided. The third phase lasted for the entire 2016 and is that of consolidation of the movement. During this time, the rhetoric is reframed. The main focus of mobilisations shifts to same-sex couples’ rights to adoption and surrogate motherhood. The fourth phase lasted from 2017 to 2019 and is one of political capitalisation: the movement became capable of interacting and mediating with politics, up to the point that one of the leading exponents of the movement, Simone Pillon, was elected senator. Prearo concludes by clarifying that these neo-Catholic movements have achieved various political successes. Among these, the abolition of same-sex couples’ rights to adoption in the Cirinnà bill; the sinking of the Scalfarotto bill; the monopolisation of the debate on the Zan bill and its collapse; the entry of *Family generation* in the FONAGS and FORAGS of Lazio; and the withdrawal of the guidelines on the reception of trans boys and girls in schools in Lazio.

Peik Ingman (Finland)

Ingman is a researcher and has been the project coordinator in a 3-year project called *Taakasta voimavaraksi*, which translates roughly to *From burden to resource*. The project aim was to help transform people's relationship to their sexual orientation, gender identity and spiritual life from feeling burdensome to be a source of empowerment. They provided consultation and conflict mediation and endeavoured to positively influence how religious groups relate to people belonging to sexual and gender minorities. The project also endeavoured to improve awareness of concerns relating to religion and spirituality in LGBT+ communities. They trained religious professionals, produced educational materials, and supported artistic activism relating to LGBT+ and religion. During the project, Ingman learnt that activists, volunteers, and employees in LGBT+ NGOs must think carefully about the challenges of helping LGBT+ people with a religious background. For example, for many activists, religion can represent the enemy. By centring the question on what helps LGBT+ individuals born into religious families, activists are faced with a challenge that renders negativity towards religion unhelpful.

Citing the American social psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen, Ingman stresses that the key question is how to help someone who does not want to feel needy. One option is to start by learning stuff about their situation and what their options might look like. Studies show that LGBT+ people who leave non-affirming religious communities may experience an increase in self-esteem yet may suffer from the loss of meaningful relationships to a point where the benefit to their wellbeing from the increased self-esteem is of little use to them. Other research shows that people who consider leaving a religious community but hesitate over an extended period are at very high risk of developing depressive symptoms. Moreover, at least in Finland, LGBT+ NGOs are vilified by conservative Christian groups, and the so-called anti-gender movement has exacerbated this situation. As a consequence, many LGBT+ people within religious communities have a very negative view of these NGOs, such as that they are politically fanatic and obsessed with persecuting religious people. Many recipients of anti-gender messages hardly ever meet with alternative messages that would challenge the hyperbole of the anti-gender movement. Many LGBT+ people with a religious background may think that what LGBT+ NGOs do is excellent but still suspect they are not welcome to participate. Alternatively, they may think they need to keep their religious background a

secret. For these reasons, Ingman argues that visible cooperative projects between NGOs and religious communities are important as they challenge these notions.

A critical issue to consider in such cooperative endeavours is recognising the different kinds of work, strain and responsibilities that individual stakeholders may have. For instance, sometimes religious professionals may at first glance seem reluctant, not very knowledgeable and not very willing to become more knowledgeable. In such instances, NGOs and activists may do most of the work, not least to ensure that the work is done correctly from a human rights perspective while allowing the religious groups to take most of the credit. This may seem unfair. However, the religious professionals (clergy and people who have positions of responsibility within their congregations or communities) will deal with the tension that the cooperation may induce within the religious community. The emotional cost and the demands on their ability to endure frustration involve their position within the community and the community members' suspicion of the NGOs. The cognitive dissonance that may emerge when a religious community begins inspecting its structures, and exclusionary practices can become too much for individual religious professionals to handle.

Finding common ground and shared interests should be explored without demanding full consensus on everything. Instead, one should find ways to feel comfortable enough cooperating. This involves ethical concerns and many considerations about phrasing and defining goals and shared values. For instance, some Christian groups advocate against homophobia but distance themselves from trans issues. From their experience, Ingman suggests that one may face differences instances that amount to deal breakers. On the other hand, it is paramount to recognise that refusing to cooperate with parties that do not fully share one's views also has consequences. It may leave some LGBT+ people that could have otherwise received help, without that help. Ingman suggests an open-dialogue approach where one makes their values clear but do not express themselves through ultimatums. That leaves room for finding novel ways forward. Ingman concludes by saying that working with conservative people is challenging. Trying to find common ground and talking about baby steps can feel like compromising at the expense of more significant goals. It can feel like one is supporting the status quo. Finding ways to address this discomfort is crucial for one's ability to do this kind of work sustainably.

Giulio Mignani (Italy)

Mignani is a presbyter in four small Italian parishes, and during their pastoral experience, they have found that it is possible to be helpful to parents and relatives of LGBT+ people. For these families, having their parish priest express support for same-sex couples has reassured them and made it easier to accept their children. After the publication of the document of the CDF that reiterated the prohibition of same-sex couples blessing, Mignani publicly manifested their dissent by not blessing the Palms. With their gesture, they wanted to express that if it is not allowed to bless Love, then it does not make sense to bless the Palms either. These experiences made Mignani reflect on the positive impact that even a simple parish priest can have on families and LGBT+ people by voicing openness and welcome towards same-sex couples. Although the Roman Catholic Church in recent documents has expressed the need and importance of welcoming homosexual people, these are not welcomed in their fullness.

Mignani argues that the Church still has considerable influence in the Italian cultural sphere and people's way of thinking. For example, on the LGBT+ rights front, slowdowns are partly due to the Church's opposition. In addition to this, there are widespread prejudices against LGBT+ people, which the Church contributes to reinforcing. For example, through the language of official documents that define same-sex couples as affected by a moral disorder and homosexuality as a sin. Mignani would like the Church to take responsibility in helping shape people's way of thinking and change its positions to no longer be an obstacle to LGBT+ rights. Mignani concludes by saying that it is essential that more and more members of the Church listen to the stories of LGBT+ people, their families, and their friends. The Church needs to listen to the suffering that it is causing due to its stances. Mignani believes that through empathy, love can prevail.

Rosario Rosati (Italy)

Rosati is a parish priest in Trapani, Sicily, in a neighbourhood of about ten thousand inhabitants with very different social backgrounds and rampant poverty. The parish has various projects dedicated to hospitality and charity, and in recent years Rosati has participated in meetings of religious and lay LGBT+ organisations. Rosati recounts that up to a certain point, there were no LGBT+ people among the beneficiaries of the projects implemented by the parish. After this realisation, the parish workers started to work on their

unconscious bias towards LGBT+ people. Alongside this, Rosati says that they also had to confront the prejudices that LGBT+ people have towards the Roman Catholic Church. As a consequence, they organised the first prayer vigil against homophobia, which has now been celebrated for four years. Rosati stresses that they met difficulties in overcoming the embarrassment of using words such as homosexual, gay, lesbian, homophobia and transphobia when preaching. Thanks to this effort, some LGBT+ people approached the parish seeking active listening. As a result of various welcoming experiences, the need for training among pastoral workers arose, and so meetings were organised inviting experts on LGBT+ issues. Rosati explains that many activities would be helpful, such as putting the issue of pastoral care with LGBT+ people on the agenda of vicarial and diocesan meetings; or participating in the Synod to share these welcoming paths with a broader ecclesial context.

Antonio Zito (Italy)

Zito is a presbyter, and since 2017 they have been the Director of the Catholic Religion Teaching Office and Head of the LGBTQ+ Pastoral in Palermo. Their interest in and approach to LGBT+ issues stemmed from their personal experience as a priest when befriended a young trans sex worker living near the parish. Zito argues that in the Catholic Church, words of mercy and love are often spoken, but official documents do not reflect these. Moreover, in their view, it is common for the Church to practice one-sided listening, thus making genuine dialogue impossible. Zito argues that in order for the LGBT+ issue to filter through the hierarchies of the Church, a great deal of emphasis must be placed on training. Moreover, it is indispensable to create opportunities for people with different and even opposing visions to meet and dialogue. Zito tries to give their contribution to pushing for positive social change. They do so, for example, through their role of responsibility for the teaching of religion in schools. They organise and participate in vigils against homotransphobia. The bishop has sometimes sent his prayers, but overall, a discourse of inclusion lacks at the Church level, and LGBT+ people are integrated but not included. Zito hopes that more events will be organised in the cities where conversations can take place on LGBT+ topics involving people with different and opposing views.

Franco Barbero, Dea Santonico (Italy)

Barbero has been a parish priest for seven years and is currently an animator of a comunità cristiana di base. They were the Italian initiator of the pastoral search for faith and

homosexuality in 1964. Santonico has been a volunteer in a comunità cristiana di base of San Paolo in Rome since 1973; they are also volunteering for *A.G.E.D.O.* and the *Rete 3 Volte Genitori*. They argue that for LGBT+ believers, religion often plays a significant role in their experience. Parents of Catholic LGBT+ people want their children to be happy and to be able to express their love for another person also through their sexuality. Acceptance by the Roman Catholic Church is also necessary as long as it is without caveats. They argue that the challenge is to make the Church a place that fully welcomes people. They argue that a step forward would be for ministers of faith and pastoral workers to become able to pronounce the words homosexual, gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender openly. They suggest that language is necessary to recognise the identity of people. Active listening, training groups, and inclusive pastoral animators are not enough. An authentic change will only be possible thanks to communities of people and theologians who pursue inclusive and revolutionary visions without looking for permissions in ecclesial institutions.

NGO “A.G.E.D.O. Trentino” (Italy) - Mario Caproni

President and founding member of *A.G.E.D.O. Trentino*, Caproni recounts that through their personal experience as a Catholic and parent of a homosexual person, he went through a conflict of conscience. They explain that while the Catholic Church extolls the beauty of heterosexual unions, it does not dignify those with a different sexual orientation. Caproni recounts that for them, listening to others’ stories and meeting parents of LGBT+ children was very useful: thanks to them, prejudices, fears, and pain were swept away. Caproni argues that the Catholic Church is incapable of even mentioning the word homosexuality and unable of listening and welcome LGBT+ people and their parents, except perhaps on a few occasions. Consequently, LGBT+ people often feel like strangers in their own country. According to Caproni, one of the Catholic Church’s mistakes has been to deal with homo-affectivity as an almost exclusively moral issue. In contrast, sexual orientation is a matter of one’s characteristics, not behaviour. Caproni concludes that it is essential that grassroots Catholic movements keep forming from communities of believers and LGBT+ people, and that these engage in dialogue with religious leaders.

NGO “A.G.E.D.O. Ragusa” (Italy) - Anna Battaglia

Battaglia is president of *A.G.E.D.O. Ragusa*. After their son's coming out, they realised that their religiousness was their greatest difficulty. Most ministers of faith in Ragusa closed their

doors to Battaglia; ignorance and discomfort prevailed when speaking of homosexuality. This irreparable fracture between the inner religious experience and the practice of the Gospels' message drove Battaglia to seek out inclusive religious communities. The only place in Ragusa where it was possible to talk about homosexuality was in the comunità cristiana di base, where they found comfort and support from priests and other believers. Thanks to the networking activity carried out over the years, Battaglia and other activists managed to obtain a space where they could meet and a chapel where they could celebrate prayer vigils for the victims of homotransphobia. Despite some small openings, the Church's exponents in Ragusa remains bound to a traditional idea of homosexuality.

NGO "A.GE.D.O. Torino" (Italy) - Francesca Marceca

Founder and former president of *A.GE.D.O. Palermo*, Marceca, is today a volunteer for *A.GE.D.O. Torino*. Marceca recounts that when *A.GE.D.O. Palermo* was founded, meetings were hosted on a church premises. Afterwards, from 2007 *A.GE.D.O. Palermo* started participating in the vigils against homotransphobia organised by *Ali d'Aquila*. Now *A.GE.D.O. Palermo* is among the organising associations of the local events for the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. Overall, *A.GE.D.O. Palermo's* experience with the parish has always been positive. The local parish priest invited them to speak at the end of a mass to announce the organisation's aims, opening times, and services offered. Marceca says that the message of openness sent by the parish was meaningful for LGBT+ believers and their families. Marceca concludes by underlining that *A.GE.D.O.* is a secular organisation. This notwithstanding, it seeks a constructive dialogue with religious groups to improve the life quality of LGBT+ people and their families.

Conclusions by the President of "A.GE.D.O. Nazionale" Fiorenzo Gimelli

Gimelli argues that *A.GE.D.O.*, as a non-confessional organisation, must be very careful when approaching religious topics not to hurt the organisation's members' sensibility, such as atheists or religious people. Moreover, it is important to clarify that the project intentionally steered away from polemics against religious hierarchies, blaming religious people, or pointing out contradictions. Likewise, the project did not intend to teach the priests their job. For some time now, *A.GE.D.O.* has noticed that many grassroots religious organisations are in turmoil, and pastoral care for LGBT+ people and their families are slowly spreading.

Moreover, many members of *A.GE.D.O.* with a religious background that are tremendously active in fighting for civil rights often feel frustrated because their religious communities are often little or not inclusive. Gimelli stresses that in addition to this, for the past 20 years, neo-catholic fundamentalist groups have attacked LGBT+ movements accusing them of propagating an imaginary gender theory. This has widened the fracture between LGBT+ groups and people with a religious background. This project aims to aid *A.GE.D.O.* to understand how to better approach religious people by overcoming the gap that has widened over the last decades. Furthermore, *UTC2* goal is to develop skills to better understand the language and dynamics of religious worlds and convey the organisation's messages in a more comprehensible way to specific groups. This project represents *A.GE.D.O.*'s first organic approach to these topics.

Conclusions

Every webinar gave us deep insight into the many intersections of sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious belonging and the multifaceted relationships between grassroots organisations and religious institutions. Overall, we were met with curiosity and appreciation by all participants due to the exceptionality of a project planned by a non-confessional organisation. Speakers and volunteers contributed significantly with generosity, bringing a mix of personal experience, advocacy expertise, and academic or theological knowledge into this project. *A.G.E.D.O.* did not censor nor exert control over participants' freedom of expression. As a result, we gathered a wide range of information that will be put into practice by *A.G.E.D.O.*'s volunteers in their everyday activities and is being shared with other NGOs to enhance their awareness and improve the inclusiveness of their actions.

Part III
Policy brief

Introduction

After elaborating on the project's learning outcomes, we drafted guidelines that lay, or religious LGBT+ organisations can adopt. These can be adapted to each organisation's needs, depending on their characteristics and resources.

Guidelines for LGBT+ NGOs

Get informed

- When welcoming LGBT+ people with a religious background, get informed on the characteristics of the specific religious current and/or denomination to which the person belongs;
- When relating to Muslims, avoid being driven by prejudices such as considering Islam as a strongly intolerant religion towards LGBT+ minorities. Be aware that approaches within Islam very much depends on the countries, where usually discriminations are products of the social context and not religion per se; for example, contemporary Islamic reform currents are progressive and inclusive;
- When relating to Jewish people, consider that their positions towards LGBT+ topics may vary depending on Jewish cultures, traditions, and religious orientations. Consider some common tendencies among Italian Jews towards LGBT+ themes. These are denial, dismissal of LGBT+ topics as a marginal problem. Moreover, due to a strong level of social cohesion and control within Italian Jewish communities, the “don’t ask, don’t tell” behaviour is amplified.

Acknowledge potential internal struggles

- Consider that helping LGBT+ people with a religious background can be challenging, especially when activists see religion as an enemy. It is essential to stay focused on what helps LGBT+ individuals who have been born into religious families while excreting negativity towards religion because it is ultimately unhelpful.

Acknowledge the struggle of religious people

- When welcoming LGBT+ people with a religious background and their families, it is essential to acknowledge that very often, they struggle to make their religious belief coexists with non-conforming sexual identities;
- Acknowledge that people with a religious background may experience different or even stronger emotions (such as fear, confusion, shame and isolation) when confronted with LGBT+ topics;
- Acknowledge that religious parents may be urged by their religious communities to choose between maintaining good relations with their religious communities and accepting their LGBT+ children;
- When welcoming LGBT+ people and their families, take into account religious leaders’ role in making these groups feel threatened, stigmatised and rejected;
- Be aware that people who leave non-affirming religious communities may suffer from the loss of meaningful relationships and may be at higher risk of developing depressive symptoms;
- Pay attention not to discriminate unconsciously against LGBT+ people because of their religion; this would exacerbate the already hurtful experience of being discriminated against by religious communities;

- When dealing with refugees or asylum seekers, consider that they may have a particularly complicated relationship with religion, depending on their life stories and how arguments are used in their countries of origin to restrict and even promote aggression towards LGBT+ people.

Networking and advocacy

- Work to create and maintain networks with religious groups or organisations that are specialised in welcoming LGBT+ people, stay up-to-date on developments within religions, and new strategies put into place by these groups or organisations;
- Consider engaging with asylum seekers and refugees communities to develop a deeper awareness of the experiences that LGBT+ people has within these groups;
- Support religious professionals who are willing to change their religious institutions. Be aware that this kind of cooperation may exert a high emotional toll on them since they will be the ones dealing with tension within the religious community;
- When collaborating with religious leaders, explore common ground and shared interests without demanding complete consensus on everything. There may be occasions where differences between stances can amount to deal breakers. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognise that refusing to cooperate with parties that do not fully share the organisation's views may leave some LGBT+ people without that help. One way forward is to adopt an open-dialogue approach where the organisation makes their values clear but do not express itself through ultimatums;
- Consider providing training to ministers of faith who push for openness towards LGBT+ people within their religious institutions. Training can be on empathic listening to welcome LGBT+ people and on adopting an inclusive language;
- Consider getting involved with those religious denominations that have not undertaken any awareness path on gender identity and sexual orientation. Sharing LGBT+ people and their families' stories can create openness;
- Consider cooperating with religious communities to challenge negative views that LGBT+ people with a religious background may have of non-confessional LGBT+ NGOs. Due to anti-gender movements, LGBT+ organisations are seen as politically fanatic and obsessed with persecuting religious people, driving them to conclude that they are not welcome;
- Make religious leaders aware of the negative impact of hateful or discriminatory communications on LGBT+ communities (such as suicidal thoughts in some instances). This will make clergy accountable and should persuade them to change their approach. Similarly, make ministers of faith reflect on the positive impact that manifesting positions of openness and welcoming of LGBT+ people can have on families and people.

Awareness, education, and training

- Train pastoral workers on adopting an inclusive language, suggesting that language is necessary to recognise people's identity;

- Cooperate with pastoral workers to elaborate educational processes, such as courses that touch upon anthropology, pastoral care, and theology. The final scope is to help spread inclusive pastoral approaches and debunk false beliefs. A lack of education among pastoral workers and widespread ignorance on homosexuality and transgender topics are the main hindrances to welcoming LGBT+ people.
- Work to destructure prejudices and stereotypes towards LGBT+ people; this can be done by organising moments where LGBT+ people and their families can meet and dialogue with religious people and ministers of faith. Meeting LGBT+ people in person and getting to know their stories firsthand can help people overcome the anonymity of the LGBT+ population and perceive them as individuals.

Referral

- Refer LGBT+ people with a religious background to inclusive religious groups or organisations; these can play a significant role in the well being of these people.

Guidelines for religious LGBT+ NGOs

Networking and advocacy

- Build local networks with inclusive ministers of faith, and share with them inclusive pastoral praxis based on principles of welcome, value, respect, integrity, and honesty;
- Network with other organisations with goals similar to yours and involve them in collective mobilisations. These can kickstart dialogues with local religious institutions. Movements and organisations can push religious leaders to check the adequacy of their doctrine to present-day society, and where appropriate, revise it to become more suitable to transmit their teachings;
- Lobby to establish responsible persons for LGBT+ pastoral work at a local level, these should have regular meetings with grassroots organisations;
- Support ministers of faith or other pastoral workers in signature campaigns and protests against their religious institutions; help them organise their activities without waiting for acceptance from the religious hierarchies.

Welcome and support

- Plan spiritual retreats where inclusive ministers of faith can warmly welcome and provide support to LGBT+ people and their parents that cannot find support in their local communities;
- When possible, set up empathic listening and emotional support services for LGBT+ people and their families. These can help families' healing. Volunteers should be trained on the main problematic aspects of the religious doctrine towards LGBT+ identities. They can offer spiritual accompaniment and share their personal experience;
- Organise prayers against homobitranphobia and ask local clergy to get involved.

Education and training

- Spread positive stories and experiences of religious LGBT+ people and their families. This will contribute to creating a positive image of these groups;
- Spread stories of the religious communities that have welcomed LGBT+ people;
- Organise seminars on how religious institutions can become more inclusive, draft texts and guidelines enumerating possible actions that can be put in place by ministers of faith;
- Through theologians' work, spread progressive theological interpretations of the sacred texts among believers.

Conclusions

Although this work is still partial and would require further deepening into the intersections of sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious belonging, we hope that the variety of the guidelines will encourage their adoption by as many organisations as possible.

Appendices

Appendix I



Project 'UTC2: United towards the change 2' CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF PORTRAIT/AUDIO-VIDEO RECORDINGS, TEXTS, PERSONAL DATA

*This form, completed in its entirety, must be sent
at the e-mail address: xxxxxxx@gmail.com*

The undersigned _____ bom
in _____ on _____
Address: _____
Town: _____ Postcode: _____
Country: _____
Phone: _____

in relation to his/her/their involvement as a speaker in the online seminars relating to the Project: "UTC2: United towards the change 2", carried out by A.GE.D.O. Nazionale OdV, and funded by the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit of the Council of Europe, which will take place on: 21/10/2021, 11/11/2021, 18/11/2021, 25/11/2021, 9 / 12/2021

DECLARES

- To be informed that the event to which he/she/they will participate will be made public by A.GE.D.O. Nazionale OdV, the organiser of the project, in accordance with the EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)
- To be informed that the event will be recorded and disseminated through institutional channels and social media channels of the organiser and its partners in accordance with the EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)
- To be informed that, by signing this declaration, he/she/they authorise/s the use of audio-video recordings, of the material used during the speech (slides or other), of any transcription of the speech, and that he/she/they authorise/s the diffusion of these materials through the media, social media channels, etc. in accordance with the EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)

Signature for authorisation

Date (dd/mm/yy)

AGEDO Nazionale -ODV 2° livello

Associazione di genitori, parenti e amici di persone LGBT+
Legal address: Via Bernardino Lanino,3 – 10152- Torino CF 97783340017

Administrative address - via Bezzacca 4 – 20135 Milano (MI)
Phone. +39-02-54122211 – www.agedonazionale.org – info@agedonazionale.org
President: Fiorenzo Gimelli – f.gimelli@agedonazionale.org ; Mob. 331-6779748

Appendix II



Project 'UTC2: United towards the change 2' PARTICIPATION FORM

*This form, completed in its entirety, must be sent
at the e-mail address: xxxxxxxx@gmail.com*

**Registration for the online seminars "UTC2: United Towards the Change 2"
that will take place on 21/10/21 - 11/11/21 - 18/11/21 - 25/11/21 - 09/12/21**

Please be informed that the following details will be made public in promotional and informative material of the project

SPEAKER'S DETAILS:

Name and surname: _____

Role and/or qualification: _____

E-mail (not mandatory): _____

Short resume of the speaker (about 150 words):

Signature for authorisation

Date (dd/mm/yy)

AGEDO Nazionale -ODV 2° livello

Associazione di genitori, parenti e amici di persone LGBT+
Legal address: Via Bernardino Lanino,3 – 10152- Torino CF 97783340017

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President: Fiorenzo Gimelli – f.gimelli@agedonazionale.org ; Mob. 331-6779748



**Project 'UTC2: United towards the change 2'
PARTICIPATION FORM FOR SPEAKERS**

Please be informed that the following details will be made public in promotional and informative material of the project

DETAILS OF THE ORGANISATION (if applicable):

Complete name of the Organisation/Group: _____

Legal address: _____

City: _____ Postcode: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Brief description of the organisation/group (about 150 words):

Signature for authorisation

Date (dd/mm/yy)

AGEDO Nazionale -ODV 2° livello

Associazione di genitori, parenti e amici di persone LGBT+
Legal address: Via Bernardino Lanino,3 – 10152- Torino CF 97783340017

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President: Fiorenzo Gimelli – f.gimelli@agedonazionale.org ; Mob. 331-6779748

Appendix III





Webinar gratuiti

Sviluppare buone pratiche per aiutare le persone LGBT+ e le loro famiglie provenienti da contesti religiosi.






21-10-21 *Il confronto con la Chiesa cattolica*
 11-11-21 *Le posizioni di dialogo nella Chiesa cattolica*
 18-11-21 *Cosa avviene nelle altre confessioni cristiane*
 25-11-21 *Voci di dialogo nell'ebraismo e nell'islam*
 09-12-21 *Un cambiamento possibile*

Posti limitati - Iscriviti su:
www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

Con la collaborazione di








Free Webinars

Developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families of different religions.

Religion can play a considerable role in how people approach orientations and gender identities, the webinars of UTC2 are born out of this awareness. This is an opportunity to better understand the intersections between religion, orientation, and gender identity. The webinars are aimed at organisations and people that want to learn to be more inclusive.

21-10-21 *Conversations with the Catholic Church*
 11-11-21 *Spaces of dialogue in the Catholic Church*
 18-11-21 *The perspectives within other Christian denominations*
 25-11-21 *Voices of dialogue within Judaism and Islam*
 09-12-21 *A change is possible*



Limited seats - register at:
www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

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Developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families of different religions.



Free Webinars
 Limited seats - register at:
www.agedonazionale.org/utc2





**UNITED
TOWARDS THE
CHANGE 2**



Free Webinars

Developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families of different religions.

21-10-21 Conversations with the Catholic Church

11-11-21 Spaces of dialogue in the Catholic Church

18-11-21 The perspectives within other Christian denominations

25-11-21 Voices of dialogue within Judaism and Islam

09-12-21 A change is possible

Limited seats - register at:

www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

With the collaboration of



Appendix IV

UTC2 Program (Rome time zone)



| Thur 21 Oct 17.30 | Thur 11 Nov 17.30 | Thur 18 Nov 17.30 | Thur 25 Nov 17.30 | Thur 9 Dec 17.30 |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Conversations with the Catholic Church | Spaces of dialogue in the Catholic Church | The perspectives within other Christian denominations | Voices of dialogue within Judaism and Islam | A change is possible |
| Decades of struggles for LGBT+ rights A.G.E.D.O. - <i>Fiorenzo Gimelli, president</i> | Roman Catholic Church's stances on LGBT+ affectivity - <i>Francesco Lepore, journalist and chief-editor of Gay News</i> | European perspectives within Christian LGBT+ movements The European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Persons (ENP) - <i>Marisol Ortiz, board member</i> - <i>Joseanne Peregijn, board member</i> | The Italian Islamic community's stances on sexual minorities Il Grande Colibrì - <i>Rosanna Sirignano, PhD in Islamic Studies</i> | From the anti-gender mobilisation to neo-Catholic movements: the assault on LGBT+ rights in Italy and Europe - <i>Massimo Prearo, researcher, University of Verona</i> |
| Why three times parents: accounts from parents' of LGBT+ people Network 3 Volte Genitori - <i>Roberto Stevanato, founding member of TuttiFigliDiDio</i> - <i>Adriana Bustreo, founding member of TuttiFigliDiDio</i> - <i>Rosaria Quaranta, pastoral worker</i> - <i>Alessandro Pizzoleo, teacher</i> | LGBT+ people and Christian love - <i>Aristide Fumagalli, professor of Moral Theology at the Theological Faculty of the Italia Settentrionale University and presbyter</i> | The reception of LGBT+ people in B.M.W. Churches Faith and Homosexuality Commission of the Baptist, Methodist, Waldensian Churches - <i>Daniela Di Carlo, theologian and Waldensian pastor</i> | "Allah Loves Equality": being LGBT+ in the Islamic world - <i>Michele Benini, volunteer</i> | How can secular LGBT+ NGOs and activists help LGBT+ people with a religious background? - <i>Peik Ingman, scholar of Comparative Religion</i> |
| The experience of the "Lucky parents" and how we met Pope Francis La Tenda di Gionata - <i>Innocenzo Pontillo, president</i> - <i>Mara Grassi, vice-president</i> | The importance of training pastoral workers towards LGBT+ inclusivity - <i>Giuseppe Piva, Jesuit priest</i> | The reception of LGBT+ people in Evangelical Churches: key points and strategies - <i>Elizabeth Green, theologian and Baptist pastor</i> | Islamic inclusive international movement: 20 years of progressive values within Islam - <i>Ludovic Zahed, imam and rector of the CALEM Institute</i> | From rural realities to large cities: the experience of three parish priests in welcoming family members of LGBT+ people - <i>Giulio Mignani, teacher and presbyter</i> - <i>Rosario Rosati, presbyter</i> - <i>Antonio Zito, presbyter</i> |
| Q & A | Q & A | Q & A | Q & A | Q & A |
| Empathic listening and emotional support for LGBT+ Catholics and their parents - <i>Andrea Diacono, volunteer</i> - <i>Beatrice Sarti, volunteer</i> | A pastoral journey for LGBT+ people - <i>Gian Luca Carrega, lecturer at the Theological Faculty of Turin and presbyter</i> | Homesickness: fighting the isolation of LGBT+ people within their own Christian communities National Association of Ecumenical Groups for Christian LGBTQ People (EKHO) - <i>Robin Paulonen, president</i> | Faith, migration, and LGBTI+ refugees: a question of intersections Achatì - <i>Rodrigo Araneda Villasante, president and psychologist</i> | From AGAPE to the present, what challenges await parents and LGBT+ people in our churches today - <i>Franco Barbero, theologian and writer</i> - <i>Dea Santonico, volunteer in the movement Basic Christian Communities in Italy</i> |
| Drachma's dialogue with the Catholic Church Drachma and Drachma Parents - <i>Christopher Vella, coordinator</i> - <i>Louisa Grech, coordinator</i> | How are all welcome: pastoral approaches with LGBT+ Catholics in England & Wales LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council - <i>Martin Pendergast, social worker and former member of the Carmelite communities</i> | Dialogue, pastoral and sexual ethics: paths towards LGBTI inclusivity in the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany Okumensische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche (HuK) - <i>Michael Brinkschröder, theologian and sociologist</i> | Judaism, homoaffectivity, gender - <i>Haim Fabrizio Cipriani, rabbi and musician</i> | Faith and secularism, a possible combination - <i>Mario Caproni, A.G.E.D.O. Trentino president</i> Interacting with local churches: a difficult dialogue - <i>Anna Battaglia</i> Hope among Catholic parents in Palermo - <i>Francesca Marceca, A.G.E.D.O. volunteer</i> |
| Cammini di speranza: paths of hope - <i>Andrea Rubera</i> | "Violence does not belong to God", an analysis of the Holy Scriptures' views of gender identity and sexual orientation - <i>Antonio De Caro, writer and teacher</i> | Experiences with LGBT+ in the Protestant Churches in Austria Homosexuelle und Glaube (HuG) - <i>Andreas Raschke, president and presbyter</i> - <i>Heinz Schubert, volunteer</i> - <i>Claudia Marten Schröder, scientist and activist</i> | LGBT+ people in Italian Jewish communities Magen David Keshet - <i>Raffaele Sabbadini, vice-president</i> | Conclusions A.G.E.D.O. - <i>Fiorenzo Gimelli, president</i> |
| The Polish case My, Rodzice - <i>Agnieszka Penczek, volunteer</i> - <i>Aleksandra Jakubczyk, volunteer</i> | Q & A | Realistic hopes Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ - <i>Agostino De Caro, archbishop</i> | Q & A | Q & A |
| Q & A | | Q & A | | |

Appendix V

24/12/21, 20:26

UTC2 sondaggio - UTC2 survey

UTC2 sondaggio - UTC2 survey

//// IT ////

Grazie da parte di A.GE.D.O. Nazionale per aver seguito "UTC2 - Sviluppare buone pratiche per aiutare le persone LGBT+ e le loro famiglie, provenienti da contesti religiosi".
Vi chiediamo di dedicare qualche minuto del vostro tempo per rispondere ad alcune brevi domande. La vostra opinione è importante, e ci aiuterà a migliorare le iniziative future.

//// EN ////

A.GE.D.O. Nazionale thanks you for following "UTC2 - Developing good practices to help LGBT + people and their families from religious backgrounds".
We kindly ask you if you could spend a few minutes of your time to answer a few brief questions. Your feedback is important, it will help us improve future events.

***Required**

1. Email *

2. Nome e cognome - Name and surname *

3. Come valuteresti la tua soddisfazione relativamente ai contenuti dei webinar? -
How would you rate your satisfaction with the webinar contents? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Non soddisfatto - Not satisfied Molto soddisfatto - Very satisfied

4. Sei soddisfatto/a della varietà di punti di vista che sono stati presentati durante i webinar? - Are you satisfied with the variety of point of views discussed during the webinars? *

Mark only one oval.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Non soddisfatto - Not satisfied | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molto soddisfatto - Very satisfied |

5. Secondo te, quale è la durata ottimale di un webinar? - In your opinion, what is the optimal length of a webinar? *

Mark only one oval.

- 1 h
- 2 h
- 3 h
- 4 h

6. Cosa e perchè ti ha soddisfatto/a del progetto UTC2? - What and why you liked the most of the UTC2 project? *

7. Cosa avresti voluto fosse diverso? - What would you have preferred to be different? *

24/12/21, 20:26

UTC2 sondaggio - UTC2 survey

Grazie - Thank
you

//// IT ////

Grazie per aver partecipato al sondaggio! Terremo in considerazione le tue opinioni.

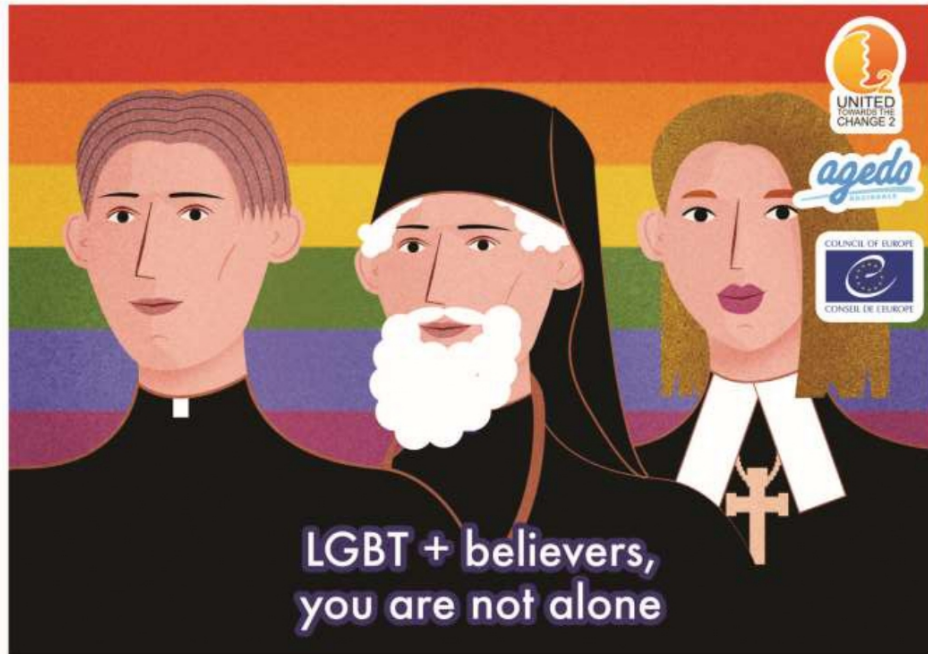
//// EN ////

Thank you for taking part in the survey! We will take your feedback into great consideration.

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Google Forms

Appendix VI



www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

Share this postcard or share the contacts with someone you think may need support.



Four horizontal lines for an address.

With the support of



The project "United towards the change 2: developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families of different religions" was carried out in 2022 with funding from the Council of Europe.







www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

Manda questa cartolina o i contatti a chiunque tu pensi ne abbia bisogno.



Con la collaborazione di



Il progetto "United towards the change 2" sviluppa buone pratiche per aiutare le persone LGBTI e le loro famiglie, provenienti da contesti religiosi e etno-culturali grazie al finanziamento del Consiglio d'Europa.



Appendix VII

