



 **UNITED
TOWARDS
THE CHANGE 2**

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



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FROM UTC I...

"United Towards the Change: Volunteers Against Homophobia" is a project born from the intention of creating a network of voluntary associations committed to supporting LGBT+ people and their families. The project's main theme is the acquisition of new tools to fight homophobia and transphobia in Europe through the exchange of good practices and strategies, with awareness of the importance of the role of young people in social change.

...TO UTC 2



UTC 2: "Developing good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families from religious backgrounds" stems from the awareness that religion plays a considerable role in the way many people interpret and experience sexual, relational, emotional orientations and gender identities. Gender. The project unfolded through 5 seminars aimed at associations and people wishing to develop an inclusive approach; UTC2 offered the numerous participants and nearly 50 speakers a training opportunity to understand the intersections between religion, orientation, and gender identity; an opportunity to develop skills and share good practices, as well as strengthen and broaden their support networks.

U.T.C.2

The project UTC2 aims to encourage attention and care to the bonds between religious communities, associations and LGBT+ people, aims to collaborate in the construction of a solidarity fraternity, where LGBT+ people and their families can find safe spaces for sharing and support. In a world that continues to change rapidly, religious institutions are often deaf to the cry of pain of LGBT+ believers and their families; the associative networks, in turn, cannot evade the specific needs of the believing users who turn to them. The friction between homophobic and transphobic visions of important religious realities and the reality of the life of LGBT+ people and their families sparks a severe conflict. In a European reality that moves towards the full recognition of the human and social rights of LGBT+ people, the rejection from religious communities becomes more and more evident and more and more

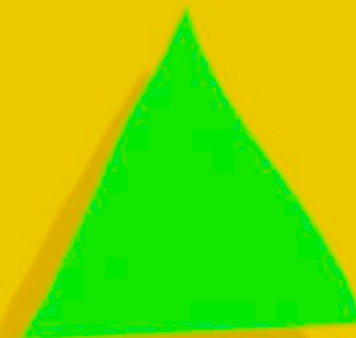
incomprehensible. It is desirable to find new balances between religious precepts and the recognition of LGBT+ people as a potential wealth for communities of faith. It is not a question of fostering a charitable welcome but of promoting knowledge and openness in a context of mutual enrichment and understanding. LGBT+ believing people, precisely because of their experiences and travails, are carriers of precious religious and human elements. Overcoming prejudices and stereotypes can only occur through a gradual process of lifelong education, which through processes of evolution can bring renewal and transformation. Associations, whether of the religious origin or not, thus become one of the components of the development of civil life in each territory in which they operate since they can contextualize the various possible support interventions.

SHARE AND LEARN

The internal working methodology at UTC2 has favoured shared planning; this has allowed the free expression of all and has favoured the establishment of a collaborative climate. The strong value of the interventions derived from the flowing transition from theoretical to experiential sharing.

The participants debated the different realities present in Europe, exchanging good practices, different working methods and strategies, to prevent and combat violence, exclusion and discrimination based on the alleged incompatibility between and "non-compliant" gender identities and sexual orientations and faith. We hope that working in UTC2 has been a source of growth for the participants and we believe it constitutes a fundamental element for imagining a Europe that ensures respect, equal rights and opportunities for LGBT+ people.

WHY



“RELIGION CAN PLAY A CONSIDERABLE ROLE IN THE WAY FAMILIES FACE THE COMING OUT OF THEIR CHILDREN“

“MANY LGBT+ PEOPLE AND THEIR BELIEVING FAMILIES OFTEN FEEL EXCLUDED FROM BOTH ASSOCIATIVE REALITIES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES“

“NO ONE SHOULD FEEL FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN BEING HIMSELF AND BE ABLE TO BE FULLY PART OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH TO WHICH HE FEELS TO BELONG“

The UTC2 project is born from the primary purpose of the A.GE.D.O. to promote respect for LGBT+ people in all areas of social life. The association carries out its mission by promoting the integration of LGBT+ people within local communities, which is why it is present at the local level in almost all Italian regions. It is precisely from the different fundamental realities that the unease of LGBT+ believers and their families has emerged strongly, who often experience difficulties in their relationship with the ecclesiastical institution and the communities of faith they belong to.

In this period in which the isolation created by the pandemic has made the desire to be part of groups feel more vital, the suffering of excluded people is even more intense.

A.GE.DO, although non-denominational, has devised a specific training course to improve the ability to listen and interact

both with LGBT+ believers and with religious institutions, not only in Italy but at the European level, having in mind the recommendations and directives of the European Union on non-discrimination.

The COE (Council of Europe) and, in particular, the internal unit SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity), already sensitive to the issue, approved the project, financing and supporting it. Due to the pandemic, the activities took place exclusively online with almost 50 speakers from 10 different countries, from different religious denominations or associations. Their competence, passion, and a keen interest in the listeners give us hope for the future.

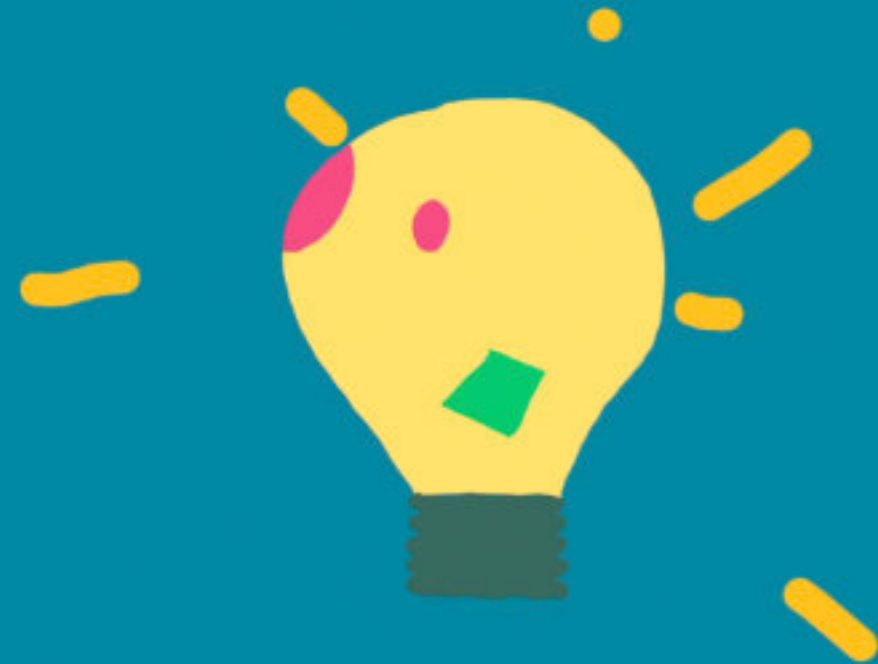


“WORKING IN UTC2 HAS ALLOWED US TO IMAGINE A EUROPE WHERE LGBT+ BELIEVING PEOPLE FEEL INCLUDED IN THE SOCIAL DEBATE“

“LOOKING AT THE UTC2 WEBINARS WE HAVE FOUND THE STRENGTH TO COME OUT IN OUR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH“

“THERE ARE COUNTRIES IN EUROPE WHERE LGBT+ BELIEVERS LIVE IN TOTAL ISOLATION“

THE WEBINARS



"CULTURES, FAITHS, DIFFERENT LANGUAGES ARE NOT A BARRIER BUT A STIMULUS. AFTER THIS SEMINAR WE ALL FEEL MORE RICH INSIDE."

The texts shown in this brochure are reworked excerpts and do not represent the entirety of the opinions of the speakers. The full videos are available online on the official website www.agedonazionale.org/utc2

"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TESTIMONIALS. YOUR SKILLS COMBINED WITH YOUR LIKING HAVE MOVED ME. LET'S CONTINUE IN THE FIGHT WITH JOY!"

21-10-21 CONVERSATION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A.G.E.D.O. Decades of struggles for LGBT+ rights
A.G.E.D.O.

Fiorenzo Gimelli, president

"During our long practice, we have realized how much religion plays a role in people's experience of sexual orientation and gender identity, especially when LGBT+ people live in an observant family context... unfortunately, many religions often have a hostile approach towards LGBT+ people. From our experience, we also know that ecclesiastical hierarchies play a role and impact the politics of countries and on the possibility that governments approve bills in support of rights."

Why three times parents: accounts from parents' of LGBT+ people

Rete 3VolteGenitori

Roberto Stevanato, founding member of TuttiFigliDiDio & Adriana Bustreo, founding member of TuttiFigliDiDio

"The Network is made up of believing Christian parents with LGBT+ children, who have embarked on a journey in the Church and Society, to build a new awareness of homosexuality and gender identity, with the life of faith. The organization's name is translated in parents three times; we chose this name because we become parents the first time when we bring our children into the world, the second time, when we welcome them, as they are, in their richness, beauty and diversity, and the third time when we come out to the Church and Society. We thus become active witnesses and accomplices in the battle of our children, to share challenges, passions, joys and disappointments with them. We welcome and accompany other LGBT+ sons and daughters and other parents searching for meaning to tear them away from darkness, fear, loneliness, and marginalization to ban prejudice, denial, derision, and violence. In 2015, when the first group of Christian parents with LGBT+ children was born, it was realized that in the Italian reality, there were few spaces for sharing and hospitality for these believing people, and there was no reception experience for their family members. At the IV National Forum of LGBT+ Christians in Albano Laziale in 2016, daughters and sons, their parents and family members, and pastors came together for the first time. Many parents confessed that they found themselves marginalized, with no one to deal with and from whom to

obtain a word of comfort. These three worlds shared their experiences, experienced the comfort of listening and welcoming, and created a collaborative relationship. Groups and people scattered throughout the national territory, from Piedmont to Sicily, created an informal network that held numerous meetings, face to face and by videoconference, which gained knowledge and awareness of reality, widespread throughout the national territory, of Catholic parents willing to get involved, to accompany their children in the harrowing battle in the Church and Society. The conditions were all there to give birth to this Network, with the awareness that only by walking together, in mutual respect and accompanying each step, can we overcome loneliness and anguish and keep faith and hope in the Risen Lord alive.

The net:

- develops horizontally as a service tool for parents looking for help and hospitality, even if single or organized in groups;
- organizes experiential meetings locally, based on non-judgmental listening and mutual help, mainly addressed to Christian parents, but also to LGBT+ people and pastoral workers who want to discuss with parents, to deepen the issues related to the reconciliation between faith, homosexuality and gender identity;
- undertakes to support those who are alone and to protect the weakest, promoting their integration into existing groups, promoting the formation of new ones, creating meeting opportunities also through personal interviews;
- proposes initiatives at local and national level;
- identifies spaces for interacting with other Catholic realities and bearing their testimony as adult Christians with the experience of life lived with their LGBT+ children;
- interfaces with other organizations working on the same issue to build, where possible, joint initiatives at a local or national level;
- in the spirit of point 250 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, it accompanies on an ecclesial journey those who, within the Church, have not yet gained awareness of the great reality, rich in content and faith, constituted by the LGBT+ world. Moreover, this is to achieve the full acceptance and appreciation of LGBT+ people in the Church and Society through the cleaning of two millennia of doctrinal encrustations."

Adriana Bustreo, founding member of TuttiFigliDiDio (Venice) and member of the 3VolteGenitori network

The 3VolteGenitori network was born with the active

contribution of the group Tutti Figli di Dio from Mestre - Venice, born two and a half years ago and made up of Catholic parents with LGBT+ children. Thanks to the extraordinary experience in the Sestri Levante retreat "Camminando S'apre Cammino", organized by the Tenda di Gionata, we decided to found the group. During that time, we rediscovered that feeling of being welcome from the Catholic world, a feeling that had been denied us, effectively relegating us to invisibility, when our children came out. The close contact and the dialogue without reticence allowed us to finally feel free to open up, to tell each other, without feeling judged, without having to hide. All this has been of great help and enrichment and has allowed all people to share fears, sufferings and hopes, to shed liberating tears. The priests present listened to the testimonies, prayed with us and comforted us with an evangelical message that speaks of a God who welcomes and loves all his children, just as they are because we are all children of God. This experience gave us the strength and determination to transform our suffering and loneliness into opportunities to act in favour of the LGBT+ Catholic world.

Aware of being a militant Church, as adult Christians, we want to dialogue with the Bishops, the priests, and the communities to open up to knowledge and see our children with new eyes for their full acceptance and visibility diversity is a resource and wealth. Our children are full of love, faith and planning and are precious gifts for the Church and the community."

Rosaria Quaranta, pastoral worker & Alessandro Pizzoleo, teacher

"I am the father of three children, including two trans twins. Due to long waiting times in public health, we had to go abroad, and our family took the financial burden of all medical procedures. Our non-binary trans boy taught us the importance of using correct pronouns. My family and I felt alone and marginalized by the Catholic Community, which does not value the wealth of LGBT+ people. Moving away from the Catholic Church, we have come into contact with the "basic Christian communities" in the last year, where we finally felt welcomed."

The experience of the "Lucky parents" and how we met Pope Francis

La Tenda di Gionata

Innocenzo Pontillo, president & Mara Grassi, vice-president.

"We wanted to participate in this "United for Change (UTC2)" meeting to contribute to the good practices that can be undertaken in our Christian communities to support LGBT people and their families.

We have already listened to the many difficulties in these areas in the previous interventions, but now let us try to see what a small Christian association, La Tenda di Gionata, can do to make a difference. I want to thank those who seek, every day, to be a bridge in the Catholic Church for these people who, our Christian communities, find it difficult to welcome.

La Tenda di Gionata was born in 2018 upon the idea of a priest, Don Davide Esposito, a country priest from a remote village in central Italy. He had a great dream: that the Christian communities will "enlarge their tent" to collect all, truly becoming sanctuaries of welcome and support for LGBT people, their families, and all people affected by discrimination.

Inspired by Don David's vivid dream, the path of La Tent di Gionata was born, a journey that revolves around three cornerstones: the first is hospitality, with which we aim to create moments in which we aim to bring parents and their children together. LGBT with our Christian communities, so that by meeting and listening to each other, seeing each other's faces, we can go beyond categories and acronyms (LGBT, queer, etc.).

From a cultural and human point of view, we firmly focus on theological and pastoral formation, which is very important for combating discrimination against LGBT+ Christians and their parents, from a cultural and human point of view. Discrimination, unfortunately, is still present in our Christian communities and feeds on prejudices and ignorance on what it means to be a homosexual person or what it means to be a binary or non-binary trans person.

The third fundamental point for us is information, that is, to make known the stories, experiences and paths of homosexual believers and their parents, aware that even in Christian communities, "we fear what we do not know and we do not know what we fear".

We organize training and formation through:

- spiritual retreats in which pastoral workers walk with parents and their LGBT children, who ordinarily do not find a home in ours;

- moments of mutual listening where you can continue a

spiritual journey and where you can listen to an inclusive Word together;

Web meetings, in which to deal with issues that usually are taboo in our Christian communities, allow people who experience these difficulties to confront each other and give them a name.

We have tried to decline these three words also through the Progetto Giornata (www.gionata.org), the internet portal which, for fourteen years now, has been trying to tell the journey that homosexuals make in the churches and Christian communities that decide to open it. Their doors.

We have also accompanied the birth of several projects, including:

- the TRANSizioni project with which we try to collect materials and, above all, to network the experience of trans believers;

- the journey of I TRUST YOU, the listening service for LGBT Christians and their parents, which we are carrying out together with the volunteers of the LGBT Christian Youth Project;

- the creation of various free publications that we distribute to those who request them, in which we address the issues of faith and homosexuality in all its various forms.

We want to make this journey together with all those who want to be our travel companions."

Mara Grassi, vice president

"It was thanks to our publication, "Fortunate parents, living the homosexuality of children as believers" that we were able to meet Pope Francis on 16-09-2020. We had written to Pope Francis asking to attend an audience and bring the publication as a gift. To our surprise, we received an invitation to meet the Pope in person at the end of the general audience.

Our president asked me to represent the association as vice president. I think it is essential that a parent tells the Pope, the whole Church and, with the media echo that followed, practically the whole world, that we Catholic parents of LGBT+ children are part of the Church, and we want our children to be part of it too. We want no one to have to choose between his own identity and belonging to the Christian community in which he grew up, and we have understood that we must not limit ourselves to dreaming of a different Church, but we must be ready to invest, sacrifice, involve so that the Church can pass from the paradigm of sin to that of the journey, from the paradigm of the law to that of the person. It is not an institution that refuses to talk or stands still, but that knows

how to heal wounds and warm hearts, and knows how to cry and caress instead of closing itself up in norms. An authoritative Church, not for doctrine, but for mercy, for which only man is not negotiable. Moreover, this is what the Pope told me: "They are all children of God, just as they are" and embracing me, he embraced the mothers of Mestre who had yelled at him shortly before: "Pope Francis, remember us, we are parents of LGBT children, and our children need your embrace!".

He stopped at those cries and gave his blessing and as Dea and Stefano wrote, parents from Rome who were present: "After years of bewilderment, pain and shame we were there shouting, in a square full of people, without hiding anymore, proud of our sons and daughters".

As Pope Francis approached, Corrado, a parent from Parma, told him: "We are lucky, Father, God has given us a great gift to give us these children!". I specified that the gift was precisely this new gaze that made us see in our children the wisdom and goodness of God, and I added that it was also necessary for the Church to change gaze. Pope Francis replied: "It does it, it does it!" and he repeated, clearly articulating the words: "Every man and every woman are children of God, and God loves them, and the Church must love every man and every woman".

Last 10-10-2021, the Synod of the Universal Church began and in May that of the Italian Church and we parents will do everything possible to make our voices heard, in the parishes, in the dioceses, in the synodal groups, because of the words that the Pope told me that they become a reality."

Empathic listening and emotional support for LGBT+ Catholics and their parents

Andrea Diacono, volunteer & Beatrice Sarti, volunteer.

"With the "Mi Fido di Te" project, we have created a service of empathic listening and emotional support for LGBT+ people and their parents. People rejected by their parishes can receive support from other Catholic members. We give hope to people to live their sexuality and gender identity, and faith with serenity. Our service is unique and accessible to all; more and more people contact us. The people who seek help from Mi Fido di Te are religious people who struggle to make their beliefs coexist with the identity and orientation of their children. The religious faith of these families is powerful, as is their desire not to abandon either their faith or their children."

Drachma's dialogue with the Catholic Church

Drachma e Drachma Parents

Christopher Vella, coordinator & Louisa Grech, coordinator.

"DRACHMA It is the only group of believing parents of LGBT+ people in Malta, and we meet in the religious spaces; we are now guests from the Jesuit order. Religious orders played an essential role in supporting us, and. When we met Cardinal Mario Grech (then bishop), he heard our stories and suffering, and at the end of the meeting, he apologized for how the church excluded LGBT+ people and Their families members and said the church loves us. One of the highlights was when the archbishop asked a priest friend to represent him on a popular TV show to confirm that the church supports the LGBT+ community; we felt very proud. Many people looking for help and advice contacted the priest; sadly, he received many hate emails also."

Paths of hope

Cammini Di Speranza

Andrea Rubera, president

"Cammini di Speranza is an ecumenical organization of Christian people, although the majority are Catholic.

LGBT+ Christians in Italy started building a network in the early 1980s. World Pride 2000 in Rome was a critical moment to become aware of the issues related to religiosity and sexual orientation. Since then, many new organizations of LGBT+ believers have sprung up around Italy; we organized a seminar "Le vie dell'amore" in 2015 and had many representatives of the Catholic Church."

The Polish Case

My, Rodzice

Agnieszka Penczek, volontaria & Aleksandra Jakubczyk, volunteer.

"The main problem with the Polish Catholic Church is a profound lack of knowledge among the ecclesiastical hierarchies where stereotypes, homophobia, actions to exclude LGBT+ people from the life and activities of parishes resist. LGBT+ people are seen as a scandal. moral for the Christian community, LGBT+ people and their families cannot participate in many religious practices. The Polish Catholic Church supports Polish propaganda against LGBT+ people and conversion therapies for gay and lesbian people through counselling points in parishes."

11-11-21 SPACES OF DIALOGUE WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Roman Catholic Church's stances on LGBT+ affectivity

Francesco Lepore, journalist and chief-editor of Gay News

"I remember my experience and suffering when I realized the gap between my vow of celibacy and my reality as a homosexual, which led me to leave the presbyteral ministry in 2006. In 2013 I received a phone call from Pope Francis, who, replying to a letter I had sent to him, emphasized my courage and honesty in having left the ministry. I am the editor-in-chief of Gay news, and I work for L'Inkiesta, where I write on topics related to the Vatican. The convictions of LGBT+ people in the Middle Ages included torture against so-called sodomites, and the sentence has always been clear-cut. The 1975 document "Persona Humana" of the former Holy Office qualifies homosexual acts as intrinsically disordered. In a letter signed by the then prefect Joseph Ratzinger, it was emphasized that the publication 'Human person' encouraged too positive interpretations of homosexual orientation... instead Pope Francis made many clear statements in which he says that God welcomes everyone, LGBT+ people included.

Although this approach gives rise to a more welcoming approach in many dioceses, there are still many unresolved issues; for example, there is a long road to fully recognizing legal rights. I believe that Pope Francis has inaugurated a new and liberal path for the Catholic Church."

LGBT+ people and Christian love

-Aristide Fumagalli, professor of Moral Theology at the Theological Faculty of the Italia Settentrionale University and presbyter.

"The doctrinal approach is not the only one since the Catholic Church is not constituted only by the magisterium. The doctrine affirms that the doctrinal conditions are lacking for this love to be accepted in its sexual expression. On the other hand, every person, regardless of his orientation, sexuality or gender identity, should be respected, and the church and its ministers should condemn any act of hatred or discrimination; on this, the Catholic doctrine is clear.

Catholic doctrine on human sexuality is not static but in a dialogical relationship with his faithful; the visibility of people and organizations fighting for a Christian way of being LGBT+ is increasing. These movements are the ones that are pushing the church to verify the adequacy of its doctrine to the present and possibly to modify it to make it more suitable for transmitting evangelical teachings."

The importance of training pastoral workers towards LGBT+ inclusivity

Giuseppe Piva, Jesuit priest.

"I am a Jesuit father. With other pastoral workers, we have created an informal network to support LGBT+ people, and this year we have worked on a training course for pastoral workers that touches anthropology, pastoral care and theology to develop skills in welcoming and support. We have realized that the lack of education of pastoral workers is one of the main problems; for example, there is widespread ignorance of the scientific community's positions on homosexuality and transgenderism. From a doctrinal point of view, there is resistance within the Catholic Church; we think we need a theological study on these aspects."

A pastoral journey for LGBT+ people

Gian Luca Carrega, lecturer at the Theological Faculty of Turin and presbyter

"The Archbishop of Turin in 2013 officially established a group with the mandate to provide continuity in the pastoral care of LGBT+ people. The diocese of Turin was the first in Italy to start this type of path in 2006 when the archbishop wanted to establish a direct dialogue with local LGBT+ Catholics. In recent years I have seen many changes in civil society and the Church, with civil unions and some debates that have opened up within the Church. I think the Church has developed a certain degree of sensitivity, and my role is to offer empathetic listening to LGBT+ people who come to me; I also have an educational role towards pastoral workers. We want to integrate these people into the life of Catholic communities, but sometimes, there is a discrepancy between what the representatives of the church hierarchy think and what they say publicly. We need to fight harder for greater visibility of LGBT+ people within the Church."



How are all welcome: pastoral approaches with LGBT+ Catholics in England & Wales

LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council

Martin Pendergast, social worker and former member of the Carmelite communities

"I want to share how, in England and Wales, particularly in the Archdiocese of Westminster in London, LGBT+ ministry has developed. An excellent gift for Catholics, often ignored or even sometimes denied, is the principle of development of the doctrine and its acceptance by all the people of God. Many of the Pastoral Guidelines of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales of 1979 "Introduction to the pastoral care of homosexual persons "remain relevant." Human love is supportive, enriching and healing; it produces harmony, unity and fulfilment. The very revelation of true love to another person is a purifying and healthy experience. A life without love is incomplete and disappointing. In this context, the pastor must encourage those who seek his guidance. The love between people is extraordinary, but its origins and value are found in God. God is the ultimate source of genuine love, and when people experience love on a human level, they absorb something of divine love. In turn, true love between people, originating from God, will lead back to those peoples. Loving people to God. Homosexuals have the same need for the Sacraments as heterosexuals. They also have the same right to receive the Sacraments". We introduced a monthly mass in May 1999 to "welcome LGBT+ Catholics, parents, families and friends". Soon the masses became a bi-monthly appointment. The number of followers grew. Despite being labelled "gay Masses" by the secular and religious media and our detractors, the community of believers was never exclusive to a specific sexual orientation, but an inclusive expression of what a welcoming Catholic community could be like. Being proudly lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, and proudly Catholic was at the heart of this faith community. Following a persistent campaign by fundamentalist Catholics who sometimes even interrupted the celebration of mass in the Assumption church, Cardinal Vincent Nichols asked us if we could move from there to the nearby Jesuit church on Farm Street, which we did in March 2013. Here LGBT+ Catholics are included in all the welcoming, vibrant and resourceful parish with clear relational structures.

Meanwhile, Pastoral Reflection Days offer the opportunity for LGBT+ focused discussions and liturgies. One of our members was recently appointed parish representative. Having met Pope Francis in 2019, Covid-19 permitting, we hope to embark on our 4th LGBT+ pilgrimage to Rome

for the start of Lent 2022. Over the years, we have welcomed people who have returned to their faith practice, who came from other ecclesial communities, who were seeking baptism for themselves or their children. The pastor of Farm Street Jesuit Church and the president of the parish council participate in our LGBT+ pastoral council as observers, and our president participates in the parish council. A poster promoting masses, produced in collaboration with Quest, the national Catholic LGBT+ organization, was sent by the diocese to all parishes and is displayed in several churches, including the cathedral. We have recently been involved in the first discussions with the Diocesan Department of Education regarding LGBT+ policies for Catholic schools. The Farm Street model is ready for export. There is no doubt that other parts of the Catholic world are interested in what we are doing in Westminster. In describing our disposition to the representatives of the diocese of Warsaw in 2015, their response was: "You have opened up new perspectives for us." Yes, it can be a model for other dioceses, but this will fail if this pastoral provision is imposed from above. The strength of our Westminster experience is that it has grown from basic pastoral practice. There are now 7 or 8 Catholic dioceses in England with different models of LGBT+ awareness and pastoral development, other dioceses have started their Synodal Paths, and some have also explicitly recognized their specific pastoral needs.

Ideally, no specialized ministry meeting special needs should be required anywhere. All parishes should welcome everyone regardless of gender, race, sexuality, ability or age, but reality often prevails over ideals. People need stops on their different journeys, and LGBT+ people and their families are no exception. A challenge for all of us is how this could fit into the current Synodal Process for 2021-2023.

To conclude: there is a rich treasure trove of the local Church's commitment to the pastoral care of LGBT+ Catholics, parents and families in England and Wales. I hope that our pastoral practice is truly the ground to start a renewed theology of sexuality and gender. "

Violence does not belong to God", an analysis of the Holy Scriptures' views of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Antonio De Caro, writer and teacher

"The Biblical passages in the Old Testament defined as condemning homosexual relationships are Gn 1,26-27 and 2,18-25: the creation of man and woman; Gen 19: 1--29: Sodom and Gomorrah; Lev 18:22 and 20:13: the code of purity. If we apply a historical-critical approach to the scriptures, we must place the sacred text when it was written. The Pontifical Biblical Commission in 2019 in the biblical anthropology publication "What is a man" states that the passage from Sodom and Gomorrah has nothing to do with homosexual relations but rather has to do with sexual violence and rape against foreigners, seen as a violation of the rules of hospitality. If we welcome the prohibition of homosexual sexuality, we should also welcome all other prohibitions, such as that of eating shellfish, or wearing garments of mixed fabrics, we should sell or daughters like slaves or stone adulterers. Moving on to the New Testament, the passages that refer to homosexuality are by Paul because the subject is not mentioned in the Gospels. Paul condemns homosexuality not based on sacred texts but referring to currents of thought of the time coming from Judaism, Platonism and Stoicism; these behaviours are condemned because they are seen as violations and exploitation of the human being (slave). It is worth remembering that the Bible condemns homosexuality when it is seen as a humiliation. In Mt 19:12, Christ speaks of eunuchs, saying that some of them were born like this, some whom other men made eunuchs and some who choose to be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. In Acts 8,26-39, Philip, moved by the spirit, is sent to meet a powerful and wealthy eunuch whom he says he too is welcome to the kingdom of God. Christ, on many occasions, defends those who are oppressed and mistreated."

18-11-21 THE PERSPECTIVES WITHIN OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

European perspectives within Christian LGBT+ movements

The European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Persons (ENP)

Marisol Ortiz, board member

"LGBT people are a gift to families, society and the church. I am the straight mother of an LGBT daughter. At first, I had severe difficulties understanding and supporting it, and the first gift I received was humility. I started having deep conversations with LGBT people, and the second gift emerged, that of learning to listen to others without judging. I met great people who helped me in my process, angels on my way telling me not to be afraid, then I started accompanying other parents in understanding their children's coming out, so I received a third gift. I understood that I could show them that their child was a beloved son/daughter of God, and therefore humbly, I was an instrument of God's love. I am an active member of ENP, the European network of parents of LGBT+ people, and I am also a member of the CLC Ignatian Christian Community. In 2014, in one of our assemblies, I first heard about sexual ministry, and I felt a strong relief that diversity and religion could walk together. My community is creating inclusive communities in several Spanish cities, and we want everyone to feel welcomed. It is a beautiful gift to build a more inclusive church."

Joseanne Peregin, board member.

"I am a founding member of Drachma Parents Support Group, Malta, of ENP: the European Network of Parents of LGBTI + People and the GNRC: Global Network of Rainbow Catholics, as well as an active member of the World Christian Life Community (CLC) a lay witness of Ignatian spirituality. Since 2008 I have been committed to establishing and maintaining dialogue with the Archbishops and Bishops of Malta. This morning Drachma's parents had a meeting with Archbishop Scicluna on the blessings of homosexual couples. Parents need to push themselves out of their comfort zones to become more visible in defence of LGBT children. I have seen many parents struggle with shame, a powerful emotion common to many parents whether they are Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox or Christian. Many parents feel that faith is the most significant obstacle in their path of acceptance, and they become paralyzed, sink into depression or distance themselves and remain invisible. I remember saying to myself: I will not let that

happen to me! Parent associations can offer spaces for sharing where to feel encouraged in the process of 'coming out as parents, were to feel strong against hostilities, to become prophetic voices in the world and the church."

The reception of LGBT+ people in B.M.W. Churches

Faith and Homosexuality Commission of the Baptist, Methodist, Waldensian Churches

Daniela Di Carlo, theologian and Waldensian pastor

"The Faith, Gender and Sexuality Commission has the mandate of the Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian churches (BMV) to re-launch the debate on the different sexual orientations and gender identities, to train the churches towards an inclusive language, to accompany the churches in welcoming and in the community integration of LGBT+ people, helping them in the path of awareness and acceptance, developing a queer spirituality and theology. The few biblical passages inherent in homosexuality must be interpreted not literally but by placing them in their historical-cultural context and the light of the Gospels. Churches need to open up to accept diversity without discrimination or prejudice. Every love relationship must be valued as an expression of God's love. We do not look for precise ethical indications in the Scriptures and answers to questions posed today in different terms than in the past. Few classical texts use the image of homosexuality, such as those of prostitution and adultery, as metaphors of the distance from God. Oppressions. Scripture is a powerful source of hope and help in people's lives, in whatever situation they find themselves in. There can be no obstacles to the consecration to the pastoral ministry of a person who publicly declares himself homosexual or to the consecration of a homosexual union. The origin of blessings is in God; the churches have no power over them; they are called to service."

"L'accoglienza delle persone LGBT+ nelle Chiese evangeliche: nodi e strategie."

Elizabeth Green, theologian and Baptist pastor

"Resistance against LGBT+ people may also exist in the churches of historical Protestantism in Italy, and whether or not they welcome depends a lot on the type of church one comes across. As someone who shares the position of the BMV commission, I think that such churches have three characteristics that make it difficult for any openness

to LGBT+ people. The first is that they consider every sexual identity, in addition to heterosexual, a choice; in other words, the sexes are two, male and female, and sexuality is one, and it is heterosexual. The possibility of being born in another way is not considered. A second characteristic is an adherence to a static vision of the sacred scriptures considered by thread and signs inspired directly by God. This means that the ancient texts are not read taking into account their historical context but are taken as instructions for today. Moreover, since some of these texts condemn sexual relations between people of the same, homosexuality is considered a sin and reparative therapies are encouraged. The third characteristic is the subordination of women and the exclusion of women from leadership positions in the community. If you identify two of these three characteristics together, you are likely in a homophobic context. However, you may find yourself dealing with churches that, having not followed any path of awareness and acceptance, are not homophobic and have no fixed ideas about sexual identity and gender. They think they do not have LGBT+ people around them and do not concern them. You could imagine these communities simply as A.G.E.D.O. when they had not yet understood that their child was homosexual or trans. If, as parents, you think about the path you have taken or that you have helped other parents take, I think you can understand this type of ecclesial reality. These churches lacked, let us put it this way, the opportunity. Perhaps you think that the community should give you something: welcome, affection, accompaniment, and you do not imagine that it is you, with your presence and any requests you may have, who can give something to the community. As a parent association, you are in a privileged position to plead your cause with the churches. At least they will no longer have the excuse to say that they have never been asked about this.

One of the best ways is to tell your story as a father or mother, as a son or daughter, because churches live from stories, both those encoded in the gospels and the testimonies of life. There are particular contexts in which that story can be proposed and received, and one is the organization of ecumenical vigils against homophobia. In the churches where I celebrated the vigils, the initiative has always started from the LGBT+ Christian community, which moved to the associations. However, it would be helpful and essential that the initiative also started from the associations because the vigil provides an opportunity for meeting that can be the first step in the church's conversion. Vigils speak a language that the churches can understand and from which they can hardly escape; it is the language of the Word, prayer, and song. As I said, the

broader world of evangelical churches is very varied, and in this scenario, a reality like A.G.E.D.O. can play an important role, but no one should get hurt. At a certain point in the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that if they do not find a welcome in a specific city, and are not heard, that they go away shaking the dust off their feet to go elsewhere, so when you find homophobic churches, I invite you to do the same, because there are communities that are open, welcoming, ready to listen and you are a blessing for them."

Homesickness: fighting the isolation of LGBT+ people within their own Christian communities

National Association of Ecumenical Groups for Christian LGBTQ People (EKHO)

Robin Paulonen, president.

"Ekho is a non-profit, ecumenical Christian organization working for LGBT+ rights since the late 1970s. The debate in Sweden is focusing on queer theology and the role of LGBT+ people in churches because it is often forgotten in the Swedish media that they are people. Even though we have come a long way with rights, the struggle for faith is still present among us as we try to change this aspect. We run membership programs, forming support groups for friends and family and allies of LGBT+ people; we are creating a hotline for LGBTQ people called the "rainbow SOS hotline" where people can find support from people who have had similar experiences within their church or religious community ("biblical violence" as it is called today); we are responsible for the "rainbow key" which is a model for churches to participate in the process of becoming inclusive churches; we have created spaces for Christians and children's camps, and evenings of faith for our older friends, we are trying to create a queer Christian community in Sweden, and we also produce books, art, podcasts. One book is about making churches more inclusive, and we are now working on another one on the same topic but more from a trans and queer perspective. We have an ongoing dialogue with Christian leaders. Being an LGBT Christian in Sweden is a time of celebration and pain; the conversation in the media is one-sided, where we are portrayed as sad and broken. In this period, we see many Christian churches embracing transphobia, homophobia and xenophobia by closing their doors instead of opening them. We are trying to write our own stories and rewrite the narratives of how LGBT+ people are seen in Sweden, and we are trying to be more present in the media through podcasts by contacting the newspapers. We are also not allowed to be part of the debate in the Christian church, but we are trying. We

are a small organization, and we are experiencing discrimination because the political landscape is changing rapidly and making us uncomfortable. There is no dialogue between the Christian and secular spheres in Sweden, and we are in the middle."

Dialogue, pastoral and sexual ethics: paths towards LGBTI inclusivity in the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany

Ökumenische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche (HuK)

Michael Brinkschröder, theologian and sociologist

"I have been a Catholic theologian involved in the Christian LGBT+ movement since 1991 when I started a gay theology study group. When gay pastors were suspended and fired from their church in 1977 (the Protestant church is divided into 20 mainly independent regional bodies, some of which are more radical), HuK initiated signature collections and protests. The synods were the entry points of our organization to try to start a dialogue. In the 1990s, the main question was whether homosexuality was a sin or an expression of love. The liberal approach took over; the biblical texts were interpreted starting from the fundamental concepts of the Gospels: to love, to give people the freedom and responsibility of choices. Another big theme was the blessing of same-sex relationships; at the beginning, the church's approach was that same-sex marriage should take place outside the church, in secret, but in 2002 it was already possible to carry out the blessing ceremonies publicly and in church and finally since 2013 the church has recognized full equality between heterosexual and same-sex couples. At first, the congregation opposed the doctrine of the faith, but this attracted protest responses from ministers and theology professors, rainbow flags were hung in churches, and some priests celebrated blessings anyway, risking sanctions. The Organization of the Catholic Family, the central committee of lay Catholics, supported us. In 2013, the national umbrella organization of the Protestant church released a document claiming that the family is a nucleus where there is mutual love and care. Again with HUK, we work to help parishes become more open, and for this reason, we meet twice a year with pastoral workers to work hand in hand on emerging problems."

Experiences with LGBT+ in the Protestant Churches in Austria

Homosexuelle und Glaube (HuG)

Andreas Raschke, president and presbyter & Heinz Schubert, volunteer & Claudia Marlen Schröder, scientist and activist.

"In Austria, the Lutheran Church is based on the reform begun by Martin Luther in 1517; in Austria, its members were about 3 per cent of the population; in the past, they were the majority of the population. There is a presbyteral-synodal constitution like every Protestant Church, so there are democratic elections; the highest governing body is the Synod. There are several traditions within the Church: one, called "devout", follows the tradition and is conservative (widespread in the countryside), the other is liberal, relatively secular (widespread in large cities). In 1980, female priests were ordained who now have the same status as men. The discussion about homosexuality began in the mid-1990s with the coming out of a gay pastor. The Reformed Church in Austria was created in 1781 by the emperor, who decided that religious freedom should be. It is based on the Swiss reform and has around 12,000 members divided into nine congregations throughout Austria. This Church is a member of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria, the Conference of European Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe. We have more autonomy than the Lutheran Church, and more decisions need to be confirmed locally; we have an open Eucharist for members of other churches, there is a strong call for resistance against injustice, inhumanity and threats to creation. We have a common path for accepting gays and lesbians with the Lutheran Church. When the Lutheran Church began discussing marriage for same-sex couples, the Reformed church did the same. In 1998 registered unions in Austria were not yet legal; the Church, through the Synod, decided in 1999 to bless non-civil unions (they did not distinguish between heterosexuals and homosexuals) in public service in the Church, even if there was no legal basis. Marriage for same-sex couples has been legally recognized in Austria since 2019. The 2019 Synod approved marriage for homosexual and heterosexual couples and the blessing for registered partnerships, a right that all congregations must grant. There is a group of ministers in every diocese in Austria to take care of LGBTIQ+ people, but they mainly focus on homosexuality even if they know something about transgender or non-binary people. Many pastors lack knowledge and training on trans people, and in general, there is hardly any theological guidance for pastors on how to welcome these people and understand their needs. There are individual congregations and very active pastors;

there is a lack of general coordination on the part of the Synod. Personal encounters with LGBT+ people and their families are crucial for change within the Church. There can be no success without affiliated heterosexuals."

Realistic hopes

Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ

Agostino De Caro, archbishop

"The Ecumenical Church of Christ is part of the independent Catholic movement; I have experienced double discrimination from the Roman Catholic Church that alienated me because of my homosexuality. One from the LGBTQ + community because I am a believer. Fortunately, I found this religious order in the USA, and I rediscovered my faith. Our religion is wholly inclusive: both women and men can become pastors. I work in a challenging cultural context (in Sicily). Our church is a healing space for LGBT+ people who often come to us deeply hurt by the social and religious institutions that have rejected them. Communities should perceive themselves as multifaceted, made up of many characteristics. Churches often talk about LGBT+ ministry, yet there is often no absolute acceptance, and these people are seen as sick. Last year we held a synod and discussed marriage for gay and lesbian couples. We see same-sex couples open to life, even if not necessarily at the birth of a new life. We support adoption for same-sex couples. We will celebrate Christmas soon and think that Joseph and Mary are great examples of adoptive parents. However, no one would argue that they are not a real family."



25-11-21 VOICES OF DIALOGUE WITHIN JUDAISM AND ISLAM

The Italian Islamic community's stances on sexual minorities

Il Grande Colibri

Rosanna Sirignano, PhD in Islamic Studies

"I am a mosque member in Rome, a spiritual guide. As a Muslim woman, I have experienced various levels of discrimination. Because of how they behave and dress, some people fall short of society's expectations of how they should look and behave.

Islam and other religions should respond to social changes; otherwise, they risk losing their status as sacred texts.

Islam is a holistic system; there is no separation between the religious sphere and the public sphere; everything is done in the name of God. In Islam, judgment belongs only to God, yet a judgment emerges from religious spaces and families, making it difficult for LGBT+ people to expose themselves and express themselves.

The question of Islam and LGBTQIA people is complex and often misunderstood because both on one side and the other often lack knowledge beyond hearsay. At the moment, I do not have the appropriate skills and knowledge of the numerous Islamic religious texts to dissect them thoroughly. Being Muslim means living the experience of faith and negotiating continuously with an established tradition that guides the believer step by step along the way. Actions according to Islamic jurisprudence are categorized in different ways; sexual behaviours outside the marriage sphere are not allowed in contemporary heterosexual terms. These prohibitions are part of an intricate web of indications on behaviour because Islam is an internal and external discipline. For most Muslims, these indications cannot be changed or questioned. However, this should not prevent the understanding and recognition of LGBTQIA people's experiences, being close to them in the sometimes common suffering and contrasting the unjust violence perpetrated against them. Above all, there would be a need to remember that some LGBTQIA people are part of the Islamic community. The Islamic religion teaches mercy and concern for others in distress, respect and empathy. It teaches us to take care of those around us, to live consciously in society. I learned all this not only by reading texts but from the experience of being alive in Islam.

It is essential to practice dialogue that aims at mutual understanding and constructing welcoming and inclusive

spaces for diversity. However, dialogue can only occur because listening is reciprocal and authentic, that the mind is open, and the heart is at peace.

I encourage everyone to build bridges with other religions, with religious minorities and sexual minorities who often share similar experiences of oppression and disadvantage. With the Il Grande Colibri, we create meeting spaces between people of different origins, belonging to different religious groups."

Allah Loves Equality": being LGBT+ in the Islamic world

Michele Benini, volunteer

"The "Grande Colibri" was born as a blog in 2011 by a small group of activists who realize that there is no place to bring together different cultures and realities of sexual minorities in Italy. Italy. On 23 January 2016, at the Pride in Milan, next to a flag with the star of David, a sign with the words "Allah loves equality" was photographed, carrying that sign was a Pakistani boy; Wajahat Abbas Kazmi. Sometime later, Wajahat and his photo become icons of the movement. It was only natural that the Allah Loves Equality campaign would end up intertwining and marrying the goals of "The Great Hummingbird". The legislation provides for the death penalty for homosexuals in twelve or thirteen countries, but only Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen apply the law; all of these nations have a majority of Muslim believers. According to ILGA, homosexual people are discriminated against by the laws of about seventy countries, regardless of the religion in those countries.

Favourable legislation does not guarantee the safety of LGBT+ people, but it is undoubtedly true that oppressive legislation allows anyone to become an executioner. Can you be a homosexual and a Muslim? In the sacred texts of various religions, we find references to relationships between people of the same sex as a practice to be avoided or condemned. This was considered to be true for the three major monotheistic religions. The best-known episode, so much so that it also gave rise to a term with which homosexuals are defined with contempt, is that of the people of Lot, according to which the inhabitants of Sodom turn to Abraham's nephew who is hosting strangers, sent of the Lord, saying, "Where are those men who came in to you tonight? Get them out of us, so that we can abuse them." (Jerusalem Bible, Genesis, 19, 4 -5, cit., P. 67). This episode interests us because it is the only one found in the Koran and seems to unite the three religions revealed

in the condemnation of homosexuality.

Nevertheless, Jewish scholars first and many Christian and Muslim interpreters emphasized that the city's inhabitants wanted to rape foreigners. It is, therefore, a non-consenting sexual relationship and a violation of the right to hospitality. The fact that they are persons of the same sex does not seem to be emphasized by the unknown authors of Genesis. It is worth noting how the alleged intolerance towards homosexual people in the scriptures is quantitatively limited, in many cases uncertain and any case, the result of the time in which the sacred texts were written. Furthermore, this is as true for the Islamic religion as for the Christian and Jewish ones. We are interested in refuting the idea that, within a religion that designs a world created by a higher entity, one may think that divinity is wrong. The homosexual believer does not approach the question as a scholar, but with a more straightforward and still interesting point of view from a theological point of view: "Allah made me homosexual, and Allah cannot be wrong, so I am not wrong". The reasoning is flawless and is also easily applied to the God of the Jews and that of Christians. Would God create some homosexual people in a world with no room for homosexuality? Would it be their fault to love someone? However, love is what divinity seems to want to teach us. In any case, a creator God can only love his creatures. This principle made Allah Loves Equality take its first steps: naturally, people armed with goodwill to make differences in the world coexist are destined to meet. In every corner of the planet, some Muslims feel they must refute the campaign's assumption that Allah would love everyone equally and that he would have no problem admitting same-sex relationships. Some do it because they know the scriptures and their traditionalist interpretations; others probably do it for calculation and convenience; some perhaps do it to avoid asking questions since the answers would be inconvenient. However, alongside them, the most ferocious in attacking the project are others who are intolerant, somehow unexpected: people belonging to atheist groups, fanatics of the religion of the godless; they try to give lessons by incessantly repeating the exact phrases, all more or less the same: "Go and say your message to Pakistan". Which is what the campaign, transformed into a project, is about to do."

Islamic inclusive international movement: 20 years of progressive values within Islam

Ludovic Zahed, imam and rector of the CALEM Institute

"We created the first European inclusive mosque in Paris in 2012 and started working with progressive Muslims in Europe, America, Africa, Indonesia. We started from a central point of view and built a community. There is enormous diversity among Muslims. After the attack on Charlie Hebdo, we founded the Calem institute in Marseille, trained for progressive imams, published manuals, and tried to understand how to convey the progressive representations of our tradition. The new Islamic reform currents promote gender equality and positively address issues of homosexuality and identity in opposition to Wahhabism, more commonly known as "Salafism", or to takfirism, more commonly known as "jihadism", which have sustained at least since the end of the last century stigma and sometimes radical dehumanization of gender or sexual minorities. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, a sociologist, stresses the need to distinguish between Shariah (the way God revealed to the Prophet in the Koran) and fiqh (human efforts to translate this spiritual path into legal provisions). This semantic distinction has social and political repercussions: it allows feminists and LGBT Muslims to participate in the debate against fascist degeneration within Islam. The fascist branch of Islam originates in the early days of the Arab-Muslim civilization, in the sect of the "takfiri", who massacred all Muslims who did not submit to dogmas. Some use the most violent apocryphal hadiths to justify a fascization of identities on both sides of the Mediterranean; they use minorities as "scapegoats".

Like every civilization, the so-called "Islam-Arab" undergoes waves of pan-Arabism: the temptation of fascism and biopower (Foucault). In Cairo in 1925, for the first time in over a thousand years, the collection of the famous Thousand and One Nights (multicultural heritage of pre-Islamic literature in Arabic) was published purged of all references related to corporeality, the sexuality of women or male homoeroticism. This puritanism did not exist in the Arab-Muslim public spheres (Tifashi 1981)... The "sodomites"? The verses about the people of Lot? The Koran deal with violent practices dedicated to a pagan goddess, nothing to do with consenting homosexuality. In Herodotus - an ancient historian (484-420 BC): the description of Mesopotamian ritual rapes is very similar to that given in the Qur'an. There was no talk of homosexuality (which has always existed) but criminal behaviour. There are no words about lesbians or effeminate men. Khalife,

after the Prophet, condemned "sodomites", who were not transgender or homosexual, but pagans who perpetuated the traditions of their patriarchal ancestors, mixing violent sexuality, enforced spirituality and idolatry. The first of those condemned for "sodomy" after the death of the Prophet would have been Fuja'a: one of the members of a tribe than in armed conflict against the centralized power of Medina, weakened by the disappearance of the Prophet of God, as well as by the internal struggles that never ceased. Among Muslims. This Fuja'a, the first of the "sodomites" of Islam, was a renegade, a political dissident with humiliating military practices for his enemies. One of the Khalifa's famous generals arrested him for his severity and willingness to slaughter entire populations."

Faith, migration, and LGBTI+ refugees: a question of intersections

Achati

Rodrigo Araneda Villasante, president and psychologist

"Freedom of religion offers protection not only to religious beliefs and manifestations but, as the HRCUN (United Nations Council for Human Rights) observes, also to the "right not to profess any religion or belief", "freedom of religion it is a right that also protects the freedom not to share religious beliefs or to be forced to live them. "LGBT+ people have the same right as anyone else not to be forced to live their lives following the religious beliefs of others. The fact that the rights of homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people are protected by freedom of religion, both in its positive and negative dimensions, does not alter the fact that religious beliefs contrary to LGBT+ people are also linked to freedom of religion. Awareness of how freedom of religion also protects LGBT+ people and pro-LGBT+ religious beliefs and dispels the myth that being LGBT+ or pro-LGBT+ means it looks like you are essentially against religion. If we admit that there are groups protected in their human rights or their freedom of religion, it becomes impossible to prevent others from excluding the rights of other groups; this would destroy the entire system of human rights. Many of the people we help in ACHATI have a complicated relationship with religion, all different depending on their life stories. Many users are asylum seekers due to their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Are religions and LGBT+ people compatible with each other? How can religious communities integrate gay, lesbian, trans, intersex people and vice versa: How can religious people fully accept the LGBT+ community? We believe it

is necessary to foster involvement between different communities and contexts, to form alliances and coalitions to build a society based on respect and appreciation for diversity. It is necessary to understand and on the right to non-imposition of beliefs. Our work aims to develop a world where no one is forced to choose between being and believing. More and more believers are promoting dialogue and looking for ways to reconcile religious practice, sexual orientation and gender identity. Thus, more initiatives are born that promote the well-being and inclusion of LGBT+ believers, fighting against hate speech linked to religious practice and promoting dialogue from a decolonizing, intersectional, feminist and queer perspective. In our projects, we aim to raise awareness, develop literacy, clarify concepts and dispel myths, highlight possible solutions on a personal and community level, promote equal rights and develop strategies to tackle sexism and homophobia and religious discrimination. We need to move from abstract interreligious dialogues, with little concrete results, to individual and joint positive actions in which we work on religious and spiritual practices themselves, relating them to the defence of human dignity for all."

Judaism, homoaffectivity, gender

Haim Fabrizio Cipriani, rabbi and musician

"Homosexuality has always been heavily condemned by the religious world, based on two verses from the Torah: Leviticus 18:22 "And with a male you will not lie as you lie with a woman, it is an abomination"; Leviticus 20:13 "And the man who will lie down with man the deposits of a woman, both have committed an impropriety; die they will die, their blood in them ". A literal understanding of that verse is complicated: what is a "woman's deposit"? A literal understanding would prohibit lying with a man face to face, which is considered the classic position of heterosexual intercourse; alternatively, it could be the prohibition of penetration, which would not exclude any other type of affectivity or sexual expression between men.

This reading is consistent with the fact that the Torah does not speak of female homosexuality; probably only the penetrative act between men was seen as problematic. Traditionally it has often been preferred to read the passage as an absolute prohibition. However, Leviticus 18 opens with a general prohibition on reproducing the Egyptian and Canaanite pagan customs: "You will not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you have lived, nor what is done in the land of Canaan where I am taking you, and

you will not follow their customs. " [Lev. 18: 3]. Since homosexual relations of a cultic type were present in these cultures, the prohibition may refer only to the ritual sphere as a typically pagan expression—the verse preceding that on homosexual intercourse [Lev. 18:21] prohibits the sacrifice of children to the Canaanite deity Moloch. Therefore, the context of the passage is oriented towards the ritual sphere, which is an important detail. American rabbi Jacob Milgrom, an eminent researcher in the biblical field, argues that the biblical ban reflects the concerns of a nascent nation, where procreation is a fundamental aspect; Milgrom also suggests that the ban could be linked to the incestuous heterosexual relationships mentioned by the text biblical in the immediately preceding section [Lv. 18: 6 - 21]. Homosexual relationships with a man outside the family would therefore be allowed. These would be illicit children through incest and adultery, children destined to die because they were sacrificed to the Canaanite deity Moloch, or no child through homosexual or bestial relationships.

The abomination ... in the passages cited, the term *toevà* is frequently used, often translated as "abomination", a morally overwhelming term. The word *Toevà* is used more than a hundred times in the Torah, almost always describing foreign religious practices. However, the term "abomination" used in the translations has a connotation of moral gravity absent in the original word, which expresses the idea of a taboo, an act extraneous to a given culture and hence my choice to translate *grim* as "inappropriateness". There is nothing abominable about eating with foreigners, but this practice is seen as inappropriate for the Egyptians, just as turning away from evil cannot be seen as something wrong but is inconceivable for the fool. In a Talmudic passage [TB Nedarim 51a], the expression *toevà* is read as a contraction of *toè attà va*, "You err in it". Some commentators believe that this is the wandering of heterosexual men who leave their wives for homosexual relationships. Based on this, there would be a reason to think that the ban applies only to heterosexual men who choose to have relationships with other men. According to this reading, the prohibition does not relate to a specific type of sexuality as such, but simply about the danger it could represent for family stability. Moreover, this reading contains in watermark an element that is, in my opinion, important. The finding that married men can be attracted to other men is an implicit recognition of a certain "fluidity" of sexual identity, which is viewed with suspicion because however uncomfortable and disturbing for some, it may be, it is a fact. In the narrative of Creation, we read: We make Adam according to our design, according to our likeness [...]

Elohim created Adam according to his design, according to Elohim's design he created it; male and female Elohim created them (Gen. 1: 26-27). One interpretation is that God created the first human being as androgynous. From the beginning of the Torah, the genre was something complex. We can also understand the verse "male and female he created them" as a merism, a figure of speech in which two contrasting sides express a whole. "The old man will dream of dreams, and the young man will have visions". Namely: old, young and everyone in between. "Greetings of Shalom to near and far", and of course, he also means those in between. Hence "male and female" and every possible combination of masculine and feminine elements. The Jewish legal tradition identifies no fewer than six distinct "genders" while also including designations that we would now call "intersex identities." To use the Hebrew terms: the androgyne, which has both male and female characteristics, the *tumtum*, whose biology is not clear, *aylonit*, which identifies as female at birth but develops masculine characteristics at puberty, and *saris*, which appears as male at birth but later takes on more typically female biological characteristics. The Jewish understanding of gender is not binary. We see gender diversity as a spectrum, a rainbow of possibilities, an image of a divine Transcendence that contains every nuance.

So when we talk about transgender people, traditional Jewish wisdom has envisioned such possibilities, particularly in mystical texts and Kabbalah was conceived with the soul of a male by divine intercession transformed into a female. To quote Rabbi Elliot Dorff: "I, for example, cannot believe that the God who created us all created ten per cent of us with sexual urges that cannot legally be expressed under any circumstances. This is simply astounding and, frankly, not Jewish. Jewish sources regard human beings as having conflicting impulses that can be controlled and directed by obedience to the wise laws of the Torah; seeing human beings as endowed with impulses that should be suppressed forever makes God a cruel director in this drama we call life. Our tradition can be better than that. Call God merciful and also good." [5]. In the ancient world, homosexuality was often seen as a form of promiscuity often practised by heterosexuals who used other men as substitutes for women, abusing a position of superiority. This type of relationship has little to do with what we today call homosexuality, that is, the will of two adults to share a common life by building a future together. The Jewish people were born as slaves and foreigners in Egypt to get to know abuse closely and avoid perpetuating it. I believe it is a religious duty to reparation for the pain and abuse suffered by LGBT+ people."

LGBT+ people in Italian Jewish communities

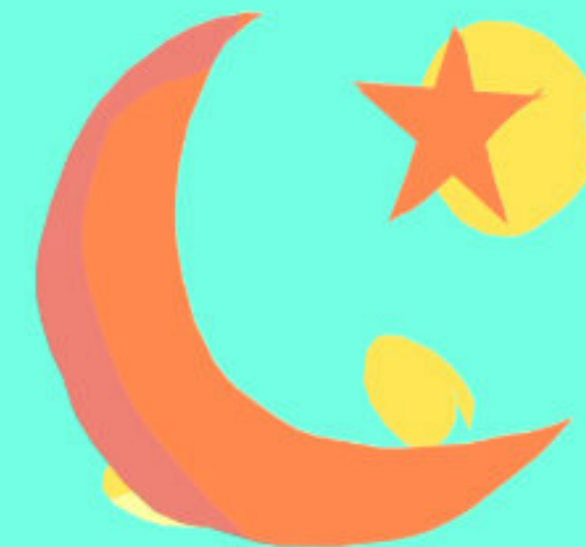
Magen David Keshet

Raffaele Sabbadini, vice-president

Magen David Keshet Italia is the first independent Italian LGBT+ Jewish organization, born in 2015, affiliated with the World Congress of LGBT Jews (Keshet Ga'avah). This worldwide network connects the most important Jewish realities in North and South America, Europe and Israel. We aim to promote within Jewish communities and beyond the full equality of LGBT+ people in line with the Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam*, that is, to repair the world, correcting injustices as far as humanly possible. To talk about the condition of LGBT+ Jewish people, it is necessary to understand on the one hand the evolution of Italian Judaism and on the other hand to cross it with that of LGBT+ people in Italy. Jews boast a millennial presence in Italy, with fluctuating persecutions by local authorities and frequent contamination with arrivals from abroad. For example, in Rome, we have been present since the time of the Romans, with frequent arrivals from countries such as Spain, after which they were expelled in 1492. Here we were, however, subjected to the whims of various Popes, who imposed on us harassment with confinement in the Ghetto until 1870. The same situation happened in the other cities, with arrivals from Spain and France and departures when situations became more difficult. After the approval of the fascist racial laws, emigration to the United States and Israel, while Jews arrived from Eastern European countries, where Nazi persecutions were stronger.

The Shoah then led to emigration after the Liberation, especially to Israel. At the end of the 1960s, over a million Jews were expelled from Arab-Persian countries, and some emigrated to Italy, bringing new life into the Jewish communities. On the other hand, with regard to Italian legislation, they have historically been aimed at denying the existence of LGBT+ people, as early as the Zanardelli Penal Code of 1889. Not even the Rocco Code introduced specific anti-homosexual laws in Italy because, according to fascism, Italians "were too virile to be homosexual," and homosexual people were in fact punished as political or common criminals with confinement which is a police rule that does not pass judicial scrutiny. Only in 2016 did LGBT+ people enter Italian legislation with the Civil Unions. Given this, the evolution of the situation of LGBT+ people in Jewish communities has strong similarities with the evolution of the situation of LGBT+ people in Italy, with some differences. One is probably in the level of cohesion and continuity of individuals and families within Jewish

communities, historically cohesive above all as a form of defence against persecution. This has certainly led to amplifying behaviours such as "don't ask, don't tell", typical of the Italian reality until a few years ago, and to make them continue over time. In the past decades, even at the official level, in the Jewish communities, the Italian trend towards the denial of the issue has been followed, despite the growing cases of coming out. LGBT+ people at the time of facing a coming out in a family and social context at least unprepared (although today on average more welcoming), they found families who expressed the most varied reactions and not only for problems related to religiosity. Therefore, many preferred to leave community life by moving, or they chose to remain on the sidelines by not attending the non-religious activities of the community or by attending them, withholding their own identity. The arrival of our organization was certainly a very important moment. We started the activities with meetings on rights, linking them to themes such as Memory, with particular reference to the Shoah and the persecutions of homosexuals in Germany and Italy. Thanks to the Civil Unions, which arrived at the same time, the custom of "don't ask don't, tell" has begun to break and many LGBT+ Jewish people have benefited from it. The consequent socialization of the celebrations acted as a multiplier, making the situation increasingly visible, as in the whole country, even in the Jewish community. Great strides have been made in many families, and small but significant strides are being made within Jewish communities. There are still many cases of people who find it difficult to reconcile Jewish identity and sexual identity, but neither should be given up! The challenge now is on education, on correct information, to learn to recognize and wipe out homotransphobia and to break the silence that has enveloped us for decades, so that young LGBT+ Jews finally grow up in an atmosphere of total welcome, understanding that one can be good Jews, living their own identity with joy."



09-12-21 A CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

From the anti-gender mobilisation to neo-Catholic movements: the assault on LGBT+ rights in Italy and Europe

Massimo Prearo, researcher, University of Verona

"In 2013, sit-ins were held demonstrating against the Cirinnà bill on the legal recognition of homosexual couples and homogenitoriality and the Scalfarotto bill to combat homotransphobia. In these events, the first logo comes from France of an association "Manif Pour Tous", named in Italy "Generation Family" and today called "Pro Vita e Famiglia" because it merged with the association "Pro-Life ONLUS". These movements organized the first demonstration called "Family Day" in 2007 and immediately had the support of some politicians who joined the demonstrations. Simone Pillon, then a senator on the League list, is one of the founders of the national committee "Let's Defend Our Children", promoter of Family Day. From 2007 to 2015, for these movements is a phase of construction and recruitment, in which the cause is promoted anti-gender through conferences, more or less always with the same speakers and very often in Catholic spaces. In the villages, it is the parishes that host these meetings or even the churches, since, on various occasions, there is so much participation that the parish spaces are not sufficient. Surprising to see this mass of people in the church, as if they were attending a mass, and who instead listens to a speaker who makes a political rally, since such meetings are dressed as informative conferences, but they call the Catholic people to intervene against the spread of the theory gender, with appeals to participate in the demonstrations of the "Standing Sentinels" and the "Family Day". This phase ends in June 2015 with the second family day, in which about 400,000 people take to the streets in Rome. From 2015 to 2016, we witness the structuring and organization of the movement. The national committee "Let's defend our children" is created, whose spokesperson is Massimo Gandolfini, who plays a coordinating role for the whole Italian territory and at a local level provides information on what to do, how to do it, what to say and how to say it and especially to whom not to speak, that is, not to speak to journalists. Many of the realities that existed, for example, some clubs become "Family Generation" or become the local antenna of the "Defend Our Sons" committee, which brings the movement back to the streets on the third Family Day of January 2016, precisely at the key moment of the discussion of the Cirinnà bill. In terms of participation, it is less good, but it inaugurates the phase of movements consolidation. Then Adinolfi's project to create the "People

of the Family" party was born, and a rift was created within the coordination because the "Defend Our Children" committee led by Gandolfini says it does not adhere to this choice, which does not intend to recreate a Catholic party, but he wants to put pressure on the parties to bring the demands of the movement, not putting himself in competition with them. Referendums and elections that follow one another from 2017 to 2019 allow Gandolfini to play this role of ideologue of family and life, against gender theory and the parties of the "Lega" and "Fratelli d'Italia" take these contents and make them own. In 2018 the interparliamentary group "Vita Famiglia Libertà" was founded, which indirectly represents these movements. So, there is this exchange between parties and movements that leads, in the 2018 political elections, to a victory of the centre-right, of which the "Let's Defend Our Children" committee claims part of the merit. The electoral deadlines are those that allow the movement to become a political actor who is able to act as an interlocutor in exchange and negotiation. This political capitalization means both being able to obtain resources from politics and being able to give tools to politics to promote a counter-revolution of values that contrasts the democracy of rights. One of Gandolfini's goals was to rebuild a Catholic movement, and in doing so, he used strategies very similar to those of the LGBT+ movements of recent years. The list of successes of these anti-gender movements is worrying: the failure to recognize homogenitoriality by the Cirinnà law, the sinking of the Scalfarotto bill and the sinking of the Zan bill against homotransphobia, the entry of "Generation and Family", the operational arm of Pro Vita e Famiglia, in the Fonags (National Forum of Associations of School Parents) at the Ministry of Education, the recent withdrawal of the guidelines on the reception of trans children promoted by the USR of Lazio."

How can secular LGBT+ NGOs and activists help LGBT+ people with a religious background?

Peik Ingman, scholar of Comparative Religion

"How can NGOs and secular activists help LGBTQ + people with a religious background? The world isn't becoming a better place fast, partly because many of us don't want to or can't handle the discomfort it brings. The challenge is to address a tendency to avoid discomfort; this challenge cannot be addressed simply by pointing to the problems; one must think about what allows people to bear the frustration implicit in change. I base my advice and perspectives on my experiences in Finland as coordinator

of the three-year project "Taakasta voimavaraksi" (From burden to a resource), in which we help people in their relationship between sexual orientation, gender identity and spiritual life. We have provided counselling, mediation and sought to positively influence religious communities that relate to community members belonging to sexual and/or gender minorities. We have trained religious professionals and produced educational materials, and supported artistic activism related to LGBTQ + and religion. For many activists, religion may simply be the enemy, but direct negativity towards religion is counterproductive. It is important that activists, volunteers and NGO employees think carefully about the challenges in helping LGBTQ + people with a religious background. We need to "increase our understanding of the effects of our attempts to help." LGBTQ + people who leave religious communities can count on increased self-esteem but may suffer from the loss of meaningful relationships to the point that increased self-esteem is of little use to them (Gibbs 2015). Studies also show that people who consider leaving a religious community but hesitate for a long time run a very high risk of developing depressive symptoms (May 2017). I have often had to consider how my actions would affect the various relationships between people within the community, between members of a community, between various NGOs. In cooperative working, it is important to recognize the different types of work, effort and responsibility that individual stakeholders may have. For example, religious professionals may at first appear reluctant to step out of their comfort zone; they may appear to leave most of the work on the shoulders of NGOs and take most of the credit, and this can be unfair. However, it will be religious professionals who will come to terms with the tension that cooperation can bring within the religious community, and it is important to recognize this as part of the work they do. The pressure on religious professionals who feel responsible for the community can become overwhelming, even more so if it is accompanied by a sense of powerlessness to influence sustainable change, and I have seen many of them suffer from burnout. Individual stakeholders are expected to have their own agendas and priorities, and I think it is important to recognize that refusing to partner with third parties who do not fully share our views has consequences and could leave people who might otherwise have reached unaided. Our working method was to help religious communities make progress ... often taking small steps. Being and working in grey areas can cause great discomfort, but the effort is well worth the effort. We can find reasons by recognizing how the affirmation of inclusive religious communities can have a positive impact on society".

From rural realities to large cities: the experience of three parish priests in welcoming family members of LGBT+ people

Antonio Zito, presbyter

"I have been a priest for 36 years, I have been a pastor in three parishes and a teacher at the same time, I have been in charge of marriage preparation courses, and since 2017 I have been the director of the Teachers Office of Catholic Religion of the Palermo schools. I have also been involved in LGBT+ pastoral care since 2017. This assignment was given to me verbally, while all the others were given to me through official written communications. I managed to snatch this job by relying on Pope Francis's post-synodal apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" of 2016, wherein some articles he speaks precisely of the dialogue between priests and parents who have LGBT+ children. I asked our bishop if he thought it appropriate that this topic should also be dealt with in family ministry, and the bishop supported me. Now I am exclusively involved in pastoral care with LGBT+ people. I am 70 years old; in my time, the mentality was very different: in the seminary, there was no talk of LGBT +. It was at the beginning of my office as parish priest, in 1985, that I had an illumination in this regard: I met a 35-year-old young man, married and father of two children, who was secretly prostituting himself. A profound dialogue was born between us that led him to commit himself as a sacristan aid. Unfortunately, he died after four years of AIDS. Also, in the other parishes, I met many women and men who had the problem of being LGBT +. I use the term problem, as it was said and thought then. Today, in the church, there is also positive talk of the LGBT+ question, but the written documents that have come out of the Vatican hierarchies, in my opinion, are in contradiction with what are opening words. We are talking, but we are people who have an open thought towards this issue; that is, we do not already place ourselves a priori in a condition of rejection. I am pleased that Fr Rino and Fr Mignani were able to activate positive experiences of inclusion in their parishes; we have good experiences in Palermo too, but praiseworthy exceptions are not enough. In my opinion, we should insist a lot on the formation of pastoral workers and promote activities in parishes to involve those people who show indifference or have little knowledge, prejudices and different ways of seeing. I am doing it with great difficulty through the task that I have been given, that is, as director of the office responsible for the 600 religion teachers in Palermo. Vigils for overcoming homotransphobia have been held in Palermo for 15 years, through which our bishop, in some circumstances, also

sent his prayers. I met Francesca Marceca, former president of A.GE.D.O. Palermo, and it was she, to a certain extent, who gave me a push to start my journey of attention towards these realities. A.GE.D.O. in Palermo is an active reality with which I have collaborated and collaborated, but mentalities change slowly: episodes of homotransphobia continue to occur, and homosexual people still contract heterosexual unions for fear of social judgment. Some newspapers interviewed me, and I said that as far as the church is concerned, it seems that today in this area, there is a lack of prophetic capacity. This theme in the church is still scary, and the fear is not evangelical. I hope that with initiatives like this, the discourse will be able to expand more and more and that we will be able to continue to work together in order to leave an inclusive church to those who come after us."

Rosario Rosati, presbyter.

"I have been a parish priest in Trapani for seven years, in the parish of Sant'Alberto located in the neighbourhood of the same name, which has ten thousand inhabitants, with varied realities and considerable pockets of poverty. The parish has a particular vocation for hospitality and charity, and many people approach the services: poor, single mothers, cohabitants, divorced and remarried, former prisoners, people with mental disorders ... but no one had ever presented themselves as gay or lesbian. From this reflection, a path began starting from attention to our prejudices about LGBT+ people and taking into account those that LGBT+ people have towards the church. So it was decided four years ago to organize the first Prayer Vigil for the Overcoming of Homophobia, interrupting only one year for the look down. Even in preaching, I tried to overcome the embarrassment of using words such as homosexual, gay, lesbian, homophobia, transphobia ... And this is how some LGBT+ people approached the parish, an elderly man who lived his whole life hidden in a heterosexual marriage, some young people, a teenager. They basically asked for the service of listening to be helped to shed light on themselves; the need for formation was born in pastoral workers; for this reason, we started meetings. In the first, we met Maurizio Macaluso, a gay Trapanese journalist and writer, who presented his novel, and this was an opportunity to stop on the words: homophobia and coming-out and to explain the acronym LGBT. For some years, I have also participated in the meetings of the Sicilian regional group of believing parents of LGBT children "On the way to Emmaus", a group that is part of the National Network "Three times parents". I

am not the leader of the group but simply a travelling companion, where the Word is intertwined with the experiences of these parents who continue to knock and offer their experience and that of their children to the parish communities to which they belong. Sharing their experiences is extremely enriching for me; reading the Word, fraternal sharing and mutual support make this group, despite the meetings being online, a true church experience. Much more could be done, such as trying to put the theme of pastoral care with LGBT+ people on the agenda of vicarial and diocesan meetings. Participation in the Synod could be an opportunity to share these paths with a wider ecclesial context."

Giulio Mignani, teacher e presbyter

"I am the pastor of four parishes, made up of different hamlets, which in winter do not reach a total of one thousand inhabitants, mostly people older in age. In reality, these small families of LGBT+ people have less chance of comparing themselves with other families who live similar experiences, and it is much easier to feel negatively judged. I then realized how important it was for these families to have their own parish priest who spoke out in favour of homosexual couples. This calmed them down and made it easier for them to share their children's experiences. Faced with the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which reaffirmed the prohibition of the blessing of same-sex unions. I expressed my disagreement by not blessing the palms and motivating the gesture publicly: "if it is not allowed to bless Love, then there is no point in blessing the palms either." Other confirmations have come to me from parents and relatives from all over Italy who contacted me to thank me after these positions of mine had been disseminated by the mass media. These experiences made me reflect on the greater good that could be produced if these positions were not simply taken by a parish priest but were accepted and made their own within the official documents of the Church. The most recent documents express the need and importance of welcoming homosexual people, but this is an ambiguous position because they are not being invited to welcome these people in their entirety. If they ask not to live fundamental dimensions of human life, such as affectivity and sexuality, then, in reality, they do not really welcome them. I believe that this change is fundamental because I realize how the ecclesial institution still has a significant influence in the cultural sphere and on people's way of thinking. I am thinking of the prejudices that still persist towards LGBT+ people and which unfortunately sometimes

result in real acts of physical and psychological violence. Unfortunately, the Church is offering a negative contribution, as it continues to define, in its official documents, the union between homosexuals as a "moral disorder", as a "sin". I would like the Church to no longer be an obstacle to the full recognition of LGBT+ people and their rights, to become a forerunner capable of facilitating the achievement of this goal of civilization instead."

From AGAPE to the present, what challenges await parents and LGBT+ people in our churches today

Franco Barbero, theologian and writer

"Today the church, beyond so many declarations of merciful benevolence and illusory synodality, still seems a "space" that can be accessed by categories, with a hierarchical green pass. The problem concerns the dogmatic, structural and patriarchal structure that is still central to the life of the church institution and its various articulations. The struggles, the challenges of families and LGBTQI+ people must be placed on a horizon that is not satisfied with obtaining a benevolent welcome, an authorized and blessed "space". "The goal of pastoral care with LGBT people is precisely the ordinary and common pastoral care of the Christian community, without the need for specifics. These, in fact, for now, allow particular attention to experiences hitherto neglected by the pastoral care but always risk ghettoizing people and existences that they would like to integrate. This requires that the words homosexual, gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender be pronounced openly and serenely ... because language is necessary to recognize the identity and positivity of people. Various sacraments and ministries, such as catechesis and preaching, must change radically, and this is possible if there are communities and theologians who do not immediately ask for permission. In the last 43 years, I have announced God's blessing to over 500 LGBT couples on the day and celebration of their marriage in different community contexts. Adult faith is nourished by the knowledge that the human sciences, biblical and theological researches make available to us. Listening to people needs to be combined with the processes of documented liberation from dogmas, from infantilizing and blaming ethics and faith. It is important that we are truly involved as believers and as active citizens in society's struggles for human rights. History generates many monsters, but it never ceases to generate liberating novelties. As a Christian theologian, I say that God is a friend of "new heavens and new lands: I am doing something new, don't you see it?" by the prophet Isaiah."

Dea Santonico, volunteer in the movement Basic Christian Communities in Italy

"An association, such as A.G.E.D.O., which focuses on welcoming parents in difficult moments in their lives, cannot risk underestimating the religious sensitivity of the people it welcomes. In my journey with parents of LGBT+ children, which began almost five years ago, after my son came out, I was able to meet many people with very different paths of faith. But everyone, without exception, wants their children to be happy and to be able to express, through their sexuality, their love for another person. Acceptance in the Church, yes, as long as it does not mean a welcome that requires people to mutilate themselves of their own sexuality. I don't know if everyone is fully aware that touching this aspect means removing one of the foundation stones, perhaps the most important, on which the Church-power rests. A power based on fear. And to think that Jesus had asked his disciples and his disciples to bring the Good News, a message of joy and liberation to all and all those who have been trampled on. Speaking God's name and using it to oppress and create suffering is greater blasphemy than any other. The journey in the Church of LGBT+ people and their parents are made from the base, from the margin, which is in itself regenerating and a reason for growth, regardless of the response it will have or will not have on the part of the hierarchy, in no case is it able to interrupt that journey. Only LGBT+ people can do it if they put themselves in a position of subjection if they do not grow in full awareness of the prophetic role they have if they do not find the courage to come out and infect others with their testimonies of life. If they walk with their heads held high, no power will be able to resist them. Because there is a force greater than any other, indomitable by any power, and it is not that of heroes but of those who have learned to walk together, holding hands, to support each other, to raise those who fall. It happens to those who are believers to feel within themselves that strength coming from the Spirit, from that wind that - as the Gospel of John says - "blows where it wants, you do not know where it comes from or where it goes", that free wind capable of freeing, which no palace of power or place of worship will ever be able to trap. The path has already been mapped out; we are already walking it together, LGBT+ people and their parents; we just have to believe in it and move forward with courage."

Faith and secularism, a possible combination

Mario caproni, A.G.E.D.O. Trentino president

"For 12 years, my wife and I accompanied heterosexual engaged couples to our parish as they were preparing for Christian marriage. It was one thing, marriage, in which we believed a lot, and these premarital encounters with young couples were a humanly very rich and very beautiful experience, but this parish commitment was interrupted in 2010 when our son revealed his homosexuality to us. A conflict of conscience has arisen in us; how could we remain within an ecclesial institution that did not deserve a glance, a blessing, those people who expressed a different sexual orientation? For four years, we attended meeting groups, made up of both parents and children, with different sexual orientations, heterogeneous groups and rich in humanity. The encounter with stories, with the faces of parents with LGBT+ children and with young people, has led to a rebirth of our parenting. Prejudices and fears have fallen for us, and we have moved on to amazement and joy."

On LGBT+ issues, we felt the Catholic Church far away, very far away, and so many other people like us felt foreign at home. The error of the Catholic Church, in my humble opinion, is to approach homoaffectivity as a moral issue. Morality is about behaviour, not about being a person. As Paolo Rigliano states in his book "Love without scandal," "the Catholic Church attacks precisely being homosexual in and of itself, regardless of any particular existence." There is something that binds us, parents of A.G.E.D.O., beyond religious affiliations, or political parties, or other philosophical approaches: it is love for our daughters and our sons, and the awareness that they do not need pietism, commiseration, conditional acceptance, but of full and unconditional recognition of what they are, of their human rights, of the beauty, of the peculiarity, of the human wealth contained in them. I consider this secular commitment to be important precisely in Italy, where the Catholic Church often makes undue invasions of the field, heavily interfering in political decisions. "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Matthew 22:21). As a Catholic believer, I joyfully witness the flourishing of communities of LGBT+ believers and their parents, who come together to pray, claim their full rights as a Church. I don't have this strength and this courage, but I cling to the love of Jesus Christ, and I pray to him every day."

Interacting with local churches: a difficult dialogue

Anna Battaglia, A.G.E.D.O. Ragusa's president and La Tenda di Gionata's volunteer

"My confrontation with the reality of homosexuality dates back to 2002 when my son, at the age of twenty, told me about his affective orientation, which led me to start a journey, what I experienced as a conversion, and unlearning in order to learn with eyes new and to unhinge the prejudices that lived in me without my knowledge."

So I approached A.G.E.D.O. Rome; it was an opportunity to confront myself, who lives in Ragusa, where homosexual people did not seem to exist. My son's "truth" was guiding me; he was asking me for help to be accompanied in revealing to the world who he was, a new birth in the face of society. The silence in which he had been forced for all those years and which asphyxiated him had to be broken, so it became imperative for me too to break up that silence, and in 2008 I activated a Punto Agedo in Ragusa."

The discovery of a son, an LGBTI+ daughter invariably leads a believing mother and father to confront their faith. When I learned about my son, the first thing I did was talk about it with my spiritual father ... even the Church holder of the message of love par excellence should have welcomed him, I thought."

Instead, I was hurt by terrible closing words."

My son was "wrong"; he could continue to be loved only if he suffocated his being himself and lived his cross in the silence of the whole family."

Thus began a via Crucis in search of a priest capable of authentic listening, but I always felt the discomfort that the word homosexuality created. Debated in the irremediable contrast between the Gospel message and living it, I understood that I had to look elsewhere to maintain and make my faith grow. I could no longer feel at home in my parish; I could not hear homilies from those who said homosexuality is an abomination, a disease to be treated. I met Don Franco Barbero; I joined Pax Cristi - the only reality in my city to talk about homosexuality."

In 2018, after the experience of the National Forum of LGBTI+ believers and their parents, I placed myself in the Tent of Jonathan and asked for an interview with the bishop to let him know this reality and let him view the documents of the Forum, I was advised to contact to a Jesuit father to create a Listening Point for LGBTI+ believers."

We finally had a space where we could gather, pray and celebrate vigils for the victims of homotransphobia and,

above all, a Jesuit father willing to listen and make you feel at home. In the parishes, everything remained the same as before, once again, I experienced an apparent welcome in a Ragusa church that had deployed 53 standing Sentinels, supported by movements of Catholic believers very active in contrasting gender ideology in May 2015, movements that had contested, in the same year, the training to prevent homotransphobia in educational contexts for teachers and parents, which took place at a school. Moreover, if on the one hand Agedo Ragusa was invited to be part of various Catholic associations to organize city conferences, on the other hand, the FUCI was forbidden to participate with its theme in the day against homotransphobia in 2018."

I realize that still in 2021, the Ragusa church remains partly entrenched in an antediluvian idea of homosexuality, if during a further attempt at dialogue, I was told that "one becomes homosexual if one is abused as a child", but above all, I am sorry for all those young and old people who feel forced into silence and non-visibility, even within their parishes."

"We must have patience with these priests", I am often told. It is true; we must be patient but in an "active" way. We need to take responsibility not for initiatives to "make ourselves accepted" but for a journey of conversion and listening. It is a rearguard Church, frightened and loaded with a prophecy that, on many occasions, we find ourselves before us. However, to resign ourselves is to fail in that appeal to the Word, which invites us to account for the hope that dwells in us."

Hope among Catholic parents in Palermo

Francesca Marceca, volunteer of Agedo Torino, ex president and founder of Agedo Palermo

"I am a mother of three children, two of whom are LGBT+, a retired primary school teacher. In 1998, together with my husband, I opened an A.G.E.D.O. office in Palermo after our eldest son confided in us about his homoaffective orientation. It was the first self-help centre for parents of LGBT+ people in southern Italy. The association was hosted at the Arcigay in Palermo but soon stopped its activities. We forwarded the request for a location to the public bodies, but we found denials, and we had to put up with laughter and jokes from the employees. In 2002 we met Father Cosimo Scordato; he listened to us, welcomed us and offered us spaces. Parents, both believers and non-believers, turned to us but entering a rectory reassured everyone. Ali D'Aquila met in the same hall: a small group

of LGBT+ believers who since 2007 have organized annual vigils against homophobia. All the LGBT+ realities of Palermo participated for the first time at the vigil of May 14, 2015: the dream for which Nicola D'Ippolito, one of the founders of Ali D'Aquila, had fought for years but, unfortunately, Nicola died of a heart attack while awake. I remember with emotion the day when Father Cosimo Scordato invited us to the microphone to talk about A.G.E.D.O. at the end of a mass. When our users increased, we resumed the search for an office and, continuing the silence of the institutions, the Waldensian Church hosted us with enthusiasm and still hosts A.G.E.D.O. Palermo. In the offered venue, we have carried out cutting-edge activities: creative projects for high school children such as comics, murals, fashion shows, painting and photography exhibitions, theatrical performances, guided by the belief that doing creative is the most effective means to counter homophobia, transphobia and bullying. We currently live in Piedmont, and my husband and I find ourselves once again facing reality unknown to us since our second son confided in us his polyamorous relational orientation. The polyamorous orientation is a reality often experienced in confusion, without or with distorted reference models. Many polyamorous people think that they cannot have visibility, dignity, recognition and the right to form stable families of love and mutual support; in the absence of models and going through the same relational difficulties that we remember for the homosexual population of many years ago. My husband and I hope to be able to bring the voice of polyamorous people into A.G.E.D.O. and in the groups of believers who will want to listen so that people like my son and all the others who want to can one day find happiness, start a family, create legally recognized bonds. A.G.E.D.O. is a secular but not secularist association that sees in comparison a tool to improve the quality of life of LGBT+ people and their families. I believe that no one should pay for their faith or the defence of their children with the price of exclusion from a group they belong to."

Conclusions

Alessandro Previti, UTC2 coordinator

"UTC2 was born from intuition, the intuition of a need, and I was surprised to see the enthusiasm, the interest that the project has aroused. I want to talk about intuition. Before founding AGEDO,

there was a mother with intuition: that it was not her son who was wrong, but that it was the myriads of direct and indirect rumours that were wrong. It often happens that intuition, the father of reason, overcomes reason. In the small of our experience in Palermo, my family and I know we had great intuition when we opposed neighbours, relatives, teachers, politicians and experts; we had an intuition when despite the flat wheels of the car, the threatening letters, the mockery and the accusations of corruption to morals, we held a strong faith in our mission, and we continued to feel we were right.

The accusations, the threats we have been victims and witnesses, came from people of faith, atheists, agnostics, men and women of different economic and cultural backgrounds. Hate does not have a flag but has voices under every flag. It has no religion and has voices in and out of religions.

Yes... we had intuition, against all reason, when our brothers, children, friends, came to us, often in tears, talking to us about their orientation, they asked to be loved, and we listened to them with love.

We can find in faith, philosophy, thought, in the heart our call to give value to people and their stories, the love and understanding to understand the coming out of a son or daughter. Whatever the source, this love, this understanding accompany us and unite us.

A.Ge.D.O. is a secular association that embraces many points of view and welcomes different people, all united by a great intuition, united by love for loved ones, by a mission for the rights and dignity of LGBT+ people.

This is why UTC2: to talk about unconditional love, to compare different points of view, to share a mission, to be more united, towards change."

Gimelli Fiorenzo, Presidente di A.GE.D.O. Nazionale

To conclude, I am pleased to share some reflections on the relationship between the LGBT+ world and faith.

A.GE.D.O. since its foundation, as a non-denominational association, has dealt with these issues in a more or less systematic way and will continue to do so in the future; many of us are believers and wish to be so in their testimony of life, others are not, others are disinterested in these aspects but no one denies how much these issues are present in the lives of many people and how much the different churches impact heavily and in a negative way in the formation of the conscience and in the legislation of the countries, in particular in Italy.

In the introduction, I would like to underline some reflections made by Peik Ingman when he said that we need to understand the motivations of others if we want to establish a dialogue. Without it, there is no understanding, but a

common basis is needed, and if LGBT+ people are not recognized and considered as such, it is difficult to start a fruitful confrontation. There is no talk of accepting, having mercy, including from top to bottom, but of seeing them as equal components of a more plural and multifaceted world. Without this basis, it is difficult to maintain constructive relationships.

During the five seminars, we had the opportunity to listen to believers and non-believers, representatives of voluntary associations, theologians, experts, ministers of worship from religious communities of Christianity, Judaism, Islam. Catholics have had a greater space because they have a majority in our country, and with them, the knowledge and contacts are greater. It was interesting to learn about lesser-known situations, such as those inherent to Islam, Judaism and countries distant from us spatially and culturally, and we understood that there are profoundly different situations even within individual religious confessions. The reports showed that there are great legislative differences on rights in the various European countries, and we have had the testimony of the terrible situation in Poland; we have heard that, for example, Tel Aviv is one of the most inclusive cities, while Jerusalem is the opposite and that in several Muslim countries and not just exposing oneself you risk your life. The COE expressed great interest in our project, so much so that it invited its coordinators to Crete to the conference "Cooperating with faith-based institutions to counter hate speech", which discussed precisely these issues, with attention paid to Orthodox churches. There is great excitement and, in many places, a flourishing of positive initiatives and discussions that we trust will bring greater results.

The Catholic Church itself does not seem to be a monolith, an unbreakable, compact wall with a single opinion. There is little or no progress on the doctrinal level, but in the pastoral care of some dioceses, plural and "welcoming" realities of LGBT+ people emerge even if the words "acceptance" and "mercy" are still too often heard and basic communities are seen. , adult and motivated, in strong confrontation with the hierarchies

During these seminars, I learned a lot, and I saw lively reasoning, practices and interpretations that unfortunately struggle to emerge in the public debate.

It is clear, and I would say indisputably, that often negativity and ostracisms that have contributed to lead to aberrant situations and to societies that have excluded, not recognized, and stigmatized LGBT+ people are the results of unilateral, dogmatic and non-historicized readings of the "books" that are at the basis of the revealed religions and this impact is still present, heavy and difficult to overcome.

What emerged, especially from the interventions of the

exponents of religious denominations, is that they are insufficiently confronted with scientific discoveries and the advancement of knowledge in the field of sexual and relational identities. It seems to look only at tradition and do not read reality as today is proposed by science; in practice, it is as if today we looked at the planets and the stars using the Ptolemaic system.

The conflict between faith and science is a subject to reflect on continuously.

A.GE.D.O. wants, as far as possible, to encourage dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and to understand what are the best ways to interact with LGBT+ believers to reduce the discomfort and pain that exclusionary communities cause.

Our business plan is that of the civil battle, of the advancement of rights, so that the values of equality and knowledge of diversity, the appreciation of diversity as a value, enter society.

In a truly inclusive and open society, an association like ours would be useless and, therefore, our ultimate goal is that we reach a point where our existence is no longer necessary, but unfortunately, it does not seem like a horizon in the short term.

I consider this project a useful step forward which has given us greater cognitive and operational tools and which will help to expand and strengthen a network of communication and exchange of good practices.

What is needed is intellectual honesty on the part of everyone, and when I see the phantom "gender theory" used to distort and negatively simplify gender studies and ridicule the proposals of the LGBT+ community, I realize that this is a modality that does not allow the dialogue.

All this, however, in recent years has made it difficult to enter to bear witness and train in schools and to propose projects to them. In many regions, where the link between fundamentalist groups and politics is strong, the spaces have shrunk a lot.

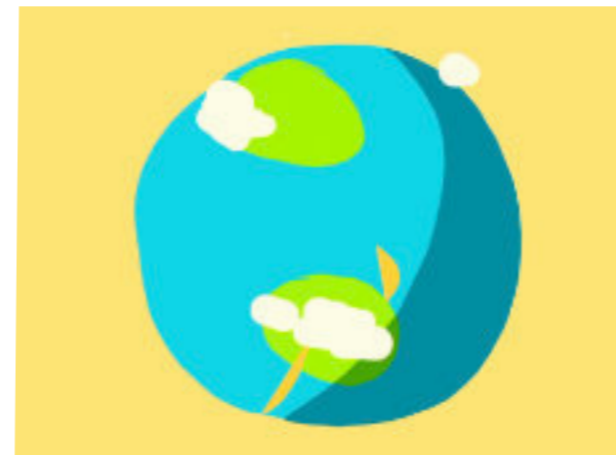
When people ask for respect and dignity, this cannot be diminished because they think they are in a position of moral or intellectual superiority.

We at A.GE.D.O. do not use easy arguments of the gut, and above all, we do not want to "teach their trade" to clerics and pastors of any confession.

I thank all those who made themselves available, who participated, who helped in any way, in particular the two coordinators, Selena and Alessandro.

Lastly, I thank the parents A.GE.D.O. who have made a great contribution by telling their experiences in the field and who daily give visibility and beauty to their families, and I hope that there will be other useful opportunities for discussion, others not.

EUROPEAN DIMENSION



Since 1960, the European Union has made the fight against discrimination one of its most essential tasks and has often made its voice heard in defence of LGBT+ citizens who, in many states, are prevented from living a fulfilling life. The European Union has repeatedly expressed its position for the protection of homosexual and transgender people and has urged the planning and implementation of sectoral cognitive studies and targeted projects to promote equal opportunities in a network with GLBT associations already operating in the territories and structures public.

On January 18, 2006, the European Parliament passed a resolution on homophobia in Europe, where it states that homophobia must be equated with racism and anti-Semitism. In 2006 the European Parliament presented the directive that enshrines the implementation of equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation.

On March 31, 2021, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe presented a recommendation on the measures to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Council of Europe in 2013 promotes the protection and exercise of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

In 2019, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) launched a large-scale investigation into LGBT+ people in the European Union.

The E.U. Presents the resolution of February 14, 20219 on the future list of actions to be taken favour LGBT+ people.

On November 12 2020, the U.E. Presented "Union of equality: strategies for LGBTIQ equality 2020-2025."

March 11, 2021, with a resolution of the European Parliament, the E.U. It proclaims itself an LGBT+ zone of freedom.

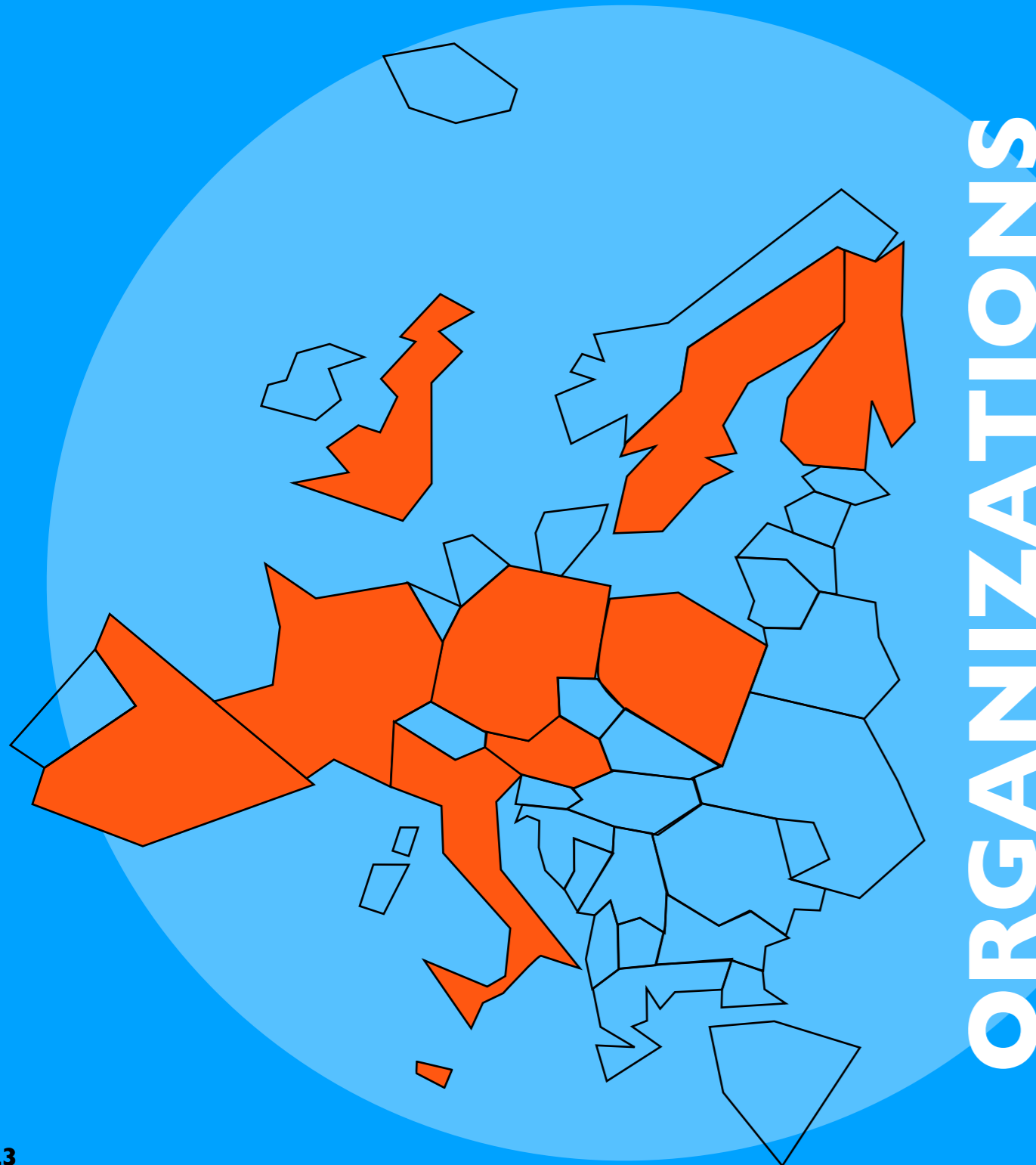
Although the issue of the rights of LGBT people is increasingly felt by the European Community and the issue of faith concerning LGBT issues is a hot topic and often makes the front pages of newspapers, the only data collected on the binomial faith and homo-transphobia seem to be those of 2008 research by FRA (European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights): Homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in E.U. member states, which showed that in some member states, institutions and organizations women religious often take part in political debates on the rights of LGBT+ people by lobbying against the adoption of these rights and by hindering the adoption of new legislation. Some groups and religious figures in some states are also active in mobilizing demonstrations against LGBT+ events. In some states, the Church owns and administers a significant number of schools, social services, community centres: NGOs active in support of LGBT+ people have not been authorized to access these facilities and have been prohibited from distributing information on LGBT issues or to participate in their public debates. The exemptions provided for in the European anti-discrimination legislation at work allow employers to discriminate against employees who do not "act in good faith and with loyalty to the organization's philosophy" are interpreted in ways that end up determining the discrimination of LGBT+ people. There are also positive examples of religious organizations engaging with LGBT people. "

The European Community shows a growing interest in the issue and, in early December 2021, organized a conference in Crete with various representatives of the Orthodox Churches to discuss non-discrimination and strategies to combat hate speech.

AGEDO, working in contact with the public, listened directly to the voices of the pain of LGBT+ believers and felt the urgency to respond to these requests for help. Thus UTC2 was born.

The project has responded to these requests by creating opportunities for comparison and growth, and sharing so that the various associative realities can better compare and share resources and cooperate to increase range and horizontal and vertical impact. UTC2 promotes the construction of a network of associations committed to promoting the rights of LGBT+ people, associations of LGBT+ believers, representatives and operators from multiple faiths.

The convergence of public action, third sector subjects and the European Community has proved to be decisive over time for improving the quality of life of LGBT citizens. Guided by this awareness, we try to promote a multi-level dialogue to promote the protection of human rights and the dissemination of social inclusion policies for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, and the dissemination of good practices throughout Europe.



ORGANIZATIONS

Volunteers, theologians, ministers of worship, experts from 10 different European countries and belonging to different religions (Catholic Church, Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches, Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ, Protestant Church, Basic Christians, Ecumenical Churches, Judaism, Islam), participated in the UTC2 webinars. The countries involved are Italy, the United Kingdom, Malta, Poland, Austria, Finland, Germany, Sweden, France, Spain. Some of the participants come from countries that have successfully implemented European directives and recommendations and resolutions on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for LGBT+ people, while others come from countries that transpose them slowly or reluctantly.

This heterogeneity has created constructive confrontation and synergy, bringing the wealth of experiences of different cultures, religions, generations, demonstrating the importance of diversity.



A.G.E.D.O. Nazionale OdV, leader of the project, is a social volunteer organization founded in 1993 as an association of parents and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and with any other sexual identity, with the aim of helping and supporting those parents who live one state of discomfort and suffering due to the discovery of the non-compliant identity of their children. It is present in many Italian cities, with 30 organized offices and other listening points, and is a member of "ENP-the European Network of Parents of LGBTI + Persons". It is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-denominational, anti-racist, pacifist organization. The association is committed to working in the social field to reduce and

break down prejudices, fears and stereotypes relating to sexual identity, with the aim of educating people to respect LGBT+ people and to take action against all forms of discrimination. It aims to offer listening and hospitality to families, to prevent youth discomfort through correct information and the awareness of the world of school, institutions and citizenship on the issues of respect for all people and all subjectivities, with a view to the promotion of a culture of hospitality, relationships and the enhancement of differences. The association interfaces with other associations and with politics in a continuous lobbying action and promotes moments of information and widespread training to increase awareness in society.

WE HAVE TO CONTAMINATE OUR CHURCHES SO THAT THEY BECOME THE SAME BRIDGE BETWEEN OUR LGBT+ CHILDREN AND THE WHOLE HUMAN COMMUNITY

"THANKS TO YOU THAT BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS TO SET THE WAY!"

"THE EXPERIENCES OF THE COURAGEOUS PRIESTS HAVE MOVED ME."



La Tenda di Gionata

Founded by some volunteers of the Gionata project encouraged by the priest David Esposito. The "Tenda di Gionata" promotes the reception, training, and information of pastoral workers, LGBT Christians, and their families. Among the activities, they foster dialogue with the local Christian realities on LGBT topics, so that they can become "sanctuaries of support for LGBT people and for every person affected by discrimination" and can fully realize what the "Gaudium et spes" states when it says "the joys and hopes, sadness and anguish of today's men, especially the poor and all those who suffer are also the joys and hopes, sadness, and anguish of the disciples of Christ". Contacts: tendadigionata@gmail.com <https://www.gionata.org/tendadigionata/>



Rete 3 Volte Genitori

A safe space for Christian parents with LGBT children where they can share and support each other in a confidential manner so that no parent feels alone. Contacts: info.3vgenitori@gmail.com



ENP (Internazionale)

The organisation was founded in Malta in 2017 on the eve of a EU Ministerial Conference about EU's LGBTIQ Roadmap. At the assembly, there were mothers and fathers from over 12 European countries who spent two-days sharing and exchanging good practices and ideas, in solidarity and friendship. ENP is now a recognised umbrella organisation and a recognised stakeholder supported by the Council of Europe. ENP has published a compendium of parents' testimonies and distributed its first book "Tell It Out!". This handbook contains over 20 real life experiences from parents across Europe. The intersections of faith and family are of great importance to ENP since many parents often feel unable to integrate these two aspects harmoniously. ENP offers insights into the ways parents may reconcile their faith with their family growth process. When this is achieved parents can come out as more loving parents, as much healthier families, and as more active persons in society and the Church. Contacts: info@enparents.org <https://enparents.org/>



Drachma LGBTI & Drachma Parents (Malta)

Originally founded in September 2004 as a Catholic group of gay men and lesbian women. The group was renamed Drachma in 2007, inspired by the Bible parable of the lost coin (Luke 15: 8-10). Drachma Parents was founded in 2008, and the two groups (Drachma LGBTI and Drachma Parents) work in parallel. They support LGBTI people in their journey to integrate sexuality and spirituality, as well as parents in learning how to accept and support their LGBTI children as well as strengthening the familial bonds of love and compassion. The two groups together form a single Non-Governmental Organisation, working in LGBTI ministry, support for families, dialogue with the Church, education and outreach. Drachma collaborates on improving acceptance, integration, and social justice for LGBTI people with other LGBTI organisations, also within the National LGBTIQ+ Consultative Council. Contacts: drachmalgt@gmail.com drachmaparents@gmail.com <http://drachmalgbt.blogspot.com/>



Magen David Keshet Italia

Magen David Keshet Italia (MDKI) is the first independent Italian LGBTQ+ Jewish organisation, it is affiliated with the World Congress of LGBT Jews (Keshet Ga'avah), the worldwide network that connects the most important Jewish LGBT realities active in North and South America, Europe and Israel. MDKI is also affiliated with the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD). The main purpose of the organisation is to promote the full equality of LGBTQ+ people within Jewish communities, and beyond. They base their commitment on the Tikkun Olam principle, which is to repair the world and correct injustices as much as possible. MDKI supports young people through the empowerment process and helps them to understand that it is possible to be a good Jew while also being an LGBTQ+ person.

Contacts: magen.david.keshet@gmail.com <https://www.facebook.com/ebrei.lgbt.roma/>



Cammini di Speranza

The organisation is made by Christian people of various origins, paths, ages, sexual orientation, and gender identity. They welcome anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge on faith and homosexuality, they promote correct information, respect, dignity, and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people in Churches and in society. The organisation is inspired by the positive and liberating messages of the Gospel, as well as the social justice tradition of the Christian Churches. Contacts: info@camminidisperanza.org



My, Rodzice (Polonia)

The organisation "We, the parents" brings together people who are deeply interested in helping their LGBT+ children and helping other parents of LGBT+ people. Contacts: info@myrodzice.org <https://myrodzice.org/>



EKHO (Svezia)

Riksförbundet EKHO is an umbrella organization for the five local EKHO associations, located in Stockholm, Malmö, Göteborg and Sydöst. EKHO supports, inspires and encourages the important work of local associations, staying in between the Christian sphere and the queer community. We are a Jesus-centred and non-profit organisation where volunteers shape and reshape how and what EKHO is working on. EKHO offers mentorship programmes, platforms to the trans Christian group, it publishes books on queer theology. EKHO is frequently invited to secret meetings with Church leaders (almost a kind of silent diplomacy). The organisation holds summer camps for LGBTQI youths, and each Friday it celebrates mass or invites guests to hold speeches. Above anything else, EKHO is offering a voice to the LGBTQI-minority within the Christian community. The message is unapologetically queer and Christian. You can be both. EKHO counts 150 members today. Contacts: info@ekho.se <https://www.ekho.se/>



HuK (Germany)

HuK (Ökumenische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche - the Ecumenical Task Force on Homosexuals and the Church), was founded in 1977 at the Evangelischer Kirchentag (the biennial Protestant church fair) and was registered as an association in 1985. HuK has around 320 members and is organized in about ten local groups. The members' newspaper, "HuK-Info", is published 3 times a year. HuK is primarily an educational organization, which does activism for social purposes. He holds 2 seminars a year and activism within the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches through specific working groups.

Contacts:
info@huk.org
www.huk.org/



HuG (Austria)

It was founded as an ecumenical association in 1990 by a working group of Catholic and Protestant student associations in Vienna. HUG is open to all people with an interest in issues related to homosexuality and faith, religion and society, regardless of gender, age, religion or worldview. They organize weekly meetings, ecumenical services, Pride prayers before Vienna Pride, concerts, excursions, museum visits, and other recreational activities to get to know interesting people and to make friends. HUG offers pastoral accompaniment and advice on questions related to blessings of partnership or marriage. Many members belong to a Christian Church, some are involved in a parish or in the civil society, others are Church employees, other members are more or less distant from the Church. Thus within HUG, believers, doubters, atheists, and seekers meet together and form a colorfully mixed group within a lively, attentive culture. Contacts: <http://www.hug-wien.at/>



Il Grande Colibri

It is a volunteer-based organisation founded in 2011. The organization offers support to asylum seekers that are persecuted in their home countries because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Il Grande Colibri offers them guidance for the asylum application and orientation to settle in Italy. Among the activities undertaken, there is that of drafting reports on persecutions and regulations of asylum seekers' countries of origin. The organisation is responsible for a webpage with contacts of the branches available throughout Italy. Il Grande Colibri is always informed about the evolution, in Italy and in the world, of the rights and situation of LGBTQIA people. It acts and supports the dissemination of information on LGBTQIA minorities. Thanks to local groups, the organisation is present in various Italian regions, with support networks, initiatives, and meeting spaces. Often, in collaboration with other associations, they organise and participate in conferences in Italy and abroad. Contacts: info@ilgrandecolibri.com
<https://www.ilgrandecolibri.com/en/>



Achati (Spain)

The organisation recognises that religious belief is one of the human rights, while it is often depicted in LGBTI activists' discourse as incompatible with the experience of gender diversity or sexual orientation. The organisation proposes accompaniment in faith and provides meeting spaces for LGBTI people of faith. Acathi reflects on religious practices and on the difficulties experienced by migrants and by those that are persecuted in their home countries. For Acathi is of the utmost importance to recognise the variables existent in the lives of LGBTI migrants and refugees. Contacts: acathi@acathi.org <https://www.acathi.org/>



In viaggio per Emmaus

Traveling to Emmaus

The Traveling for Emmaus Group was born in Sicily in May 2020 after the national meeting of Lucky Parents on 25 April which made us experience how geographical distances could be canceled, thanks to the possibility of online meetings. The purpose of our group is to overcome marginalization and rediscover serenity in the joy of walking together, experiencing the beauty of a path illuminated by the community reading of Scripture. Let us try to dismantle that wall, built by civil society and a part of the hierarchical Church, which for so long has relegated LGBTI + people to the ghetto of silence and the absence of rights. We are building a road together with those sons and daughters who join us on this journey and also with those religious who become travelers to let us touch the loving welcome of the Jew from Galilee named Jesus. Most of the parents who are part of it have also been AGEDO activists for some time.



Tutti Figli di Dio

Founded in 2019, it adheres to the parents' networks "Rete 3 Volte Genitori" and "Tenda di Gionata". The group welcomes LGBTQ+ people and their parents, lay or Catholic. The purpose of the group is to create a safe space, dialogue, understanding, sharing, and support so that no one feels alone and marginalised. Among the activities, the group raises awareness within Catholic institutions on LGBTQ + issues. The Patriarch of Venice recognised the group's important role. As a consequence, some parents of the organisation met the bishop of Treviso and numerous other priests to share their testimonies. The group is open to lay people and spreads information on + topics among the media, and social media. They participate in Prides and other events in support of LGBTQ + rights. Contacts: tuttifigliidio@gmail.com



LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council (U.K.)

The organization is commissioned by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster to provide pastoral support for LGBT+ Catholics and their families in the Diocese of Westminster in London. Masses that welcome LGBT+ Catholics and their families have been organized since 1999, transferred to Soho in 2003 where they became known as the "Soho Masses". The mandate of the association is to identify the pastoral and sacramental need of LGBT+ Catholics and their families. Activities include planning faith development activities relating to LGBT+ Catholic communities and communicating with the Archdiocese of Westminster on pastoral care issues relating to LGBT+ Catholics and their families.

Contacts:
lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com
<https://sites.google.com/view/lgbt-ca-w/home>

"UTC2 WAS A BEAUTIFUL OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSMIT THE WALKED WAY WITH INTELLIGENCE AND WITH A JOYFUL HEART"

"I CONSIDER THE SEMINARS A GREAT GROWTH OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL OF US"

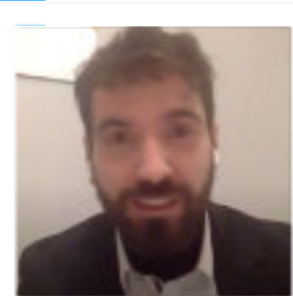
"I HAVE NO WORDS TO EXPRESS THE JOY OF THIS EARLING OF HEAVEN IN THE EXILE I LIVE IN MY PARISH REALITY. THANK YOU WITH ALL MY HEART."

The project was born from the passion of 3 operators-coordinators-authors.

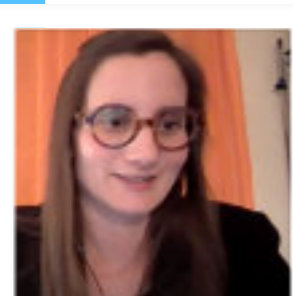
Fiorenzo Gimelli, president of A.G.E.D.O. National O.D.V. ; Alessandro Previti, with more than 20 years of volunteering and numerous projects behind him developed both in Italy and in Poland; Selena Demarchi graduated in gender studies. They all have the expertise, motivation, passion, a sense of mission and devotion to the cause behind them. Aware that the road to equal opportunities, equal rights, true democracy is an infinite road of conquest, reconquest, maintenance, they continue to seek ever new ways to reach people who need help, to understand emerging or buried needs of various communities and to respond with appropriate strategies.



Fiorenzo Gimelli - president: 67 years old, agronomist with skills in the floricultural sector, a former official of the Liguria Region, for eight years he has been national president of A.G.E.D.O. In recent years he has taken particular care of relations with politics, with other sector associations and school issues, while internally, he has worked to strengthen the organizational network.

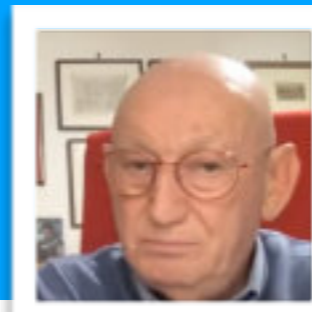


Alessandro Previti - project manager, coordinator, designer: he was a volunteer A.G.E.D.O. for more than 20 years, graduated in fine arts in Italy with a master's degree in Poland, he participated in the conception and development of the first UTC project. He regularly collaborates with non-governmental organizations and entities such as ENP, UNAR (National Anti-Discrimination Office).



Selena Demarchi-Project manager and coordinator, she holds a master's degree in gender studies from the University of Sussex, where she graduated with research on hate crimes against LGBT+ people in Italy. She collaborates and volunteers with some feminist associations for the prevention of gender-based violence.

COORDINATORS



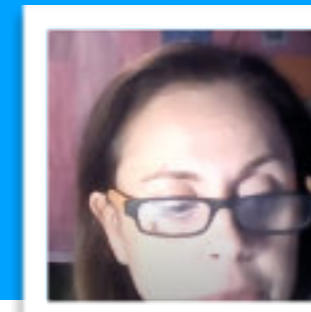
Roberto Stevanato
(3VolteGenitori - Tutti Figli di Dio)

President of many socio-cultural organisations, he actively entered the LGBTQ + world following his son's coming-out. He promoted the birth of the TuttiFigliDiDio group. He is a professor of Biochemistry at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, he is now retired.



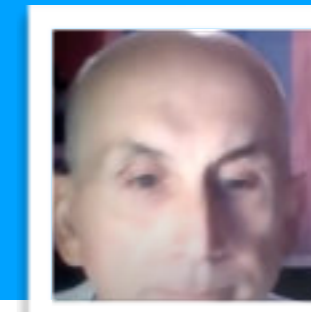
Adriana Bustreo
(3VolteGenitori - Tutti Figli di Dio)

She actively entered the LGBTQ+ world following her son's coming out and promoted the foundation of the TuttiFigliDiDio group. Administrative manager of several companies in the Venetian area, she is now retired.



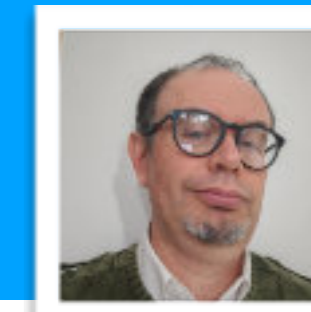
Maria Rosaria Quaranta
(3VolteGenitori - Pastoral worker)

Mother of two transgender twins, she carried out pastoral activity for many years as a catechist. The closure of the Catholic Church towards LGBTQ+ issues pushed her to move away from the Church and brought her closer to the "comunità di base cristiane" where she discovered the authenticity of the Gospel by the sharing of personal experiences with other religious people. This has enriched her and paved the way for volunteering and activism LGBTQ+ rights that are still denied in Italy.



Alessandro Pizzoleo
(3VolteGenitori - Teacher)

Upper secondary school teacher and father of three children, two of whom are transgender. Thanks to their love for their children, he and his wife were motivated to support them in the long and complex process of transitioning. He is aware that the lack of information in schools and civil society is a source of confusion and disorientation for those families that have to face the topic of non-binary gender identities.



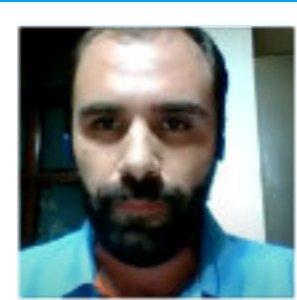
Innocenzo Pontillo
(President of La Tenda di Gionata)

Innocenzo Pontillo was, in September 2007, one of the founders of the Gionata Project, a reality of information on faith and homosexuality and is the president of the La Tenda di Gionata association. He collaborates with the Christian weekly Adista, and has to his credit numerous in-depth articles on the reality of LGBT believers and their parents.

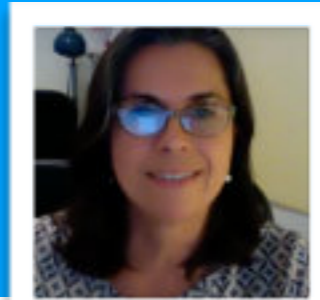
SPEAKERS

**Mara Grassi**

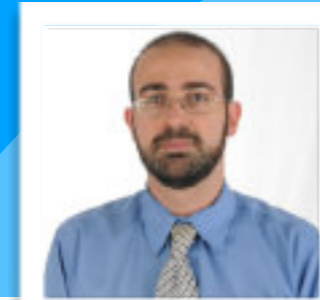
(Vice-President of La Tenda di Gionata)
Vice-president of the "Tenda di Gionata". Her son's homosexuality led her, after long-suffering, to live her religious faith in a new and deeper way pushing her to advocate for the inclusion of LGBT people among religious communities.

**Andrea Diacono**

(Project: Mi Fido di Te)
Following his coming out with his family, he began to actively participate in the Gionata project, with the "Gruppo dei Giovani Cristiani LGBT" (Christian LGBT Youth group), and other groups. Since 2020 he has been involved with other volunteers in the listening service "Mi Fido Di Te" (I trust you) managed by "Gruppo dei Giovani Cristiani LGBT" and by the "Tenda di Gionata". The project aims to offer LGBT people the opportunity to talk about themselves, share their emotions and receive support from experts on the intersections of faith and homosexuality. He is also part of Drachma, the Maltese Christian LGBT group.

**Beatrice Sarti**

(Project: Mi Fido di Te)
She graduated in Chemistry and is a partner in a company that works in the dental field. From her youth, she was part of the local parish and joined its activities. In 2017, after her son's coming out, she started a lengthy process to reconcile her child's reality with a Catholic's life. She is part of the group of LGBT people's parents in Bologna (that is, in turn, part of the "Rete 3VolteGenitori - 3 Times Parents network" and is a member of the "Tenda di Gionata". She also collaborates on the "Mi Fido di Te" project.

**Christopher Vella**

(Drachma & Drachma Parents)
Coordinator of Drachma LGBTI since 2013, he is a founding member and Co-Chair of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics since 2017, and from 2017 is a founding member and former Board member of the European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Parents (ENP). He is also a member of the National Malta LGBTIQ+ Consultative Council since 2014. He has been involved in outreach with parish communities, working with families of LGBTIQ+ persons, dialogue with Church leaders in Malta, LGBTIQ+ ministry, media outreach, training of educators and youth leaders. He is also a historian and History lecturer at the University of Malta Junior College.

**Louisa Grech**

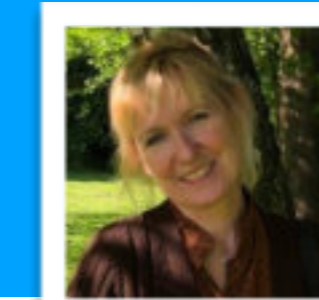
(Drachma & Drachma Parents)
Became involved with Drachma and LGBTIQ+ issues seven years ago and in 2020, became the Coordinator of Drachma Parents. Mother of a gay person, she is a retired teacher who has taught all ages and abilities, and for the past 30 years, she has been an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. She has given lectures to university's students and addressed conferences on this subject.

**Andrea Rubera**

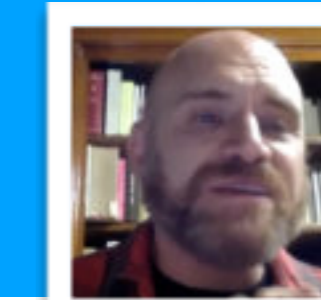
(Cammini di Speranza)
He holds a Degree in Political Sciences and a PhD in Corporate Communication. He works on welfare and diversity & inclusion. Since 2001 he has been active with groups of Christian LGBT people and since 2015 is the spokesperson for the national association "Cammini di Speranza". He is very active in volunteering on topics regarding faith and homosexuality, and on homosexual parenting. He has given several interviews to Italian media and written articles for Christian/Catholic magazines. Born into a Catholic family, he married Dario in Canada in 2009, where their children were also born.

**Agnieszka Penczek**

(My, Rodzice)
Mother of a gay person, she joined My, Rodzice in September 2019 in response to the words of a Polish Catholic Church's bishop that described LGBT+ people and 'rainbow ideology' as a plague. She is an active member of the Congress of the Polish Catholics whose main topic is the situation of LGBT+ people in the Polish Catholic Church, and especially their exclusion.

**Aleksandra Jakubczyk**

(My, Rodzice)
Catholic mother of a 25 years old gay boy, she is strongly disappointed by the attitude of the Polish Catholic Church towards LGBT+ people. She is resolutely motivated to help parents of LGBT+ people who feel a sense of belonging towards the Catholic faith, but find no help within the Church.

**Francesco Lepore**
(Chief editor of Gay-News)

He is a scholar and author of essays on the history of Mariology and Christian spirituality in medieval and modern times. Francesco Lepore was a Latinist at the Vatican Secretariat of State and then, a minutes-taker of the Vatican Apostolic Library. Professional journalist, since 2017 he is the editor-in-chief of "Gaynews.it"; for the "HuffingtonPost" he curates a Latin blog concerned with LGBTI rights. He is also a collaborator of "Linkiesta". Among his many publications there are the critical edition of the eighteenth-century Masonic text "Il Purgatorio Ragionato" (2014), "Seraphica Charitas" (2016), and "Il delitto di Giarre. 1980: un "caso insoluto" e le battaglie del movimento LGBT+ in Italia" (2021).

**Aristide Fumagalli**
(professor of Moral Theology at the Theological Faculty of the Italia Settentrionale University and presbyter)

He was born in Inzago, and ordained presbyter by the Milan Diocese in 1991. After completing a Baccalaureate at the Seminario Arcivescovile di Venegono Inferiore (VA), he continued his education and obtained a degree in Moral Theology and, after that, a PhD in Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome). He is currently a professor of Moral Theology at the Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Settentrionale, of which he was the director from 2003 to 2007. In the same period of time, he was also a lecturer of Moral Theology at the same Faculty and at the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose of Milan. Among his publications we highlight: "L'amore possibile. Persone omosessuali e morale cristiana" (The possible love. Homosexual people and Christian morality) (2020); "L'amore sessuale. Fondamenti e criteri teologico-morali" (Sexual love. Foundations and theological-moral criteria) (2020); "La questione gender. Una sfida antropologica" (The gender question. An anthropological challenge) (2017).

**Giuseppe Piva**

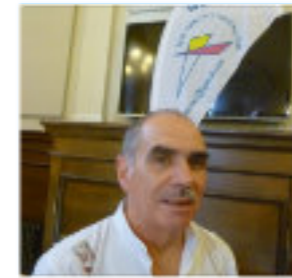
(Jesuit Priest)

He is a Jesuit priest engaged in the spiritual accompaniment and education of people of faith. He is the promoter of spirituality from the frontiers.

**Gian Luca Carrega**

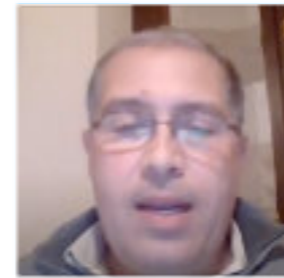
(lecturer at the Theological Faculty of Turin and presbyter)

Priest of the Turin Diocese since 2000, he is a lecturer of New Testament at the Theological Faculty of Turin and, in the same Diocese, he is the Director of the Ufficio di Pastorale della Cultura (Office for the Pastoral Care of Culture).

**Martin Pendergast**

(LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council)

Born in 1945 he has been a member of Carmelite communities in England, Ireland and Italy from 1963 – 1973. In a relationship since 1976 and civilly-partnered since 2006. He has a Diploma in Philosophy from the University College Dublin; a License in Sacred Theology (STL) from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome; a Master's Degree in Theology, Behavioural & Social Sciences, Bristol University; a Master's Degree in Social Work & Postgraduate Professional Qualification, from the Middlesex University. From 1976 to 1980 has been the Chair of the Catholic Renewal Movement (now Catholics for a Changing Church). From 2004 to 2007 he has been a member of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales Social Welfare Committee. From 2010 to 2017 he has been the Chair at the Centre for the Study of Christianity & Sexuality. Theology Committee Member of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics from 2020. Member of UK Catholic Theological Association. Founder Member of the Lesbian & Gay Christian Movement (now One Body, One Faith). Secretary of the Cutting Edge Consortium. Communications & Media Member of LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council. Occasional contributor to Conscience (USA); Guardian Newspaper – Comment is Free; New Blackfriars; The Furrow (Ireland); The Tablet; The Way; Theology & Sexuality.

**Antonio De Caro**

(Author and teacher)

Born in Palermo, he lives in Parma, where he teaches Italian Literature in high schools. Expert in Greek-Latin culture, he has carried out research projects in Italy and abroad and published several texts on didactic and literature. As a counsellor, he works with young people and adults and focuses on the use of literature for personal growth purposes. As an author, educator, and translator, he collaborates with the "Tenda di Gionata" and the Catholic weekly magazine "Adista". Here he contributes to promoting dialogue within Christian faiths on homosexuality. He edited the theological ebook "Seek his face. Theological reflections on homosexual love" and wrote the book "Violence does not belong to God. Homosexual relationships and acceptance in the Church". For the latter, he received the "Books for Peace 2021" literary prize for the best essay on a religious topic.

**Marysol Ortiz**

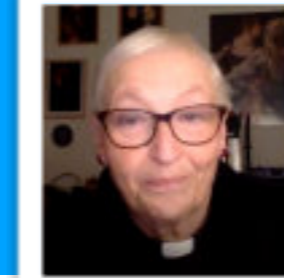
(ENP board member)

Member of the ENP board of directors. Member of the World Christian Life Community. Her experience with her children prompted her to emphasize the importance of the family and motivated her to act to build bridges with Christian communities. She is also a member of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. You believe that the wealth of experiences and synergies in promoting and building bridges of dialogue with bishops and clergy is something that must be shared. Good practices can be very important especially if parents cooperate with each other and support each other.

**Josanne Peregine**

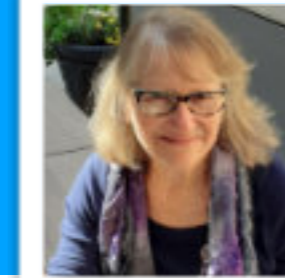
(Co-founder and ENP board member)

A member of the World Christian Life Community, she works to build bridges with Christian communities. She is co-founder and member of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. You believe in the importance of building dialogue with the bishops and the clergy. She believes that respect, compassion, and sensitivity are universal requirements that allow family members to love their faith and find a sense of belonging.

**Daniela Di Carlo**

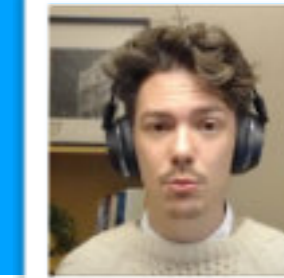
(Baptist, Methodist and Waldesian churches)

Pastor of the Waldensian Church of Milan, she directed the Agape International Ecumenical Center in Prali, and among her interests, ecumenism, ecofeminist and gender theologies. She graduated from the Waldensian Faculty of Theology and studied at the New York Union Theological Seminary. She contributed to the edited publication "La parola e le pratiche. Donne protestanti e femminismi" (The word and practices. Protestant women and feminisms) (2007); "Un vulcano nel vulcano. Mary Daly e gli spostamenti della teologia" (A volcano within a volcano. Mary Daly and the displacements of theology) (2012); "Giustizia di genere. Una nuova visione" (Gender justice. A new vision) (2018); "Gli animali che ci servono. Antologia di testi sulla questione animale" (The animals we need. An anthology on the animal question) (2018); "Quali segni e prodigi Dio ha compiuto per mezzo di loro" (What signs and wonders God has done through them) (2019); "Donne di Parola. Pastore, diacone e predicatrici nel protestantesimo italiano" (Women of the Word. Pastors, deacons and preachers in Italian Protestantism) (2020); "Religioni e animali" (Religions and animals) (2020). She collaborates in the "Culto Radio" column on Rai Radio Uno and is a member of the Faith, Gender and Sexuality Commission of the Waldensian, Methodist and Baptist Churches of the Justice Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission of the Council of Christian Churches of Milan. She is also a member of the Forum of Religions.

**Elizabeth Green**

(Baptist, Methodist and Waldesian churches)

She is a pastor of the Baptist Evangelical Christian Union of Italy serving in Cagliari. Her approach to LGBTQ+ issues starts from feminist theology. She is a member of the Italian Theologians Coordination, was vice-president of the European Association of Theologians. She is a member of Cagliari Arcigay and an honorary member of the Grosseto Arcigay. She collaborates with the Tenda di Gionata and the REFO. Among her latest publications, "Un percorso a spirale" (A spiral path) (2020) written together with Selene Zorzi and Simona Segolon; "Sorelle tutte" (All Sisters) (2021), "Incontri" (Encounters), "Memoria e prospettive della teologia femminista" (Memory and perspectives of feminist theology) written together with Cristina Simonelli (2019).nelli (2019).

**Robin Paulonen**

(EKHO president)

He has a Master's Degree in Human Rights, with a focus on social responsibility and sustainability for minorities, such as the Christian LGBTQ community in Sweden. His thesis focused on conservative anti-gender discourses on topics of power and LGBTQ. Robin is the chairman of a national association called Riksförbundet EKHO (Evangelical Christian groups of LGBTQ people). His work in EKHO has included developing a mentorship programme for and by Christian LGBTQ people, helping to create queer spaces in church and leading workshops. Alongside his work with EKHO Robin is also working as a developer of Human Rights on the County administrative board of Västernorrland. He is overseeing issues concerning human rights, national minorities, democracy, and LGBTQ+.ia, e LGBTQ+.

**Michael Brinkschröder**

(Theologian and sociologist)

He lives in Munich and works as a teacher of religious education at a vocational college. Educated as a Catholic theologian and sociologist, he started the AG Schwule Theologie (Study group gay theology) in 1991 and was editor-in-chief of the journal "Werkstatt Schwule Theologie" from 1995-2005. He has published several articles on gay/queer liberation theology. He is also a founding member in "Queergottesdienst" in Munich, celebrating monthly queer services since 2001 and belongs to the steering group of Rainbow Pastoral in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising. From 2011-2015 he was Co-President of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups and from 2016-17 he was Co-Chair of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. Since 2011 he is (co-)chair of the Catholic LGBT+ Committee in Germany which coordinates queer politics within the frame of the Roman Catholic Church. Publications: "Sodom als Symptom. leichgeschlechtliche Sexualität im christlichen Imaginären – eine religionsgeschichtliche Anamnese" (2006); as co-editor: "Aufgehende Saat. 40 Jahre Ökumenische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche" (2017).

**Andreas Raschke**

(HUG president- Presbyter)

Born in Austria and baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, he converted to an Evangelical Free Church at a young age. He came out at the age of 28 after 4 years of struggle between faith and sexuality. Member of the organisation HUG since 1993, he is currently chairman. He represents HUG at the European Forum of LGBT Christians and has been a member of the Reformed Church (Protestant Church of Helvetic Confession) since 2000. He is a member of the presbytery (church board) in a parish in Western Vienna, and very active in the inter-religious organisation "Religions for Equality", in the queer magazine "XTRA!" and "MCC Vienna". He is in a registered partnership. [registrata](#).

**Heinz Schubert**

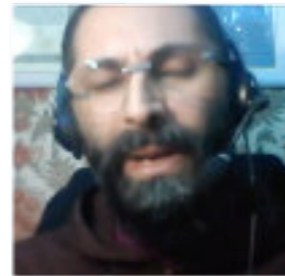
(HUG volunteer)

He is a historian; he grew up in the countryside, and in 1990 he went to Graz (province capital of Styria) for studying economics and history. In those days he came out as a gay man and soon came in touch with the local gay/lesbian community. In 1996 he started following the first chairman of the local branch of "Homosexuelle und Glaube (HuG)" ("Homosexuals and Faith"; founded in 1993). Since then he is the speaker of this ecumenical group. Schubert is also a volunteer for the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession (i.e. Lutheran). From 2000 to 2020 he has been a member of the presbytery in the parish of Graz-Heilandskirche; from 2012 until 2020 he has also been the chairman and member of the local synod.

**Claudia Marlen Schröder**

(Hug activist - scientist)

She is a natural scientist and has been an active member of her local Protestant church for more than 10 years holding a position in the representation council. During her coming out as a transgender person in 2020 she realised that there was barely any knowledge of specific help for transgender people within the Protestant community. Therefore, since then she is engaged in LGBT activities, promoting the visibility of transgender topics in the Protestant Church.

**Agostino De Caro**

(Archbishop in the Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ)

Born into a working-class and very religious family, at 15 he entered a convent among the Capuchin Friars Minor, feeling a strong call to simplicity and poverty. He became aware that priesthood was of the utmost importance and therefore asked to be admitted to the seminary of the Palermo diocese. He studied Theology even if this did not exempt him from problems and doubts. He fought not to be removed from the seminary, but the anonymous letters and the 'inquisitions' he had to undergo led him to leave everything. However, he continued his study of Theology and in 2006 he graduated in Religious Sciences with a thesis in Mariology. He volunteered in organisations that defended LGBT people's rights. In 2010 he met the world of independent Catholicism and, healed from the wounds of the past, he was finally able to dedicate himself to serving the Lord. In 2012 he was ordained a priest by the Ecumenical Church of Christ. In 2013 he went to Dubai in the Indian community. In 2014 he went to Mexico to oversee a prevention programme for minors experiencing prostitution. In 2015 he went on a mission to Kenya for a project in the diocese of Kisumu. In 2018 he received the Archiepiscopal Pallium from the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio for Western Europe. In 2020 he was appointed provincial of the New Order of St. Francis and St. Clare by the Archbishop Primate.

**Rosanna Sirignano**

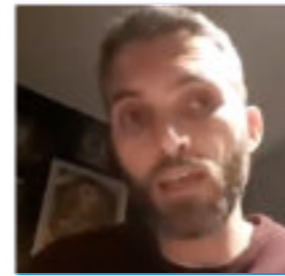
(Il Grande Colibri - PhD in Islamic Studies)

Rosanna Maryam Sirignano is an educator, she teaches Arabic, Islamic studies and interfaith dialogue through her MaryamEd project. He has a PhD in Islamic Studies with a major in Transcultural Studies. She has been collaborating with the "Grande Colibri" since 2017.

**Michele Benini**

(Allah Loves Equality - volunteer)

After various journalistic experiences in local newspapers and in specialised publications, in 2011 he began to write permanently on the blog of "Il Grande Colibri". Together with other partners, he promoted the project "Allah Loves Equality", a documentary filmed in Pakistan on the situation of LGBT people in the Islamic country. Together with Elena De Piccoli and Wajahat Abba Kazmi he wrote a short book on the making of the documentary.

**Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed**

(imam and rector of the CALEM Institute)

Doctor and imam, international consultant in Psychology, Anthropology and Inclusive Theology, Zahed founded the CALEM Institute. He obtained a PhD in Anthropology and Psychology of Religion. He is the former international coordinator of CALEM (2010-2014), imam, and founder of the first inclusive mosque in Europe. He is a founding member of the "LGBT Interreligious Network", founder of the "International and Inclusive Network". Member of the "Network of theologians living with HIV". Queer Muslim of 2014, for his commitment, was the holder of the Pierre Guénin Honorary Award, awarded for moral courage. He is now the rector of the CALEM Institute.

**Rodrigo Araneda Villasante**

(ACHATI president - sociologist)

He is a psychologist with a major in Clinical and Community Psychology. He has worked mainly in civil society, in projects with children, young people and older people. He has mainly focused on vulnerable groups, addictions, HIV, public health, migration and refugee issues. In the last 20 years, he has managed the reception of LGBTBI+ migrants and refugees and has provided help and support for their inclusion.

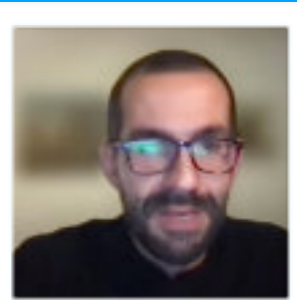
**Haim Fabrizio Cipriani**

(Rabbi and musician)

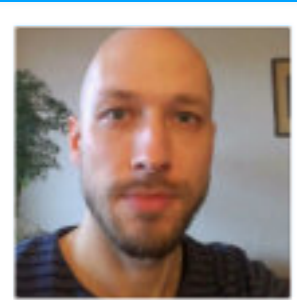
His rabbinate is rooted in the Italian and Hasidic traditions. He studied at the Italian Rabbinical College and received traditional rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva Ateret Tzvi, of the school of the great Rav Shlomo Carlebach, as well as from the New Yorker Rebbe, Joseph H. Gelberman and the Rabbinical Seminary International of New York. Former member of the rabbinical assemblies and rabbinic tribunals of the Masorti/Conservative and Reform/Progressive Jewish movements. He is currently a rabbi at the ULIF Jewish community in Marseille and Visiting Rabbi at the Kehilat Kedem community in Montpellier. In 2017 he founded the Etz Haim movement in Italy for a Judaism without walls, an unprecedented and innovative Jewish group open to individuals of all backgrounds and belonging. He is also the author of numerous essays on Judaism. Along with the rabbinic ministry, Haim Fabrizio Cipriani works internationally as a violinist and conductor. [hestra](#).

**Raffaele Sabbadini**

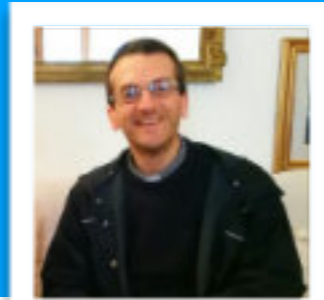
(Magen David Keshet Italia - vice president)

**Massimo Prearo**

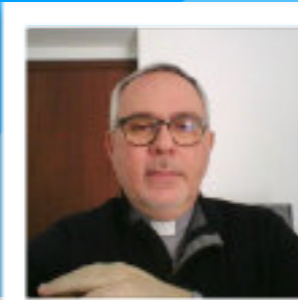
(Researcher at Vienna's university)
He holds a PhD in Political Studies from the EHESS in Paris. He was Marie Curie Fellow and research fellow at the University of Verona, where he is also scientific director of the PoliTeSse – the Politics and Theories of Sexuality Research Center. He has published in Italian: "The pride factory. A genealogy of LGBT movements" (2015) and, with Sara Garbagnoli, "The anti-gender crusade. From the Vatican to the manif pour tous" (2018). Of recent publication is "The Neo-Catholic hypothesis. Politology of anti-gender movements" (2020). He currently teaches Political Science.

**Peik Ingman**

(Scholar of comparative religions)
Peik Ingman is a scholar of Comparative Religion and a professional mediator. He worked as a project coordinator in a national project aimed at improving the condition of LGBTQ+ people with a religious background in Finland (2018-2021). Ingman has worked particularly with staff and volunteers in religious communities. He has also lectured, held workshops, trained religious professionals, organised seminars and helped produce guidance concerning the well-being of LGBTQ+ youth in religious communities, conversion therapy, the anti-gender movement and polarisation.

**Giulio Mignani**

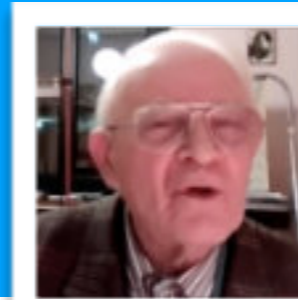
(Presbyter)
In 1999 he obtained a Theology diploma from the Interdiocesan Theological Study of Camaiore and received the priestly ordination. In 2005 he obtained a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology ("Summa cum laude") at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy in Florence. In 2009 he obtained the Canonical Licentiate of Theology with a specialization in Catechetical and Practical Theology ("Magna cum laude") at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences of the Catholic University of Paris. From 1999 to 2021 he was parish administrator of S. Rita in La Spezia. From 2002 to 2003 he was deputy director of the Diocesan Catechetical Office. From 2003 to 2009 he was director of the Diocesan Catechetical Office. From 2001 to 2008 he was private secretary to the Bishop of La Spezia. From 2008 to 2009 he was parish administrator of the parish of San Giovanni Battista in Monterosso. He is parish priest of the parishes of S. Caterina in Bonassola, of S. Martino bishop in Framura, of S. Pietro martyr in Montaretto di Bonassola. Since 2014 he has also been parish administrator of the parish of San Lorenzo in Castagnola di Framura. From 2010 to 2011 he has taught religion at the Liceo Scientifico "A. Pacinotti" in La Spezia, a branch in Levanto.

**Rosario Rosati**

(Presbyter)
Ordained priest in 1990, he has been working as a parish priest and as a director of the Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry, Director of the Ecumenical Office and Interreligious Dialogue. He has a specialisation in Gestalt Counseling, Pastoral Counseling and Family and Couple Counseling. He is currently a parish priest in the city of Trapani in the parish of Sant'Alberto which has about 10,000 inhabitants. For some years the parish community has been questioning whether and how to welcome LGBTQ+ people and their parents, as a consequence Rosario Rosati has started to participate in the meetings of the Sicilian group called "On the way to Emmaus" included in the "3 Times Parents Network".

**Antonio Zito**

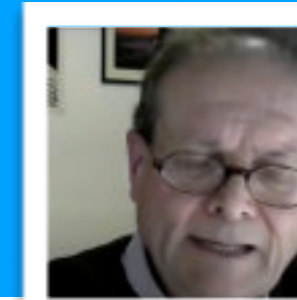
(Presbyter)
From 199 to 2017, he was a teacher of Catholic religion at a scientific high school in Palermo; from 1985 to 2006 he was a parish priest in various local parishes. From 1986 to 1992 he was Diocesan Assistant for the Pastoral Care of Sport, Tourism and Leisure, and from 1998 to 2004 for the Family Pastoral. Since December 2017 he is Director of the Catholic Religion Teaching Office and Head of Pastoral LGBTQ +.

**Franco Barbero**

(Basic Christians - Theologian and writer)
He carried out theological studies to which followed a period of teaching in the seminary. He has a major in Christology. He was parish priest for 7 years, animator of the "comunità cristiana di base", he has been the Italian initiator of the pastoral search for faith and homosexuality. He is the author of a personal blog and of 32 books, the last of which is entitled "Without asking permission".

**Dea Santonico**

(Basic Christians - volunteer)
Volunteer in the "comunità cristiana di base" of San Paolo in Rome since 1973. Volunteer for A.G.E.D.O. and for the Network 3 Times Parents.

**Mario Caproni**

(Agedo Trentino's president)
President of A.G.E.D.O. Trentino since 2017, he was also one of the founding members. He graduated in Social Work and is now retired. He is a member of the board of A.G.E.D.O. Nazionale and a delegate for public relations with Churches and religious confessions regarding the situation of LGBTQ+ people.

**Anna Battaglia**

(Agedo Ragusa's president)
Mother of two children, literature teacher in lower secondary school, now retired Activist at the 228 Amnesty International group, member of the Libera Ragusa presidium Dafne Caruana Galizia, member of La Tenda di Gionata. You are part of the 3VolteGenitori Network through the Sicilian group In Viaggio per Emmaus.

**Francesca Marceca**

(Ex President of Agedo Palermo - volunteer at Agedo Torino)
After graduating with a diploma in Education and a degree in Pedagogy, she has been a primary school teacher for 43 years. Mother of three children, in 1999 she founded in Palermo the first A.G.E.D.O. of southern Italy where she has been president until 2014. She attended training courses as a teacher and as a volunteer. For A.G.E.D.O. she participated as a speaker in various training courses and collaborated in the drafting and implementation of various projects. Now retired she lives in Carmagnola and is a volunteer of A.G.E.D.O. Torino, as well as being part of the 3 Times Parents Network. In her spare time, she writes children's books and collaborates in the drafting of projects for A.G.E.D.O.

TO SPEAK VISUALLY



"THE FIRST IMPRESSION ON A PROJECT COMES FROM THE QUALITY OF ITS IMAGE"

One of the final objectives of the project was to produce material for distribution to the public. The following were produced: this brochure and a series of illustrated postcards, to be disseminated during events and subsequently, in the most suitable meeting places, between associations, between religious communities, to reach new interested catchment areas.

The decision to invest time and work in developing a consistent graphic line proved immediately important. The graphic language made it possible to present the qualities and values of the project to potential speakers, the public, the newspapers; it has also contributed to giving a sign of professionalism, care and importance. We have invested in graphics that attract the attention of the public and encourage reading, and we have produced synthetic texts capable of communicating the content in a clear and immediate way. The blue colour was chosen as the base colour of the graphics as reassuring and inspiring optimism. The characters of the postcards and posters are simple and immediate, and the essential

style wants to communicate safety and calm, while the paper effect makes the illustrations vivid and personal.

The advertising campaign made use of a hand-animated trailer that presented the themes of the project and made it possible to reach many people with clear and immediate communication. At the beginning of each webinar and during the breaks, self-produced 3D animation videos with music composed specifically for the project acted as an introduction and interlude, offering a few minutes necessary for the speakers and spectators to prepare, always maintaining the professional look. Activities.

The materials produced are intended to respond to the needs of LGBT+ believers and those who accompany them, whether they are individuals or associations. We have condensed the mission, the vision of the project, the products and services offered in the brochure and postcards.



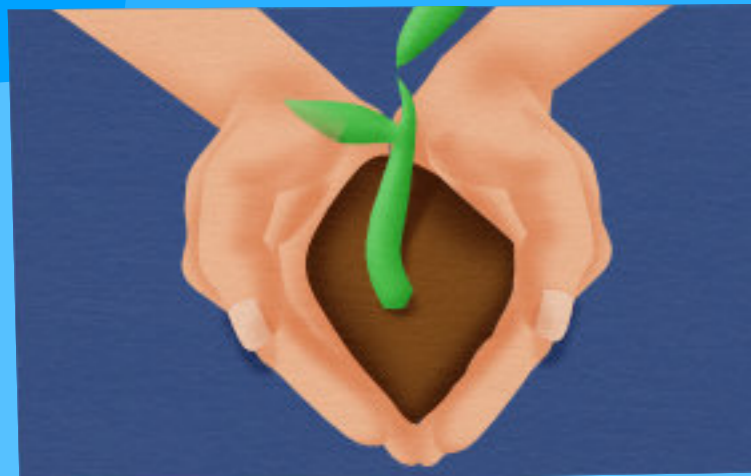
IMPACT

The network for the UTC 2 project spontaneously grew in a positive way; word of mouth was very useful. The subscriptions exceeded the numbers planned at the start of the activities; when the news spread, associations, informal networks, religious communities spontaneously contacted A.G.E.D.O. National by asking to participate; this led to the presence of 47 speakers, dozens of associations and the identification of a potential multilevel network. The real result of UTC2 is precisely the people who worked and collaborated on it. They belong to different places, contexts, with different expertise and this great variety of voices ensures the dissemination of the good practices acquired.

The team behind the project implemented various communication and awareness-raising strategies to disseminate information in order to involve potentially interested individuals, entities, communities. The webinars were advertised through word of mouth between associations and through

direct communication with online and social newspapers and newspapers. We have worked systematically so that all contents can be used by all. A report, a trailer, graphic materials, webinar recordings, slides of many speeches were produced. All materials are available free of charge on the A.G.E.D.O. National at the link www.AGED.O.nazionale.org/utc2.

Many of the participants in the UTC2 webinars expressed their intention to continue the path undertaken, keeping the dialogue open, working on new common projects, exchanging ideas, in the hope of helping to reduce the stigma and prejudices that almost all religious contexts project on people LGBT+ both within their own fields and in civil society where they are often the worst opponents. Activities of this type may well support non-discrimination policies within the European Community.



"WORKING IN UTC2 HAS ALLOWED US TO IMAGINE A EUROPE WHERE LGBT+ PEOPLE FEEL INCLUSIVE IN THE DEBATE ON FAITH."

"NO ONE SHOULD SUFFER FROM HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN HIS FAITH AND BE HIMSELF"

POSTCARDS

The A5 format of the postcards was chosen because of the great ease of distribution already experienced in previous designs. Postcards pass from hand to hand and last longer than flyers and leaflets; about 2000 postcards have been printed, while the brochure will be made available free of charge in Italian and English on the website.

The aim is to reach people in need of help, to listen or people sensitive to the themes of the project, interested in learning more. From our experience, we know that sometimes it takes very little to no longer feel alone, to initiate a profound and important process of change, to change a life and the lives of the people around for the better.

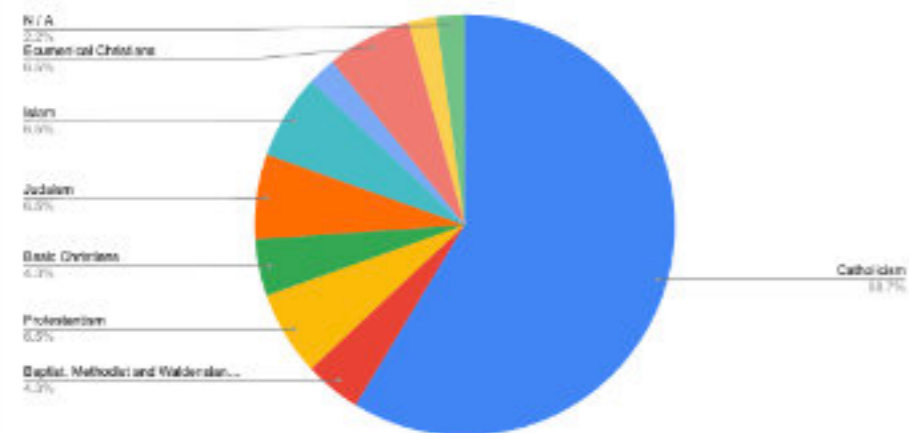
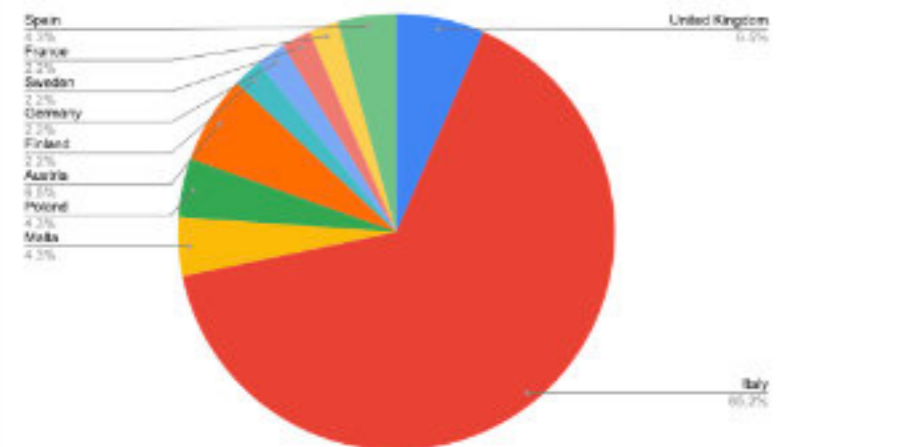
The materials produced were distributed among the speakers and the participating associations; the brochures, videos, posters, postcards are available in digital format on the UTC2 page at www.agedonazionale.org/utc2, together with the full recordings of the five webinars.



STATS

SPEAKERS

PARTICIPANTS



Nationality	Count	Religious orientation	Count
United Kingdom	3	Catholicism	27
Italy	35	Baptist, Method	1
Malta	2	Protestantism	3
Poland	2	Baptist, Method	1
Austria	3	Basic Christians	2
Finland	1	Judaism	3
Germany	1	Islam	3
Sweden	1	Ecumenical Cath	1
France	1	Ecumenical Chri	3
Spain	2	Jesuits	1
		N/A	1

The project saw the participation of a heterogeneous group by socio-cultural background, age, nationality, religious faith, membership. Present among the speakers were representatives from 10 European countries (Italy, United Kingdom, Malta, Poland, Austria, Finland, Germany, Sweden, France, Spain), representatives of pro LGBT+ associations, writers, theologians and ministers of worship from various churches and religious denominations (Catholic Church, Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches (BMV), Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ, Protestant Churches, Basic Christians, Ecumenical Christians, Judaism, Islam).

The speakers represent the most diverse profiles: psychologists, presbyters, pastors, volunteers from pro LGBT+ associations, students, teachers, etc.

They are all linked by the idea of a democratic Europe that is stronger and more homogeneous in respect of human rights and by a vision of open and welcoming religious communities.

The heterogeneity of interests, cultural backgrounds, skills and experiences was an important resource of the seminars.

More than 230 people have signed up to the UTC2 mailing list, and many of the registered users have asked for webinar recordings to be able to watch them outside of livestreaming dates.

The live webinars had an average of between 40 and 70 participants at the same time, and the number recorded a drop of about 1/3 in attendance in the last hour (out of the three expected).

Most of the spectators were people of Italian nationality, LGBT+ or their allies, representatives of NGOs.

Social media (including promotion), mailing lists and word of mouth were the main channels of dissemination of the project.

Nationality

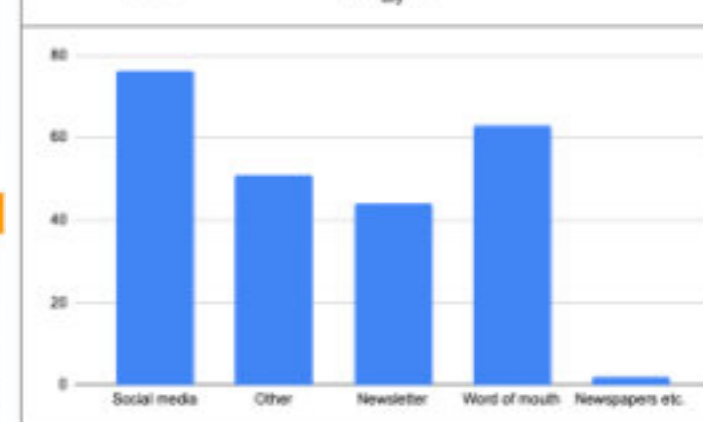
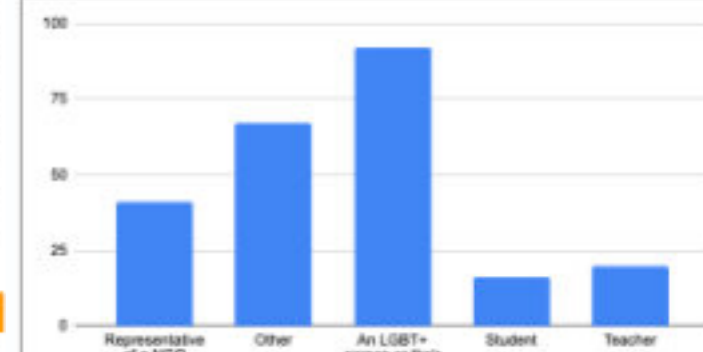
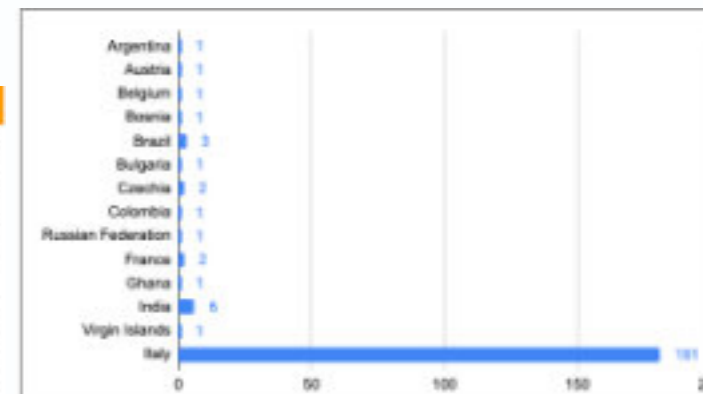
Argentina	1
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Bosnia	1
Brazil	3
Bulgaria	1
Czechia	2
Colombia	1
Russian Federation	1
France	2
Ghana	1
India	6
Virgin Islands	1
Italy	181

Role

Representative of a NGO	41
Other	67
An LGBT+ person or their ally	92
Student	16
Teacher	20

How they got to know about UTC2

Social media	76
Other	51
Newsletter	44
Word of mouth	63
Newspapers etc.	2



VISIBILITY

RIFORMA.IT
United towards the change, uniti verso il cambiamento
L'associazione Agedo (associazione di genitori, parenti, amiche e...

RBE.IT
"Uniti verso il cambiamento" con l'associazione AGEDO | Radio RBE

RIFORMA.IT
«Uniti verso il cambiamento 2»
Giovedì 21 ottobre alle ore 17:30 si svolgerà il primo di cinque we...

QUIRKYMAGAZINE.COM
UTC: i 5 webinar di A.GE.D.O. per aiutare le persone LGBT+ e le loro famiglie provenienti da contesti religiosi...

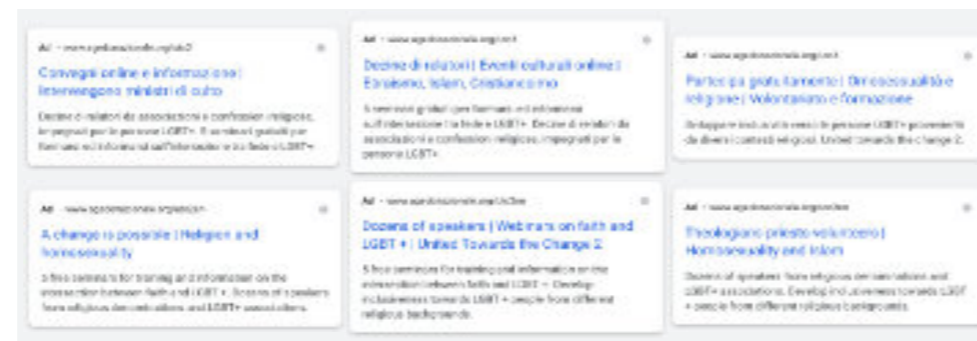
ITALIALAICA.IT
Italialaica - COME CAMBIANO LE RELIGIONI CON LE PERSONE LGBT E I...
La religione può giocare un ruolo considerevole nel modo in cui le persone interpretano orientamenti e identità di genere, da questa...

https://www.adista.it - articolo - Translate this page
"Uniti verso il cambiamento": la rassegna di Agedo su fedeli e ...
Oct 20, 2021 — Al via domani "United Towards the Change 2" (Utc 2), la rassegna promossa dall'associazione di genitori, parenti, amiche e amici di persone ...

The project has spread widely on social networks through word of mouth and mailing lists of associations, blogs, websites, Facebook pages; they have published numerous articles to spread a project that they considered innovative. Here we report some titles, the number of articles, posts and emails spread while on the web far exceeds the material present here.

ADS

The project was advertised through Facebook ADS and Google ADS. Advertising on Google was acquired for free and reached more than 82,000 people, of which more than 4,000 visited the UTC2 site. The campaign on Facebook ADS was supported by the project budget and brought 1666 views and 47 interactions.

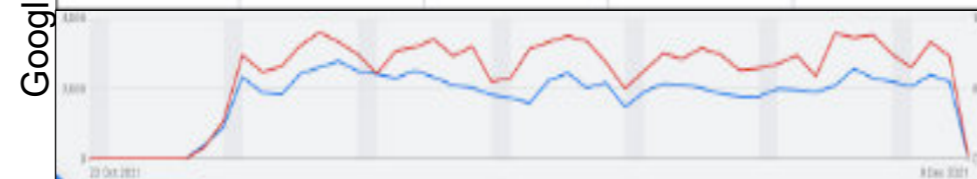


Facebook

	THU, DEC 9	Impressions	Interactions
	United Towards the Change	1666	47
	2		

Google ads

Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost
4,531	82,082	5.52%	US\$1.30	US\$5,902.21



CHALLENGES

It is clear to us at A.GE.D.O. that being a non-denominational association, when we approach religious issues, we must be very careful so as not to offend anyone's sensibility, atheists and believers, so as not to incur gross errors that can create misunderstandings. Meanwhile, to be immediately clear, our goal was not to make even easy controversies against many hierarchies, to further blame our believing friends and to point out any contradictions and least of all to "teach the profession to priests". Why then have we addressed the issue, not for the first time, I must say?

For some time, we have noticed a great ferment in many basic believing groups, the birth of specific pastorals for LGBT+ people and their families and above all, how many believers we had within us who firmly fight with us for civil rights and are often frustrated. From the fact that often

the religious communities to which they belong are little or nothing open and inclusive.

In addition, an offensive against us has been unleashed for about 20 years by fundamentalist groups who accuse us of propagating a phantom "gender theory" that often makes meeting with believers difficult. We need to understand where this strong sense of opposition comes from, how and if we can compose it. Lastly, we have the little aptitude to understand the language and dynamics of the religious world and the difficulty in transmitting our contents in an understandable way and also, on this, we try to be more and more equipped. All this is not a small thing, and certainly, this is the first organic approach on our part that could have developments in mutual respect.

We have had around us curiosity,

appreciation because these methods are not usually on the part of a non-confessional organization and a lot of collaboration from those who have made themselves available with their experience, their experience and their knowledge without any control and censorship from our part.

AND RESOURCES

C.O.E.

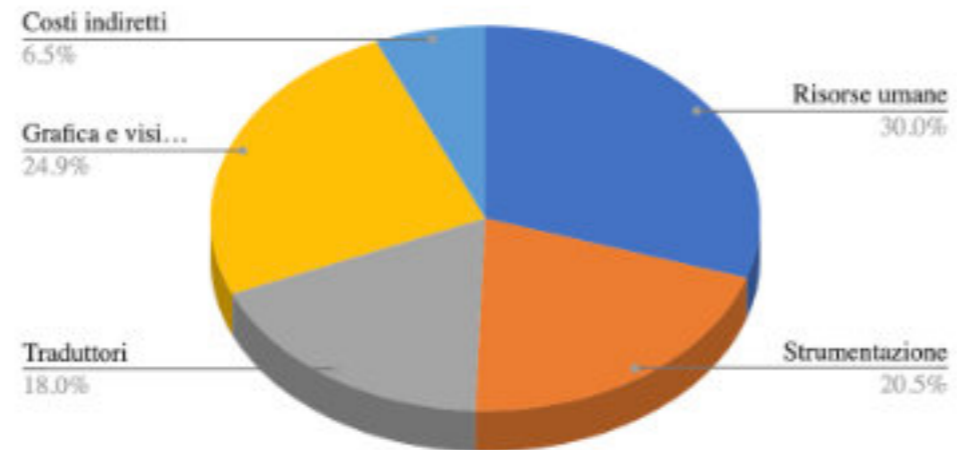
The Council of Europe (COE) is an international organization whose purpose is to promote democracy, human rights, European cultural identity and the search for solutions to social problems in Europe. It was founded on May 5, 1949, with the Treaty of London today. It has 47 member states, and its institutional seat is in Strasbourg, France, in the Palace of Europe.

The purpose of its establishment in 1949 was to prevent the atrocities of World War II from happening again; the Council of Europe exercises the function of achieving this aim by intervening on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. On October 17, 1989, he was granted observer status by the United Nations General Assembly.

This project has been possible thanks to the support of the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) unit of the Council of Europe, which is responsible for promoting and guaranteeing respect for the human rights of every individual, including equal rights and dignity for people. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI).

S.O.G.I. UNIT

BUDGET



The project was funded by the SOGI Unit of COEE for a total of: 14,991.38.

Human resources: € 4,500.00 (Collaboration, organization, contacts, secretariat)

Instrumentation: € 3,259.70 (Hardware and software)

Interpreting: € 2,700.00

Graphics, promotional communication: € 3,730.38

Indirect (administrative) costs: € 976.00

18% of the budget was invested in translations and simultaneous interpretation to allow speakers and the international audience to follow the webinars and to allow speakers from various countries to interact smoothly and without communication barriers.

30% of the budget was invested in operators who followed the project step by step.

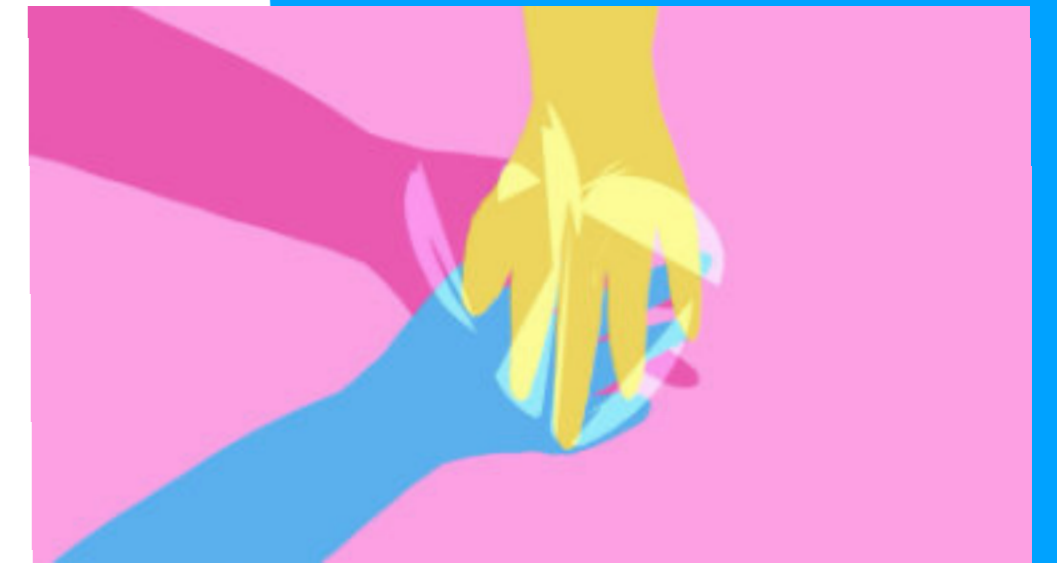
About 20% of the budget was invested in the tools necessary to optimize the work and achieve good technical quality.

About 24.9% of the budget was invested in promotion, in the graphic production of the trailer, the brochure, the illustrations, the graphics for social networks, in the printing of the products and in the mailings.

A.G.E.D.O. thanks all the speakers, associations and operators who have contributed to the success of the project. They were days of intense activity and involvement, with a peaceful discussion and a fruitful exchange of ideas and proposals that we hope will be useful not only for us.

We thank the participants in the webinars who followed the work by contributing with questions, appreciations and observations to an outcome we believe to be profitable.

We thank the SOGI unit of the Council of Europe for believing in the project and supporting it.



THANK YOU

Gimelli Fiorenzo, president of A.G.E.D.O. Nazionale O.D.V.

UNITED TOWARDS THE CHANGE 2

Develop good practices to help LGBT+ people and their families from religious backgrounds.

Religion can play a considerable role in how people interpret gender orientations and identities; from this awareness, the UTC2 project was born, a training opportunity to better understand the intersections between religion, orientation, and gender identity.

In cooperation with



LA TENDA di GIONATA
Insieme per credere e intervenire su fede e omosessualità



HUK
Theological Institute of the University of Cologne



il grandececlibri
Essere LGBT nel mondo



Riksförbundet EKHO
KÄRLEK FÖR ALLA
LÄSHTA LGBT+ PERSONER

