



Organisation Intersex International Europe  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**



# WE THANK OUR SUPPORTERS!

We received funding from:



The project „RISE! Fighting discrimination and increasing visibility of intersex people through capacity and knowledge building“ was funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

**SIGRID RAUSING TRUST**



We are also very grateful and thank our anonymous funders and individual donors for their generous support

We also thank our cooperation partner



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# Organisation Intersex International Europe ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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# Introduction

2020 was a year full of unprecedented challenges and rough seas for the intersex community in Europe and worldwide. Covid-19 has impacted strongly on most people's lives. All vulnerable and marginalized parts of the population, including but certainly not limited to intersex people, have been among those that have been hit hardest. If there is good news in this crisis, then that the resilience and the strength of the intersex community can count as such. OII Europe's Covid-19 survey has shown that, despite the hardship faced, the bond intersex people have built in the past few years in Europe and, recently, in Central Asia, holds strong during the crisis.

As an organisation we had to adapt to a new and unforeseen situation and to find new solutions, while continuing our work to ensure the protection of intersex people's human rights.

In order to stay in touch with our community and without the possibility of hosting our beloved "Community Events and Conference" due to the COVID-19 pandemic we decided to launch a first weekly and then bi-weekly "Virtual Campfire", a regular online platform for social interaction between our community members. During these calls we talk, catch up, support each other, watch free movies, play games and have fun!

However, with the world in the midst of a global pandemic, and an evident lack of general visibility of and knowledge about

its impact on intersex people already early on in the crisis, it was obvious that we needed to do more. Seeing that most of the quickly launched research was not taking intersex people's existence into account, let alone could reflect their specific situation in the questionnaire, we created and conducted the European Intersex COVID-19 exploratory survey, with the help of the European and Central Asian Intersex Community, and published the findings in our report "COVID-19 – A report on the situation of intersex people in Europe and Central Asia". The findings are worrying, but also full of the resilience and long-term vision to work for change, which are two of the assets of our community.

Speaking about long-term visions: In 2020, we celebrated OII Europe's 5th birthday as a registered organisation. The celebration featured intersex musicians, special guests, surprise videos with birthday wishes, speeches from past and current steering board and staff members, lots of memories from our history and surprise gifts for attendees. We finished the celebration with an afterparty, which consisted of a reading from our testimonial book #MyIntersexStory and sharing some of the personal testimonies of intersex people living in Europe. Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who attended our celebration, sent us birthday wishes and was with us in spirit despite not being able to make it to the events – but don't forget that you can still watch the recordings on our YouTube channel!



*Serious faces during the online steering board and staff meeting from our home offices in May 2020, coping with the Covid-19 pandemic*

2020 was also a year of very important steps on EU level, with several European Commission Strategies being developed that OII Europe contributed to by ongoing advocacy and several submissions. The two most important ones being the *EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy* which includes, for the first time ever in a EU document, Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM) as a harmful medical practice, and the *EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child* which includes intersex children explicitly and presents an action point that aims to support Member States in working towards ending IGM.

On the level of the Council of Europe, we saw the first ever intersex cases being brought before the European Court of Human Rights, one about a third gender marker option and one about IGM. OII Europe as the lead submitted, together with ILGA-Europe and its French member organisation C.I.A, a third party intervention on both cases.

Also, in 2020 we started our project „RISE! Fighting discrimination and increasing visibility of intersex people through capacity and knowledge building” which is funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). Project RISE! aims at increasing intersex awareness and building the capacity of intersex activists across Europe through online trainings and mentoring.

And of course, we did not forget about another pillar of our work: OII Europe’s ever growing bouquet of materials and publications translated into several languages. In 2020, the materials included infographics about the multiple forms of discrimination that intersex people living in Europe experience, based on the statistical findings of the FRA EU-LGBTI Survey 2019 and its accompanying data explorer. Also part of the created materials are several translations, e.g., of the legal toolkit “Protecting Intersex People in Europe” which we were able to translate into French and Spanish. And of course the OII Europe Good Practice Map 2019, which we published with a new set of good practice examples on IDAHOBIT 2020.

And there is more: In this year’s Annual Report you can read about our new Intersex Refugees and Asylum Seekers Support Project, our Strategic Litigation Project and our activities during the Intersex Awareness Weeks 2020.

But the short story is: Despite all the challenges we faced in 2020, we managed to continue our advocacy work for intersex people’s human rights. We are still here and we will continue to grow as an organisation and advocate for the protection of the human rights of intersex people across Europe.

*The Steering Board and Staff Team*

# COVID-19

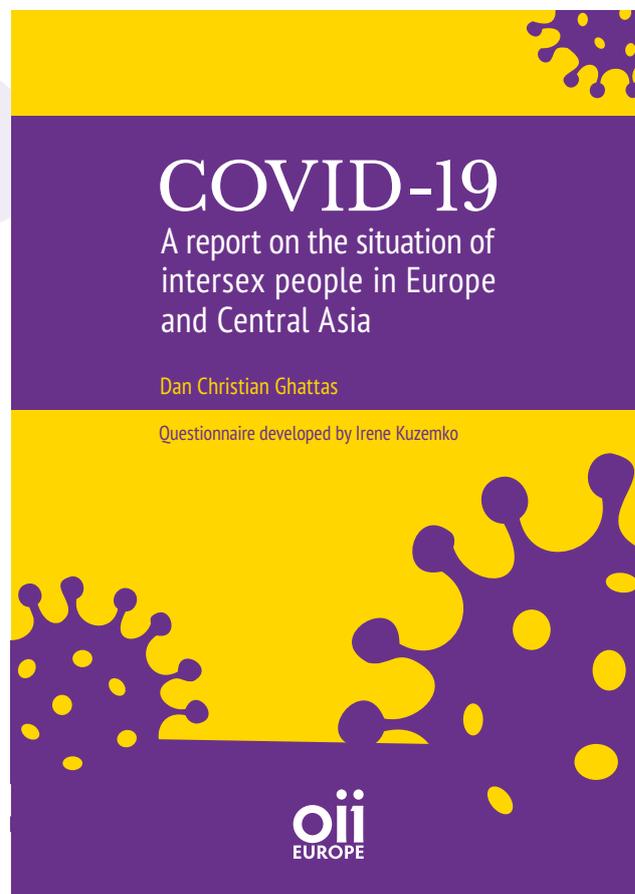
## & the situation of intersex people

**M**any surveys on the impact of Covid-19 were developed and launched after the beginning of the crisis, but even when they addressed areas that are of particular concern for intersex people and their families, the still prevailing lack of awareness about intersex people and intersex lives makes it challenging for these surveys to collect meaningful data or to collect data at all. Many intersex people have reported to OII Europe that the available Covid-19 surveys did not address the specific challenges created or aggravated for them by Covid-19.

As OII Europe, with the support of the European Intersex Community, we therefore set out to create a questionnaire that would help to gather more detailed information about important areas of the lives of intersex people and their families in the times of Covid-19.

We decided to use quantitative data collection together with extensive opportunity for participants to write about their experience. From a statistical point of view, the quantitative findings are not applicable to the general intersex population, as the sample size is too small and the necessary statistical randomness is not given. But they send a signal and indicate areas of concern.

On December 9th 2020, OII Europe published the survey report “Covid-19. A report on the situation of intersex people in Europe and Central Asia”. This intersex-led survey was the first in Europe and Central Asia to specifically focus on the impact of Covid-19 on intersex individuals. It is part of a global project, initiated by OII Europe and conducted by the International Intersex Community, that aims to increase knowledge about the situation of intersex people in times of the pandemic.



Cover of the OII Europe Covid-19 Report on the situation of intersex people in Europe and Central Asia, 2020. ▲  
Download as PDF available under:  
<https://oii europe.org/covid-19-survey-report/>

## Main Findings: Areas of Concern

Overall, the survey findings showed that the Covid-19 pandemic had and continues to have a massive impact on all areas of life of intersex people with negative effects in mental health, general access to healthcare and on intersex people's and their families work and financial situation being the most prominent.

■ **Medical trauma acquired through unconsented, non-vital medical interventions and treatment:** Intersex people's problems are amplified during the Covid-19 crisis because they relive their previous trauma through actual contact or being at risk to be in contact with medical doctors and hospitals, aggravated because the societal and medical environments do not account for their trauma.

■ **Financial situations & mental health:** Many intersex people are experiencing financial problems and/or income reduction as a result of the pandemic, with about half noticing that they have to spend more money during the pandemic. Some survey participants lost their job due to the economic crisis or had to quit their job because of their mental or physical health issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a few facing severe housing problems as a result of their financial situation. Several participants of the survey are staying at home in self-isolation with someone whom they have a strained relationship or other difficulties with.

## Impact on Intersex Activism

On a less personal level, the survey also drew a clearer picture about how the pandemic is impacting intersex activism as it prevents intersex activists from using in-person methods of building community, raising awareness and advocating for intersex human rights that they have created. In addition, with an extremely high amount of volunteer work still at the core of intersex activism, the need of many intersex activists to refocus their energy on their personal financial survival directly impacts the capacity of the movement.

On a positive note, the majority of respondents were in touch with other intersex individuals and intersex organisations and groups on a regular basis. But resilience can only carry a movement so far.

The European and Central Asian Intersex Movement needs the means and the capacity to proceed while staying strong. It needs encouragement, protection and, last but not least, sustainable funding – during the crisis and beyond.

# POLICY & ADVOCACY I

## Advocating for a strong commitment of the European Commission to intersex rights in the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

In 2011, the first discussions on what would later be called *EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy* began. In 2020, the **European Commission** started preparatory work on a new strategy to combat the persisting discrimination and inequality experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) people, an initiative that would build on the achievements of the EU list of actions to advance LGBTI equality (2015-19). The strategy does not extend the competences of the EU, but it does make sure that the EU is actively working towards ending discrimination against LGBTI people within its borders.

In April 2020, OII Europe sent a submission to the European Commission in preparation of its LGBTIQ Equality Strategy in order to ensure that the latter would commit to respecting and protecting intersex people's rights. The Strategy was approved in November and marked a huge success: it includes a comprehensive set of action points to tackle discrimination of LGBTIQ people, ensure their safety, build LGBTIQ inclusive societies and leading the call for LGBTIQ Equality around the world. The strategy explicitly addresses the impact of harmful practices such as non-vital surgery and medical intervention on intersex infants and adolescents without their personal and fully informed consent and, for the first time ever in a EU document, uses the term "intersex genital mutilation"

(IGM). Its action plan not only addresses the inequalities and challenges affecting LGBTIQ people, but it pays particular attention to the diversity of LGBTIQ people's needs and to the most vulnerable individuals within this group, who are among the least accepted groups in society and generally experience more discrimination and violence: intersex, trans and non-binary people.



Cover of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

# Submitting interventions in two intersex cases at the European Court of Human Rights

In 2020, for the first time ever, two intersex cases were brought before the **European Court of Human Rights** (ECHR). We congratulate the two French claimants and their lawyers who had the will and stamina to bring those two cases forward to the highest Human Rights Court in Europe. OII Europe as the leading party intervened in both cases, together with ILGA Europe and OII Europe's French member organisation Collectif intersexes et allié-e-s. The first case (Y v. France) concerns the French authorities' refusal to allow for the current "male" gender marker of the applicant, an intersex person, to be replaced by "neutral" or "intersex" on the birth certificate.

Our first joint third-party intervention was submitted in November 2020. With the same consortium, we also submitted an intervention in a second case (M v France), in February 2021. This second case concerned the breach of bodily integrity through non-vital surgical interventions on intersex children and the obstacles faced when seeking reparation before the Courts. Decisions issued by the ECHR are not only binding for the Member State in question but for all Council of Europe Member States and would be a milestone for the protection of intersex people's human rights.

Link: <https://oiieurope.org/submissions/>

## Advocating for intersex inclusion in the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

Advocating for the Rights of intersex children is a particular focus of OII Europe's advocacy work, in order to ensure the bodily integrity and autonomy of children born with variations of sex characteristics. With the first ever **EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child** on the way we took the opportunity, together with our close ally ILGA-Europe, to address the situation of intersex children and advocate for an explicit inclusion of intersex children in the Strategy. In July 2020, OII Europe sent a submission to the European Commission in the context of the roadmap consultation for the strategy. In December, OII Europe endorsed and contributed to the joint submission of ILGA-Europe, TGEU, IGLYO and NEFLA in the context of the public consultation. In addition, OII Europe submitted a second submission which detailed the specific situation and needs of intersex children, and the violations they face. As a result of this continuous collective effort and ongoing, joint work and advocacy before and during the creation of the strategy, the now approved Strategy (March 2021), for the first time in a EU document,

■ recognizes IGM (intersex genital mutilation) as violence against intersex individuals, and, like with FGM (female genital mutilation), points to the strong need to end these harmful practices;

■ acknowledges the similarities between intersex genital mutilation and female genital mutilation by noting that "more than 200 million women and girls worldwide are survivors of FGM, including over 600.000 in the EU. 62% of intersex people who had undergone a surgery said neither they nor their parents gave fully informed consent before medical treatment or intervention to modify their sex characteristics";

■ includes as a key action to ending IGM: to "support the exchange of good practices on ending non-vital surgery and medical intervention on intersex infants and adolescents to make them fit the typical definition of male or female without their or their parents' fully informed consent";

■ explicitly acknowledges the specific discrimination faced by LGBTIQ children;

■ highlights the fact that LGBTI students are overproportionally affected by physical, verbal or relational bullying, with 51% of 15-17 years old respondents to the 2019 FRA LGBTI Survey reporting harassment in school.

# POLICY & ADVOCACY II

## Advocating for the Right of Privacy of intersex children on UN Level

In September 2020, OII Europe sent its submissions to the **UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy**. We outlined the severe breaches of the Right to Privacy that intersex children experience and the respective effects on the development of their autonomy. The final report (released in January 2021) references OII Europe's submission and highlights violations of intersex children's rights to bodily integrity and recognition of gender identity. The report highlights many severe violations of intersex children's human rights:

### Sexuality, gender, bodily integrity and physical autonomy

[...]

98. The bodily integrity and autonomy rights of children, however, are infringed by the actions of Governments, commercial entities, health-care and other professionals, parents and peers. Infringements identified include:

[...]

(c) Children with diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and expression, and variations in sex characteristics being subjected to violence; discrimination and harassment; pathologization of their gender identity or body; unnecessary medical treatment; publication of details concerning genitalia; stigmatization; "instructive" rape;

"conversion" therapies; withholding of specific health services, including trans health-care and reproductive sexual information and services; denial of access to medical records; criminal penalties for consensual peer sexual activity, including sexting; sexual abuse online and offline; and lack of legal gender recognition.

### Recognition of identity

103. Birth certificates can pose challenges to attaining dignity, identity, privacy and development for transgender and intersex children, children born through international surrogacy arrangements, missing children, unaccompanied refugee children and children in out-of-home care, among others.

## Opening up spaces for intersex activists: EQUINET seminar on trans & intersex rights

The 3-day online event took place on December 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and was hosted by EQUINET, ILGA-Europe, OII Europe and TGEU. It brought together national and European equality body staff with national intersex and trans activists. One part of the event focussed specifically on intersex issues, starting with an Intersex 101, to ensure a common basic understanding among all attendees and a session in which equality bodies presented their work on intersex issues, followed by a session in which intersex activists discussed their experiences working with equality bodies. A substantial part

of the meeting was devoted to discussing the impact of the growing anti-gender movement on trans and intersex activism.

Spaces, where intersex activists working on national levels can connect on a European level with national and European equality bodies, policy makers and politicians, are an important way to establish new working relationships. We consider opening up those spaces a key measure in our support of national intersex-led NGOs.

# Advocacy Work and Awareness Raising at relevant events

## In 2020, we spoke at the following events:

04.02.2020, Brussels, **The EU and LGBTI Rights in 2020-2024**, Meeting with the European Parliament's LGBTI Intergroup ▶

05.03.2020, Vienna, **Expert Meeting on Communicating of the FRA LGBTI Survey Results** with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

07.03.2020, Frankfurt, **Euro LGBT Family Law Institute Meeting**

13.05.2020, Online, **United we Talk**. Discussion on IDAHOBIT & Solidarity

17.06.2020, Panel discussion on Discrimination and Stereotyping inside the LGBTI+ community, part of **AEGEE's Online Pride**

30.06.2020, Online, **How to advance the Human Rights of Intersex Persons? Lessons learned from Finland**. A Council of Europe Pride-week Webinar, in co-operation with the Permanent Mission of Finland to the Council of Europe

24-25.08.2020, Online, **WE- Connect Europe. A conference about LGBTI-asylum and migration**., workshop held by OII Europe at the conference, organised by COC Netherlands

09.09.2020, Online, **Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing: Mental health challenges in the LGBTI community: looking at the COVID-19 impact and beyond**, hosted and moderated by Maria Walsh MEP

03.10.2020, Online, Intersex Talk, part of **IGLYO's UNITE Global Youth Pride**

07-08.10.2020, Online, Global Conversation, part of the **International Virtual Intersex Forum**

14.10.2020, Online, Dialogue with Donors Global Webinar, part of the **International Virtual Intersex Forum**

20.10.2020, Online, **How to be a good intersex ally?** Global Webinar, part of the International Virtual Intersex Forum

09-11.12.2020, Online, **OutRight Action International: OutSummit Human Rights Conference**

## Attendance and dissemination of information about intersex at the following events:

11.09.2020, Strassbourg and online, **Extraordinary Roundtable of the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network**

28.09.2020, ECRI's 2020 online Seminar with Equality Bodies: **Joining Forces to Communicate the Equality and Diversity Message**

29.09-01.10.2020, Online, **13th European Forum on the rights of the child**, organised by the European Commission

07.10.2020, FRA webinar on **European Union Fundamental Rights Information System (EFRIS)**.

08.10.2020, Online, **International Anti-Gender Campaigns: What are we dealing with? Insights from the US, Mexico, and Europe**, organised by CFFP Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy



08.10.2020, Online, **A "Living Instrument" For Everyone: The Role of the European Convention on Human Rights in Advancing Equality for LGBTI Persons**, conference to mark the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.

08-15.10.2020, Online, **International Anti-Gender Campaigns: What can we do about it?**

13-14.10.2020, Online, **10th EASO Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting**

14.10.2020, Online, **Equinet Online Roundtable: Future of Equality Legislation in Europe**

16.10.2020, Online, Euractiv Poland online seminar. **Situation of LGBT+ People in Poland and Europe**

19-23.10.2020, Online, **ILGA-Europe Gathering 2020**

## Events OII Europe co-organised:

17.6.2020, **Instagram Life Event** about the FRA LGBTI Survey Results and OII Europe's Good Practice Map 2020, co-organised by ILGA-Europe and OII Europe

01.10.2020, Online, European Regional Conversation, part of the **International Virtual Intersex Forum**

15-17.12.2020, Online, Seminar on **Trans & Intersex Rights Building Bridges Between Equality Bodies and Trans and Intersex Activists**, co-organised by EQUINET, ILGA-Europe, TGEU, OII Europe

# AWARENESS RAISING

Raising awareness is one of OII Europe's key measures to inform policy makers, stakeholders, professionals, media and the general public about the situation of intersex people living in Europe. Our goal is twofold: to foster human rights-based language and terminology that is depathologizing, destigmatising, empowering, appreciative, affirmative and developed by the intersex community and to make intersex people in Europe more aware of their human rights.

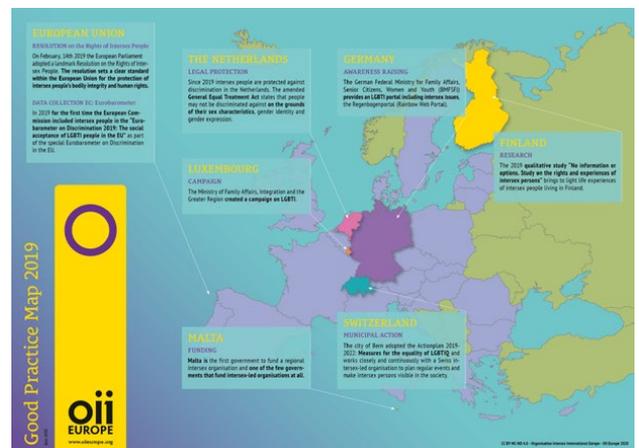
In our continuous work throughout the year we transform existing, comprehensive OII Europe resources into shorter, topic-specific awareness raising material. Here are four highlights of our awareness raising work in 2020:

## 1. Good Practice Map 2019

For the second time OII Europe released its Good Practice Map. The Good Practice Map 2019 shows that, while intersex rights are still under attack in Europe, there are good examples of positive change. The Map features eight examples of Good Practice from the areas of resolution, data collection, research, legal protection, campaigning, awareness raising, employment and funding by national governments and municipalities and the European Commission.

Front and back sides of the unfolded Good Practice Map 2019 ▶

Download as PDF available under:  
<https://oiiurope.org/good-practice-map-2019/>



## MUNICIPAL ACTION

Switzerland

The city of Bern adopted the Actionplan 2019-2022: Measures for the equality of LGBTIQ. The plan

- ▶ provides a better integration of intersex persons (also lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans persons) in the labour market
- ▶ explicitly emphasizes that intersex persons should know that they are not alone and that they can get support in their situation

## LEGAL PROTECTION

The Netherlands

Since 2019 intersex people are protected against discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics in the Netherlands. The amended General Equal Treatment Act protects people against discrimination at work, in education, in housing, and in (social) services. Apart from going to court,

- ▶ individuals can lodge complaints with the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, which allows for a more low-threshold accessibility.

As of 2019, seven CoE Member States offer explicit protection on the ground of sex characteristics. These developments show a clear increase of awareness

- ▶ about the need to legally protect intersex people against discrimination
- ▶ about the necessity to protect intersex people in all areas of life
- ▶ that the protection of intersex people in existing anti-discrimination legislation must be explicit, not implicit
- ▶ that the ground of "sex characteristics" is the most adequate ground to protect intersex people in Europe

**Who else:** Malta and Finland (since 2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina (since 2016) and Montenegro (since 2017) offer comprehensive legal protection against discrimination, including in the health sector on the grounds of sex characteristics; Greece (since 2016) and Portugal (since 2018) offer partial legal protection against discrimination.



For the launch of our Good Practice Map 2019 we invited to guests: Urs Vanessa Sager ▲ as representative of InterAction Suisse and Bente Keulen ▲ as representative of NNID, to share their perspectives on the achievements of their respective countries and municipalities

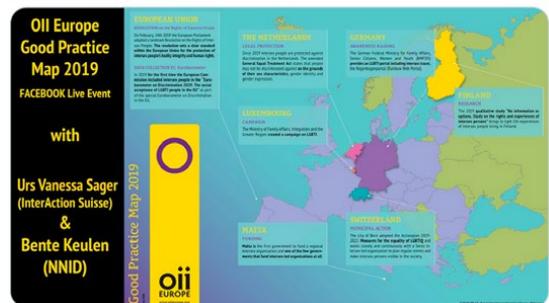
## 2. Intersex Awareness on IDAHOBIT 2020

On May 17th, the **International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)**, we launched our **Good Practice Map 2019** as a Facebook Live event. For the launch we invited two intersex activists as representatives of InterAction Suisse and NNID, to share their perspectives on the achievements of their respective countries and municipalities that made it into the OII Europe Good Practice Map 2019: The Netherlands and the City of Bern, Switzerland.

Afterwards a recording of the Facebook Live event was made public on our YouTube channel. ▶ ▲

Also after IDAHOBIT 2020 we had the opportunity to speak about our Good Practice Map during an Instagram Live event by ILGA-Europe. ▶

OII Europe @OIIEurope · Jun 23, 2020  
For the launch of our Intersex Good Practice Map 2019 we invited two #intersex activists: Urs Vanessa Sager of InterAction Suisse and Bente Keulen of @NNID\_nl Check out the video here ➡ : [youtu.be/DqufDSIZ4Mk](https://youtu.be/DqufDSIZ4Mk)



INSTAGRAM LIVE

Keeping an Eye on Intersex Rights in Europe

Cianan Russell, Senior Policy Officer at ILGA-Europe  
Dan Christian Ghattas, Executive Director of OII Europe  
@ilgaeurope and @oiiurope

Wednesday  
17 June  
18.00 CEST



# AWARENESS RAISING II



## 3. Intersex Awareness Weeks 2020 Campaign #IntersexLives

For the Intersex Awareness Weeks from October 26<sup>th</sup> to November 8<sup>th</sup> we launched our campaign “Intersex Lives”: This campaign was based on a workshop during our OII Europe Community Event in Zagreb 2019, where the intersex community collected and shared short personal quotes of their dreams, hopes and fears: What makes us proud? What gives us joy?

Many of the topics raised in those personal quotes will sound familiar, other quotes are more directly related to the life

situation of intersex persons – a selection of issues that are highlighted in focus points on the campaign website are: health, trauma, discrimination, work & education and acceptance. <https://IntersexLives.oiiEurope.org>

The website and social media postings also included 14 original illustrations created for this campaign. The images accompanied the quotes to reflect, emphasize and contribute as an additional entry way to engage with the topics addressed by intersex people and their lived realities.



## 4. Infographics on the findings of the FRA LGBTI 2019 Survey Data Explorer

The **FRA EU-LGBTI Survey 2019** provided us with lots of new and never before seen statistics on the lives of intersex people in Europe. This data contained valuable first-time statistical information on the situation of intersex people, so it was very important to us to present this information to the general public in an accessible and low threshold way in form of Infographics.

From the data found in the FRA LGBTI Survey Data Explorer we created a “mini-campaign” which included 9 infographics on 7 topics: **consent, housing difficulties/homelessness, physical violence/harassment, discrimination, financial precarity/poverty, legal recognition, and intersex youth.**

<https://oieurope.org/library-en/infographics/>

We also created a new subdomain and website for these and future OII Europe infographics: <https://infographics.oieurope.org>



Social media posting on the infographics with findings on the situation of intersex youth, May 2020 ▲

## Social Media highlights

**f** We increased our followers within our first year from 240 to 884 by the end of 2020. The most liked post in 2020 is the drawing of a cat for the #BiVisibilityDay with over 370 likes. ▶

**f** In the time of the Intersex Awareness Weeks over 20,000 people were reached through our Facebook page. The most successful post was the post on 05.11. (Campaign on Employment Discrimination / Ship image (see cover) with 8,4K reach, and our follower count increased by 300 between 31.10. and 19. 11.2020.

**t** In Oct. & Nov. we reached over 10,000 people, the top tweet was on 26.10. (Intersex Awareness Day and launch of our campaign) with over 23K impressions. For the previous 28 days (as of 19. 11. 2020) we earned over 94K tweet impressions and increased our profile visits by 42%. From October 2019 to December 2020 we increased our follower count by more than 500 new followers.

Retweet of our posting on November 8, Intersex Solidarity Day, by PACE Equality ▶



# OUR PROGRAMS

## EU-Project RISE & Capacity Building of the European Intersex Movement



In 2019, OII Europe applied for an EU-project and was granted its first ever EU grant with the Horizon2020 / European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) for its project "RISE". The project aims at:

- building the capacity of intersex activist groups in five focus countries and of 20+ intersex NGOs across Europe to advocate against intersex fundamental rights violations,
- providing low-threshold and easily accessible online information to support intersex people and their families, as well as advocacy stakeholders by creating a website in an accessible language suited for the general public and the media (conducted by our partner NNID),
- increasing the visibility of intersex people and the discrimination they face across the EU,
- increasing the awareness about intersex as an issue of social acceptance and not a medical issue.

In order to achieve these goals OII Europe is building the capacity of intersex activist groups in five European countries and of more than 20 intersex NGOs across Europe to advocate against violations of the fundamental rights of intersex people.

In 2020, we conducted a capacity building needs assessment of the European intersex community, results of which were used to create beginner intersex capacity building online trainings on the topics of awareness raising, community building, fundraising and advocacy, which we started hosting in the same year. While OII Europe is building the capacity of the European intersex community further, our partner and member organisation NNID in creating an online intersex awareness platform, which will include comprehensive information on intersex and aims to build and increase knowledge amongst the general public, media and professionals.



The project „RISE! Fighting discrimination and increasing visibility of intersex people through capacity and knowledge building“ was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

The content of this project represents the views of the authors only and is their sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

# Making our resources available in multiple languages

OII Europe is dedicated to making its policy work and empowering material available to intersex communities that can use it for their advocacy work across the European Council region. In the light of limited funding for intersex organisations it is crucial to share materials among intersex activists and organisations.

In 2020, we translated our OII Europe flyer into Arabic (print version available), as well as the start page of our community website ([www.intervisibility.eu](http://www.intervisibility.eu)), both now serving the Arabic-speaking population in Europe with basic information on intersex issues.



The testimonial book “#MyIntersexStory – Personal accounts by intersex people living in Europe” was printed and is available from the OII Europe office or as a free digital download on our websites. The digital pdf-version of our testimonial book has been downloaded almost 6,000 times since its launch November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

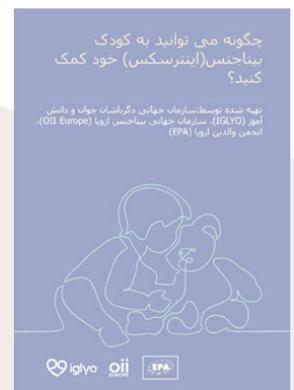
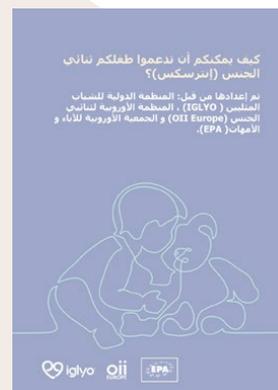
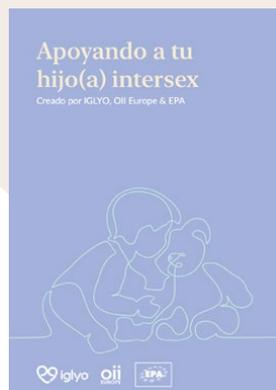
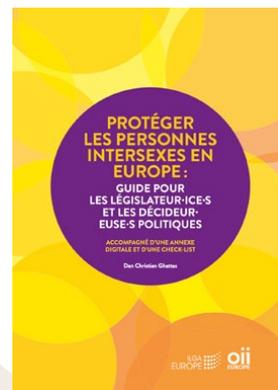
By the end of 2020 we published the parents toolkit “Supporting your intersex child” in six additional languages: Arabic, Persian, Spanish, Dutch and soon also available in Albanian and Italian. Our parents toolkit is one of our most in-demand toolkits with currently over 10,000 downloads, with highest requests for the English version, followed by Turkish, French, Russian and Greek.

By the end of the year we had three translations of the legal toolkit “Protecting intersex people in Europe - a toolkit for law and policy makers”: Spanish, French, and upcoming, in German.

All currently available toolkits are also found in the language-specific pages of our community website: [www.intervisibility.eu](http://www.intervisibility.eu)

Legal Toolkit in French and Spanish ▼

Parent Toolkit in Spanish, Arabic and Farsi ▼ ▼



# OUR PROGRAMS II

## Intersex Refugees & Asylum Seekers Support

Intersex people are particularly vulnerable in the asylum-seeking process. OII Europe sees an urgent need in increasing the professional capacities of organisations working with intersex asylum seekers and has therefore launched a new “**OII Europe Intersex Refugees and Asylum Seekers Project**” in 2020.

We started the “OII Europe Intersex Refugees and Asylum Seekers Project” with collecting positive decisions from intersex asylum seekers and performing an in-depth analysis of their positive decisions. Advancing in our project we conducted interviews with LGBTIQ organisations that are working with LGBTIQ asylum seekers as well as with legal experts. Doing so, we collected information on the needs of LGBTIQ organisations in working with intersex asylum seekers. What do they need in order to enhance their knowledge on intersex issues in the

context of the asylum seeking process and therefore improve their capacities in working with intersex asylum seekers? The aim of this project is to create a toolkit for all professionals working with asylum seekers, which shall help them to identify and meet the needs of intersex asylum seekers.

A first overview about the project and an analysis of positive decisions of intersex asylum seekers was given at the COC Netherland Asylum Seeker Conference. OII Europe also participated at the Asylum Conference by EASO, an agency of the European Union which acts as a centre of expertise on asylum and provides evidence-based input for EU policymaking and legislation. At the EASO Asylum Conference OII Europe held a workshop on intersex asylum issues.

## European Intersex Strategic Litigation Network

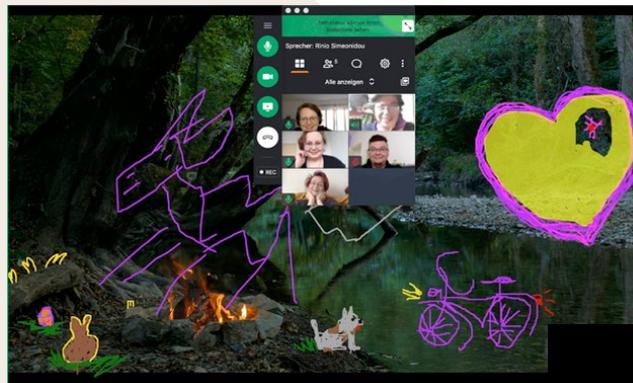
In 2020, we held the first ever **European Intersex Strategic Litigation Meeting**. 9 intersex activists from 8 Council of Europe countries and 8 lawyers/ legal experts from 7 Council of Europe countries attended the meeting. The participants shared knowledge, including about legal avenues and strategies before European Courts, the legal situation in Europe regarding intersex genital mutilation and legal gender recognition. During the meeting the participants discussed the need of a supportive network, a safe space for intersex people and related challenges.

With this initial meeting confirming our analyses about the need and the key impact of intersex strategic litigation – on one hand on the envisioned positive legal change, on the other the encouragement that it gives not only to individual intersex activists but also the entire intersex community – OII Europe has decided to intensify its work in the area of Strategic Litigation. This fruitful event also led to establishing a network in order to have a coordinated European intersex strategic litigation. We are excited to continue and increase our work in this new area.

# Making the European and Central Asian Intersex Community Stronger

## Virtual Campfires / Community Event

While coping with the situation quite well we also thought of a way to support our amazing intersex community. With no Community Events possible because of the pandemic we were standing against a new issue of staying connected with our growing European community and supporting them through these difficult times. In the Spring of 2020, we started hosting regular “campfire” calls for our community members. During the calls we talk, catch up, support each other, watch movies, play games and have fun! Definitely not a replacement for



in-person meetings and events, but a way to hang in there and support each other in these trying times.

## Intersex: New Interdisciplinary Approaches (INIA) 2021-2024

INIA is a new international research network and the first of its kind. It aims to train a cohort of 10 early stage researchers working collaboratively to develop knowledge that will inform policy making and practice about intersex across a range of key sectors. The research conducted within INIA addresses key issues for intersex wellbeing and rights, including e.g. education, age, ethics, research, policy, family support and activism.

INIA consists of a consortium of 21 organisations from 10 countries and was established by the University of Huddersfield in partnership with the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Dublin City University, the University of Zurich, the Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública / Andalusian School of Public Health and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona as the main partners. It is funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

OII Europe has acted as a key consultant to the University of Huddersfield and the INIA network since the beginning of its establishment in 2018 and, in 2020, became part of the then established advisory board of the network. In the upcoming years OII Europe will

support the doctoral students by providing expertise and support during their secondment at OII Europe and give workshops on intersex issues and provide expertise at INIA conferences.

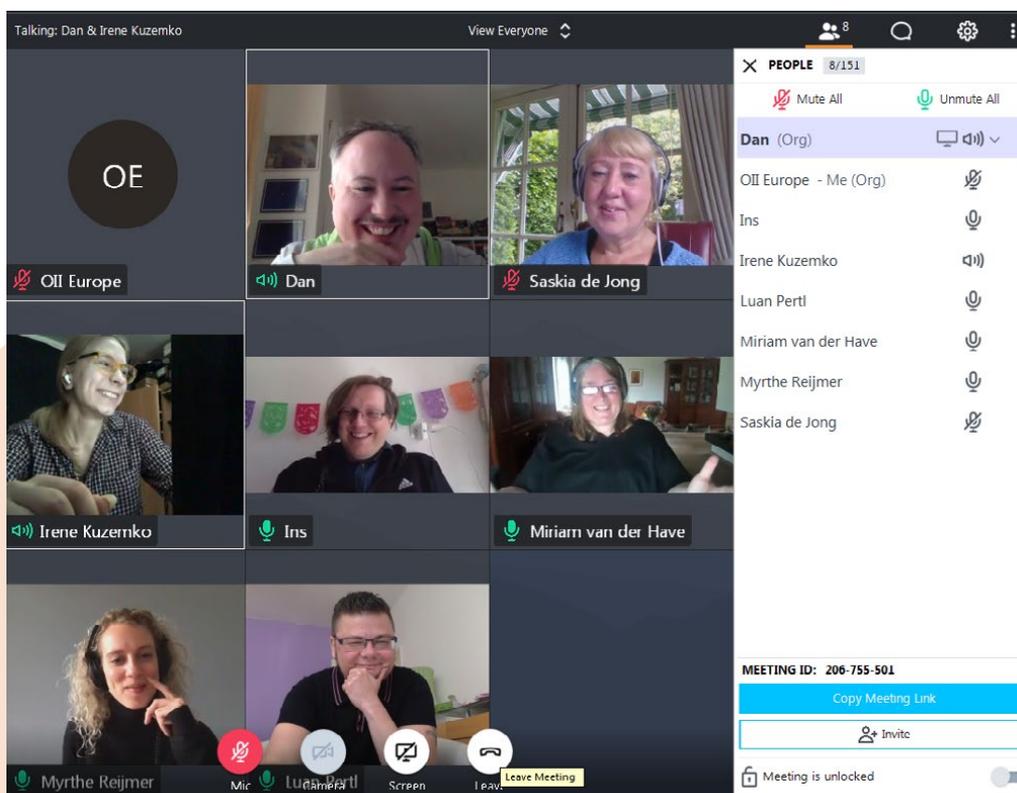
## Advocating for more funding for intersex-led organisations

OII Europe engages regularly in bi-lateral communications with donors to inform them about the situation of intersex funding and the still prevailing lack of funding for intersex-led communities in Europe and world-wide, by, e.g., contributing to research on the funding situation of intersex-led organisations in Europe and highlighting the lack of funding on national level and the consequences for intersex activism and the fight for intersex human rights in our own submissions and reports, e.g. the recent Covid-19 report.

We also regularly participate and speak at donor events, e.g. such as those organized by the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP), which aim to increase the number of private and public donors funding intersex-led organisations and encourages them to open their portfolios to include intersex work. This is a long-term process, but we will not cease in our effort towards an increase of funding for intersex-led organisations in Europe and beyond.

# FUNDING & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**W**ith the COVID-19 pandemic taking hold of our planet we were presented with a unique set of obstacles. Like in many other organisations, all areas of our work were affected. While we have been somewhat used to remote-working due to our international structure and board members living across Europe, there are also areas in which we had to adjust. The work of staff and steering board meetings moved into a remote format, all in-person events had to be postponed or moved into an online format, including our Steering Board Meetings, and lots of our plans for the future had to be rethought. We took this challenge to improve our capacities and tools for online communication and remote working, while also extending our considerations for wellbeing and a healthy separation between working from home and our personal live.



*Team RISE meetings that were planned as in-person had to be completely moved to online formats in 2020.*

## Membership

■ In 2020, we increased our membership to 22 intersex-led organisations and three supporting members, based across the Council of Europe region.

## Training of OII Europe Staff

■ FRA webinar on European Union Fundamental Rights Information System (EFRIS)

■ ILGA-Europe online-training on „Skills Boost: How to create great campaign videos at home“

## Funding

■ In 2020, all ongoing grants were renewed and the number of OII Europe's donors increased from five to eight.

■ **October 2020 – OII Europe is awarded a second grant circle from Sigrid Rausing Trust.** This grant allows the organisation to maintain increased working hours for the Finance & Administration Officer and the Awareness Raising & Campaigns Officer.

■ **December 2020 – Malta awards again OII Europe with a governmental grant.** The grant is part of the 'pledge for financial support' by donor governments Cyprus, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands & Norway to representatives of governmental and civil society networks.

■ **December 2020 – OII Europe's Equivalency Status in the U.S. is renewed.** This status allows the organisation to be treated comparable to U.S. based charity organisations by donors based in the U.S.

■ **In 2020 we again engaged in a cooperation with the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung** that allowed us to translate our legal toolkit into French and Spanish and our parents toolkit into Albanian and Spanish.

**We are thankful for the support, the trust and the appreciation of OII Europe's work expressed through these grants:**

Anonymous Donors • Astraea • Dreilinden  
European Commission • Malta Ministry for Justice  
Equality and Governance • Sigrid Rausing Trust  
Council of Europe

**For OII Europe's Fiscal Year 2020 we can report a funding income of 396.476,27€**

**We also thank our cooperation partner:**  
Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung





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