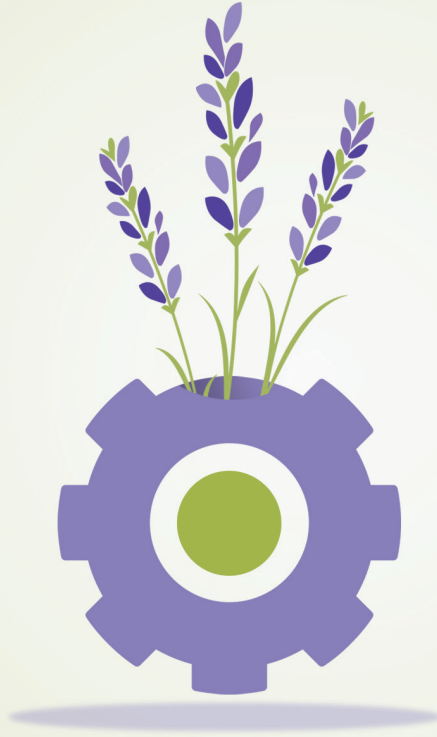


# LAVENDER CEILING



## LAVENDER CEILING

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# Wish to Smash the Lavender Ceilings one by one...

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**W**hile the global crisis caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) is ongoing, the discourse of the governments “We are all in the same boat” continue to be one of the main discourses regarding the combat against the pandemic. The first case in Turkey was confirmed and announced on 11 March. As of 11 March, in order to prevent the spread of the virus, the government has taken some measures and implemented some others under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior.

While the Ministry of Health is calling on residents to continue to stay at home, on the other hand, the employees from various sectors are obliged to go to the work. The story of Turkey on Covid-19 that can be summarized as “Everyone has to declare their own state of emergency”, also accounts for serious problems for LGBTI+ persons, who are currently the most vulnerable ones in the country, facing serious problems in accessing rights, and whose rights to life are systematically violated.

Apart from the inequalities in access to the right to health and in the employment process and the domestic violence increased by being forced to stay home faced; LGBTI+ persons became the target of various hate campaigns during the coronavirus process.

According to the Pandemic Report<sup>1</sup> published by the Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association (SPoD) in June, which includes the association’s experiences in various fields of studies in the first three months of the COVID-19 process, during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a hundred percent increase in discrimination and violence cases on account of gender identity and sexual orientation following the Friday sermon that targets LGBTI+ persons and those living with HIV provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

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1 Retrieved from <http://www.spod.org.tr/TR/Detay/50128/4/spod-pandemi-raporu-cikti> on 5.10.2020

Data of Young LGBTI+ Association's Research: Situation of the LGBTI+ Community in the COVID-19 Outbreak<sup>2</sup> also highlights the extent of domestic violence. According to this report, 42 of the participants who stated that they were subjected to more than one form of violence stated that they were subjected to domestic violence (all forms of violence such as physical, sexual, psychological, economic, etc. by one or more persons living in the same family or home). Among the forms of violence, emotional violence, economic violence, verbal violence, physical violence, sexual violence and digital violence are also prominent.

Even though the calls for stay home and quarantine measures are right and appropriate to prevent the spread of Covid-19; those can create new problems for LGBTI+ persons who are not able to stay home or who are likely to be subjected to violence by family members when they are at home. The government or relevant ministries do not have an action plan to solve these problems.

In addition to the risk of violence, discrimination in accessing the right to health becomes a more vital issue in pandemic period; the fact that transgender persons who are in gender confirmation/affirming process cannot go to hospitals and have to postpone the steps regarding their procedures, hospital checks of LGBTI+ living with HIV have to be interrupted, and LGBTI+ refugees who have problems in accessing their right to health can not even find quarantine opportunities account for major problems. LGBTI+ persons, who are among the groups that experience discrimination in employment the most; are coming face to face with the fear of losing their job, unemployment and loss of income. LGBTI+ sex workers, who do not have any social security, experience the most intense financial income loss. The coronavirus and the loss of income have become two sides of the same coin for LGBTI+ persons in that regard. LGBTI+ persons are one of the groups that are affected most by the fact that the service and entertainment sector are brought to a standstill. While all these are experienced, hate campaigns targeting LGBTI+ persons are also becoming widespread.

In recent years, besides the bans by Governorates and District Governorates, the statements and practices of high-ranking public officials targeting LGBTI+ persons have been systematized. The process which started in the first days of the coronavirus pandemic, when the school principals shared mes-

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2 Retrieved from <https://genclgbti.org/2020/09/02/covid-19-salgininda-lgbti-toplulugun-durumu-arastirma-raporu-yayinlandi/> on 5.10.2020

sages targeting LGBTI+ persons in WhatsApp groups created to continue online education on quarantine days, in line with the instructions of the Director of National Education, then hate campaigns on social media against a counterfactual gay character on Netflix, and the discriminatory statement by the President of RTÜK and Diyanet's hate sermon and then when various ministers stand by this hate, this hate also leaped on the Pride Week. While #onurhaftası (pride week) was on the TT list, the hashtags #YallahHollandaya (get the hell out and go to Netherlands), #LGBTFaaliyetleriDurdurulsun (stop LGBTI+ activities) were launched. In the first days of the coronavirus pandemic, #YallahHollandaya and #LGBTFaaliyetleriDurdurulsun hashtags, which are the last pillars of the campaigns that call for the ban of LGBTI+ activities and the closure of LGBTI+ organizations, remained on the TT list for a long time. With these hashtags, calls for boycott of companies supporting LGBTI+ rights have become widespread. Among the accounts participating in the hate campaign, there were also highly influential accounts verified by Twitter. Women and Democracy Association (KADEM) continued its hate speech that has become common. A call was made from the İhvan TV channel in Istanbul to "kill homosexuals". All of these are just a small part of the hatred towards LGBTI+ persons while the pandemic is ongoing.

This booklet you are reading now was published within this atmosphere to remind and bring to the agenda the rights of LGBTI+ persons regarding labor life. In this booklet, which is a product of Yunus Emre Demir's meticulous work, we directly hear from LGBTI+ persons what they have experienced both during the pandemic process and in the labor life before that. Before providing the detailed testimonies provided in the booklet, we care about digressing for a moment to discuss the importance of the unions. The guide of Kaos GL, which we have provided at the end of the booklet, can also guide the unionists.

So what can unions do against this hate? Having such serious problems in accessing human rights, which is the center of the union activities, shows how the struggle for LGBTI+ rights is intertwined with the struggle for union rights. Fundamental rights and freedoms underpin the union activities. It is important for unions to take a clear political stance regarding LGBTI+ rights, especially in the periods such as the pandemic when LGBTI+ persons who are subject to systematic discrimination are becoming more vulnerable. Trade unions shall form an autonomous LGBTI+ policy within their existing anti-discrimination policies. They not only should prohibit the discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity against LGBTI+ persons, but also should take political steps to ensure equality.

While the problems of LGBTI+ workers and laborers, who are already one of the most vulnerable groups regarding employment in the pandemic, are multiplied, these also became invisible among the general and larger problems in line with the government's discourse: "We are all in the same boat". This invisibility forms one of the most basic tools for legitimizing violations of rights. An invisible problem is not described as a problem, and unless it is described, necessary steps for a solution cannot be taken.

It is no exaggeration to say that from the first moment that LGBTI+ movement in Turkey was initiated in the early 90s, it is hand in glove with the labor movement and the unions. We can see that even in the first issues of Kaos GL magazine, which explain the problems of LGBTI+ workers and laborers they faced while trying to contact the unions by being locked out of the unions. It is no coincidence that the LGBTI+ movement and Kaos GL's first appearance in the public sphere was 1 May 2001. On the other hand, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK) covered prohibition of discrimination on account of "sexual orientation and sexual identity" in its proposal for constitution presented to the public in 2009. Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK) provided its recommendations on taking measures against sexual orientation discrimination in labor life as a constitutional rule in its "proposals for a new constitution". It stated that the discrimination on account of sexual orientation along with other discriminations should be banned and sanctions should be imposed in such cases.

However, in order to ensure these steps in practice rather than being merely mentioned in written documents, the unions shall take these steps in practice by not letting LGBTI+ persons go by the board during crisis periods such as a pandemic, and shall defend the rights of LGBTI+ persons against both targeting and hate campaigns and against the problems faced by LGBTI+ persons in labor life. In the combat against heterosexism and the gender binarism, it becomes crucial to develop permanent policies starting from the structure of the union, to maintain advocacy regularly and available to the public, to be the catalysts for social transformation starting from its own members.

The studies on the situation of LGBTI+ employees in the private sector and public sector that we, as Kaos GL, conduct every year clearly show that the unions do not yet have a clear sense to find solutions or to defend rights for LGBTI+ workers and laborers. According to 2019 private sector research<sup>3</sup>, none of the respondents reported the violation of their rights to

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3 Retrieved from <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2020ozel-sektor-2019-web.pdf> on 5.10.2020



their unions or professional organizations. In public sector,<sup>4</sup> only one of the respondents reported it to the union of which this respondent is a member. Unions and professional organizations are undoubtedly one of the first areas that come to mind when it comes to mechanisms to empower LGBTI+ workers and laborers in access to employment and labor life. However, our research shows that among LGBTI+ laborers working in the private sector or in the public sector, the rate of being a member of a trade union or professional organization is low. When we read this situation together with the low rate of LGBTI+ workers and laborers who apply to unions when they are exposed to discrimination, we can conclude that unions are not open and welcoming enough for LGBTI+ workers and laborers. We know that most of the time it is discussed whether LGBTI+ workers and laborers are open and proud, but perhaps it is now the time to discuss how open and welcoming the unions are for LGBTI+ workers and laborers and whether they make an effort to be open.

While the hate campaigns have clearly shown that LGBTI+ persons “are not on the same boat” of the government, whether they are on the same boat with the unions, and who is in the captain’ cabin and who is in the lower cabins even if they are on the same boat, is still a mystery. Although various unions against the targeting raise their voices up on social media and publish statements, it is essential that this stance to be maintained every day of the year and it should not only come to mind just to criticize the Government and pro-government institutions and organizations. And most importantly, the unions shall have strong-will in all areas of equality policies at work in their collective bargaining negotiations regarding the problems of LGBTI+ workers and laborers. The more stronger this will, the more stronger the struggle against rights violations in the pandemic. Wish to smash the lavender ceilings one by one...

I hope you enjoy reading this booklet

Yıldız Tar

Kaos GL Media and Communication Program Coordinator

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4 Retrieved from <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2020kamu-calisanlari-2019-web.pdf>, on 5.10.2020

# LGBTI+ employees and compulsory strategy for concealing SOGIESC

Reyda Ergün

Reyda Ergün from Kadir Has University is our first guest in the series: Lavender Ceiling, where we talk about what LGBTI+ persons experience in the labor life. With Ergün, who took part in the research team of joint research studies: “The Situation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex Employees at Public Sector in Turkey” and “The Situation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex Employees at Private Sector in Turkey” conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University, we discussed the situation of LGBTI+ persons in employment.

■ **Hi. First of all I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. Can you tell us about yourself?**

Hi Yunus Emre, thank you for this interview. It is highly significant for me to find the opportunity to talk about the findings of our research we conducted on the situation of LGBTI+ persons in employment in Turkey within the scope of 1 May. I know that the whole research team feels this way.

Let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am an academican of Kadir Has University Faculty of Law, Department of Philosophy and Sociology of Law. Gender and sexuality studies and its legal aspects are among my fields of studies.

■ **I think the first situation report was published in 2015 focused on the private sector. Can you tell us about the development/change process of the reports since that day? How long have you been in this study? How did you initiate this, what were the motivations behind and have you ever experienced any technical, academic or political difficulties in the process? What has changed since the beginning of the report and what caused these changes?**

These reports are actually having a nature for sharing the results of the annual research with the public. The first research was conducted by Kaos

GL in 2015 regarding the private sector in a limited manner. In this research, it was aimed to identify the experiences of LGBTI+ persons regarding the working conditions in the private sector in Turkey as well as the forms of discrimination they face in the workplace and in the recruitment process. In 2017, in parallel to this research on the private sector, a second research open to the participation of LGBTI+ persons working in the public sector was initiated. We, as Kadir Has University Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, were involved in this process in 2018. I was not in the first team developing the project, so it is not possible for me to answer questions about the motivation behind conducting these research studies and the difficulties encountered in the first years. However, for both Kaos GL and the Center, I can say that every work on human rights carried out by combining activism and the experience and expertise of the academy is extremely important. Secondly, the employment is not a field studied enough around the world and in Turkey regarding the rights of LGBTI+ persons. However, it is generally accepted in the human rights literature today that economic, social and cultural rights, which are called second generation rights, and first generation rights, that is, civil and political rights, have a very close relation with each other. For this reason, labor life is a field where data collection is significant in order to assess the discrimination against LGBTI + persons with a holistic perspective in any country. I think Kaos GL has acted with such a motivation for addressing an important gap in Turkey by initiating these research studies. Contributing to the opportunities provided by the data pool provided by such a research study covering years to the policies to be developed within the framework of advocacy and struggle for the rights was the biggest motivation behind our participation in the process, as the Center.

With the publication of the 2019 reports, the private sector research has completed its fifth year, and the public sector research has completed its third year. For each long-term study, reporting the evaluations of the previous year, identifying the technical, academic and political difficulties encountered, producing solutions to overcome them in the next year, in other words, the preparation phase of the next year is of course one of the most important stages of the research. In this context, we try to move forward by without making major interventions to research methods and questions in order to make analysis covering 5-10 years possible, but also by making the necessary changes in line with the evaluations of the project team and the feedback we receive for the research.

To mention the prominent changes over the five-year period, I would like to emphasize the following: The expansion of the sampling, thus reflecting a sexual orientation and gender identity spectrum closer to the research universe, and reflecting the diversity of employment, has become one of the most important goals of each year's preparation phase. It can be said that we have achieved this goal, at least in terms of the number of respondents. The annual number of respondents of the private sector research has risen from 151 to 772 in five years. The number of respondents in the public sector research has risen from 80 to 228 in three years. On the other hand, since our research questions are answered via an online survey platform, we see that the sampling is formed by being open to analysis in terms of qualities such as age range, socio-economic status and education level that will affect whether or not you are an active internet user.

One of our research goals for this year is to review and analyze the findings of five-year private sector and three-year public sector research findings comparatively. It is a very joyful development for us that this research last long enough to make such an analysis possible. We hope to continue these studies in the coming years.

■ **When evaluating labor life, all of the processes such as recruitment, starting a job, working, leaving/being fired are actually issues that need to be addressed and assessed one by one. You do so in the report. Are there any steps in which discrimination against LGBTI+ persons become more intense? What is your inference regarding this situation?**

Exactly, the process of job search, recruitment, working and termination of the work must be addressed separately and comparatively. When we address these with the perspective of human rights law, such a method can also serve as a facilitator in determining the obligations of states in the context of LGBTI+ persons' right to work and labor life. For example, states have an obligation not only to prohibit the discrimination that may arise at various stages of the employment, but also to remove the barriers to the access of vulnerable groups to labor life due to discrimination in society. Especially considering that discrimination and the social structure and cultural elements that cause discrimination are not identifiable at first glance, it can be very difficult to map the discrimination. Employment is unfortunately one of the most difficult areas regarding to identify discrimination against LGBTI+ persons. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights pro-

vides a striking point in their 2011 report based on the research conducted in various countries: LGBTI+ workers are developing compulsory strategy for concealing SOGIESC against the risk of harassment and discrimination. This strategy makes it difficult to identify the real dimensions of homophobia, transphobia and discrimination in employment, together with the low number of cases where application mechanisms are applied against harassment and discrimination. We observe that our research findings regarding Turkey are compatible with this evaluation.

For example, when we look at the data of the 2019 private sector research, it seems that the rate of the respondents in the sampling who stated that they encountered discriminatory attitudes, discourses or practices at first sight during recruitment processes and in the workplace, seems quite low as in every year. However, in order to identify the actual situation, these rates need to be considered together with a number of other data. For example, considering the rate of the respondents who stated that they faced discrimination in recruitment processes and in the workplace and the rate of the respondents who stated that they did not experience discrimination during these processes but who stated the reason of this as they conceal or not reveal their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status, it is observed that one of every two LGBTI+ persons working in the private sector either face discrimination during the recruitment processes and/or at the workplace where they are employed, or they are not exposed to a direct discrimination due to being assigned with cisgender heterosexuality by the persons around them. This is a very high rate. On the other hand, the rate of the respondents who stated that they did not experience discrimination on account of any reason (44.4%) should be considered together with the rate of being open among the respondents. For example, only 15.9% of the respondents stated that they were completely open during the recruitment process and again only 17.4% of them stated that they are open at the workplace. The findings of our research generally lead us to have such an inference: LGBTI+ employees in Turkey follow a compulsory strategy to conceal their SOGIESC to minimize the potential discrimination and harassment risk starting from the search for a job. The findings reveal that when this strategy is abandoned or does not work, the risks that have been avoided occur. We rarely come across that any application mechanism is applied against the discrimination faced. It can be thought that this is one of the reasons for the low number of precedent court decisions identifying discrimination against LGBTI+ persons in employment, especially in the private sector.

Despite all the difficulties in identifying discrimination, it is possible to say that the respondents still see this risk as higher at some stages. For example, the rates of being fully and partially open in the workplace are relatively higher than the relevant rates in recruitment processes; the rate of ones concealing SOGIESC also decreases after being hired. All these data show that if an atmosphere of trust is created depending on the conditions in the workplace and the attitudes of the superiors and other employees, LGBTI+ employees can be more open about their SOGIESC. Respondents' answers show this as well provided within the framework of open-ended questions. However, the actual distinct difference regarding the risk of discrimination and the degree of the strategy of concealing emerges between the private sector and the public sector. The rates of being fully open in recruitment processes and in the workplace among 2019 public sector research respondents are much lower than the private sector.

For the first time last year, we added a question about hate speech to the research questions in order to better understand the conditions that force LGBTI+ employees into maintain such a strategy throughout their labor life. Within the framework of this question, 34% of the respondents in the private sector research stated that they encountered hate speech against LGBTI+ persons in their workplace. We believe this finding confirms the conditions that force LGBTI+ employees to pursue such a strategy in the private sector. The related rate doubles in public sector employees. So, this is one of the reasons that may explain why the rate of being open and proud among LGBTI+ employees in public sector is much lower than in the ones in the private sector.

■ **When I read the report and during the interviews I conducted, I observed that the discrimination was not always direct, and often progressed in an implicit manner. For example, even the definition of “presentable” and the issue of military service can stand in an exclusionary place for many LGBTI+ persons. Did you find it difficult to identify implicit discrimination during the reporting process? Do you think the respondents are aware enough about such forms of discrimination?**

I would like to start with the question regarding the respondents' awareness about discrimination. This is a very important point, and it requires an explanation of our approach to structuring the research questions. We especially preferred not to provide any explanation or definition of the terms while creating the survey. In an online and anonymous survey study, we took care

to take the statements of the respondents without onus of proof at every stage and to avoid interference that might manipulate their statements. Discrimination is a legal concept and has a dynamic definition in legal context; it can be said that this is valid for every concept related to human rights. For example, under applicable law, a practice in the field of employment may constitute discrimination, but the person concerned may not perceive this as discrimination. Or an attitude, behavior or practice that the person concerned considers to be discriminatory may not be qualified as discrimination by the law in force, or it is claimed by rights advocates that the relevant attitude, behavior or practice is a violation of the prohibition of discrimination, but a gain in this regard in the legal struggle (a precedent court decision etc.) has not been obtained yet. On the other hand, being able to name discrimination requires approaching the issue with a human rights perspective, and the perspective of rights is not a perspective automatically owned by members of groups exposed to discrimination in societies. If only it were, one of the most important goals of rights advocacy would not have been to raise the awareness of individuals that they are subjects of rights. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the struggle for rights is not seen as a survival strategy and model that is accessible to many persons for various reasons or is preferable in terms of its subjective conditions. Therefore, we tried to look at the direction of the perceptions and experiences of LGBTI+ employees based on the statements of LGBTI+ employees by research questions. Maybe I can briefly make the following inference: the strategy of concealing that has to be carried out at every stage of access to labor life and employment is itself the biggest indicator that LGBTI+ persons cannot fully and equally benefit from their rights to work and labor life. Hate speech against LGBTI+ persons at labor life in Turkey is very common phenomenon. However, this situation is not always directly associated with discrimination or human rights by LGBTI+ employees.

I think that the low number of direct discrimination examples is also related to the related strategy of concealing. The respondents' answers, especially for open-ended questions, show that LGBTI+ employees are almost sure that they face negative consequences if they are open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. A large proportion of respondents have no experience of being fired or subjected to different treatment directly on account of the sexual orientation or gender identity because their employers and colleagues are considering them as cisgender heterosexuals. Therefore, as you have identified, in the field of employment, we encounter rather implicit forms of discrimination. In order to identify such forms of discrimination, it is necessary to ask the respondents not only whether they

have been discriminated but also such questions in which they can explain their experiences in a wider framework, and it is necessary to analyze the answers given to open-ended questions by using various methods.

■ **Are there topics in the reports where we can see significant differences / distinct similarities when comparing the private sector and the public sector? If so, can you mention them?**

The findings regarding research for private sector and public sector employees are generally in parallel to each other. Therefore, it may be more meaningful to talk about the obvious differences between them. While answering one of the previous questions, I pointed out some of them. The rate of being fully open, both during the recruitment process and throughout the working life, is significantly lower among public sector employees than the ones in the private sector. The rates of encountering hate speech doubles in the public sector compared to the private sector. Therefore, we can say that the conditions that cause the reproduction of discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI+ persons provide a much critical picture in the public sector than in the private sector. When the responses to different questions are cross-analyzed, the following result emerges: As long as conditions do not significantly reduce the risk of discrimination, LGBTI+ employees in public sector do not abandon the strategy of concealing. In work environments where heteronormative and cisnormative gender perception based on system of gender binarism is very strong, the strategy of concealing does not always work; Even though the slightest word, behavior or attitude that is not compatible with gender can cause a discriminatory practice to be faced by the individuals although they are not open.

One of the most problematic issues in terms of public sector employees is the heteronormative and cisnormative interpretation of some concepts included in the legislation regulating the civil service. This situation creates different forms of discrimination than the ones in the private sector.

■ **From the persons I made an interview with and from the experiences I witnessed around me, I have observed that the productivity of the employees are increased if they were not exposed to discrimination, or they stated that there was a development in this regard. Is there any data in the report that we can infer or verify this situation?**

Definitely there is. The info note on the findings of the International Labor Organization's Pride Project in 2016 points out that LGBTI+ persons who are



open and proud at work are much less likely to show symptoms of anxiety, depression and burnout syndrome. The findings of our research are in line with these findings. From the sharing of the respondents, it is inferred that the risk of being discriminated against, facing hate speech or discrimination and hate speech, and the strategy of concealing SOGIESC they had to maintain prevent them from establishing close and genuine relationships with their colleagues and from owning the institution they work for. It is understood that it causes intense emotions such as hopelessness, unhappiness, anxiety, solicitude as well as low performance and motivation, depression, stress and tension, burnout syndrome caused by overstraining psychological and physical capacity. Therefore, this reduces productivity and professional satisfaction in the workplace. The respondents working in workplaces with supportive and inclusive policies, which are rare, mentioned positive results in terms of productivity and professional satisfaction.

■ **Almost none of the persons I made the interview with were members of a professional organization or union. There is similar information in the report. LGBTI+ persons do not both become a member of these organizations and do not consider these as an authority to apply in case of discrimination. Can we say that there is a special situation for LGBTI+ persons in comparison with the unionization/organization situation in the country?**

Unions and professional organizations are undoubtedly one of the first areas that come to mind when it comes to empowering LGBTI+ employees in access to employment and labor life. When we look to the private sector unionization rate of workers between Turkey we are already seeing that in general it is very low. This is a problem in itself in terms of the struggle for economic and social rights. According to DISK-AR's report published in February 2019 named "*Unionization Research Report*", union membership rate is 11% among workers in Turkey. However, our research shows that this rate is even lower for LGBTI+ employees in the private sector. Among the respondents in our 2019 private sector research, the rate of the ones indicate that they are union members is only 5.6%. We also see that the rate of being a member of professional organizations among LGBTI+ persons working in the private sector is also low (11.3%).

The findings of our research show that this rate among LGBTI+ employees in public sector in Turkey is not high as well. It is very difficult to say that the members see trade unions and professional organizations as areas of

struggle against discrimination against LGBTI+ persons. 33.8% of the respondents of the 2019 public sector research stated that they were union members. This rate is significantly lower than the rate of the unionized public sector employees in general. On the other hand, only 10% of the respondents stated that they are members of professional organizations. Although the rate of being fully open in the union or professional organization is higher than the rate of being open in the institutions, it still does not exceed the rate of 12%. Only one of the respondents, who stated on the discrimination faced in the institution, notified the union of which this person is a member and only one respondent applied to the professional organization of which this person is a member. Similarly, according to the data of our private sector research, 7 out of 59 participants who stated that they were discriminated in their workplaces are members of a union and/or a professional organization, and none of them reported the situation to the union or professional organization they were a member of.

The rate of those who answered the question about the three main measures to be taken against discrimination against LGBTI+ persons in our survey by marking the option “organized struggle and solidarity networks” is 20% in both public and private sectors. Based on all these findings, we can conclude that most of the unions and professional organizations in Turkey are not prioritized to develop effective policies for strengthening LGBTI+ employees and for preventing the discrimination in the employment against them in that regard. However, it is difficult to say that this is a situation specific to Turkey. Inference of International Labor Organization on that the economic and social rights of LGBTI+ persons are not a priority issue for trade unions points to a general problem.

■ **Another issue mentioned in the report is the subject of legal regulations. Do the laws protect LGBTI+ persons against the discrimination? - In the private sector - where the laws are not protect the employees, are in-service regulations meaningful and sufficient?**

It is impossible to say that the discrimination on account of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender is prohibited legally in Turkey; while the Constitution and related laws regulate the grounds on which discrimination cannot be made, these covers all the rights holders although these do not list these grounds explicitly. However, such a regulation on paper does not mean that legislation in Turkey can protect LGBTI+ employees against discrimination. The law is a field that is constantly being rebuilt in prac-

tice. Often, specific measures need to be taken to ensure that law enforcement officials to interpret legal rules in a way that everyone can enjoy equal rights. For example, the explicit inclusion of the concepts of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics in Article 10 of the Constitution regulating the principle of equality or Article 5 of the Labor Law regulating the principle of equal treatment would have unquestionably revealed the will of the legislator in this regard in terms of law practitioners. In this sense, we all know that there is no such a legislative will in Turkey.

However, in terms of labor life it is still hard to say that this situation is specific to Turkey. In the 2015 report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, it was determined that the national legislation in most states does not contain adequate and effective protection mechanisms against discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, and that the relevant norms are not effectively implemented in some countries where there are legal regulations on the subject. Of course, the obligations of the states come into play with this determination. For example, in a publication of the United Nations dated 2016, it was stated that discrimination on account of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender perception and sex characteristics in the context of the right to work should be explicitly prohibited at the legal level. However, it was underlined that not only legal regulations will not be sufficient to prevent discrimination in employment, but also there is a need to implement an effective policy, especially about raising social awareness, ensuring accountability and measures to eliminate the reasons and effects of discrimination. There are similar findings in the 2010 recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. Thus, the obligation on the subject in terms of states who are members of an international mechanism is clearly manifested, including Turkey: the discrimination on account of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics shall be explicitly prohibited by national legislation and all necessary measures shall be taken for the realization of this prohibition, effective policies shall be developed in that regard. In this sense, in Turkey, we know that how law enforcement and the legislation are deficient in that regard.

On the other hand, the findings of our private sector research show that even when the legislator does not develop the necessary policies, there is a lot that employers can do by using their initiatives.

According to the findings of our recent research, the rate of the respondents who stated that there are mechanisms to prevent discrimination on

account of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics, and practices being responsive to the needs or for the inclusion of LGBTI+ employees in their workplaces is 10%. Unfortunately, this is a very low rate, but it is possible to identify the positive effects that an increase in this rate can create, based on the research findings. We see that the rate of being open and proud among LGBTI+ employees increases significantly in workplaces where such mechanisms exist and are effectively implemented. The rate of the respondents who work in workplaces with these qualifications are fully open is over 50%. To remind you, this rate was 17.4% in the overall sampling. In addition, the sharing of the respondents show that although there is no such rules or boards or practices formally, the existence of unwritten agreement and a corporate culture responsive to LGBTI+ rights can have positive results. As we have seen that in the workplaces where there are mechanisms effectively used for empowering LGBTI+ employees are rarely found in the private sector in Turkey. However, the findings of our research clearly reveal that these mechanisms are essential in combating against discrimination on account of gender identity and sexual orientation and in empowering LGBTI+ employees.

#### ■ **What are your plans for the new period regarding the study?**

Right after we introduced our research reports with an event we held on 10 December Human Rights Day, we started the preparations for the 2020 research and published our 2020 survey for the access in mid-April. It is possible to access our survey from the web pages of Kaos GL and our Center. As I mentioned before, this year we also plan to publish five-year data of private sector research and three-year data of public sector research.

Finally, we can encounter many different forms of discrimination while working and in daily life. Or even if we do not encounter it, the discrimination experiences we indirectly hear/witnessed, can affect us, as we call secondary trauma. Have there been any difficult moments you faced in this reporting process that you do as part of your job? If so, what were the methods that are good for you after such moments or are there any such methods?

While developing effective policies for advocacy, data and information are among the most needed resources that will enable a situation analysis. I think it is the responsibility of academia as much as non-governmental organizations to create these resources. Every work that I can contribute within the scope of this responsibility is the most important means of strug-

gle against the effects of the experiences you mentioned for me. I think it is very empowering to be able to contribute to the establishment of empowerment mechanisms, because liberation of one of us means the liberation of all of us.

### ■ Is there anything else you would like to add?

Our research from the shares of the respondents reveals that the priority of LGBTI+ employees in Turkey is freedom and visibility. I want to underline this in particular. Obtaining legal safety both in general and in employment is of course mentioned as one of the conditions for fulfilling this claim. However, it is possible to mention that there is a common perception among LGBTI+ employees that social transformation cannot be achieved only by law. In this context, it is understood that LGBTI+ employees have demands and claims from employers, universities, professional organizations, trade unions and non-governmental organizations as well as official authorities and political parties. I hope that our research reports will contribute to ensure this demand to be taken into consideration more.

On the other hand, the findings of our research show that LGBTI+ employees do not form a homogeneous group, and within the framework of their conditions and needs, especially the differences arising from gender and gender identity should be taken into account in developing the relevant policies. I would like to highlight this aspect of the subject as well. For example, in the 2019 private sector research, we see that the rate of the respondents who are trans women having an education level like associate, bachelor, master's degree decreased from 82.4%, which is the overall rate in the sampling, to 53%. On the other hand, the rate of being open in recruitment processes and workplace among trans women is much lower than the overall rates in the sampling. Despite this, the rates of encountering discriminatory attitudes or practices are highly above the overall rates in the sampling. These data suggest that the strategy of concealing is more difficult for trans women, which increases the risk of discrimination.

Maybe lastly, I must underline that the research we have conducted makes possible an analysis of the employment status of LGBTI+ workers who have already joined the registered workforce. It should be noted that access to education that will pave the way for labor life and even a qualified form of labor life has become a separate challenge in itself, especially in cases where the strategy of concealing is more difficult for various reasons. For example, in the process of gender confirmation and after the legal recogni-

tion of gender identity, trans persons face major obstacles and difficulties in labor life. Especially in countries like Turkey, where there is no empowering policy for the rights of transgender persons, how the unemployment rate become higher among transgender persons are pointed out. This phenomenon also causes results that need to be investigated separately in terms of discrimination, especially for trans women, such as working unregistered without social insurance, and being forced into sex work. Therefore, finally, I would like to state that the findings of our research can shed light on only a small part of a multi-layered picture of labor life and discrimination against LGBTI+ persons, and that the increase in the number of research studies and publications on different aspects of the issue is of great importance in terms of advocacy.

# “The person they used to see as a client is now a lawyer”

## Evrim Demirtaş

In our “Lavender Ceiling” series, LGBTI+ persons in labor life will speak for themselves. Similar to the glass ceiling, the lavender ceiling concept refers to the obstacles in LGBTI+ persons’ ability to be in the decision-making or representative positions that are deemed to be senior posts in labor life. We are starting our study with the hope that all ceilings will be smashed one day.

According to the findings of the research conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University on the situation of LGBTI+ employees in the private sector and the public sector, LGBTI+ persons are forced to conceal their SOGIESC both in the private sector and the public sector, discrimination starts from the recruitment and hate speech is widespread, especially in the public sector.

So what do LGBTI+ persons experience in labor life? Are there differences between the sectors? How does discrimination affect the right to work? Unemployment is on the one hand and exploitation is on the other hand. What are the ways to break this? We discussed all these and others with LGBTI+ persons and experts from different sectors.

Our first guest in this series, which will be published every Tuesday and Friday for a month, is Lawyer Evrim Demirtaş. We talked with Evrim Demirtaş, a young lawyer who has just started the profession, a few days after receiving her lawyer license, about being a lawyer as a trans woman and the violations of right to work of lawyers. Evrim, whose internship was refused by a bar association and who had to complete the internship in Izmir Bar Association, talked about the discrimination she faced and the situation of the profession of being a lawyer.

### ■ Hi Evrim. First of all I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. Can you tell us about yourself?

I am Evrim. I graduated from Erciyes University Faculty of Law in 2018. At first, my internship in another bar association was not approved, I faced bad

procedures, I was discriminated. Then I settled in Izmir thanks to some of my contacts and started my internship in Izmir Bar Association. I am also a transwoman. I am very happy that I can do the profession I want.

■ **Is there a special reason for you to become a lawyer?**

It would be a very classic answer, but I grew up believing that working in the legal field will make persons strong. I believed I could support myself, LGBTI+ persons and other vulnerable groups more. I studied law to be a lawyer, not a judge or a prosecutor.

I believe being a lawyer is a powerful profession. If lawyers do their job really well, they can prevent many persons from losing their rights in many issues. The humanly satisfactions that I have and can have in this profession makes me very happy. For example sometimes trans women are applying. A fine was unjustly imposed in line with the Law on Misdemeanors. They do not know how to deal with this, and they do not have the time to do it. I know this so I can protect their rights.

■ **You are a young lawyer who just started the profession. Your internship has just finished, but in general, you have had impressions of the field both during your study and internship period. Do you want to share some of them?**

Many lawyers are currently working for another lawyer, as a worker lawyer. They are under a much higher workload than a worker who is not a lawyer, there is a huge exploitation of labor, and the salary is generally the minimum wage for new lawyers. Many of them are about to lose their jobs due to the pandemic period right now, because the employers themselves are not in a position to employ the lawyer anyway.

Yes, there is always a need for a lawyer, but unfortunately very limited things a lawyer can do in Turkey. Before the number of jobs available to a lawyer increases, there are so many graduates of faculty of law... There are many graduates and the lawyers get a share of the same cake. While this cake remains constant, the number of lawyers who benefit from it is always increasing. As such, someone make money on someone else, and then labor exploitation begins.

If this cake expands, which is much bigger in the systems in Europe and America, the situation would be different. If this cake expands, the number



of lawyers now will be actually insufficient. It is insufficient actually. Legal practitioners' act in Turkey is very outdated. Whenever this law was written, the work to be done by lawyers is still the same as back then. The law never serves for the present era. Therefore, lawyers are employed like slaves with very small wages.

■ **What do you mean by expanding the cake? What can be changed at this point?**

I do not think much about it right now, but the Ministry of Justice can work on it. Things like mediation and conciliation have recently been included in the sector. Studies on these can be done. CMK wages are very low, legal aid fees are very low, and these can be increased. Their scope can be expanded.

We say rights for everyone, lawyers for everyone, freedom to defense; but they do not have money. Persons cannot benefit from legal aid, because the conditions of legal aid are very restrictive.

■ **At the same time, political oppression on lawyers has increased a lot.**

5 April was Lawyers' Day, but this needs to be discussed a little bit. Unfortunately, we have some lawyer colleagues who have been arrested for doing their profession. Laws are amended by the circulars.

Lawyers' relations with their client falls within the freedom of defense. It is an indispensable part of the right to a fair trial. But lawyers unfortunately can be afraid of facing this kind of situations when doing their profession in Turkey. They have to reject certain clients. Actually, what we will do there is very simple; we defend the rights of the client on that issue. My defense of the client's rights does not mean that I agree or disagree with the client, it cannot be. But unfortunately there is such a perception in Turkey. They believe that they strengthen justice by oppressing the lawyers but no, this will be their utopia, but it will be Turkey's dystopia.

Law is for everyone, also for minorities. Violation of law and rights starts with the minority. There are minorities at the bottom of the pyramid, but as they go up they notice the problems in the legal system. Then they say "what happened to justice, where is the freedom of defense, where is the right to a fair trial".

- **Do you think the field of law is LGBTI+ friendly? While evaluating this, I also want you to look at it with the following perspective that sometimes some places can be gay friendly but not transgender friendly, I would be glad if you take into account this perspective.**

The legal system is unfortunately very patriarchal and male dominated system. The law faculties are the same. If we do not include LGBTI+ persons, it is still a profession that excludes women even in the simplest equality between men and women. Therefore, they cannot sense the presence of a trans woman or trans man in the courthouses, courtrooms, law enforcement offices, and police stations.

There is an incredibly large prejudice. They act as if the brains of trans and LGBTI+ subjects work differently and this brain structure is not suitable for lawyers. Therefore, there is a huge discrimination regarding this. I experienced a lot of discrimination while looking for a job. I found it easy to do my internship but when I was looking for a place to earn money, I went through incredibly terrible things. They never believe you can do this job.

If a cis-hetero person is working on one case, you need to work on 10 cases to prove yourself. You need to put much more effort, know much more. You have to prove yourself this way. Persons have a bias about you when you are a transgender.

They do not know, they do not have awareness, and this causes them to have prejudices. The trans perception and LGBTI+ perception in their minds is funny, enjoyable or something. They can do a lot of things; There is a perception that they can make persons laugh, they can do sex work, they can work in clubs, but they cannot act as a lawyer. When it comes to being lawyer, they are discussing such things “being lawyer is a hard profession, even women can have a lot of difficulty in client relations, how will this person be able to do?” LGBTI+ subjects cannot be well suited to this profession, according to them.

I do not think the profession is definitely LGBTI+ friendly. Even in the minds of the most contemporary lawyers, “Can a LGBTI+ person do this, can a transgender person do this?” There are such question marks in their minds.

If we compare transgender persons with homosexuals and bi+ persons, yes trans persons face more difficulties. Of course, transgender persons are more discriminated, but nobody can say that gays, lesbians and bisexuals are very comfortable. I have many friends with open identities and I know very well what they are going through.

Persons think this is a situation to be disclosed. The profession is in such a terrible situation that the lawyers across you can harm you suddenly on account of your sexual orientation. They can hurt or upset you.

Unfortunately, transgender persons are not visible enough in the profession. Of course, I do not know who knows who is trans or not. But in terms of visibility, the sector certainly does not know this. They are not used to this, they become so surprised.

When I entered the hearing at the Enforcement Court, the judge was shocked. The judge did not understand from my physical appearance, my id had not changed, the judge stopped while speaking and asked me to look at my id. I gave the ID, she was very surprised and she could not understand it.

The same happens in police stations. The sector is not used to it. The sector does not know this. Persons are used to seeing LGBTI+ subjects as victims. It surprises them to see that the person they used to see as a client is now a lawyer who defends the rights there.

When we look at the existing legal system in Turkey, we cannot say that there are sufficient developments for the realization of the ideal of human rights. Also, there are no regulations regarding gender identity and sexual orientation. For example, if you are a woman who is at the beginning of the gender confirmation process and the process is not officially finished, you have to have your license photo taken by wearing a tie. My photo on the license is wearing a tie because I have not had the financial means to officially finalize my confirmation process, and I could not receive my ID. Since the state issued me an ID card that is assigned male, I had to take photos with a tie. This situation made me very sad. The same is true for trans men. No human being should have to undergo any surgery to do the job. It should be thought that this is person's own preference, own view of life. Persons should decide whether to undergo surgery within the framework of their possibilities and wishes, but since there is no regulation in the field of gender identity, transgender lawyers are exposed to intense discrimination in that regard.

■ **Are you worried about being unemployed because you are a trans woman, not being able to find clients even if you can open your own office or not be able to work in the fields you want?**

Of course I am very afraid of not being able to find a job. I had two terrible months because I could not find a job in Izmir. But since I am a trans woman,

I am not afraid that I will not have a client. Still, I want to be a worker lawyer right now because I cannot cover the expenses of an office because I do not have the necessary financial resources.

Besides, unfortunately, I do not believe that I can find many LGBTI+ clients. Especially the middle-aged generation does not believe in themselves and therefore does not believe me either. Sometimes they make it feel and sometimes they say it openly. For example, I had a dialogue today with a trans woman friend of mine who called me about the discrimination that trans women working in the brothels were subjected to. She was also biased while calling me. I gave the information she needed, and she was quite surprised after that. I am sorry for their confusion. I believe this is harming the field in itself. We cannot make other persons believe in something that we ourselves believe. If I had not believed this today, I would not have gone to Izmir.

We subjects have to believe in ourselves, believe in each other.

■ **I want to ask the following in connection with the issue of your internship being rejected by a bar association you mentioned before: Do you think that do Bar Associations and Union of Turkish Bar Associations make the things that they should do? Are your professional organizations sufficient enough?**

I do not think the Bar Association is doing what it has to do. We see more than just thinking about the things they already do. They never stand by its LGBTI+ lawyers, lawyers with disabilities and so on, even by its lawyers who are the majority. I do not think they are standing behind them.

When we examine bar associations specifically, contemporary bar associations do not really distinguish between their lawyers. It does not do this whether or not the lawyer is republican, conservative or from right wing. I experienced this example in Izmir Bar Association. The Izmir Bar Association even protects the rights of its lawyer which is a minority, of course, there are points I can throw shade, but it also protect the rights of the lawyer who is from the majority. I observe this.

This is my observation of course. Maybe another friend sees and tells about something else, but that is my experience. I am an open and proud trans woman and I did not even see positive discrimination. I liked this so much.

■ **How was the process of the rejection of internship?**

The bar association refusing my internship did not provide any legal justification for rejection. It was anger towards the minority. It was an anger felt

towards a subject being an open LGBTI+ person. They did not notify me with a written document. I know only that there were 3 votes for rejection.

I actually did not want to start my internship in this bar association. I knew I might have faced trouble there. When a few of my friends said you would not have any problems in contemporary bar associations, I applied in the city where I live. I immediately started working in an office. I waited for a long time, but my confirmation document did not come. This was not sent to the Union as well, I do not carry out the process for identification or something. And nobody told me that there were 3 rejecting votes that would go to the Union and I would start after the confirmation for the internship comes from there. I realized that there was a shady process there then, because the time given in the law had also exceeded. I later learned that I was rejected.

The rationale behind this was my gender identity, that I am a trans woman. When I recall this, I get very upset. I have experienced discrimination at school, I have experienced discrimination from my professors, I experienced discrimination by the right-wing groups, but none of them affected me that much. I thought I could not do my dream job. That discrimination I was experiencing had incredible psychological consequences on me, I am still getting through.

■ **I still do not understand why it went to Union and what the reason behind this was.**

The part regarding justification was empty.

■ **How would it go to Union? How would Union of Turkish Bar Associations evaluate this?**

I do not really know that either. My colleagues, whom I consulted, told me that there was no such thing to burn my bridges; only Union would examine my documents. It is so unreasonable...

■ **It is really a surprising situation. In what situations do they normally send it to Union?**

In the legal practitioners act, there are conditions for admission to internship and admission to practice of law. In very exceptional cases, if you do not meet these conditions or you have committed the crimes specified in the law, you may not be accepted for internship. There are situations such

as being sentenced above a certain year. I did not have any of this. That is why I had a lot of paranoia after my internship until I got my license.

During that period, persons made this decision with their own hatred and reflected their discrimination in their job.

■ **What happened then?**

Then I went to Izmir. I mean, I did not want to stay here anyway, but it was not possible to change cities economically. The rents were also very high. While you could sit here in a good place with such money, Izmir was much more expensive than here. I left the city where I live, there were situations like I would receive very little money anyway during my internship, I had hard times.

My plan was to do my internship in the city where I normally live for 5-6 months, collect some money and move after creating circles in other cities. But when it happened like this, I had to make a very quick change because here I would still have been an intern if I had waited for the decision from Union. It was a waste of time...

I took a bag and went to Izmir.

■ **Sorry to hear it again. You were on the LGBTI+ Rights Commission in Izmir Bar Association. The establishment process of the commission and the work it did excited everyone. Would you like to talk a little bit about that?**

I got involved after the commission was established. I am currently the coordinator of it together with Ekin. Commissions in bar associations work on a voluntary basis. For this reason, we cannot find many opportunities to work on a case-by-case basis. Our aim is ensure lawyers and bar associations to recognize and support LGBTI+ persons. Our next goal, of course, is to help persons in these matters if they are exposed to discrimination due to being LGBTI+ persons. But we are not able to get into the studies as associations do. We cannot get into these anyway; we do not have enough equipment for this yet.

■ **When we look at the field of law, I see that the law itself is very masculine. And what you are actually doing is trying to find an air within this patriarchal cycle. Is it possible?**

It is really hard to breathe. If I really did not want to do this profession, I would have quit 6 months ago. Courthouses are so masculine that it is very difficult to breathe and it is very difficult to get out of the way. If you are a

man, you can speak up. If you are a woman, you are a LGBTI+ subject, you are not taken too seriously and you have to fight for it.

For example, I had a fight with the police in my first week. I did not have an identity card, but I have the document. They did not allow me in from the lawyer entrance! Interns normally go through with this document. “Who is to say that you did not fill out this document yourself?” the police stated. As if I forged the official document to enter the courthouse. The more masculine the state is, the more masculine the courthouses become.

I am really confident in myself. I trust my legal knowledge and hard work. When you say this, you still seem strange by the same patriarchal cycle.

### ■ How do you stay well in this cycle?

My motivation is high and I have a dream. I visualize my dreams about my professional successes. Where do I see myself in 5 years? I answer this question myself by writing. I write my plans, write down the good and bad things that I am likely to experience I am reaffirming my belief that these things will not psych out and intimidate me.

Last year, I wanted to see myself as a lawyer in one year. That was my motivation. I focused completely on this. I lived in Izmir just for this for a year. That motivation is very good for me.

Yes, I sometimes experience serious discrimination. For example, one day, when I walked into the trial at the enforcement court, a male judge really insulted me, saying, “Do you believe you can do this job?” He said this out of nowhere. I said, “Yes, what is your basis when you say this? How is it related to the case?” I replied. He said “I do not believe you can do it, I even had difficulty”. Because he is a man, therefore “even” he...

That day I came home, I was crying. I guess I cannot do it, I cry because I do not want to be subjected to this discrimination. I have not earned any money anyway, and I constantly cry. I burned out in 1 year. Then I was motivated again so that this discrimination by someone does not affect me. I decided to give myself 3 hours of depression when I face such moments.

But I have to say that there are persons who approach very positively. Sometimes I come across such cops that, for example, they tell me “well done!” In a hearing, for example, when the opposing party leaves out, there are those who say, “I hope you will climb the ladders as you deserve, Well Done!” This also motivates me. I remember I am not alone, and that makes me happy.

# “Frankly speaking, you are actually a precariat”

## Aside

We discussed being LGBTI+ in the music sector as well as working in night-life, insecurity and invisible labor with Aside, who works as a service staff and bartender as well as being a DJ.

### ■ **Hi. First of all I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. Can you tell us about yourself? How is your life?**

I was studying engineering at ITU until 2 years ago. Before that, I have a science high school background that I could not bear and transferred to Anatolian high school. Actually, I have always been “forced into” this kind of education by my family, in order to be an engineer, a doctor or something. Then I stopped studying engineering three years ago and became interested in electronic music, when they realized how much I wanted, my family started to support me. I was always interested in music, but I did not know that I could make music with my computer. Then I took some training on percussion, music theory, and solfeggio. Somehow I tried to educate myself. I make music and work as a DJ. I also work as a service staff.

### ■ **How long have you been working as a DJ and why did you choose to be a DJ, to make music?**

I have been working as a DJ for a year and a half. As for why I chose it, because I love creating a whole new song from the songs I love, creating an atmosphere and presenting it to persons, making them dance. I can say that music is my biggest passion.

### ■ **Are you open while doing your job? Do all employers or listeners know where you work as a DJ that you are queer?**

I am open and proud and there are no processes where I conceal it. Being in a space with my identity makes me feel comfortable. For this reason, I



want to do my work with my open identity, this is important for me and I am able to do it.

I have never worked for less money or under different conditions than any other artist on account of being queer.

However, in the music industry, I sometimes feel that I am not taken seriously because I am non-white LGBTI+ person.

■ **What kind of situation is this where you are not taken seriously? How do they make you feel?**

For example, they can make me feel it by not communicating with me directly. Actually, I can say that I feel this in some places, though not everywhere. They do not say directly that you are LGBTI+ person and we do not take you seriously, but when I think about why they do not take me seriously, I see no other reason than this. Because I can observe that there are areas that are not welcoming me while more space is provided for the artists I work with.

I experienced such a thing with the music director of a venue. I said I wanted to play in this venue and the director wanted me to provide a set to learn my style. I sent two of the sets I prepared. Although the director told me to call me back, but never did it. 3 months later, when I went to that venue to talk with that person again and this person asked me things like that “What were you playing?” I actually have sent my sets already. I said I am playing mostly house, breaks and techno but not in a genre specific way; I said that I am trying to create eclectic sets without using a single genre. This person also said that they are not playing house music much in this venue. But I know that house music was played in that place. When I look at the characteristics of the persons who play house music in that venue, I see the difference between them and me; they are all white heterosexual men. Are they more talented than me? This is open for discussion, but when I think why I am not given a chance, such reasons come to my mind.

■ **Issues such as insurance, employment with social security and occupational safety may not be on the agenda for persons working in nightlife. Do you have anything to say about this?**

I am not just a DJ in the nightlife. I also worked in various jobs such as being service staff and bartender. That is why I experienced this field one by one. I

know that in most of the places where I work as a service staff and bartender, persons work precariously, for a daily wage. Frankly speaking, you are actually a precariat! When that job continues, it turns into a situation where you do not see your future, you cannot make a career plan, you stuck in the same place in a precarious way and you work with flexible working hours.

For example, when I was working as a bartender, I was also carrying a beer barrel. While carrying it, my back was injured and that venue did not issue a health insurance for me. What happened then? My back was injured so I could not continue working in that job. I was working for 70 liras per day at that workplace; all I could have is a back injury.

This is not the case in every place. For example, I am working both as a service staff and a DJ where I work now. This venue was not opened yet, the pandemic process started when it was about to open, we went on unpaid leave, but it was an insured employment.

■ **You are working both as a service staff and a DJ where you started right now. You have had experience as a service staff before. Can you tell us more about this?**

It varies a lot from place to place. When I started college, I started working to earn my own allowance. I was inexperienced at first, and when you were inexperienced, it is both harder to find a job and you are working in worse conditions. I started working in a bar in Beşiktaş, working 10-11 hours a day and getting 50 TL. The venue was also very busy and when I got back home I was so tired that I fell asleep immediately. The next day I woke up and went to work again and fell asleep after I returned home.

Afterwards, you gain experience by working and you do not have to work for 50 lira. Again, you work without insurance, but for a little better money. As I gained experience, I was able to work in more comfortable conditions. It was such a process for me.

■ **Both the nightlife and the music industry seem to be a sector where there are lots of queers. But actually we are talking about a very wide area with the nightlife and music industry. Can LGBTI+ persons find enough space in this wide area? Do you think the industry has advantages or disadvantages for queers?**

As queers, we are already organizing and socializing in nightlife. We now have venues and we are in the nightlife. There are lots of Queer DJs; there

are Queer owners of venues. I cannot mention it as an advantage; this is what it should be. Nightlife is just an area where I feel safer compared to other sectors.

I have been working as a DJ for a year and a half, for two years, and I have not experienced the whole industry frankly. I am not sure how much of it I have experienced. But when you go to the places and look around, you can understand somehow how many queers are there. Or when you look at the line-up of the night, you can see how many women are playing. From that, it becomes very clear that there are more cis-hetero men. I do not think these venues take LGBTI+ visibility into account too much.

■ **Do you think venues or organizations that support LGBTI+ persons use this as a showcase? Do you have any questions or concerns about the political stance of the place when choosing the place to play or the persons you will play with?**

Honestly, I sometimes feel this showcase issue. I think this is the case not only for the venues, but also for the persons or organizations that organize events. When you get involved in it, you can still find yourself in something shady. What you do can be valuable and important for queer artists, for queer nightlife, but when you look back later, it is impossible not to think, “Did I take a right stance by playing in that event?”

I actually have political concerns about the persons I will play with or the places I will play, but since this is a job, you have to earn money no matter how much you care about the political stance of the venues. You may have to ignore some things.

If we had discussed this two years ago, I would have said that I would never support participating in an event sponsored by a beer brand: “this brand is a capitalist company, it exploits persons’ labor”. But when you do not have money, you can say that you can work there and pay your rent.

Or there is a very cool club, it is located in the swankiest place in the city and the prices are high. The regular customers of this place have no connection whatsoever to the social group and the economic class I am in. But when I play there, I can pay my rent and I can play the music I want. Sometimes I can work by compromising the things I think without paying attention to the attitudes or political stances of companies, places, and organizations.

■ **Is there a difference for you between playing in queer venues or in queer parties and playing in other places?**

The music I choose is clearly different. I feel free more at dance parties I play whatever I want. But I cannot say that for every queer place, I can say that for parties. For example, there is a queer venue in Beyoğlu, I cannot always play the music I want there. It is a place where the administrator of the place intervenes when I play the music I want.

I kept playing there for a while because I needed money, but I am aware that I do not want to do this anymore. I do not want to be interfered in what I play. Until a while ago I could not say this because I needed to earn money, but now I have a clearer stance.

However, I feel more free at queer parties. I can play whatever I want.

■ **As a queer in nightlife, you are in the position of producing work, making music and sometimes receiving service. You stand on both sides of being in the nightlife. There probably are challenges and joys in both. Can you tell us about your experiences in that regard?**

What really challenges me in nightlife is about setting my sleep schedule. I sleep in the mornings when I play intensely or party hard, and I can be in a depressed mood due to my sleep schedule. At the same time, alcohol use etc. can challenge me, and of course persons. I was not a very social person until college, as I spent most of my life like a nerd. Another thing that challenges me in nightlife is to constantly socialize with persons. I may not feel very comfortable with this social situation. Sometimes I just want to go, play music and return. But I like it in general, although it is sometimes difficult.

■ **There is also a part of being a DJ, which we call invisible labor. It is not about just the time you get there and play, there are also preparation stages behind. We are actually talking about a pre and post process. How is this preparatory part, the invisible part of your labor for you?**

You need to constantly listen to music. This is something I have ve already done, but when it becomes a job, it becomes a necessity. I need to listen to music, find good songs and use them effectively in my sets.

At the same time, if you work in another job, it has different aspects that make it difficult. Events generally take place at night on Fridays and Satur-

days. If you have to wake up early the next day, you can either go to work without sleep or you have to work after sleeping for a few hours.

There is also a social media aspect. From what I have observed so far, I think you need to be popular on social media, manage social media well and make yourself more visible in order to be a DJ. I do not think I can manage this very well. And I do not know if I actually want to do that either. I cannot be someone I am not. I do not want to turn into a person who constantly shares posts on social media because it is not good for me.

■ **When you do not do that, do you feel the anxiety about not being successful?**

I clearly feel the pressure to get along with popular kids, but I cannot. I am not that person, I have never been. I have never been a person who got along well with the popular kids of the school and became popular by their approval. I could never be in such a dynamic.

You need to consume more to become popular anyway. There is a dynamic in which the clothes you wear, your style and the places you go to, and the persons you befriend with are connected to each other, and I have never been able to achieve this in any period of my life. That is why I define myself as a little more outsider. I do not get along very well with popular kids, and I feel a bit excluded because I do not follow their rules very well.

■ **Do you think you are talking about the general problem of the industry or is it just a problem you face?**

I think this is an industry-wide problem. I have experienced it clearly.

■ **What goals do you have in mind for the future? Do you have hope in that regard?**

Frankly, I am hopeful. At least I feel hopeful about myself and about the queer nightlife. Good things are happening. Besides being a DJ, I am also interested in music production. I have been working on two separate projects for a while and I am thinking of releasing two different EPs next year.

# “I forget about homophobia and the other problems while I continue teaching”

ABB

Our guest is ABB Afrodith. We discussed with ABB, whom we know from the nightlife of Istanbul, about ABB’s profession, which is English Teacher.

## ■ First of all, can you tell us about yourself? How is your life?

I am very young actually, I am 31 years old. I was born in Hatay. I am actually an English teacher, but in the last 5 years of my profession, I have been in education design and education management rather than teaching.

For the last 2 years, I have worked as a department manager and director at a foundation school. On the other hand, I continue my doctorate program because I embraced the policy of “raising world students, world children”. I also take IB (International Baccalaureate) courses in that program. Thanks to the various topics we study in this course, I can study queer theory in the course. Or I provide areas where I can include the art of queer while producing useful services for the society.

So while I was shaping the last year of my life, which was when I met you, I spent my time on doing research on how to add queer theory to the education and I realized that I can do this very smoothly in IB.

Apart from this, I am a volunteer at the Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week Committee. I am on party, event and lobbying commissions. I am an honorary volunteer of BÜ LGBTI. I am a volunteer in Pink Life. I work in Şişli City Council LGBTI+ Assembly’s Commission on Education.

## ■ Have you ever worked in a public school? Can you share how the stages of labor life were?

I worked at a university and even appointed as an English teacher to Şırnak at that time, I went there and stayed for 1 day and came back. That is why I

was punished; I could not take KPSS exam for 2 years. The period I worked at the university was very good because I was working in the foreign affairs office. I was also working as a volunteer when I was not working there professionally. So it was the team I knew, persons knew me. Before I started working professionally, I had not share my identity, but everyone understood that. I am slightly a drag.

After I started working as a professional, I gained self-confidence and I started working at the university openly. Both the head of the department and the person in charge of the department knew me. But I have never been able to experience this in the entire university. At that time, a LGBTI+ association was established in the city. After the Gezi period, the association was established, things were going very well and I gained self-confidence because of that, but the environment I worked in was an environment that could accept this. Everyone was very white, they were different faculty members. That is why I did not face any problem.

Did I see the advantage? Yes I did. We applied for this position with 3 persons and I think I saw the benefits of being queer compared to the other two for various reasons.

■ **Are you open where you work now?**

I never actually concealed it. Nobody dared to ask me this because I build all my relations that way. I let persons to ask me whom I would not hesitate to come out when they ask, and I am open to them. But I do not allow persons to ask by whom I think I will face problem when I told them.

■ **There was a period when you were working open and you are living a period now you are not fully open. What are the differences between these two period for you or is there a difference?**

There is for sure. When I was working in college, I could think more creatively and big, but now I cannot think that way. For example, there is a single mother in the content that I put while preparing material and she likes another woman at work, and I question myself a lot when I want to put this. But when I was working at university, I was much more comfortable.

It is also a bit related to the following: I am not only doing a job with the persons I work for now. Actually, I do it with children and the limits of the Ministry of National Education on this issue are very clear. They can even cause my

diploma to be nullified by being identifying this as a behavior that is not suitable for the teaching profession. Maybe that is why I totally moved away from teaching and turned my head to education design or HR education departments in human resources sector and I am developing myself in that regard.

■ **I guess you needed air inbetween?**

Absolutely.

■ **So do you feel that you are discriminated? What are your coping mechanisms in such moments?**

I think I am having problems during the recruitment process because I am drag a little. And when I go there better groomed, it can draw more attention in the interviews. For this reason, there were jobs I missed. For example, when I applied to a foundation school, I attended all of the interviews, and the meetings with the heads of departments were very good. Afterwards, the HR manager calls my manager at the institution where I worked before from my reference list during the inspection. "This person is a little feminine, what do you think?" HR manager asked such questions to my former manager. I was not hired as a result of these dialogues. Someone who had 2 years less seniority than me was employed for the same position.

But other than that, in other places, I actually benefit from the advantage of my branch. It is a branch with few qualified teachers. Also, I have not applied for teaching positions since 2014. In the positions I have applied for, employers look at things like whether there is a master's degree or a published article. The scale is narrowing there, already, I have had its advantage.

Another problem I faced during the recruitment process with Turkish Airlines, which was a sector different than education, I got 5 out of 5 in English exam and 4.8 out of 5 in psychological assessment. I took my documents, I was going to have an interview, but I was not interviewed because I had a military service exemption certificate. They said that those who are exempt from military service cannot be cabin crew either. Even though I raised my objections, they did not accept and I could not attend the interviews.

The things I faced are these two incidents during the recruitment process, I do not know if anything else happened in the others without my knowledge.

Of course, I have not changed a lot of institutions. I worked in 2 universities and at 2 schools. Therefore, I did not have too many problems as I did not



move much, but I am working with an incredibly homophobic director at the institution where I am currently working, and I experienced the hardship a lot. My brother, who is also an English teacher but has a clearer identity, was not hired for the same school because of this director.

If you ask how you cope with it, I had to make big plans and brew a plot. I try to build meaningless relations with persons who can be effective in firing that person o. For example, I am trying to keep relations strong by providing free English lessons to our HR recruiter. At the end of these processes, an official investigation started regarding this director. So as you can understand, I am holding a grudge, I am fighting.

■ **So actually there is a very obvious crime of discrimination and you have to deal a lot to deal with it. This process should actually be exhausting for you. Does it affect your motivation?**

I love to fight. When I look at the essence of the work, I do extra work, I get tired more. If I had been paid for the free lessons I gave to that person in HR, I would take a holiday abroad.

■ **I want to talk a little bit about the sector. Does the education sector have advantages or disadvantages for a queer?**

We work with children and young persons. “Queer” is loved by children. All the teachers that I know them to be queer teachers are very popular. Your transfer of information is very good in the places where you are loved. So you do your job better.

In other words, queers are generally liked by their colleagues and they can affect the culture of the institution. We have 8 campuses connected to the foundation, half of them have queers, half of them do not. I feel the energy is higher where there are queers. In other places there is a constant complaint, unhappiness. I always say that what they need is a queer.

There are a lot of queers in the education sector, especially in the field of foreign languages, both among students and employees.

■ **Well, do you think this is a runoff?**

Studying languages is much better for me. If I had studied science, I would have had more difficulty, those fields seem very heteronormative to me.

You read a thousand different things here and you solve language questions about them, and you are not actually restricted when you think and work. Language is a very free area to study.

- **We hear a lot of negative news about private schools these days, about teachers not getting their salaries. Teachers working in the public institutions are also usually assigned to village schools in conditions they are not ready after graduation. What kind of a sector this is, what do you think?**

Like shit. Because the success base in preferring medical departments in the country is 50 thousand, for being a teacher this is 300 thousand. In other words, you have to be in the first 50 thousand persons to become a doctor, whereas you have to be in the first 300 thousand persons to educate doctors, there was no limit to teaching until last year. In Turkey currently most of the universities consist the faculty of education. Those who do not consist these faculties also provide teachers with education by formation programs. This is an area that has already more graduated persons than needed; the quality of education is very poor. And when you assign these persons to schools with poor conditions, everything is completely ruined.

I am in the advantageous group because I have already studied high school in teacher high school. I had received a suitable education even then. Teacher high schools have also closed down...

In other words, education is in a very bad situation, but the reason for this is that YÖK has to undergo a restructuring first in terms of quality and quantity.

- **Now I want to return to you again. You mentioned that you produce materials. Do you think there is a relation between the materials you produce and your queer identity?**

Especially when I look at the products I have released for the last two years, I see incredibly beautiful things come out. For example, in a text I wrote in 5th grade last week, the boy is playing with his toys at home. Then his mother and older sister come from outside. His older sister is playing football on the street and their mother came home from work. Their father also cooks because he came early. With such simple images, we can add another perspective to the child. When the children see these at a young age, they became much more ready for them. For example, when I put the same

text in the high school group, it seems strange to the child because he did not see such a family until he reaches that age, but I never experience this in the middle school group.

And now I have IB in my life. The things we talk about in this area make me think about the relations between language and gender. In this way, we have the chance to talk these with young persons.

While I am describing colors, I can observe the transformation that when I dress the boys in pink and the girls in blue by going beyond the norms of society. Or I use words that are genderless in terminology.

I cannot use the “They” pronoun yet. I used it a few times but it came back.

In other words, I open spaces for myself while I develop content on this subject, but it is also censored from time to time.

■ **My next question is a question we both know the answer for it, but I want to ask anyway: Do you think this kind of practice or queer teachers cause kids to be gay?**

Such practices do not cause children to be gay, but showing them that they should not be ashamed of it if they are gay, this makes them more secure and happy. It strengthens them, makes them to be open.

Our student graduated last year was an open and proud trans woman, and she was one who had difficulties before contacting us. If we had not reached that student and provided appropriate guidance, her life would have been different since she had attempted suicide before. But now she graduated and will continue her education abroad.

■ **I would like to discuss unionization a little bit. Are you unionized? Is there pressure for this in the places you work?**

Unions do not accept private school teachers, we are not public employees. There is Turkish Private Schools Association ruled by the financial support of Private school owners and managers. So it is impossible for this place to defend our rights because the origin of their financial sources are these.

However there is a need for such a union definitely. The greatest example of this was experienced by friends at Doğa College. There was no union they could go to, apply for, or act jointly with, so they chose different ways and

tried to fight. Somehow most of them got their wages, but their processes were prolonged, their energy wasted, it was demotivational for them.

■ **Thank you very much for your answers. I do not have any other question to ask, is there anything else you would like to add?**

I really believe this: I was saying I would be an English teacher in future, when they asked me in middle school. Then when I started to university, I realized that I want to be an English teacher, but why do I? I also wanted a bit to be liked by the others. I want this not only for myself, but also for my profession, for the institution I work for, for the foundation that the institution is affiliated with, for my sector. I started this with that intention.

If I can reach the heart of the students and if they believe my sincerity, they accept my identity and me. I believe this effect is important. I like my job very much, but I do not like teaching anymore. My teaching is always restricted by others. That is why I am not a teacher, I moved forward for producing content.

■ **Now, while you were talking, the following question came to my mind: If you were not restricted, would you still want to produce content or would you continue to be a teacher?**

I would like to teach. Because I love the class, that is my stage. It is very good for me. I attend classes 12 hours a week and those days are very busy but I really forget about everything at that time. I forget about homophobia and the other problems while I continue teaching. I am having fun there. It is so fun and dynamic there... And every year I have to improve myself more. It is a perfect place for this reason.

I have been teaching since 2011. I have been doing the same job for 9 years and the issues are the same. That is why I start to do a job that I take for granted in a more artistic manner. I love this so much so to speak...

# “Existing in the field as a queer is a matter in itself”

## Aria Na

Our guest is the performance artist Aria Na. We discussed with Aria Na and the art starting from childhood from the April 23 shows to the stages, situations in working in nightlife and being a performance artist in the quarantine period.

### ■ Hello Aria Na. I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. First of all, can you tell us about yourself?

I am Aria Na. I am 22 years old. I am studying at Management of Stage and Performing Arts Program at Bilgi University. I am also a performance artist as a part of a group that we have formed together with performance artists. Besides, we have a project we started together one of my friends called “O Perf Türkiye”.

### ■ How long have you been interested in performance art? So how did you get started?

I actually started when I was very young. It started with preparing something for the April 23 shows in primary school. There were theater plays where I wrote the script, directed, brought my friends together and played. Again on April 23, we prepared a dance show with my friends ... Actually, this process started when I was a kid.

Later, I moved to Istanbul and had other responsibilities. I moved away from the arts and performances, but with “Dudakların Cengi”, that period came to my life again. 2 years ago, when “Dudakların Cengi” had not reached such a large audience yet, when I went to watch it, I had no plans to go on stage. But when I went there and got under the influence of that scene and the applause, I got my name written to go on the stage.

I was so excited that I had not been on the stage in many years. After years, I was on the stage again, and then it continued. I have been doing it for 2 years continuously.

■ **Why did you choose to make it?**

I think we queers are born for performance. I speak for myself; I always wanted to do what I love to do in life. I like the feelings like being applauded and being appreciated. I also think I have talent. I can see myself on the stage.

I love to provide a show, to be on the stage. I had that feeling when I was a kid. Writing something, envisioning those in my head, performing it on stage with my friends while also directing... For this reason, I always prefer to be accompanied with a crowd in my shows.

■ **You said you are studying Management of Performing Arts. Can you tell us about the school process? How was it?**

I started school this year. I knew the department last year when I was preparing for the university exams, but that was not my dream. I studied in science high school before and I wanted to do something about this area. But I also started performing; it was an important part of my life.

One day I had an epiphany and said I do not want to spend my life in the lab. At the same time, that period was my peak period in terms of performance. I had performed in important places, and I decided that I had to continue with getting the training of this. It would be better for me to continue my life doing something I love. After these thoughts, I made a quick decision and prepared for the talent exams, and then I passed the exam and started to the school.

■ **You often make performance art in nightlife. Have you ever experienced discrimination or difficulty when you perform?**

I think I created my safe space for myself. Therefore, I have not been subjected to any kind of discrimination. But this is also about being in a more closed environment. I did not choose to go outside of my own circle, I just said yes to jobs I trust. There are a lot of demands, but there were places that I refused because I could not afford to go to these cis-het places. I have always determined my own boundaries. Because an incident I will face where I am not safe can turn into a trauma for me. My art may not be understood there.

I do not want the persons in those places to see my art as a service they only get for money. This will bother me. That is why I have always determined those boundaries myself and created the spaces I want to work in.

I am performing an art and yes, I also earn money from the art I perform. I do not know if I want these separate from each other. I guess I do not just want to make art or just make money. In today's conditions, we need a financial power to continue our lives or to think of new productions and unfortunately our own budget does not support this. Therefore, I create my own resources myself; I get paid for the art I perform. Taking the two together makes me relaxed and motivated. It also helps me prepare for the next job. But I would be lying if I say that I am doing my job only for money or only for the sake of art.

### ■ **What do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of working in nightlife for LGBTI+ persons?**

I think queers are the group that manages and organizes this network that we call "entertainment" in the best way in the world. All the examples I have seen supported this idea, because we can think very broadly. Whatever life gives us; we can handle an issue with all sides.

First of all, we are born politically. The most important thing in nightlife is safety. We know very well how to ensure this safety, that persons have limits and that these limits should not be violated. When we achieve this, when we give this trust to the other party, we start ahead. It is our advantage that the queers can manage this whole process well.

Coming to the disadvantages, it feels like what we call nightlife keeps us in the night. Our entertainment network does not continue during the day. I think this is a major disadvantage. So there is a perception that sticking in the nights and being in nightlife are inherent for queers. We may not be able to create areas where we can socialize and work outside of nightlife due to external factors.

There are events like daytime festivals and I think a more cis-het world prevails there.

### ■ **How relevant is your performance on stage with your story?**

I would be lying if I say I am telling my own story at every performance. I am a person with vivid imagination. I am influenced by a song I listen to, a

movie I watch, something the things I see on the road while walking and turn these into a performance. Most performances are like this.

But of course, I add something from my life, with or without realizing it. Adding details from my life to my art is an important point for me to create my own style and be authentic

I mean, I cannot say that there are no parts of myself in my performances, but I go beyond my own life.

■ **You are now also studying in the school related to your work. Can you talk about your future plans? What do you want to do in the future?**

I have so many plans about myself ... With my friends Q-Bra and Krutzog; we together launched a project called “O Perf Türkiye”. In fact, a parody of the competition show published in Turkey channels, as you can understand from the name. I have various feelings for these television shows. It feels like we were excluded from here for being queer and we could not live it. It was always my dream to participate, to compete, to live dramas and so on. But I see that we cannot live this openly. I do not remember a television show in which queer artists competed with their open identity.

This is why we created “O Perf Türkiye”. We got bored in the 5 square meter hall of the house and we started to play. We had a lot of fun doing this at home. We had incredibly beautiful moments in that tiny living room. During this period, a venue asked me to organize an event and I decided to do this. I immediately went to Q-bra and Krutzog to be the jury. They also said okay, they were very happy. Then the contestants were selected, songs were selected, rehearsals were done and we had a very good night. We were going to do it again, but the pandemic process started. My recent goal is to reorganize this night.

At the same time, I want to finish my school. I am at the very beginning in this road. I want to learn the methods for this work. I also have a plan to stay at the academy. I want to keep my scores high and have a master’s degree abroad at a school related to my field. I think why I may not be the good producer of the future...

I want to get out of sticking at night. I will also do my best about it. For example, a festival last for a whole day and night comes to my mind.



- **Initiatives such as “Dudakların Cengi, O Perf Türkiye“ are actually diverting the queer nightlife in Turkey. There were drag queens in some venues before, and they were usually queers, but what you do now is something completely different and you really shake some dust in nightlife. This is also very intertwined with politics. How do you feel about that?**

As I said, my re-engagement with the performance art started with Dudakların Cengi. I think Dudakların Cengi has a unique dynamic. It is a process where everyone puts their own efforts and we do great things. A lot of persons with different personalities come together and we create something magical.

Besides, as you said, there is a political aspect of what we do. Drag queens always evaluated as someone wearing wigs and make-up, shaving the body hair. We are smashing this pattern. I can also go on stage with beard; someone else can perform without shaving the body hair or without wearing make-up. We have shown this. At this point, we have a very good political stance. We are all political persons at some point, and our relationship of trust with each other depends on the bond that comes from here.

When you do not an ordinary and do something new, you naturally enter that political field, and we do this. This is what separates us from other drag cultures.

- **In the beginning, for many persons, including me, this issue was at the level of “gays try drag”. But you have clearly demonstrated that this is not the case, that women and queers are also in this field. On this occasion, I have provided my self-criticism in this regard. In this process, you have revealed both the injustice of the labor and the discriminatory attitudes towards the queers. You actually changed the direction of queer politics. Do you have anything to say about this?**

I agree very much with this statement. We are working with persons from all over Turkey and from very different lives, having very different personalities. We have a wide variety of identities related to where we stand. Even the coming together of so many different queer persons is a political symbol in itself.

We all do something about ourselves. We destroy persons' perceptions, we play with them. We demolish the profile of women and men imposed by society by applying headlights on the beard or exaggerated make-up. This is a very special job. It is very important way to show the politics.

For example, I see straight couples who came to the front of the venue while Dudakların Cengi is on the stage. We all have that points where we can contact those persons. You make news, you do a social media campaign, but these persons will not even know about those. But when you go there with makeup and chat with those persons, you can get their attention and teach them something. Even this is a very important step for activism. I find the work we do very valuable in this sense.

Performance is not always activism, but I think my performance is activism. Everyone can add something from their own life and from their political stance. There may be persons talking about child brides on the stage or they can draw attention to transgender murders. At some point, you show this to the person who came to the event that night and had no idea about it. This is also an activism in that sense.

■ **There are comments that your work is white. Do you think you are doing a “white” work?**

We cannot be white even if we want, I think, if we are doing this job. Existing in the field as a queer is a matter in itself ... I do not understand this criteria of being “white”. At least I know myself that I cannot be white

I also consider it unfair to define our art as white. It feels like it is done with the intention of excluding a little more rather than criticism. While making this criticism, they do not know the artist, they do not know the job, they have not talked with the artist even once about the work ... For this reason, I cannot find these comments made from outside fair.

■ **Are you worried about the future? Are you feeling hopeful?**

Like everyone else, I have anxiety about the future ... I am sorry, but I do not feel like I can live in this country without worrying about the future. You can be all alone completely, regardless of life and the circumstances you live in. For example, the state does not pay my rent when I need it. I would also like not to have this anxiety, to be supported by responsible persons ... For these reasons, of course I have anxiety.

Do I want to do something in this country, yes I do, but I am not sure if I can stay in these conditions in this country. Maybe after securing something abroad, I can return here and do something. But my plans, like many others, are always about going abroad.

I do not know if my work is paid the attention in a way I deserve. We all know that artists are not much valuable in this country. For example, if you can solve 3 math problems, you are more valuable and that makes me feel bad.

■ **How do you get motivated again when you face any difficulty?**

Yes, we all really experience various difficulties in our lives. But with these situations, we cannot continue this process by being sad or burning out. That is why I overcome such moments by devoting myself to my art, by producing and by thinking a lot on my work.

Other than that, I feel happy when I am applauded for my work on stage. Knowing that I have achieved something makes me happy.

■ **How is the quarantine process going for performance artists?**

We are going through an incredibly difficult period. Everyone I saw around me was puzzled; they are in a difficult situation. There is no area in which we are supported or secured. There were a lot of persons who made a living, earning money. We all found ourselves in a process we could not understand. We have no idea how this will progress.

We started various campaigns. We started Cengaver Solidarity Fund. Queerwaves also launched a fund. We had to resort to these ways because we need money to continue our lives. We expect support from everyone in this regard.

At the same time, we started to plan what we can do in this process in terms of production. In this process, we talk about ways such as how we motivate persons, how we can continue our work. We want to move our business into a digital platform. But of course, we do not know how long this process will continue, so we cannot predict what steps we will take.

■ **Thank you very much for your answers. I do not have any other question to ask, is there anything else you would like to add?**

I think we are doing a very valuable job. We need support during and after this quarantine process. This does not necessarily have to be a financial support. Even a good message can be empowering. We are all going through difficult processes and we need financial and moral support.

# “They always have a tongue-in-cheek approach”

## Zahter

We discussed with Zahter, a 24-year-old private sector employee, about the situation of the private sector and the place of transgender persons in the private sector, regarding these days where Zahter had to take unpaid leave due to Covid-19.

### ■ Hello, Zahter. I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. Can you tell us about yourself?

I am Zahter. I am 24 years old. I graduated from folklore department actually, but I cannot do my job, since it is seen worthless in Turkey. Besides, I work in the private sector. I work as a secretary in a company. I live in Izmir. I came here in 2014. Before that, I was in Eastern provinces and Syria.

### ■ What is your work experience? Is this your first place of work?

I have never been able to do my own profession. I worked in bookstores, second hand bookstores. I worked as a secretary in a trade chamber. I also worked in a call center. In other words, I generally took part in the private sector, in the service sector. I also worked in a private hospital.

### ■ Can you explain the recruitment process? How was it?

My aunts are working in the same company I work for now. Various relatives on my mother's side are also there. This company is a well-established company. It is an active company in many fields such as oil industry and food sector. I work in the food department. I have a disability report due to my diabetes, and they had to have 4 employees with a disability report in this company. My aunt called me 4 months ago and asked if I would like to get

a job in the company she works for. At that time, I was already looking for a job. I accepted it. But I also explained my criteria, I accepted with these conditions. They said it was okay.

My manager, for whom I am working as a secretary, is a very responsive woman. She ensured that no one address me with my name on the ID card, thanks to her, everyone calls me “Miss”. She is a young woman, too, probably she is responsive due to that. She tries to reduce and eliminate LGBTI+ phobia as much as she can in the office and in places like dining halls. Of course she cannot interfere with everyone, but at least I am lucky to have such staff around me. The higher-level managers also know that I am transwoman. I have not encountered any transphobic attitude until now, I hope I never will.

■ **Do you think your work performance would be affected if you were not open?**

I could never work. In order to be efficient, I have to be happy there, I have to be positive. But if I conceal my identity and repress it, I cannot deal with it psychologically. This would have made me very demoralized. I can be aggressive and probably do not want to work. It is very precious and exciting for me to work with an open identity and my workplace to accept it.

■ **It is very pleasing that you do not have any problems in this place. Have you ever had problems in looking for a job?**

I had a lot of problems while looking for a job. Everywhere I applied, I went with an open identity and directly said who I was. They always have a tongue-in-cheek approach. Standard attitudes were like we will call you back or we cannot work with you. It was sad at a certain point, but I did not refrain from applying the jobs. I have a very good job now, I am very happy.

Persons produce a phobia by themselves, due to their ignorance. But they are also unaware of what they do and the effects of what they do. At the company, I sometimes talk and explain this and some persons' perspectives have changed about LGBTI+ persons. You need to touch them a little. Indeed, LGBTI+ persons need to live freely in all areas of life. Somehow we need to make it clear that we exist everywhere, as much as we can.

■ **You have had a lot of experience in the private sector. In your experience, do you think the sector is worker friendly?**

Almost all of the private sector is in a very bad situation regarding labor rights. In fact, in my own experience during the Covid-19 process, I saw this again: The private sector kills. It is a field that exploits the workers' rights too much and does not respect their rights. There are very bad experiences in terms of human values in the private sector.

■ **As a transwoman, you experience working in the private sector. Do you think the conditions of the private sector are suitable for trans persons to survive?**

Especially the mentality of the administrative structure of the institution we are dealing with is very important. If that administrative structure is genuinely friendly and embraces you with your own identity, the person is more motivated. Personally, if my administrative staff did not welcome me like that, I would not want to work like this. It does not matter if this is a private sector or public sector. What the administrative structure thinks is very important.

I think that administrators in every institution should be trained by the state, local administrations and civil society. They need to get raising awareness training. There is also a workshop where I am and we work there together with 300 persons. Of course there are many different types of persons. Because of me, maybe there are persons who come out among themselves and I feel that. Their conversations with me always are about this issue.

■ **As far as I understand your relations are well with the managers. So how is your dialogue with the customers and other employees you meet?**

I do not meet many customers. I encounter them when the regional managers arrive. They also have difficulties when it comes to addressing my name, but never in a transphobic attitude. I actually like to this. It is very good to make them stunned and contemplate on this.

I have no problem with the employees. We have our lunch in separate places, but sometimes I try to go there and chat with them after lunch. I generally have more positive dialogue with female employees. I do not have much contact with the men and the drivers, they are a bit unbalanced. Their

reactions are not clear. I also do not want a tension. Only there is a distance between them and me. Knock on wood! My relation is very well with other employees, administrators.

■ **Are you organized in any trade union or professional organization or do you have a plan for this?**

I am not. I met them recently to become a member of DİSK. They told me about the necessary conditions about the workplace, I had to come with 10 persons. The persons where I work are generally those who are from the right wing. Naturally, they do not want to do much union work. I am not a union member now, but I hope I will become a union member in the future.

Being a member or not in a trade union in Turkey changes nothing really. I have criticisms about the trade union movement in Turkey in that regard.

■ **What kind of criticism is this? Can you explain it a little more?**

While it is very difficult to be a cis-woman in the union, I cannot think about being a trans woman ... I am happy for those being able to ensure this, it is nice and hopeful. But I really want to spend this energy on LGBTI+ movement; I do not want to spend it on union movement, which is not worth it anyway.

I think the trade union movement in Turkey lives in its own utopia,

■ **Sometimes you provide your opinions and do activism on health-related issues both in your political circle and on social media. Do you think your sector is open to various health or physical conditions?**

My friends in my work environment are really very sensitive to my health conditions. But I sometimes chat with them to learn about their point of view, and for example I find that they are not that open about HIV. They have HIV phobia. If I were living with HIV, I probably would not be able to say it openly at my workplace. I do not think that the sector is very open to health conditions other than conventional diseases such as diabetes.

But they were very responsive during my diabetes and chemotherapy process. Nevertheless, I could not go on paid leave during this Covid-19 process, they gave unpaid leave, I am a bit upset about this. I had to apply for a loan because I was on unpaid leave. Why would I have to apply for a loan?

Or they are not open to various eating habits. Although I want to eat vegan, the lunch every day contains animal products. I am constantly writing petitions, there are other persons who do not want to eat such, but there is no improvement in that regard.

- **You said you could not work consistent with your actual profession. What was your dream? If you have future plans, can you share those? Are you satisfied with where you are now?**

I really want to be recognized in the field of literature. More than anything, I want to produce something in this field and earn money from it.

Although my dream of the future is different, I am happy with where I am now. Although it is not exactly what I want to do, I feel lucky and happy about it.

But I hope I also make my dreams come true to be happier.

- **What you are saying is actually a situation that most of the young persons experience. Most of the young persons are just grateful for getting a job. Are you hopeful as a young trans employee living in Turkey?**

I have always been hopeful since I know myself. I will never lose hope. I think that if I have achieved these until now, the future is more beautiful.

- **You mentioned that there were also applications that you were rejected, and these were experienced because you are transwoman. How did you find energy again to start looking for a job? What was your motivation? What helped you to be back on the road?**

As I said, there was always hope in me. I always hoped for everything, even if only a small amount. I do this first of all, if I sleep happy at night, I wake up happy in the morning. I start the day with good music, starting with a good breakfast, trying to motivate myself and stay physically well. When my physical health is good, my mental health is also good. These helped each other to bring me to a certain point. After reaching this point, I think you can be happy or hopeful. Nothing can prevent you from anything then. Even if your job is bad, even if you have trouble with persons at work, it is very important not to have a bee in your bonnet.



A significant number of trans persons start their lives by fighting with their families. I think the most difficult part of the struggle is the family. That is why it feels much easier to ignore the persons outside. Struggling with the family also teaches you to struggle with social norms. It is necessary not to avoid fighting. The method is sometimes wrong, sometimes right, but it is necessary to struggle with resistance.

# “The illusion as if there is no boss is created in civil society”

Efruz Kaya

We discussed with Efruz Kaya about the experiences in civil society and how civil society is in terms of civil society employees.

## ■ First of all, can you tell us about yourself?

I am Efruz Kaya. I was living in Istanbul before and I was working in an association working on the field of asylum- rights of refugees. I am currently conducting transgender studies in Pink Life. I have been doing LGBTI+ activism in different institutions for a long time. I am a lawyer.

I have worked in many sectors. When I was not working professionally in the field of human rights, I also worked as a cleaning lady and sold a newspaper. I am 25 years old.

## ■ How long have you been in the field of civil society? Can you talk about your background in the sector?

My involvement in the field of human rights was with the revolutionary movement even before the LGBTI+ movement. I was doing something in the student movement at school. When I started my education at the university, I joined student clubs. We were analyzing social trials in the club. There was a raise in the fees of dining hall at school, and I was a student coming from the one of the Anatolian cities. My family's financial situation was not good, and because I am transwoman, I was far from economic resources. A raise that might be small for many persons was very important in my life and I started to be very impressed by it. This process politicized me and I got involved in the human rights struggle.

Then I wanted to do something about my identity, my coming out process started. 7 years ago, I first went to a LGBTI+ association and attended law meetings. Then Gezi period started, there was a LGBTI+ Block in Gezi. I got

very politicized there. The first Pride March I attended was 2014's Pride and it was extremely beautiful, I was very impressed. It was a bit late for me. Then I thought everyone should really live this moment. So I wanted to experience this moment again. That is why I started organizing in the Istanbul Pride Week Committee. But as you already know, we were banned since 2015, it never happened again.

I have always defined myself as a Middle Eastern person. The Middle East's past is full of wars and wars are still going on. War means immigration, being a refugee, and actually I am an immigrant at some point. I was born in Malatya, I grew up and then came to Istanbul and started my life here, but for me, it is not a place I go back and forth. I come out after I left Malatya and I have not been able to go to Malatya for years. Actually, I am living a compulsory expatriation. Therefore, I find immigration and refugee issues very valuable. I wanted to work on that.

■ **As we have started to discuss your coming out story in the field, I want to continue a bit more. The place where you work is a transgender association, but before that, were you open in the places where you worked, organized, were a volunteer? Have you ever had times in this field when you had to exist by concealing your identity? How did it affect you; I mean being open or concealing your identity?**

I was always open in the civil society field, but there were times when I was more careful before starting my process in other sectors I worked. But I have been open for a long time. Concealing it has never been a subject in my life, as I am a bit drag before I started my process.

As for how it affected me, when you have an open identity, you already experience difficulty in finding a job and I was rejected on account of my gender identity by many places. Apart from that, there were areas where I existed with my open identity. Frankly, I have not experienced any major shady problems in human rights field. Just there is such a situation that they are too far from the realities of your life and they do not understand you because this world itself is directly so cis and heteronormative. A reality that is too meaningful for you may not be the case for the others. That is why the whole working area itself is designed according to this structure and persons socialize accordingly. And you inevitably may find you in a confusing situation where you question where you are. You are excluded. I have mostly experienced such shady moments. Even if you explain them, they do not understand you completely.

■ **Have you ever faced discrimination during the recruitment process or while doing your job? I ask this by considering both your employers and colleagues and the persons you serve for.**

Of course, there are moments when you are discriminated. Basically, as I mentioned before, they do not see the realities of your life and that is why you have trouble.

If I talk about the persons I serve for, I am talking about civil society, I was working with women and LGBTI+ persons, especially in the field of asylum and refugees, but I was also dealing with the children or spouses of these women, and believe me, I have never experienced anything bad by them. This was so beautiful. We were organizing women's meetings, we had solidarity activities, and asylum seeker-refugee women were very comfortable with me, they did not make me feel different or bad.

Remember the stupid discussion by TERFs about a refugee woman waxing a trans woman. I find this very hypocritical. As I have experienced these, I can once again see that this argument of TERFs is due to their transphobia. Because I worked with a lot of women for a year and a half, and at the same time, they or their spouses did not have any attitude that I would call transphobic. They uncovered their hair with me and they dance. Because you are what you are and they accept you as you are.

Apart from that, I was already working in the LGBTI+ field, and I am currently working on trans rights in civil society, so I did not experience a shady moment related to my identity in this field.

■ **Looks like there is a lot of queer visibility in the civil area. So do you think this field is really good for LGBTI+ persons?**

The problem I think is this: Spaces are provided for queers but not for transgender persons. I think this is a very important detail. There are a lot of cis gays and bisexuals working in the human rights field, especially in the asylum field. You can come across these persons at meetings or something, but there is no open transgender person. This is completely the transphobia of the employer and the sector. Their excuse is that "you have a visibility, the audience you will work with will not understand you" and they do not open up the space for you. And in fact, it does not help you to meet those persons, and hence prevents your progress. As in every field, trans visibility is very low in this field.

The group that has the biggest disadvantage in participating in education is transgender persons. Again, due to the visibility issue, the number of trans persons who can continue their education is very low. Even if you somehow

complete that training, you are not competing under equal conditions. I am thinking of cis-hetero persons, they have much more resources and opportunities; they have not had a lot of problems. They went to the language courses they learned the office programs, etc., whereas I was on the street loitering. So you are actually in a similar place with them, but employers never see it. You are constantly expected to show the same performance and success with the persons you do not have equal opportunities.

I also experienced such a shady moment like this: I was working with an institution. They once said, "You have to be a little more professional" because I was trying to bend the rules and create resources in the face of problems. They said I had too much empathy, too much emotional attachment and they advice me not to do that. When I heard this I got so angry really ... I said, "I think you do not know the meaning of professionalism because professionalism is not like that". Besides, there are always someone telling me about my story, so what are you waiting for? You are the ones who have more opportunities.

In general, most of the persons in the civil area are very white, very privileged, have a lot of education opportunities, and they are clever, and so on and so on. They started this area for the sake of helping others and they consider this area like that. Actually, very few persons from the oppressed groups are able to join this field. We can say that the rate of queers is also low. That is why they can dare to give you this advice. That is why I recommend queers to be in this field, we should definitely be more in this field, we should be more organized. Because, for example, you feel that loneliness in a meeting, you say " it should not be like this" but you are the only voice there, you can raise up your voice for once and postpone that thing, but when you do it for second and the third, time you become the lunatic woman. But if you had a couple of other queers beside you, they would not be able to marginalize you alone.

■ **I agree with you too. As you told, you have both volunteer and professional experience in civil society. For example, professional labor and voluntary labor, which I observe in my own practice, sometimes intertwine and labor exploitation can occur. This can be done by the individuals and sometimes by some institutions. Institutions working with human rights can have conditions and wages that do not comply with human rights. What do you think about these?**

The sector is in a terrible state. There is an exploitation order going on. You work in incredibly flexible conditions everywhere because there is no such

thing as “I cannot”. For example, when a LGBTI+ refugee calls you in the middle of the night, you cannot say “I am out of working hours right now” because something happened to this person at that time. You get up and go or, you give counseling over the phone. There were many times I have woken up so early in the morning due to the phone calls... And for example, you do not get paid for any of these in return.

Moreover, I think that persons working in this field need supervision support. This is the biggest deficiency in the field of human rights. Almost no institution has such support and everyone I meet complains about the same thing. There is such a thing as secondary trauma, it is a fact, and we are exposed to it so much. You cannot cope with it alone; there must be support for it. And I also know that many projects have a budget for this. But this budget item is not used. It is spent for other things. You cannot spend a budget item for other things, but they conduct a fake activity and they called it as supervision. This is really one of the most basic needs for the employee to continue and the beneficiary to get better efficiency.

They know very well that if you are transgender, that you cannot easily find a job elsewhere, and they use that trump card on you. They are in a position that patronizes you as if it is their grace. At this point, there were moments when I went really crazy and very angry. When I told them ““I will go and let people to fuck my ass, rather than working for you for such a small amount of money. How can I survive with my pittance of a salary?””

I also experienced this: the issue of being a showcase. The reason it actually employs you there is not to provide anything to the beneficiaries. “Look how modern we are, how perfect we are that we even employ transgender persons” and they make you feel this. This is horrifying. It works for me for me because I was using it. I just consider the salary I got, I was doing my job, I do not care that too much, but at some point it should not be okay to be used only for showcases, as an image.

### ■ **Actually, all of these stories seem like a framework of private sector...**

Civil society is an exact copy of the private sector. Their minds works like that. They look at persons in numbers and constantly remind you to be professional and do your job. They see it as just work, but what we do is not just work. The person who does it must also be devoted to this; the persons must understand the value of what they are doing. Because we are not cleaning the streets, we do not banking, rather we touch persons’ lives and how you touch this life is very important. You should not touch them huffing and puffing.

- **LGBTI+ persons can already experience many traumas in their daily lives, and there is also the secondary trauma situation you mentioned. There are a lot of stories coming and they are not erased automatically when the counselees leave, they leave a mark on the person. Do you have a way to cope with these? How do you stay well, or are you ok?**

I am not sure if I am okay or not. I think I am feeling a little bit bad. I went to UK for a short time because I could not cope with it anymore, I could not. There are a lot of things that I have already experienced and the experiences of others are added to this... Also, providing counseling is not mere listening to the story and saying okay and sending them back. As soon as the beneficiary shares that problem with you, that problem becomes your problem and you have to find a solution together. When you accumulate this, you have thousands of problems.

I have a bell jar I built for myself. I have been living in this for a long time and I survive with this. Who is in this jar? There are persons that I love very much, that I am close to, that I think understand me. Sometimes I impose the burden on their shoulders, we jeer together, I think the way to survive is jeering. It is impossible I could not survive without jeering! I really need this, I am addicted. It is something else. When I went to UK, I laughed there too, there were funny cute persons but no jeering. There is no jeering in the whole country. Because my jeering is something born out of trouble, something born out of pain.

We know that it is something that our sisters did to protect their mental health, while being forcibly detained while being tortured in custody. Also it is same for us. The area that I call that bell jar is a very safe area and maybe I am really jeering with everything there. We jeer and laugh about the horrible things that happen to us, which the others can be speechless if they faced those things. A few times where we were jeering, accidentally around someone who was not among us, they wept. So I can say that this jeering and my bell jar are my methods of survival.

- **I want to talk a little bit about the unionization. You have been working professionally for a while. So are you unionized?**

I am not because I do not think I can exist in unions. I see that unions do not do much; on the contrary, they can cause a lot of trouble and there are corruptions. I have been in the leftist movement for a long time and I

describe myself as a revolutionist. So we hear a lot of horrible things about the unions. Partisanship, patronizing, espionage... And these are things that have happened very recently.

Another issue is that I think the unions are too patriarchal. All unions are male dominant, so I do not want to go there where I would be oppressed.

■ **So, what kind of a path should be followed to develop a solution to the problem in the sector? Do you have any advice, ideas on this? How can this sector be improved?**

The first thing that comes to my mind is organizing because it is not possible for every institution to solve it within itself, and it does not. I am not sure how to maintain organization. Everyone is very afraid of losing their job in this economic crisis. That is why they say okay and ignore it. I left the institutions where I worked by slamming the doors, but persons who were as unhappy as I was still continue to work in these institution. When I talk with them, I see that they are still very unhappy.

You can get organized in some way and contact the persons who provide the funds, because when you contact donors individually, you may be stigmatized, you will not be able to work in any NGO again, you will be banned from the sector, etc. This organization can be instrumental in this. But I am not sure how to be organized. Because, for example, everything is very clear in a factory. What the worker and the boss do are very clear; everyone's duties and interests are very determined. Your duties are obvious. But civil society is a very slippery slope, very blurred, very intertwined. The illusion as if there is no boss is created in civil society. We all work in the field of human rights, we are all good, we are such progressive, we are leftists and so on. But no, there is actually a boss here too, and you are just a worker. But they create this illusion in such a way that it is not clear whose interests are where and the exploitation continues. It is very unclear whom you will organize against. Also, everyone in the civil field knows each other and establishes friendships, even if they are the boss. For example, I knew my boss before I started working there. If they are already working in this field, of course you come across them somewhere. Organizing against the boss becomes much more complicated and difficult, as different relationships are established between the employee and the boss.



■ **How do you feel about the future as a young woman living in Turkey?**

So, like everyone else, I have concerns. I am very afraid at certain points. This crisis is getting deeper and it worries me. By the way, what I am talking about is not an economic crisis. I am talking about further deepening of migration and refugee crisis in Turkey and I am ashamed of this as a young woman who lived in Turkey. I am so ashamed. I feel very guilty and with this shame I think how I will be able to live the rest of my life. There have been many things that should never have happened, we have seen many things we should never have seen, and this is a shame for all of us. We could not do anything against those; we should be ashamed of ourselves. We watched the refugees get in the boats and leaving, I am filling with tears when I think about all of this...

I provided such a dark picture, but I am still hopeful. I am very hopeful and continue to fight for it because I am sure it will not continue like this. It cannot live like this. It is not possible. I will continue to hope and do something for as long as I live. Because I know that if I do not do anything, nothing will change. But if I do something, maybe it will change, maybe it will not, I hold on to this possibility of change.

■ **Your answer made me feel good, thank you. I do not have any other question to ask, is there anything else you would like to add?**

I want to tell persons that they should appreciate the life they live, enjoy it, but think about other creatures and the universe as well. It should never be forgotten that there is no such thing as “it is not my problem”. All of these matter, they are our concern at some point, because we do not live in a tree hole and someone around us must have experienced this problem. All of these will surely touch us at some point because every fire begins with a little spark. A spark can set a whole forest on fire.

I love you very much.

# “There have always been a moment that makes you feel “you are different”

## Nazlı Özersoy

Our last guest is Nazlı Özersoy in Lavender Ceiling, where we talk about what LGBTI+ persons experience in the labor life. We talked with Nazlı, who has been working in the advertising industry and agencies for about 4 years, about the general situation in the sector and the advantages and disadvantages of LGBTI+ persons.

### ■ Hello Nazlı. Can you tell us about yourself?

I am Nazlı Özersoy. I was born in 1993. I am 27 years old. I have been in the advertising and design industry for about 3 and half, 4 years. I try to do activism in a right manner in other times of my life. At the same time, I try to be in queer nightlife and queer art.

### ■ I want to discuss a little bit your work environment. Are you open at work?

I am open in my work environment. When there are some newcomers who do not know, I also inform them that I am not straight, so that they do not assign any sexual orientation. For me, me in the business environment is a little developing person and coming to this day. My coming out process coincided with the middle of my labor life. I had already been working in an advertising agency for 2 and half years, and persons knew me there. But there is a strange detail there, before I even came out to myself, that is, although I did not come out to myself yet, my boss at my workplace asked me during a lunch, “So do you have a girlfriend?” I remember this day very clearly.

In advertising agencies, they like a little bit of sensation. They like the idea of distorting the general opinion and because of this, it may seem different and interesting to them. You are LGBTI+ person, but none of this means that they “support” you.

My concern before I started at work was that my work was not evaluated through the contents I produced but through my identity. There are already more privileged persons in front of you and these persons have a comfort zone they lean on, they have their own comfort zone. When looking at persons from outside of this comfort zone, they do not leave their position behind. This area, the comfort zone, is generally dominated by cis-male, patriarchal persons. I have been criticized and mobbed not directly over my LGBTI+ identity, but over my female identity. One day I came across an incident like this: there was a Happy Hour. During these times, the masks fall off and you can see the reality. We were talking with a person, who did not know that I am LGBTI+ person, and the discussion about feminism somehow is opened and this person stated “feminist women become feminists because they are ugly because they cannot see themselves in the general judgment of beauty and because they are excluded, therefore they have such a harsh and hostile attitude.”

Here in agencies what I feel is: There is a point where I reached personally, but how can I explain this to persons? It is so obvious that this person made that silly comment without realizing the comfort zone this person is in. It seems like there is no way to tell this person without saying it directly. This has to do with the complexity of the environment there.

Being open at work - both about your LGBTI+ identity and the activism you do - can pave the way the mobbing at any point. The reflection of this on me is that the “me”, “ my identity” which I have barely created over the years, is damaged. My work environment is about creativity. When I cannot express my ideas comfortably, my creativity is affected.

I was in a strange dilemma here. I could lose my job if I come out, and when I did not, I could lose my job because my productivity was affected. I am very happy to come out as a result of all these dilemmas. There is no incredible advantage it brings to me in my current workplace, but I am more myself, more confident and in a situation where I can embrace myself more.

■ **We actually got into the discrimination issue a bit. Can you talk a little more about how you feel in these moments and how you cope with these situations?**

I cannot describe the moments when I was exposed to discrimination very clearly, but of course there are certain moments come to my mind. In the workplace, there are social structures that inevitably become vis-

ible. Among them, there may be a group of men, these male groups are generally persons who do not want to go out of their comfort zone and do not want to expand their circle on behalf of me by understanding that I am not same with them. Or there are groups of younger employees. These groups may be more open-minded, but in my first working environment, we formed a team like a small Pride Week Committee. Although I did not have any identity statements at the beginning of this period, one of the young boys from the group said, “Oh, forget about Naz, she does not care about us anyway as a lesbian”. Frankly, I ignored it because I had a chosen family in my work environment that I could lean on and with the comfort of this, we were able to say that we are a separate group, you are a separate group, lets not combine ourselves.

But there is a lot going on when talking about ideas while doing business. As I said, advertising progresses on generating ideas.

Besides, a few different things happened, of course. Being a woman is also a part of this discrimination. Talking about the photographs of last March 8, there were arguments “Well, this ok, women are seeking their rights, but what do they mean by “Whores Exist”. I have faced a lot of arguments like this and for this there is the presumption that I am the authorized person to answer. I have never hid my opinions on these matters. I explained myself, my problem. This also helped me establish my identity, but most of the time it will develop in line with this “Naz is awkward person, nothing is discussed with her”. I have had experiences of being discriminated against in line with such comments.

These were conversations with my colleagues. There are also situations I faced with the persons in administrative positions. I was also open to them, more precisely, there was nothing I concealed specifically, and they did not ask. But before I did LGBTI+ activism, I organized in various leftist organizations. They also know my views and opinions. I also have a tattoo on my arm, a Zapatista tattoo. I was wearing something short sleeved when the weather was hot in the summer. They asked, “What is that on your arm, do you have a terrorist tattoo?” There had been such jokes.

Sometimes there are situations related to customers. Since the money comes from the customer, whatever the idea of the customer is, there is an environment like this should be your opinion as well. So, we had a customer who was very close to the government at the first agency I worked for. After receiving this customer, there were orders like “Be careful with your Facebook posts,

be careful on social media, and do not share posts against the government”. They try to maintain the order there. There are cases of like this because of customers. For example, while alcohol was never a problem before, we also encountered such obstacles after we started working with this customer.

To summarize all of these above, there is actually an environment that holds power, where domination is concentrated in certain groups, and where male dominant parties constantly question your identity.

Nevertheless, despite all this, I cannot remember a situation where I was specially excluded, because I am LGBTI+ person. I tried to establish an identity in which I was more in conflict but in which I could express my own opinions. It was not easy, but I was able to do it.

■ **What do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of this sector? When looking from outside, we see that there is a dense population of LGBTI + persons, but is it really a sector that opens space for LGBTI+ persons?**

On its own, even being a young woman entering the sector has its disadvantages. I remember that the person who was the leading creative director said, “you shall not hire a female writer, think twice about it when you hire such a writer”. He was not a particularly misogynist person. Sometimes, because of this comfort zone, there is an environment where those do not hear what they are saying. This can be exhausting for some identities. Persons can be exhausted a lot. They make you feel that you are different. There is a lot of a mansplaining situation that starts with being young and being a new woman in the sector.

On top of that, there are situations such as not recognizing the LGBTI+ identity and not recognizing the lesbianism.

But besides this, the advantage is that this is an environment where our ideas are needed. If you can prove yourself in all these obstacles, which is a difficult process, then they already realize that they need your ideas, because the ads are produced in parallel to the contents that suit the ideas of the generation. In connection with this, I have a LGBTI+ friend whose ideas are successful and very valuable.

I provided more or less a picture as I explained. LGBTI+ population is dense and I think we have also friends who are concealing, as everywhere, but this is my estimation of course. At the same time, I know that there are

persons who do conceal their identity at work, but live the identity in their private life. These persons are mostly women. This of course is linked with the gender norms.

Of course, there is an opportunity to be in the sector with your identity. It is necessary to talk about how we exist here. If you work with toxic persons, you can also be exposed to mobbing, you can be fired from your job, but as I said, the sector is actually a sector where there are too many LGBTI+ persons, and sometimes even so intense that they can be organized in a single workplace and come together.

Therefore, the advertising sector is an area that includes LGBTI+ persons with all its advantages and disadvantages. At the same time, a queer perspective is sought within this male-dominated, nonproductive and closed mindset. This can actually be a motivating factor.

■ **You also took part in the team producing visuals for Istanbul Pride Week. Now you are on the committee. What are the differences between the productions you prepared for queers, for activism and for your work?**

I am not currently in an advertising agency; I am in a somewhat more design-oriented place. However, when your target audience is not completely parallel to you, you should always think from that point of view. On the contrary, something like this happened once, we were going to set up a stand at a festival on behalf of Pride Week and I was designing the products we would sell on the stand. I made a few designs. A friend of mine said, “They are nice, but it does not seem like queer to me.”

I do not generalize this as a school of art, but the queers have an aesthetic perception. You can enter and look for it, but this aesthetic perception is something very special. As I progressed, I found out what this meant for me and I enjoyed doing it very much. Whenever I want to get an air from the work, I try to make a production related to this. It is one of the works I enjoy the most.

■ **I will also ask you to talk about the general working conditions in the sector. What kind of sector is it in matters such as working hours, insurance, and salary?**

Working conditions are really difficult, very hard. Of course, this is something that varies according to situations such as how big your advertising

agency is, how institutionalized it is. But when entering the agencies, they pay your salary as if you were already working for 7 days. Therefore, there are determined working hours, but I can say that I could never leave at that determined time. Your salary is given as if you could work 24/7, so no extra overtime is paid. If you are staying to work on weekends or off-hours, then your meal and road will be covered.

Psychologically it is very exhausting. In no case you figure out when you will work overtime. For example, a presentation fails and you urgently need to prepare a new presentation for the next day. Then you spend the night at the agency till the morning. Or before times like Crystal Apple, you definitely give up your life and you spend your daily life in agencies and stay there till the morning. It is a bit of a grumpy sector with a lot of expectations like this.

My most troubled issue is working overtime. The shift is always getting longer and you never get the full compensation for it. In doing so, your employer or manager tries to boost you up with arguments like “This is very good for your personal success, you can be ahead of the others by doing these”. In other words, they constantly invite you to work overtime by mentioning the future. The working order is generally like this.

Before I became an employee tenured, I worked as an intern for 6 months. Then the freelance process started for me. The freelance process was a process where I received a salary but without insurance. This is happening in many agencies, not just specific to where I work. It is a habit throughout the sector. When recruiting persons, they must both pay insurance and pay a higher salary. I have been working in this way for about 1 year and I was tenured after that. I started working as a Junior Art Director.

When you consider all of these, of course, we can see that our efforts are not rewarded. In order to be rewarded for your efforts in this sector, you need to be known and be very famous. However, yes, your salary is not bad compared to other sectors because it is a sector with huge money flows. But they are not generous when they give you this money, they can extend the time. In addition to all of these, it is a sector where you have to deal with constant stress and you feel inadequate.

However, if persons want to be advertisers and are LGBTI+ persons, they should definitely try it.

### ■ How is the recruitment process?

As far as I can see in the recruitment process, there is a part where your portfolio, CV is evaluated. While doing this, of course, they look at the photo on the CV. There may be eliminations here due to the photo. If you are hiring as an intern, this discrimination can be much more. Since you do not have experience, criteria such as “beautiful” or “not beautiful” come into question.

At the same time, when you are hired, yes, you are evaluated by your job experiences, but you may have more difficulties when your opportunities are not high. Having acquaintances in the sector has a huge impact on getting a job.

### ■ You are doing a public production. Are these production processes affected by or affecting your identity?

Of course, when you do public production, you can feel like you have to put yourself in the shoes of cis-hetero persons and think like them. Advertising usually proceeds through insights. When planning a commercial, it is usually thought through insights. So, for example, a boy loves spending time with his father and spends time with his father where technological products are available. For who this kind of insight is right? Is it right for any LGBTI+ persons or do we have to make such a generalization? Since advertising progresses with such generalizations, you do not have the option to object too much in such situations while doing any public business.

Since advertising is mass consumption, you have to leave your own identity aside and produce. This creates hypocrisy, a contradiction. While you may be closer to yourself and be like yourself more in the working environment, the works you create may be far from you.



# A GUIDE FOR UNIONS: LGBTI+ Rights Are Union Rights

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Prepared by: Kaos GL

The rights of LGBTI+ persons (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex persons and other sexual orientations, gender expression/identities (+) covering other than those sexual orientations, gender identities and sex characteristics) are human rights. LGBTI+ persons face serious problems in accessing their rights within the social order created by discrimination ideologies based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Violations of rights stand as a systematic problem that ravage the equality of LGBTI+ persons in society and labor life. Such serious problems faced in accessing human rights, which is the center of trade union activities, shows how the struggle for LGBTI+ rights is intertwined with the struggle for trade union rights.

In this brochure, we have endeavored to address the steps that trade unions can take in the provision, protection, implementation and development of LGBTI+ rights and LGBTI+ rights in union struggle. With this brochure, we aim to raise the awareness of union organizations on LGBTI+ rights, to highlight the significance of the link between LGBTI+ rights and union rights, to recommend best practice examples to unions to help them develop policies, initiatives and activism regarding LGBTI+ rights during collective bargaining agreements and at workplaces, to provide recommendations for unions so that the priorities regarding LGBTI+ equality can be integrated into the policies and practices of unions.

Fundamental rights and freedoms underlie the union activities. Trade unions should have a clear political stance on LGBTI+ rights. They should develop an autonomous LGBTI+ policy within the existing discrimination policies. They should not only prohibit discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity against LGBTI+ persons, but also should take all the political steps to ensure equality.

The fact that the unions can organize LGBTI+ workers contributes to the representation of all members and workers within the union; it strengthens diversity and democratic structure. All workers have the right to be protected against discrimination. The organization in unions by LGBTI+ workers, who are not visible in their workplaces and who are denied access to their rights, depends on the unions' development of sexual orientation and gender identity policies. The organized worker can also find the strength to resist the discriminations in the workplace. The positive climate created by union policies is effective in making the problems of LGBTI+ workers visible.

It is no exaggeration to say that from the first moment that LGBTI+ movement in Turkey was initiated in the early 90s, it is hand in glove with the labor movement and the unions. We can see that even in the first issues of Kaos GL magazine, which explain the problems of LGBTI+ workers and laborers they faced while trying to contact the unions by being locked out of the unions. It is no coincidence that the LGBTI+ movement and Kaos GL's first appearance in the public sphere was 1 May (2001). On the other hand, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK) covered prohibition of discrimination on account of "sexual orientation and sexual identity" in its proposal for constitution presented to the public in 2009. Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK) provided its recommendations on taking measures against sexual orientation discrimination in labor life as a constitutional rule in its "proposals for a new constitution". It stated that the discrimination on account of sexual orientation along with other discriminations should be banned and sanctions should be imposed in such cases.

One of the important events, which brought LGBTI+ movement and the trade union movement together in Turkey, was the 3rd International Symposium Against Discrimination organized by Kaos GL in 2014. KESK member Tüm Bel-Sen (Trade Union for All Workers of Municipality and Local Administration Services) hosted the symposium held with the call: "Let's defend the right of LGBT persons as human rights!" The participants of the symposium were the unionists from United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Northern Cyprus and Turkey. From Turkey, the representatives of Confederation of Public Workers' Unions (KESK) Central Office, Trade Union for All Workers of Municipality and Local Administration Services (Tüm Bel-Sen), Trade Union of Employees in Public Health and Social Services (SES), Education and Science Workers' Union (Eğitim-Sen), LGBTI Commission of İzmir Eğitim-Sen Branch No. 2, LGBTI Commission of

İstanbul Eğitim-Sen Branch No.3 and Eskişehir, Malatya, Mersin and Urfa Eğitim-Sen took part in the symposium,

The theme of 27th Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week that took place between 24 June and 30 June 2019 was “Economy? What’s that?” During the events held within that week, both the trade union struggle and the LGBTI+ movement and the labor movement were discussed. Many trade unionists also participated these events.

LGBTI+ commissions established under various branches of Eğitim-Sen continuing their studies, the fact that various unions publish congratulatory messages on their social media accounts on 17 May- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersex Phobia and Transphobia and on Pride Week, and the fact that the unions provided statements both at the central and local levels against hate campaigns targeting LGBTI+ persons can be considered as positive developments.

However, in the fight against heterosexism and the gender binary regime, it is important for the unions to develop permanent policies starting from the structure of the union, to maintain advocacy available to the public regularly, and to adopt the role of being the activator of social transformation starting from its own members.

As Kaos GL Association, we investigate what kind of problems LGBTI+ employees face in the private sector and public sector every year. According to the result of the 2019 research studies we conducted together with the Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center of Kadir Has University, named “Situation of LGBTI+ Employees in the Private Sector and Public Sector in Turkey”, LGBTI+ employees are facing discrimination at every stage of the recruitment and they are forced to conceal their SOGIESC.

According to the results of private sector research; the rate of those who can be fully open about their gender identity, sexual orientation and intersex status in the workplace is 17.36 percent, 32.90 percent of the respondents stated that they are fully concealing SOGIESC in the workplace; 23.32 percent stated that they are open partially. The vast majority of those who are open partially in the workplace are only come out to their colleagues or other LGBTI+ employees. The rate of the respondents who stated that they are fully open about SOGIESC in the public institutions is 4.4 percent. According to the results of last year’s research, the rate of LGBTI+ employees being fully open at work was 7 percent in the public sector.

This result is described in the report as follows:

““As far as we can see the public sector is far worse than the private sector when it comes to the reproduction of discrimination and hate speech.”

Only 2.1 percent of respondents working in the public sector are fully open during the recruitment process: “LGBTI + employees are forced to stay closeted to prevent the risk of unemployment. Since discrimination continues after employment the same strategy determines the rest of their work life. Closure is even more evident in the public sector compared to private companies.”

Within the scope of the survey, for the first time this year, the participants were asked, “Have you ever witnessed any hate speech against LGBTI+ persons in the institution you are working?” 34 percent of the respondents of private sector research stated that they have witnessed this.

Some of the sharing of the respondents who stated that they witnessed hate speech against LGBTI+ employees are mentioned in the report as follows:

*““The word homo is generally used as a curse. Masculine discourse is dominant” (Gay male in culture/arts).*

*“I have seen many people making ‘jokes’ about customers or about people from their own social circle” (heterosexual trans man working in food sector).*

*“I have seen people saying it’s a sin or perversion using religious discourse. And they use words like homo or fag when they talk about it” (lesbian woman in health).*

*“Is he soft or what? You are like a girl. This one is a weirdo” (lesbian woman in health sector).*

*When they were going to hire new personnel I heard them saying ‘I will not work with this perverts god knows what!’” (Gay man in education).*

*“I was told it was perversion and deviance” (Gay man in retails).*

*“Gay or lesbian, they are all infidels! That’s how they start and go on with lots of insulting comments” (bisexual man in education sector).*

*“They keep saying fag, homo, softy etc. as an insult” (Pansexual woman working in retail).*

*“A colleague of mine was talking about the Pride: ‘Now the police will attack them and we’ll have to defend these homos’. An executive in a meeting said: ‘I was in Taksim the other they, filled with transvestites, you cannot even walk down the street. They should all be sent to exile’” (Gay man at an NGO).*

*“They used word like homo and fag as bad word, for people who don’t like. Female personnel blames LGBTI+ talking about People of Lot” (Gay man in Law).*

*“I have seen people say that homosexuality is a disease” (lesbian woman in IT)*

*“Masculine language is also hate speech. Off, course I have seen it” (pansexual non-bi- nary in entertainment).*

*“Hate speech is everywhere. Even ‘are you gay, buddy?’ between men is enough. I have heard it many times” (lesbian woman in finance/banking).*

*“I have seen my colleagues commenting and expressing opinions many times, so I am hiding myself” (Gay man in energy)”<sup>5</sup>.*

64 percent of the respondents of public sector research stated that they have witnessed hate speech. In the preface of the research, Prof. Dr. Melek Göregenli explains what kind of effects the hate speech creates as follows<sup>6</sup>:

*“It has been stated by the employees of both public and private sector that they do not only experience discrimination, but they often experience hate speech. Even though legally there is a distinction between hate speech and hate crimes, considering the results of hate speech in the workplace one can argue that it is also a hate crime. The answers given to open-ended questions by the LGBTI+ employees and their shared experiences of discrimination reveal that in most cases discrimination is based on behavior. The relationship between hate speech*

5 TN: The quotations provided in this chapter are directly taken from the English version of the reference 2019 reports named “Situation of LGBTI+ Employees in Private Sector” and “Situation of LGBTI+ Employees in Public Sector in Turkey”. For the quotations provided in Italic font with double quotation marks, the translator have not made any amendment. So the minor translation errors that can be identified are duly the sole responsibility of the persons who prepared the English version of the 2019 report.

6 TN: In order to reflect the original meanings in Turkish, the translator provided some minor amendments/additional statements regarding the quotations taken from the preface of the English version of the mentioned report, since some parts were missing in its English translation.

*and hate crime is the fact that hate speech can directly transform into one's negative behavior. The phenomenon such as homosexuality as a stigmatized category, discrimination against sexual orientations other than heterosexuality and compulsory heteronormativity are social problems that were ignored by both government and in academic circles mostly throughout 20th century. As a result, many studies, both in USA and in Europe, consider the evident relationship between violence and discrimination based on homophobic ideology by the definition of the concept of hate crime and underline this special form of discrimination. In Turkey, considering the high level of discriminatory violence towards LGBTI+ individuals, we need to understand and deal with homophobia as a special form of violence in relation to the hate crimes. Hate crimes, which are experienced in the workplace and have direct negative impact on by LGBTI+ employees, are manifested by the respondents of the research”.*

*“Hate crimes based on the bias and the discrimination against sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics have different characteristics than the other forms of hate crimes against other social groups. According to the studies in this context, the survivors of such crimes face or would face this kind of attacks throughout their lives just because they are LGBTI+ persons. These attacks do not necessarily happen predictively, as a consequence of other incidents, as is the case for hate crimes against other groups: they are not limited to the actual time of the attack, they also cover the period before and after the incident. Survivors are generally harassed and threatened in advance, in most cases there are witnesses and more than half of them do not react or intervene. The personal experiences of our respondents regarding discriminatory behavior at work supports these findings, showing us that hate crimes and discrimination experienced in everyday life continues at the workplace”.*

According to the results of LGBTI+ employees in the 2019 public sector report, 73 percent of the respondents stated that they either experienced a direct discrimination or concealed their SOGIESC in order not to experience such an experience, or they did not experience any discrimination because they concealed their identity. The question: “Have you ever reported any discrimination you face at the institution you work for?” was also asked. None of the survivors of discrimination have applied to the judiciary. No written notification was made to the authorities within the institution, and

the application to the Ombudsman Institution and TİHEK was not preferred in any case.

The testimonies of the respondents show that LGBTI+ employees constantly live in an environment of latent discrimination, even when their sexual orientation and gender identity are not disclosed:

*““Even a small connection with the same sex is interpreted the wrong way and my colleagues started avoiding me, they started looking me in a weird way in the toilet” (lesbian female academic).*

*“I get innuendos, like why my hair is so short, just meaningless questions really” (heterosexual trans male teacher).*

*“We are cruuuuushed!” (active queer teacher).*

*“A professor yelled at me ‘What kind of a laughter is that, are you a homo’ in front of the students” (gay male academic personnel)*

*“A disciplinary action is currently going on, I might get dismissed from my profession” (pansexual female in law enforcement).*

*“My behavior or my reaction to certain things, despite the fact that I control myself (or have to) can be considered as gay and be ridiculed” (gay male academic personnel).*

*“I think maybe it’s rude and lack moral ground, but a very shallow male teacher told me once ‘you are a little too delicate, professor’. I know he did not intend to praise me with that phrase. His voice, his insinuation meant a lot. We had a small disagreement with him in the past. You know when sometimes your energy does not match. He was secretly competing with me. Since we were both in the same subject, it was inevitable. Since I did my job as well as I can I did not give him or the management any leverage. But after a while he started mobbing me with my gender identity. They were little bites. I manage to survive being tough all the time” (gay male teacher).*

*“Mentality a la Turca. In all the places I work heteros make hand jokes. Since you are single at a certain age and intellectual, they think you might be gay and start making fun of it. It doesn’t bother me really, I am not the type that loses the sleep over everything” (gay male in law enforcement).*

*“I cannot be assigned for a while now” (gay male instructor).*

*“When I had a disagreement, somebody used the word ‘homo’ so that everybody could hear” (gay male health personnel).*

*“I experience discrimination, from top to bottom, everyday” (health personnel who does not want to determine a gender identity).*

*“I have experienced after I opened myself. I am still but I manage it” (gay male social servant).*

*“They make castrato jokes next to me. I talked to my union, had the consent and attacked him verbally” (gay male architect/engineer).”*

According to the LGBTI+ employees in the private sector report, the vast majority of LGBTI+ employees subjected to discrimination did not report these incidents. When LGBTI+ employees are exposed to discrimination in their institution, they try to solve this with the person in question or share this situation with the persons around themselves. According to the report; “none of the victims of discrimination appealed “to a court or union/professional organization”. The report explains this situation as follows:

*““The statements related to how participants reacted to discrimination are in line with previous years. LGBTI+ employees often fail to pursue their rights because they fear losing their jobs, involuntary disclosure and other problems that might come up in their work life. Another important finding is the lack of belief in authorities advocating LGBTI+ rights. This might be the result of an inadequate corporate or legal approach. LGBTI+ employees worry that reporting discrimination might result in further discrimination, or even spreading discrimination outside the workplace. Hence, many stay quiet”.*

*“The inadequacy of corporate and legal approaches to discrimination is an important finding for unions and professional organizations. Among participants 120 are members of at least one union or professional organization (15,54%). From those who experienced discrimination in the workplace only 7 of them are members a professional organization and 4 of those made an official complaint and the remaining 3 never notified their professional organization.”*

The report also includes the statements of the respondents regarding discrimination. Some of those statements are as follows:

*““The ex-owner of the company and my director teased me about my very short hair saying I am only missing ‘the thing’” (Heterosexual trans man in food sector).*



*“They are constantly surveilling me or make comments about whatever I wear that day saying ‘men don’t wear that’” (Gay man in food sector).*

*“When I had to have a promotion, after a perfect interview, someone blocked my way” (Gay man in telecommunication).*

*“They don’t shake my hand, they don’t make eye contact. When we talk about relation- ships and it’s my turn to talk, they look at each other. A general situation of mobbing” (Cisgender male in advertisement).*

*“My director said to a close colleague ‘Don’t hang with him, they will think you are gay, too’. Phobic, discriminating, alienating talk behind my back” (Gay man in health).”*

The struggle of the unions against the situations summarized in the two studies above gains importance. According to private sector research, none of the respondents reported their rights violations to their unions or professional organizations. In the public sector, only one respondent reported the incident to the union that this respondent is a member of.

Unions and professional organizations are undoubtedly one of the first areas that come to mind when empowering mechanisms for LGBTI+ employees to access to employment and in working life are mentioned. However, our research shows that among LGBTI+ persons working in the private sector, the rate of being a member of a trade union or professional organization is low. Members do not see trade unions and professional organizations as one of the main areas of struggle against discrimination. The rate of those who state that they are union members among our participants is only 5.6%. This rate is well below the rate of unionization in general among workers in Turkey. According to the DISC-AR’s report published in the February 2019 named Unionization Research Report, rate of unionized workers in Turkey is 11%. On the other hand, only 11.3% of the respondents stated that they are members of professional organizations.

According to the data of our research, 7 of 59 respondents who stated that they are discriminated in their workplace are members of a trade union and/or a professional organization. However, as stated above, none of them reported the situation to their union or professional organization. In addition, the rate of respondents in our survey regarding the three main measures to be taken against discrimination against LGBTI+ persons, who marked the option of “organized struggle and solidarity networks” is only 22%. These findings reveal that unions and professional organizations have

an important role in empowering LGBTI+ employees in employment and preventing discrimination against LGBTI+ persons, and that unions and professional organizations shall make it one of their priorities to develop policies in that regard.

Our research shows that the rate of union or professional organization membership among LGBTI+ employees in public sector is not high. Even those who are members generally do not see trade unions and professional organizations as areas of struggle against discrimination against LGBTI+ persons.

The rate of those who state that they are union members among our respondents is 33.8%. This rate is well below the rate of union members across Turkey between public employees. On the other hand, only 10% of the respondents stated that they are members of professional organizations. Although the rate of being fully open in the trade union or professional organization is higher than the rate of being open at the institution, the rate still cannot exceed 12%. As stated above, only one of the participants who stated that in case of the discrimination faced in the institution notified the union of which is being a member of, and only one of them applied to the professional organization.

Discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity can be experienced in various forms in workplaces. LGBTI+ employees may face discrimination in recruitment and dismissal processes, as well as in access to employment, in-service trainings and in case of promotions.

LGBTI+ employees not being open and the fear that they will be exposed to injustice when they come out is also discrimination. In addition, using the sexual orientation and gender identity of employees in workplaces for “rumor mongering” also strengthens the anti-LGBTI+ atmosphere and sets the ground for discrimination.

LGBTI+ employees are frequently exposed to bullying and mobbing in their workplaces. It is important that equality plans at work to ensure a workplace culture based on equal respect and dignity.

“Advantages that heterosexual married couples benefit from but same-sex couples are deprived of”, such as “Paternity and maternity leave”, ease in appointment and lodging, bereavement leave, care leave in case of the sick spouse, education support for employees and their families, free or off-price access to goods and services, social benefits, loans and advances,

health insurance, retirement plan for surviving spouse and life insurance are examples of discrimination experienced.

Changing this picture and ensuring LGBTI+ equality is up to all of us who are at all levels of the labor field, especially unionists. As Secretary General John Monks of that period stated at the conference of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 2017: “Equality is at the center of the union agenda. In case of inequality the union suffers as a whole. Combating discrimination is as important as other union work. Any union that treats another as inferior will suffer. We have to combat all forms of discrimination that have historically evolved at the social level”.

Heterosexism, the gender binary regime and its reflection on working life, discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity are not just a matter of LGBTI+ trade unionists; it is also an issue that should be included in the organizational policies of the unions.

It should not be evaluated only within “gender”, but should be addressed as human rights, discrimination and an organization problem in general. Addressing LGBTI+ rights in trade union struggle should be fed by feminism and feminist methods.

Unions should also embrace the demand for equality and freedom that LGBTI+ persons raised. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are not different from other discriminatory ideologies such discrimination on account of race, ethnic origin, sex, militarism, religion and sect. The anti-heterosexist movement cooperates with other social struggles and argues that liberation is possible only if it is collective with unity. Trade unions should include the combat against these forms of discrimination on their agenda.

LGBTI+ workers / members cannot be visible within unions as well as in their workplaces. Any mechanism of trade unions should be structured against heterosexism. The anti-heterosexist environment that will be created will encourage and facilitate the organization of LGBTI+ persons.

An environment and opportunities should be created in which anti-heterosexist union members can organize. It is important for unions to openly call for organizing, to show clearly and consistently that they take LGBTI+ workers and their problems on their agenda and they will fight together to solve them. Making public statements at times such as 17 May IDAHOBIT Day or Pride Week can be a good starting point. However, the information that LGBTI+ equality is on the union agenda every day of the year, except

for certain days to strengthen the organization, can be shared with both its members and with the public. Trade unions should make the anti-heterosexism and the fight against discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity visible within the union, and promote anti-heterosexism at the central and local level.

Increasing diversity in trade unions may also be possible with alliances it has established. More dialogue and cooperation should be developed with organizations (children, refugees, LGBTI+, women organizations, etc.) that combat against all kinds of discrimination. International cooperation and solidarity should always be considered.

As our research results show, LGBTI+ workers are less organized in unions compared to the general population. To change this, it is important for the unions to intervene in the problems of LGBTI+ workers and to show that they recognize their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recruiting and organizing LGBTI+ workers in unions should be one of the goals of unions. This also means increasing the visibility and participation of LGBTI+ members at all levels of the union. Establishing an LGBTI+ commission, board or assembly within the union allows LGBTI+ members to come together.

A climate where LGBTI+ employees in the union can “come out” should be created, if they wish. This will be important so that LGBTI+ workers can support unions and their workplaces while defending their LGBTI+ rights. It should be accepted that the LGBTI+ issue is not only a matter of LGBTI+ persons but also of all members.

Campaign materials on LGBTI+ equality that can be used in organizing and recruiting should be produced. Training and information should be provided to those who have a role to advise members and represent the union. Responsible persons should be identified to support LGBTI+ members and appropriate resources should be created.

Paths of unions on how to ensure LGBTI equality should be clearly defined. Awareness should be raised across unions by building a LGBTI+ network or by organized structures formed automatically, by training and learning programs and positive discrimination programs. There should be proper promotion by equality and ethical policies in compliance with the gender-assignment regulations. Everyone should be aware of the fact that there is a zero tolerance policy at all levels and positions at the unions against dis-

crimination on account of gender identity and gender confirmation process. There should be regulations formed in a way to provide support to the transgender persons in gender confirmation process. It can be a good start to use the names of persons they chose for themselves rather than their assigned names. The union should develop regulations and formulas to record the names of transgender members instead of their assigned names, even if these have not changed in official documents. Union records must be updated, former records should be deleted and privacy of personal data should be guaranteed by the highest level of security measures. Steps should be taken to cover transgender workers in equality policies. Recruitment policies and procedures that clearly state that discrimination against transgender persons will not be tolerated should be negotiated. For example, transgender persons can be welcomed to apply for the posts. Transgender persons' rights to personal security, privacy and safety should be fully guaranteed, for example in personnel records. In collective bargaining negotiations, it can be negotiated that transgender persons should be deemed on leave in certain steps of the gender confirmation process. Trade unions can provide trainings to their members and employees on the rights of transgender persons and in particular on harassment and discrimination at workplaces. Special policies need to be developed to ensure transgender equality. Transgender members should be informed about support groups and the union's own organizations.

Anti-heterosexism policies should be integrated into the fundamental policies of unions. Debates and discussions made around these policies by members and all other parties should be protected and guaranteed. And these policies should be made visible effectively in the publications and programs of unions.

There should be a clear declaration by the unions that LGBTI+ equality is addressed at all levels of the union as the matter of the unions.

Unions should bring their LGBTI policies on the agenda by discussions and decisions made at its congresses, general assemblies, conferences and similar events.

Policies that ban discrimination should be embraced and implemented on the union structures at local, regional and national level.

LGBTI+ rights can be integrated into the social agenda of employers and unions. Equality, diversity, solidarity and social responsibility fields can be targeted by the union studies.

In documents and written regulations of unions, no heterosexist language shall be allowed or promoted. Former documents and papers should be revised accordingly. “Homophobia” and “transphobia” should be clearly defined in disciplinary regulations and guidelines and should be banned.

It should be clearly and openly announced by the unions that there is a zero tolerance policy regarding discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity. This policy should be clearly mentioned in the equality policies, bylaws and guidelines. LGBTI+ rights should be defined as union rights and should be embraced and protected.

The problems of LGBTI unionists should be compiled in reports; raising awareness activities should be planned and conducted. The reflections of LGBTI+ studies on the internal dynamics of the unions should be monitored and evaluated regularly.

Representatives and directors of unions should be provided trainings on the LGBTI+ issue. Training against discrimination and prejudices and raising awareness programs should be created. Discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity should be integrated into these programs.

LGBTI+ rights should be taken into consideration in each study of the unions; they should be on the agenda during decision-making and collective bargaining negotiations process.

In order to raise the awareness of the unions on LGBTI+ equality and make their stance on that visible, fund raising studies shall be conducted for ensuring various materials such as bulletins, journals, and websites.

Unions should make it clear by which articles and documents LGBTI+ rights to be guaranteed in collective bargaining negotiations.

If the unions have an equality commission/assembly, organization secretariat or women’s commission/secretariat, it should be ensured that LGBTI+ members to be represented in these platforms. These units shall be induced to include LGBTI+ equality on their agendas.

It should not be forgotten that unions are also the employers when it comes to their own employees and that unions are primarily responsible organizations in taking steps to ensure the equality of their LGBTI+ workers. Granting leaves for transgender workers at the specified steps of the gender confirmation process, expanding the social rights gained by marriage in a way to include employees who do not have the right to marry, granting menstrual

leave per month for employees who are menstruating (it should not be forgotten that not only ciswomen have a menstruation cycle, but also there are persons who are menstruating such as trans, trans men or non-binary persons or there are also women who are not menstruating), avoiding an unequal practice for employees who do not have the right to marry about lodging, avoiding similar inequality in annual leave arrangements, removing obstacles to LGBTI+ members' ability to benefit from union's social facilities with their partners can be important starting points. It should not be forgotten that heterosexism and the gender binary regime have shaped the structure of trade unions as well as the whole society. Consequently, questioning the whole structure of the union, leaving heterosexist and the unequal discriminatory practices of the gender binary regime aside requires an active work while reviewing every practice of the union.

Unions play a big role in breaking the silence and sharing the commitment of LGBTI+ persons on equality. This will be important to trade unions' political visibility plans in the near future. States should adopt the measures to eliminate discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment policies, access to vocational and professional in service trainings, recruitment processes, promotions, dismissals, working conditions and wages. Trade unions have to monitor the states to ensure them to implement these policies.

Discrimination against LGBTI+ persons in the workplace is linked to discrimination across society. Trade unions should also develop advocacy for better access to public rights, such as the right to education, health and housing, protection against hate crimes.

Unions should be the primary contacts in case of any discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity in working life. Union protection and legal support shall be provided for LGBTI+ employees who are discriminated.

Unions should openly discuss the equality of LGBTI+ persons in the workplace with the business communities. Matters such as recruitment, safety, sense of belonging and productivity should be specifically described.

Special policies should be developed for equality of LGBTI+ persons in the workplace. these regulations should be clearly covered and visible in the general equality policy of the workplace; special regulations must be made to address bullying, mobbing and harassment in the workplace.

Equality of LGBTI+ workers should be discussed with employers and business communities. Protecting LGBTI+ persons against discrimination and harassment in working life is possible by working together with the employers.

Instead of developing policies based on heterosexual families while ignoring other forms of relationships, it should be requested that individuals and couples can benefit from regulation and facilitating practices on the basis of their own declarations/statements, regardless of the state of official relationship between individuals.

Not only in workplaces including visible LGBTI+ persons, but also in all kinds of collective bargaining processes, the articles and clauses should also be determined in line with the needs of LGBTI+ employees.

Where anti-discrimination legislation is in place, unions should initiate policies to ensure the full implementation of the law, that employers are aware of the legislation and the elimination of discrimination.

Trade unions can be at the forefront of an inclusive culture with zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment. This means defending the safety and dignity of all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Trade unions should follow the general LGBTI+ agenda in the country, make public statements as an actor against hate campaigns targeting LGBTI+ persons, and should not refrain from sharing with the whole public that they are defending the rights of LGBTI+ persons. In times when violence against LGBTI+ persons intensify, it is important for unions to make campaigns against violence, and to provide information for both their members and the public in that regard.

It should not be forgotten that advocacy should be done with a holistic perspective. Unions should embrace policies to raise awareness about LGBTI+ rights in workplaces and in the whole society start from themselves and to ensure LGBTI+ equality. In Turkey, where there are no laws protecting LGBTI+ persons in Turkey from the forms of discrimination, trade unions can develop a movement for the adoption of such laws and for highlighting the importance of LGBTI+ equality issue in labor life by conducting a campaign by establishing alliances with non-governmental organizations.



Working with LGBTI+ organizations enables unions to connect with LGBTI+ union members and reach LGBTI+ communities in different cities. It improves the understanding and knowledge of trade unions; it enables unions to respond to the problems in right and appropriate ways. It diversifies the union profile, encourages the participation of new members and strengthens the roles of existing members from the LGBTI+ community.

By ensuring the union's commitment to LGBTI+ equality to be demonstrated in a policy statement, and official participation of the union should be ensured in events such as Pride Week and 17 May.

Participation in the campaigns of democratic mass organizations and LGBTI+ communities, such as demanding legislation amendment, is extremely important.

A meeting can be organized with LGBTI+ organizations to ask them what kind of activities the unions can conduct for supporting LGBTI+ rights. Consulting LGBTI+ organizations is highly significant for unions to understand the issues fully. A temporary special study group should be established between LGBTI+ organizations and the union. It is important to compile recommendations for policies, practices, procedures and structures appropriate for the union.

It is important to organize joint conferences, seminars and training activities with LGBTI+ organizations.

Research studies and surveys can be conducted and data can be collected in collaboration with LGBTI+ organizations. Thus, it can be possible for unions to have more information about the problems in the workplace.

In order to prepare a legislation to protect LGBTI+ persons from discrimination and hate, unions can build campaigns for the enactment of these laws in cooperation with LGBTI+ organizations, and by forming alliances with non-governmental organizations, they can develop actions on the importance of the issue of equality of LGBTI+ persons in labor life.

Collective bargaining (CBA) negotiations are of great importance to ensure equality of LGBTI+ employees. Those also provide visibility into the union's LGBTI+ studies. As a result, it will help increase the number of members and strengthen the organization.

Workplace Equality Action Plans, which explicitly include the protection of sexual orientation and gender identity, can be negotiated in CBA negotiations. This applies similarly to Gender Equality at Work Plans.

Negotiation teams can identify which workplace policies create the grounds for the discrimination against LGBTI+ employees. For example, career development supports, insurances, leave arrangements, family supports, in-kind benefits, etc. that other employees can benefit from rather than LGBTI+ employees.

CBA negotiations need to take into account the impact of biased attitudes in society. For example, preventing employment in worse conditions or preventing excessive supervision or unfair distribution of work, which are more evident for LGBTI+ employees.

It should be stated that LGBTI+ equality and covering all social segments are a part of the workplace's reputation. This means elimination of harassment, verbal and physical abuse caused by other employees, managers and customers.

It can be negotiated on the recognition of same-sex partnerships in social and economic supports. For example, sickness, vacation, moving and travel permits and leaves, health benefits and insurance, etc.

It can be negotiated with the employer to set policies, including measures to combat harassment in the workplace, and to create an inclusive workplace.

Including the employees in the workplace records in line with their declared gender and reflecting on these on the opportunities, granting leaves for transgender workers at the specified steps of the gender confirmation process, expanding the social rights gained by marriage in a way to include employees who do not have the right to marry, granting menstrual leave per month for employees who are menstruating (it should not be forgotten that not only ciswomen have a menstruation cycle, but also there are persons who are menstruating such as trans, trans men or non-binary persons or there are also women who are not menstruating), avoiding an unequal practice for employees who do not have the right to marry in annual leave arrangements, ensuring all employees to benefit equally from social rights may be the demands to be discussed in CBA negotiations.

“LGBTI+ Equality Action Plan” can be provided as an example of how the problems of LGBTI+ workers can be brought to the agenda of the CBA

meetings. This plan can also be part of broader equality plan, such as gender equality or ethical behavior/ code of conduct plans.

The following points can be transferred into the equality action plans at work:

- Developing a partnership understanding with employers to agree on measures to address prejudices and discrimination.
- Determining special needs and new regulations needed in consultation with LGBTI+ employees and service users.
- Underlining unintentional or indirect discrimination by reviewing all policies, procedures and practices of workplaces.
- Providing recommendations for changes to ensure the equality of LGBTI+ persons.
- Advising the equality issue of LGBTI+ persons to be addressed in vocational and in-service training programs.
- Recommending methods for regular monitoring/follow ups, reporting and due diligence.

When it comes to monitoring the workforce, privacy becomes important when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity issues. Many LGBTI+ employees refrain from coming out in the workplace. This is no surprise given the fact that hate, discrimination, harassment and abuse are one of the most serious problems faced in the workplace. So it can be very difficult to be open at work. Unions working on the issue of LGBTI+ equality emphasize the safeguarding of the privacy of LGBTI+ workers and the right not to come out. This is particularly important if an organization is doing workforce monitoring.

The workplace to be monitored should have an appropriate LGBTI+ equality policy and a specific action plan on how this policy is implemented.

Being clear is a must about why monitoring involving sexual orientation and gender identity is being done and what to do with the results to be achieved.

The confidentiality of all data collected should be fully guaranteed.

## GLOSSARY OF BASIC DEFINITIONS

**Sexual Orientation:** It refers to the ongoing emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to persons of more than one gender or persons who are attracted to genders similar to their own and to genders different from their own. Individuals may or may not express their sexual orientation through their statements, or they may not be able to because of the possibility of facing oppression and violence. The sexual orientation of the person cannot be understood by external observation, through certain stereotypes and prejudices or assumptions. Heterosexuality, which expresses the ongoing emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction of a person to men if this person is a woman and to women if this person is a man, lesbian, gay, bisexual and some of the other identities included under the umbrella term: + covered by the term: LGBTI+, are among sexual orientations. Sexual orientation diversity is a natural consequence of sexual diversity. None of the sexual orientations are more natural, healthier, superior, more “normal” than the other.

**Gender Identity:** It is a definition expressing the gender with which persons feel belonging and identify with. Gender identity cannot be understood by observing from the outside, through some assumptions or assignments based on physical or physiological characteristics. Gender identity is a process and term that is not only related to the body, but also includes psychological and social aspects. Gender identity, on the one hand, is a concept that concerns the self-determination rights of individuals, their freedom in their projection over their own bodies, and their participation in social life in a way that they feel equal and free.

**LGBTI+:** It is the abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex words. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual refer to sexual orientation; transgender refers to gender identity; Intersex refers to sex/gender characteristics. In terms of covering sexual orientation and gender identities other than these definitions, the + sign has been placed at the end of the abbreviation in the sense of referring “the more others”. The + sign indicates that the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity is much greater than the identities included in this abbreviation.

**Homosexual/Gay:** describe persons having emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to persons of their own gender. It is the English translation of word: homoseksüel/eşcinsel in Turkish. The terms “homosexual” and “homosexuality” are not used today, since these were used as medical terms in past. In Turkish the term: “Eşcinsellik” is still used by the LGBTI+ movement in Turkey when needed since this does not bear the negative meaning attributed to “homosexuality” in English. Although it does not give information about the person’s own gender; as a result of the patriarchal system, gay men come to mind in daily life. However, this word in itself is an expression of a person’s sexual orientation and does not give information about the person’s gender.

**Lesbian:** refers to gay woman. This term describes women who have emotional, romantic and sexual attractions to those of their own sex. The term originates from the Greek poet Sappho. It comes from the name of Lesbos Island (Mitilini) where she lived in the 6th century BC. For more information, see. “Söylemekten Çekinme: Lezbiyen”/”Do not Be Afraid to Say: Lesbian” brochure of Kaos GL Association.

**Gay:** refers to gay man. It emerged in the early 1970s with the Gay Liberation Movement. In this process, it was used as a political break from the word: “homosexuality.” While the word “homosexual” has been defined by medicine, the word “gay” has been defined by gays to describe the lives that are created with the emotional, romantic and sexual attraction of gays towards each other. This word is started to be in use since 1980s. For the first time in 1999, after “Turkish Gay Meeting”, the word “gay”; began to be used as “gey” in Turkish. Since September 2006, it has been defined as “gay, gay men” by the electronic dictionary of the Turkish Language Association.

**Bisexual:** refers to persons experience emotional and/or sexual attractions to persons of more than one gender. Although bisexuality has historically been defined as attracting both genders, in recent years it has been used to mean attracting more than one gender, along with criticisms of the gender binary regime. It is also defined as an interest in persons of one’s own sex and other genders. Bisexuality is used as an umbrella term, especially in Europe, and a policy is made on this axis. For more information, see. “Bi+Seksüeller Burada”/”Bi+Sexuals are Here” brochure of Kaos GL Association.

**Bi +:** An umbrella term used to describe persons who are interested in and having sexuality with persons of more than one gender. It can also be used as a term covering bisexuals, pansexuals, polysexuals, and omni-sexuals, fluid, queer, etc. For more information, see. “Bi+Seksüeller Burada”/“Bi+Sexuals are Here” brochure of Kaos GL Association.

**Trans/transgender:** refers to a gender and/or gender identity and it refers to persons whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the gender assigned to them at birth. It is also used as umbrella term. The gender assigned to persons at birth may not be the right one in many cases, as it is an assignment and does not actually reflect one’s own will and life. Persons who are assigned a “male” gender when they are born but who are women are called trans women, and persons who are assigned a “female” gender but who are men are called trans men. Trans is a gender identity and persons may identify themselves only with the gender determined by their own statement, which is their gender and not related to the assigned gender, or they may not have a statement of any gender identity. The word trans does not require any surgical operation, but many trans women, trans men and transgender persons may undergo a gender confirmation/affirming process and may want to undergo various medical and surgical procedures. The term trans is related to gender identity and does not indicate any sexual orientation. Trans persons may have heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual orientations as well as may feel that these sexual orientations are not sufficient or do not fit them.

**Transsexual:** Unlike the word “trans/transgender”, this is not an umbrella term, but rather an old term preferred by healthcare staff. It describes persons who apply or intend to apply medical interventions such as hormone therapy, gender confirmation surgery, and mastectomy.

**Gender Confirmation/Gender Affirming Process:** It is a concept that expresses the processes of trans women, trans men and trans persons, which are reflected in a wide range of medical, psychological, social, economic and legal terms, resulting from the relationship between these fields. Although debates on the concept defining this process continue, the terms of confirmation and affirming other than “gender reassignment or sex change” previously used, are used in the literature. The expression “sex change” is not a right concept because it indicates the gender of trans women and trans men as “unreal” and describes the process as “changing” by accepting the assigned gender as the right one.

**Non-binary:** This concept means not consisting of two things. In the context of gender identity; in the most general sense, it describes the gender identity of persons who do not define themselves within the traditional categories of binary genders. For more information, see. <https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/non-binary-olmak-ne-demektir-1> published on the website: KaosGL.org.

**Gender non-conforming:** In a broad sense, the term “gender non-conforming” defines persons who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Just like “non-binary”, “gender non-conforming” is often used as an umbrella term, although some use it to describe persons who define themselves as cis but standing up against gender stereotypes through dressing style or various other behaviors. For more information, see. <https://www.kaosgl.org/haber/non-binary-olmak-ne-demektir-1> published on the website: KaosGL.org.

**Intersex:** The term intersex refers to a gender/sex characteristic. Apart from the male or female gender assigned to persons at birth, they are persons with a range of natural biological variations who are born with a chromosomal pattern, a reproductive system, and/or sexual anatomy that does not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies or fits to a gender, which is both feminine and masculine. They are persons born with gender characteristics that do not fully display the typical female and male characteristics in terms of gender. Doctors often recommend parents to initiate a surgery and other medical interventions on their intersex children so that their bodies appear to be “female” or “male”. In many cases, these interventions are medically unnecessary and can have very negative effects on intersex children as they grow up. These involuntary actions, which interfere with the bodily autonomy of individuals, are also violations of human rights. For more information, see. “Standing up for human rights of intersex people” translated into Turkish by Kaos GL, Pink Life and Intersex Anatolia as “İnterseks Bireylerin İnsan Haklarını Savunmak”.

**Ace or asexual:** Generally, it is a term used to describe persons who generally do not experience sexual attraction to others of any gender. However, asexuality is a broad spectrum defined by the variability or absence of sexual attraction. Ace is used in English as a concept that includes all concepts such as demisexual, which describes persons who do feel sexual attraction to someone in varying degrees on the condition that they have already formed a strong emotional or romantic bond with the

person, and gray asexual or graces, which describes persons experience sexual attraction infrequently. It has started to be used as “As” in Turkish literature.

**Aros/aromantic:** Persons experience no romantic attraction to others of any gender.

**Monosexual:** Persons who have emotional and/or sexual attraction to one sex.

**Straight/Heterosexual:** Persons experience emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to men, if this person is a woman and to women if this person is a man. Due to the narrative that heterosexuality is the only “natural, normal, and acceptable” sexual orientation, and due to compulsory heterosexuality, persons often do not even need to describe themselves as heterosexual.

**Cis/Cisgender:** Refer to persons identify with the gender that was assigned to them at birth.

**Non-trans:** is another term for defining cis persons. It is “natrans” in Turkish; this was introduced into the Turkish literature by trans activist Aligül Arıkan, who passed away in 2013.

**Gender Assigned at Birth:** Refers to the gender assigned to persons based on assumptions built on some characteristics assigned to external genitals at birth or before. Often it is limited to binary notions of girl and boy/woman and man. Although the expressions “biological sex” or “birth sex” are often used, it is more correct to use the term “assigned at birth” as it is assigned by medical and social presuppositions against one’s own will.

**Gender:** It is used as “Toplumsal Cinsiyet” in the Turkish literature as the equivalent of the word Gender. It refers to the all roles and responsibilities socially assigned to women and men in different cultures, different geographies and different historical periods. The concept of gender; reflects the different roles, social positions, economic and political powers of men and women in society, and also affects all of these. There were feminists discussing the social meanings of femininity and masculinity in the 1970s, who gave visibility to the concept of gender. In addition, gender is a conceptualization that goes beyond two fixed notions of gender identity that have become social prejudices, including other genders and



gender identities. Most of the time, gender inequalities seen in almost all areas of public and private life are based on “biological sex differences” over assumptions. However, the patriarchal system critique emphasizes that inequality is socially constructed, can and must be changed by social processes.

**Gender Role:** Describes all roles assigned to the gender. Gender roles and responsibilities imposed on individuals often cause inequality and discrimination between individuals. This situation stems from the sexist approaches in patriarchal society.

**Gender Expression/ Gender Presentation:** Gender expression refers to a person’s expression of their gender through clothing, personal care, attitude, social behavior and other factors is also referred to as “gender presentation”. While gender identity corresponds to an internal and established sense of self, gender expression is related to how persons express their gender identity to the world, that is, how they express these externally.

**Heteronormativity:** The fact that heterosexuality is seen as the only normal sexual orientation where social values, rules and lifestyles accept as if everyone is heterosexual. It is the combination is the division of persons into two as men and women and the beliefs, thoughts and norms that claim that sexual relations / marriages can only be between men and women. Heteronormativity builds a whole social structure through this set of norms.

**Heterosexism:** Heterosexism is an ideology of discrimination that sees heterosexuality as a necessity and imposes it as the only form of existence. It is closely related to sexism and the gender binary regime. Heterosexism suggests that the natural, normal, superior, and acceptable sexual orientation is heterosexuality; refers to the ideological system that stigmatizes, denies, and humiliates any non-heterosexual behavior, identity, or relationship. Heterosexism, which also assigns heterosexual sexual orientation to the genders, is an ideology of discrimination that creates oppression, inequality and violence.

**Gender Binary regime:** It is the name given to the form of oppression that suggests that there are only two genders over the assigned sexes, that it is made up of men and women, and imposes this as an obligation. It is the classification of gender with two opposing forms, masculine / male

and feminine / female, through a social system. This regime also attributes a “biological” essence to the sexes, argues that gender is constructed on this essence, and limits gender with two sexes, which it claims to be opposite and completely different. This model leads to the constant reproduction of sexism, heterosexism, and cissexism, as well as ignoring non-binary identities outside of this binarism. By reducing gender to the sex assigned at birth, it also defines the gender of trans women, trans men and trans persons outside of their own declarations and will, and creates inequality through these definitions. The gender binary regime also assigns roles to these definitions by making a uniform definition of “femininity/womanhood” and “masculinity/manhood”.

**Homophobia:** This term describes prejudice and hatred against gays. It includes all of the discourse and actions that degrade gays and homosexuality as elements of insults or comedy. It is closely related to hate speech and hate crimes. Rather than being an individual and psychological fear, it is a social phenomenon that is fed by social hierarchies and constantly reproduces those hierarchies. Homophobia is a problem for everyone who advocates a fair and free life. Although the concept of homophobia has been seen as a concept that defines hatred and prejudice against all LGBTI+ persons especially in social psychology, however, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are related but separate concepts.

**Biphobia:** This term refers to prejudice and hatred against bisexuals and identities under the bi+ umbrella. It includes all kinds of discourse and actions that degrade bisexuals as elements of insults or comedy. It is closely related to hate speech and hate crimes. Rather than being an individual and psychological fear, it is a social phenomenon that is fed by social hierarchies and constantly reproduces those hierarchies. Biphobia is a problem for everyone who advocates a fair and free life.

**Transphobia:** This term describes the prejudice and hatred against trans women, trans men and identities under the trans umbrella. It includes all the discourses and actions that degrade trans persons as elements of insults or comedy. It is closely related to hate speech and hate crimes. Rather than being an individual and psychological fear, it is a social phenomenon that is fed by social hierarchies and constantly reproduces those hierarchies. Transphobia is a problem for everyone who advocates a fair and free life.



