

POLICY DOCUMENT

Document Title: – YOUTH RIGHTS – SEXUAL ORIENTATIN – GENDER IDENTITY

Organization: CYPRUS FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Submission Date: 11th of November 2024

Summary – Intro: (120 – 150words):

The Cyprus Youth Council (CYC), as one of the key representatives of young people’s voices, is committed to, and actively works towards the protection, promotion, and defence of the rights of all young individuals, regardless of gender, race, colour, religious or other beliefs, disability, family or social status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Supporting and accepting all individuals enhances the mental health of children and young people, reduces bullying and social stigma, limits inequalities, strengthens social inclusion, equality, and active participation, and promotes respect and understanding. The adoption and implementation of policies such as the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for All without Discrimination by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2021) and the Anti-Racism Policy of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth contribute to creating an inclusive society where every young person can grow and express themselves freely.

Policy Positions: (bullet-point form)

- **Creating a Safe School Environment**

We urge the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth to design programmes and ensure systematic and mandatory training for educators and other professionals working with children and young people on issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity within its Anti-Racism Policy. Any form of education should be based on human rights based approach, aiming to combat stereotypes and reduce prejudice, violence, and discrimination. Educators and other professionals must have the knowledge, tools, and support from the Ministry to create and maintain a supportive and safe school environment. They should be able to prevent and adequately manage incidents of violence, bullying, stigma, and discrimination while promoting empathy and respect.

- **Implementation of the Anti-Racism Code of Conduct**

We call on the Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure that any incidents of racist behaviour, including those related to sexual orientation and gender identity, are promptly identified, recognised, and addressed decisively. The “Code of Conduct against Racism & Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents” is a mandatory policy for schools by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, and its application was institutionalised and monitored following a recent decision by the Council of Ministers (1/11/2023).

- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) - Anti-Racism Policy**

The Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth must include topics related to diversity, specifically sexual orientation and gender identity, in the Health Education programme as part of its CSE and Anti-Racism Policy. Education on these topics provides essential knowledge, helps deconstruct stereotypes and myths surrounding these issues, and fosters a safe and supportive environment for all children, free from stigma and discrimination.

- **Informing and Raising Awareness Among Children and Youth about Diversity, Respect, and Acceptance**

The Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, as well as other relevant bodies, are called to promote practical and consistent understanding, respect, and acceptance of diversity in matters of sexual orientation and gender identity through awareness and education programmes and campaigns. Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination, stigma, bullying, and violence faced by young people related to their sexual orientation or gender identity should be replaced with a culture of mutual understanding, acceptance, equality, and respect.