

Comment by Transgender Europe on the consultation - recommendations from the expert group regarding the available health services for people who are experiencing gender incongruence and gender dysphoria in Norway

Summary

The re-organisation of trans-specific care in Norway is much needed, given long distances, waiting periods and discriminatory accessibility criteria. Thus the proposal made is very timely, and TGEU encourages policy makers to follow its advice and swiftly work for its implementation. In general, TGEU supports the suggestions made in the proposal, and where there are split opinions endorses those made by the majority of the expert group.

We welcome the suggestion to follow international good practice and particularly welcome to take a LEON approach, that is to provide treatment at lowest effective level of care.

We recommend to policy makers to take note of internationally evolving concepts and practices and suggest using non-stigmatising and empowering language, particularly by avoiding reference to loaded medical and mental health terms such as gender dysphoria.

The International Classification of Diseases, in its currently on-going reform, proposes the removal of trans-related mental health diagnoses. We would like to encourage Norwegian policy makers to explore alternative access models that provide accessible, stigma-free and competent care for all those who need and seek it.

Training of general health practitioners

(Anticipated) negative reactions often drive trans persons away from seeking health advice and care when, in fact, they actually need it. Research shows a frequent lack of knowledge and even at times hostile attitudes amongst general health practitioners towards their trans patients. It is important to train practitioners including receptionists, nurses and administrative staff to enable them to deliver stigma-free, respectful and competent care. Thus, in addition to the proposed development of national guidelines, training for a change of attitude in general health care providers should have priority.

Children and young persons

Standardised providence of information about gender variety from a young age should be considered as to provide a welcoming and open atmosphere for trans and gender variant children. Offering information only upon presented

behaviour might expose the child and could prove too late to avoid problems that could have been avoided in the first place.

TGEU welcomes the suggestion of the majority in the expert group to make decentralised health care also available for children and young people.

Persons of age

Trans-specific health care should also be made available for persons who come out as trans at a later stage in life. Amnesty International has reported that older trans individuals have been refused the necessary diagnoses which would give access to trans-specific care because the individuals are considered to be “late onset.” The health care needs of these individuals must be met without discrimination of age.

Reproductive capacities

The nationwide protocol should also foresee provisions to keep or support the reproductive capacities of those persons who want to undergo gender reassignment treatment including surgical intervention that might lead to sterilisation.

About the submitting organisation

Transgender Europe - TGEU is a European human rights NGO working for the human rights and equality of all trans people with member organisations in 42 countries in Europe and beyond. TGEU is registered as a charity under German law.

Governments have sought after TGEU’s competence in regard to trans specific health care across the continent. TGEU regularly consults European institutions, such as the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights. More Information can be found at www.tgeu.org

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