**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBT PERSONS, COMMUNITIES AND/OR POPULATIONS**

**YOUTH SUBMISSION BY CHOICE FOR YOUTH AND SEXUALITY**

**‘LOOKING AFTER EACH OTHER: GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE DUTCH QUEER COMMUNITY’**

Contact person: Quirine Lengkeek, advocacy coordinator.
E-mail: quirine@choiceforyouth.org

**Introduction**
CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality is a youth-led and youth-serving organization based in The Netherlands, implementing programs on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all young people across several countries in Africa and Asia, and the Caribbean sub-region.

Youth are often minimally discussed in the Council, with only 43% of Special Procedures reports addressing youth in more than 1 sentence last year (based on our internal research). This is a positive increase in regards to 2018, where only 34% of Special Procedures did so, but there is still more to be done to recognize age as an intersecting form of discrimination throughout the UN Special Procedures mechanism.

CHOICE would like to add to the important work of States and civil society to create an LGBTI-inclusive response to the current health crisis, by providing a brief overview of some good, community-led practices, as well as concerns for The Netherlands. Although submitted by (queer) youth, we note there is limited to no youth-specific data available (so far), and thus included in this submission, on the specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for LGBTI young people in The Netherlands. It is expected however that the waiting periods for transgender persons to access an intake conversation in a gender clinic, or Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to increase further. The waiting periods are – outside of the pandemic – already very long with an average waiting period of 18 months for a first intake, and another 6 months for surgical intake[[1]](#footnote-1). In many regions, transgender and gender non-conforming persons have no access to gender-affirming care at all. The pandemic not only restricts this limited access further, but also the vital continuation of ongoing treatment and support.

Our heart goes out to members of the LGBTI+ community worldwide who are facing restrictions in receiving care and support, face homelessness, or are in unsupportive households during the lockdown.

1. **How did the State evaluate the situation of LGBT persons vis-à-vis the pandemic and potential specific vulnerabilities?**

*There was no communication from the government towards or about the specific impact for LGBTI persons in The Netherlands. On the 26th of May, two members of Parliament, Van den Nieuwenhuijzen (Groenlinks) and Van Den Hul (PvdA) asked* [*questions*](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2020Z09419&did=2020D20307) *to the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands about the deteriorating situation for LGBTI+ people in the countries receiving funding from The Netherlands, after reading a* [*report from Kaleidoscope Trust*](https://kaleidoscopetrust.com/news/183)*. This report, compiled after* [*consulting 34 LGBTI+ charities in 37 Commonwealth countries*](https://www.commonwealth-covid19.com/)*, showed that the COVID-19 outbreak and the governments’ responses to it, are worsening their social and economic position every day. For example, 85% of respondents are concerned about the wellbeing of their service users, and their organization’s ability to deliver meaningful interventions during the pandemic.*

*At the time of writing, no answers are available yet to the questions posed to the Minister.*

1. **What measures were adopted by the State to ensure that LGBT persons would not be subjected to discrimination in the implementation of COVID-19 related interventions?**

*There were, according to our desk research, no specific measures adopted by the State to ensure that LGBTI persons would not be subjected to discrimination in the implementation of COVID-19 related interventions in The Netherlands.*

1. **Did LGBT civil society participate in the design of measures taken to respond to the pandemic? If no, why not?**

*Different sectors are invited to submit plans or protocols to start working safely, in accordance with the* [*guidelines from the RIVM*](https://www.rivm.nl/coronavirus-covid-19)*, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, advising the government. This is mainly based on (economic) sector, and not community- or needs-based. They are gathered on a* [*website*](https://www.mijncoronaprotocol.nl/)*, and are meant as guidance, but have no legal status. Sex workers, among whom many LGBTI persons, have tried to reach out to the government through an* [*incendiary letter*](https://sekswerkexpertise.nl/brandbrief-naar-ministeries-vws-szw-ezk-en-venj/) *on the 12th of May, to start a conversation on (emergency) financial support for people in the sex industry, as (full-service) sex workers are currently not allowed to work until the 1st of September. Sex work is legal in The Netherlands, but many sex workers are exempt from receiving emergency funding due to their contract type (opting-in). Despite several attempts, there was no response from the government. In the meantime, the sector created a* [*protocol*](https://www.metronieuws.nl/in-het-nieuws/binnenland/2020/06/sekswerkers-willen-aan-het-werk-met-eigen-hygieneprotocol/) *for themselves and started a poster campaign in red light districts.*

*The Prime Minister, Mark Rutte,* [*called on young people*](https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/rutte-vraagt-de-jeugd-om-ideeen-tegen-corona-ik-weet-niet-zeker-of-dit-mijn-kinderen-heeft-bereikt~b60cb0ff/) *to submit proposals and critique on the corona-related measures, hoping to activate young people to engage in the conversation about the changes in society. Those with the most inspiring proposals will meet with him.*

1. **What is the information available to the State as to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the general situation of LGBT persons and their access to education, housing, health and employment and on their living conditions?**

*There is limited to no information available about the specific impact on LGBTI persons’ education, housing, health, employment and living conditions in The Netherlands. The lack of data, although perhaps still to come, is worrying.*

**5. Can you identify good practices in the State interventions in relation to COVID-19 and LGBT persons? Can you identify good practices stemming from civil society actions? Have lessons be learned from the pandemic on how not to leave LGBT persons behind in emergency situations?**

*Good practices from civil society intervention:*

1. *The COC, The Netherlands most well-established and widely known LGBT organization, lists available* [*resources*](https://www.coc.nl/gezondheid/informatie-tijdens-de-corona-pandemie) *on their website. It is the first hit on Google when searching (in Dutch) ‘LHBT en corona’.*
2. *Well-known members of the queer community call on their fellow community members not to go on sex dates during the pandemic with the campaign* [*#NUffNIET!*](https://mantotman.nl/nl/nuffniet) *(NotRightNow!). They encourage people to connect online, but postpone dating in person. The call on peers to share the message through social media.*
3. **[*LGBTI+ Support*](https://www.lhbtisteun.nl/en/lgbti-support/) *(image below) is a chat/hotline for community members who feel lonely, or just want to connect with peers during the lockdown. The site also offers various forms of entertainment and workshops/live shows to connect artists and viewers. The initiative is supported by well-known LGBT organization in The Netherlands:* [*COC*](https://www.coc.nl/) *Netherlands,* [*NNID*](https://nnid.nl/) *and Transgender Network Netherlands (*[*TNN*](https://www.transgendernetwerk.nl/)*).*
1. Van der Miesen, Anna & Raaijmakers, Daphne & Grift, Tim. (2020). “You Have to Wait a Little Longer”: Transgender (Mental) Health at Risk as a Consequence of Deferring Gender-Affirming Treatments During COVID-19. Archives of Sexual Behavior. 10.1007/s10508-020-01754-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)