Equality policy in Portugal: the case of sexual orientation

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study of sexual orientation equality policy in Portugal. It focuses on the effects that legal advances in equality have in everyday social contexts, as well as on the roles that civil society and academia play in the formation of equality policies.

In a relatively brief period of time, equality legislation in Portugal has progressed considerably with regard to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1982, subsequent legal measures including civil partnership in 2001, non-discrimination constitutional rights in 2004 and same-sex marriage legislation in 2010 have paved the way for increasing equality in society. Despite these significant legal advances towards equality, however, social discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is a pervasive reality, and a number of key issues remain.

This paper analyses the roles of civil society, academia and policy makers in sexual orientation equality policy, on the basis of interviews with activists, academics and policy makers. The Portuguese context was found to be characterised by the active participation of civil society, particularly LGBT associations, and policy makers on the one hand, but by rather weak, sporadic participation from academia on the other.

Key words: equality policy, sexual orientation, Portugal, activism, academia
1. Introduction

Sexual identity is diverse and multidimensional; nevertheless lesbians, gays and bisexuals share a common sexual non-normativity that causes a specific socio-political position, often affected by inequality and discrimination (Dewaele & Motmans, 2003). Such legal and social discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation will be the focal point of this paper.

Knowledge is produced in specific contexts or circumstances, and the acknowledgment of the situatedness of knowledge necessarily leads to a recognition of the importance of the “position” or “positionality” of the researcher, and of her/his specific embodied locations. Because of this, it is important that researchers are self-reflexive and assume explicit positions in order to overcome false notions of neutrality (Rose, 1993; Valentine, 2002). In this context it is relevant to state that the authors of this paper have participated in nationwide equal opportunities programs and are LGBT rights activists.

The main objective of this paper is to explore the boundaries and intersections of civil society, academics and policy makers in the pursuit of sexual orientation equality rights in Portugal.

The paper begins by presenting an overview of non-normative sexual orientation in Portugal, focusing on the following issues in particular: policy and anti-discrimination legislation; the social situation of non-heterosexual individuals; LGBT rights activism; and academic research. We analyse policies, legal changes and social discrimination, and critically present the roles of relevant actors in equality policies: civil society, academia and policy makers. The paper goes on to explore the interrelations between these actors and the impact on sexual orientation equality policy, based on interviews with LGBT activists, academics and policy makers. We conclude by reflecting on possible directions for future research and action.
2. The Portuguese context

2.1. Policy

Homosexuality retains a marginal, unequal status in Portugal, both in legislation and in society. Although there have been significant legal advances towards equality, social discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is a pervasive reality and a number of important areas of legal inequality remain (Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009).

Homosexuality was first decriminalised in Portugal in 1852, but was made a crime again in 1886. From this date on and throughout the dictatorship, Portugal became ever more oppressive of homosexuality. Since the revolution of 25 April 1974, however, Portuguese society has become increasingly accepting of homosexuality, and over the last decade civil rights concerning sexual orientation have improved substantially (Roseneil, Crowhurst, Hellesund, Santos & Stoilova, 2009).

The most significant landmarks in Portuguese legislation concerning sexual orientation civil rights can outlined as follows:

- 1982 - Portugal decriminalises homosexuality;
- 1999 - Homosexuals and bisexuals are able to serve openly in the Armed Forces;
- 2001 - Recognition of same-sex unions/civil partnerships granted (same rights as heterosexual couples, with the exception of adoption);
- 2003 - Labour Code rights protected (access to work and employment, protection from discrimination at work and sexual harassment);
- 2004 - Sexual orientation is included in the Portuguese Constitution within the Principal of Equality (article number 13);
- 2005 - The Portuguese Institute of Blood officially allows men who have sex with men to donate blood. However, this decision will be annulled in 2009 by the President of the Institute;
- 2007 - Penal Code rights (equal age of consent for same-sex and opposite-sex couples, protection from violence and hate crimes);
- 2009 – Explicit inclusion of sexual orientation subjects in sexual education in schools (Law of Sexual Education);
- 2010 - Marriage is extended to same-sex couples (same rights as heterosexual couples, with the exception of adoption);
- 2010 - Approval in Parliament of a law allowing men who have sex with men to donate blood.
The reality of life in Portugal for lesbians and gays has changed rapidly in recent years. A consistent and significant set of legal measures have been adopted, from the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1982 to the 2010 same-sex marriage law. It is a remarkable change, framed by the revolution of 1974 that ended a long period of dictatorship and brought noteworthy social changes to Portugal in extensive and diverse areas of life, including sexuality. Portugal has wide-ranging anti-discrimination laws and is one of the few countries in the world to include in its Constitution a ban on discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Nevertheless, some areas of Portuguese legislation remain discriminatory on the grounds of sexual orientation, of which parenthood is a notable example. Although single lesbians and gays may adopt, joint adoption of children is restricted to heterosexual couples. Furthermore, assisted procreation services are currently withheld from single women and lesbian couples (Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2008).

2.1. Social discrimination

Legislative measures can contribute to social change, but discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is still a widespread reality in Portugal. The 2009 Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in the EU (European Commission, 2009), revealed that the majority of Portuguese citizens (58%) believed that sexual orientation was the main reason for discrimination in Portugal, ahead of ethnic origins and disability (both 57%) and age (53%). The percentage of the Portuguese population who selected sexual orientation as the main discriminating factor is 9% above the average of the 27 countries of the European Union (EU), where this kind of discrimination lies in fourth place (47%), behind ethnic origins (61%), age (58%) and disability (53%).

One of the most pervasive forms of social discrimination is strong societal pressure to confine and hide lesbian and gay sexuality within private spaces (Valentine, 1993). In Portugal, recent research on public spaces and same-sex displays of affection (Ferreira, 2011) indicates that the majority of lesbians and gays tend to confine same-sex displays of affection to private spaces. It is particularly relevant that younger lesbians and gays report the same frequency of same-sex public displays of affection as older members of
the same communities. This correspondence is surprising given the significant legal advancements regarding homosexuality and the societal changes that have taken place in Portugal since the revolution of 1974. The results of this research (Ferreira, 2011) also show that there are less than 100 LGBT-friendly spaces in Portugal, giving rise to large areas of very low LGBT visibility: LGBT-friendly commercial spaces are concentrated in large urban areas such as Lisbon and Porto, with only small numbers of isolated spaces in certain small cities. Moreover, in large cities, such as Lisbon and Porto, LGBT-friendly commercial spaces are restricted to specific areas. Many of Portugal’s districts have no LGBT-friendly commercial spaces at all, or any non-urban areas.

It is also noteworthy that the lesbians and gays who participated in the aforementioned research perceived LGBT commercial spaces as rather unaccepting of same-sex public displays of affection. Considering that LGBT-friendly spaces are among the few public spaces where lesbians and gays actually perform same-sex displays of affection, it is discouraging that these spaces themselves are perceived as less than accepting of such displays.

These results confirm the conclusions of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights report (Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009), which found that European countries, including Portugal, still have a discriminatory social environment towards non-normative sexualities.

3. The actors: civil society, academia and policy makers
3.1. Civil society - LGBT associations and informal groups

Prior to the revolution of 25 April 1974, organised gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender movements did not exist in Portugal. It was not until the mid-1990s that many LGBT associations emerged (Cascais, 2006; Santos, 2005).

Before the 90s, a kind of embryonic gay and lesbian movement began as a result of initiatives taken by a small number of individuals, and 1990-1991 saw the founding of the lesbian magazine Organa and of the Homosexual Working Group (part of the Revolutionary Socialist Party) (Cascais, 2006).
The emergence of LGBT associations in Portugal can be closely linked to the AIDS epidemic (Cascais, 2006; Santos, 2005; Vale de Almeida, 2004), in that the Portuguese LGBT association movement and the visibility of the gay community gained strength within the broader process of the fight against the AIDS epidemic (Cascais, 2006).

However, it was only after 1996 that a well-established and enduring LGBT movement emerged. Among the most significant landmarks of the movement are the foundation of a diverse range of LGBT associations: ILGA-Portugal (1996); Clube Safo, a lesbian association (1996); Portugal.Gay.pt, an internet-based organisation (1996); Opus Gay (1997); Não te Prives [Don’t deprive yourself] – Group for the Defence of Sexual Rights (2001); Rede ex aequo, youth LGBT association (2003); @t, Association for the Study and Defence of Gender Identity (2003); Panteras Rosa [Pink Panthers], an informal group with significant political activity (2004); Caleidoscópio LGBT (2007); MICA-me, LGBT Movement of Artistic and Cultural Intervention (2008); and Amplos, Association of Mothers and Fathers for Free Sexual Orientation (2009).

Pride events are among the more recent occurrences in Portugal. The first Pride Festival was organised in Lisbon, the country’s largest city and its capital, in 1997 and it was also here, in 2000, that the first Pride March took place. Porto, the second largest city in Portugal, organised its first Pride Festival in 2001, and its first Pride March in 2006.

Other LGBT-related projects worth mentioning include the Queer Lisboa - Lisbon Gay and Lesbian Film Festival¹, founded in 1997 and one of the most important European forums for international LGBT films, and the radio programme Vidas Alternativas² [Alternative Lives], which has been broadcasting since 1999.

One of the most interesting aspects of LGBT associations’ activities relates to academia (Santos, 2006b; Cascais, 2006): specifically, the organisation of conferences and workshops. Various LGBT associations, in collaboration with academic institutions, have organised a diverse set of initiatives, namely: Jornadas Lésbicas/Lesbian Workshops, Clube Safo and ISPA - Higher Institute for Applied Psychology, 2002; Encontro sobre Homoparentalidade/Meeting on Homosexual Parenthood, Clube Safo and ISPA - Higher Institute for Applied Psychology, 2004; Fórum Casamento/Wedding

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¹ http://queerlisboa.pt/en
² http://www.vidasalternativas.eu/
The first International Congress of Gay, Lesbian and Queer Studies, “Cultures, Visibilities, Identities”, Janela Indiscreta (responsible for the Queer Lisboa film festival), Franco-Portuguese Institute and Centre for Communication and Language Studies at the New University of Lisbon, 2005; and several local initiatives launched by Não te Prives in cooperation with the Centre for Social Studies, Coimbra University. In December 2009, a new project was launched in Portugal: LES Online (http://www.lespt.org/lesonline), an online journal which aims to promote scientific research as well as intervention projects and opinion pieces related to various lesbian issues.

Another important link between LGBT associations and academia relates to the gathering of information through surveys on the LGBT population and reality, and the compilation of complaints about discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, providing data on this subject to overcome a lack of statistical and qualitative information on LGBT reality in Portugal (Santos, 2006b). The Education Project “Observatório de Educação” by Rede ex aequo is a very good example of this type of work. Using an online form, it collects information on cases of discrimination regarding the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity that have occurred in Portuguese schools, and then reports the results to the Ministry of Education.

At present, nine active LGBT associations and seventeen informal groups can be identified in Portugal (Ferreira, 2011). The large majority of members of LGBT associations are volunteers, who have to combine their professional work with volunteer work at the association. This reality limits the capacity of LGBT associations to design and implement new projects. A number of LGBT associations recently gained access to funding from the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), a government institute, and this may be a major step forward. Nevertheless, there is still a need to compare the advantages of non-funded independent status with the limitations imposed by a lack of economic resources.

Although LGBT associations and informal groups often engage in significant social and political activity (Santos, 2005), the majority of their members are not open about their sexual orientation in their daily environments. This state of affairs reinforces the invisibility of gays and lesbians in society and makes social advances on equality more
difficult. The practical nonexistence of lesbian and gay commercial expression in Portugal should also be noted (Ferreira, 2011).

3.2. Academia

Portuguese academia does not have a strong tradition of engagement with equality issues, even regarding gender and ethnic issues, which are generally considered the most prominent subjects of equality research.


A number of landmark publications on the emergence of this area of study in Portuguese academia include: the collection of essays “Indisciplinar a teoria. Estudos gays, lésbicos e queer [Indisciplinary theory. Gay, lesbian and queer studies]” organised by António Fernando Cascais (Cascais, 2004), which brought together academics from diverse scientific areas, such as Anthropology, Communication Sciences, Literature Studies, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology; and the thematic number of Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais on “Estudos queer: Identidades, contextos e acção colectiva [Queer Studies: Identities, contexts and collective action]” organised by Ana Cristina Santos (Santos, 2006a).

There has been increasing interest in this subject since 2006, but it still remains a rather marginal and insubstantial area of research in Portuguese academia.

A positive example of the possibility of increased research on sexual orientation issues is the 2008 joint call for R&D projects from the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) and the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), for scientific research projects and technological developments in the field of gender relations and policies for equality between women and men in Portugal which have funded certain research projects focusing specifically on sexual orientation issues, such as the research project coordinated by Prof. Conceição Nogueira, University of Minho,
“Sexual citizenship of Lesbian (Women) in Portugal - Experiences of discrimination and possibilities for change”.

The relationship between activism and academia in Portugal is an interesting one. Many academic researchers working on sexual orientation issues in Portugal are in some way connected to feminist or LGBT activism. Similarly, in recent years a number of LGBT activists have (re)entered university on undergraduate or postgraduate study or research programs related to sexual orientation issues, in such diverse scientific areas as sociology, psychology, geography and anthropology.

It is significant that until 2011, neither degree programmes - undergraduate or postgraduate - nor individual curricular modules specifically concerned with sexual orientation issues existed in Portuguese universities. Only a small number of very limited examples were addressed in certain curricular modules. Nevertheless, over the last decade there has been increased interest among undergraduate and postgraduate students in addressing sexuality, and specifically sexual orientation, in their research (Vale de Almeida, 2010). The academic year 2011/12 is a landmark for sexual orientation issues in Portuguese academia, as it sees the launch of the first postgraduate degree in LGBT Studies.

Despite certain individual efforts and exceptions, Portuguese academia remains characterised by a pervasive resistance and unwillingness to invest in research related to sexual orientation issues.

3.3. Policy makers

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (EYEOA), 2007, was another milestone for equality policies in Portugal. For the first time, a major initiative in the area of equality brought together policy makers, civil society and academics. Some of the most significant results included: the consideration of discrimination from a multiple perspective in the promotion of equality; the discussion of equality in an integrated way that included diverse forms of discrimination (gender, disability, ethnic origin, age,

sexual orientation and religion); and the focus on the individual rather than on areas of discrimination.

Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was one of the areas that gained visibility with EYEOA. During the Closing Conference, National Coordinator Elza Pais drew attention to diverse initiatives related specifically to this area of discrimination, underlining the “Thematic Conference on Sexual Orientation - LGBT: full citizenship for all”, a joint organisation linking policy makers, LGBT associations and academics. This thematic conference was held on 17 May 2007, the International Day against Homophobia.

It was during 2007 that the Commission for Equality and Women's Rights (CIDM) was transformed into the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), with a new focus on citizenship. This new Commission clearly identifies sexual orientation and gender identity as priority areas in the field of equality. It was also during the EYEOA that LGBT associations entered the Advisory Board of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG, 2008).

The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) supervised a research project in the area of sexual orientation and gender identity: “Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity”, 2009, coordinated by Prof. Conceição Nogueira, University of Minho. The research project report was presented on 17 May 2010 at the conference “Against Homophobia and Transphobia: Identifying and Combating Discrimination against LGBT People in Portugal”, which was organised by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) and the LGBT associations ILGA-Portugal, Rede ex aequo, and Amplos. Prof. João Oliveira, one of the researchers responsible for the project, reported that LGBT people felt most discriminated against when subjected to insults, and that the institutions where they felt most discriminated against were associated with religion and the state. The model of heterosexist thinking was reported to be the most crucial factor supporting discrimination or unfavourable opinion towards LGBT rights, and its predominance was stressed in men, and within the family, in the father (CIG, 2010).

Another of the CIG’s initiatives that has addressed the fight against diverse forms of discrimination included in EYEOA (gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs,
disability, age and sexual orientation) is its sponsorship of the research project “Addressing Discrimination at Local Level for Achieving Gender Equality at National Level”, 2009, coordinated by Prof. Margarida Queirós, Centre for Geographical Studies, University of Lisbon.

The creation of a Secretary of State for Equality (SEI) during the XVIII Government (2009-2011 legislature), formed by the Socialist Party, was a clear sign of commitment to equality policy. This government program clearly identified as a priority the fight against all forms of discrimination, paying particular attention to inequality based on gender and sexual orientation. The former Secretary of State for Equality (SEI), Elza Pais, played an active role in addressing sexual orientation equality issues. For instance, she made public statements (August 2010)\(^4\) demanding an end to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation with regard to blood donation. This remains an area of controversy in Portugal: legally, it is prohibited to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation, but many hospitals ask blood donors to complete surveys which ask about participation in sex practices between men. At present, blood donation centres continue to employ diverse practices, a number of which are clearly discriminatory.

The present Government of Portugal (elected 5 June 2011) revoked the position of Secretary of State for Equality and created a Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Equality, thus weakening the focus on equality policy.

Same-sex civil marriage was one of the priorities of the XVIII Government, which presented a bill for legalisation in December 2009. It was passed by the Assembly of the Republic on 8 January 2010. The bill was declared legally valid by the Portuguese Constitutional Court in April 2010. On 17 May 2010 (coincidentally the International Day against Homophobia), the President of the Republic ratified the law and Portugal became the sixth country in Europe and the eighth country in the world to allow same-sex marriage nationwide. The law was published in the official journal on 31 May 2010 and became effective as of 5 June 2010. At the same time, other left-wing legislative proposals were being considered, including the possibility of adoption for same-sex couples, but these were rejected.

Two bills for the legalisation of same-sex marriage had already been presented to Parliament on 10 October 2008. The bills were introduced separately by the Left Bloc (BE) and the Green Party (PEV), but both were rejected by a parliament in which the governing Socialist Party (PS) had an absolute majority. One year later, the Socialist Party themselves presented the same-sex marriage bill which eventually passed. This kind of arrangement is, unfortunately, a typical feature of Portuguese politics.

An example of a less positive aspect of policy and sexual orientation equality is the way in which the III National Plan for Equality – Citizenship and Gender (2007-2010) (CIG, 2007) addressed these issues. Sexual orientation only appeared in introductory texts, and specific goals or strategies were not included. The IV National Plan for Equality – Citizenship and Gender (2011-2013), however, which was approved in January 2011 during the XVIII Government legislature, included a specific area of strategy for sexual orientation and gender identity, which was a step forward. However, due to the change of government in June 2011, the effective implementation of this Plan remains indistinct.

Although equality policy in Portugal has positive aspects, sexual orientation issues are only a recent component of political discourse and are certainly not yet widespread or mainstream.

4. Discourse: voices from the field

This section reports on interviews with LGBT activists, academics and policy makers on the field of sexual orientation issues. A total of six interviews were conducted specifically for this paper, but our results also include data from informal conversations held on the same topic with a range of individuals who are in some way related to sexual orientation equality policy. The interviewees have a diverse positionality: 2 academics; 1 policy maker; 2 academic LGBT activists; and 1 academic LGBT-activist policy maker.

The main objective of the interviews was to explore the boundaries and intersections of civil society, academics and policy makers in the pursuit of sexual orientation equality

\[^5\text{In the context of this paper, “civil society” denotes LGBT associations and informal groups}\]
rights in Portugal. The ideas presented in this part of the paper are the results of an analysis of the information gathered during the interviews.

4.1. Policy makers and civil society

Advances in sexual orientation rights in Portugal have been the result of joint endeavours by civil society, namely LGBT associations, and policy makers. This does not mean that there was a consistent common agenda, rather that there were certain specific understandings and combined projects that led to change. Media coverage was an essential instrument for change in legislation and in the attitudes of Portuguese society towards homosexuality.

The LGBT movement is not homogeneous; diverse understandings of equality exist within it. Some LGBT associations assume a state-oriented position, aiming to gain access to the same rights as heterosexuals (for example, access to marriage); other LGBT associations, meanwhile, take a more radical and transgressive position, questioning the rules and norms that organise life in society, and challenging power structures. These diverse positions have enabled policy makers to establish strategic alliances with state-oriented LGBT associations, and have made specific agendas possible, such as same-sex marriage legislation.

The diversity of the LGBT movement and its internal conflicts can be understood as catalysts for legal and social change. Firstly, such conflicts generate invaluable media coverage, and also raise awareness of the fact that apart from a common sexual non-normativity, LGBTs are multidimensional and include diverse socio-political positions.

Alliances between policy makers and specific LGBT associations are now more visible, thanks to project funding and LGBT associations’ increasing cooperation with government institutes responsible for equality policy, such as the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG).

Prevailing sexism within LGBT associations should also be noted. These associations invariably reproduce patterns of the societal context in which they exist; sexism and male dominance, therefore, are a pervasive reality even within LGBT organisations. Specifically lesbian issues, for example, are rarely afforded the same prominence as gay
issues. Blood donation by men who have sex with men, for example, is a subject that is much more widely discussed and focused on in LGBT associations than assisted procreation, for example, which is currently only available to heterosexual couples and therefore a key equality issue for lesbians. This reality is echoed in the media and in the public arena; one example is that same-sex marriage in Portugal is commonly known as gay marriage.

4.2. Civil society and academia

Specific cases of collaboration between LGBT associations and academia do exist, but these are largely initiatives of LGBT associations that are attempting to benefit from the influence and status of academic discourse and aiming to gain increased public acceptance.

The most significant relation between academia and LGBT associations is an “intimate” one, wherein the majority of academic researchers on sexual orientation issues are themselves LGBT or LGBT activists.

The recent increase in interest among undergraduate and postgraduate students in including sexual orientation issues in their research may indicate positive future developments. Sexual orientation and equality policies may gain more visibility within academia and a more established presence in higher education curricula.

There are a number of interesting examples of informal collaboration between academia and LGBT associations in the provision of training courses for professionals who work with LGBT people. These training courses aim at promoting greater self-awareness and a recognition of one’s own prejudices, and at developing competences for using an inclusive approach in their professional activities. Nevertheless, more formally planned projects would be of great social value.

The influence of academia and scientific discourse on public opinion should not be underestimated. It has a social legitimacy and authority that may be instrumental in improving equality in Portugal.

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6 In Portugal the word “gay” is commonly used in reference to male homosexuals, and not female homosexuals.
4.3. Academia and policy makers

One of the requirements of academic work is a critical approach to reality, which makes it difficult for academic ideas to enter politics. Often in politics there is little critical thinking, merely political strategy, and a negotiation of different interests and motivations. Lobbying and pressure are more often influencers of political decisions than scientific support. This is not specific to the case of equality policy, however; it is rather common in politics.

Decision makers are not often aware of academic research, but scientific knowledge can be a substantial support for political decisions. For instance, the issue of same-sex marriage brought together LGBT associations and policy makers, but academia was not involved. Given that parenthood is a topic of debate whenever same-sex marriage is discussed, scientific insight into same-sex parenthood would have been constructive. As Portuguese legislation explicitly discriminates against same-sex couples regarding adoption rights, the discussion of same-sex marriage can be seen as a missed opportunity for academia to assert itself in politics.

Portuguese academia does not yet appear to be sufficiently concerned with the social and political consequences of research. Though somewhat provocative and ironic, it could be said that the “feminist turn” has not reached Portuguese academia.

4.4. Future perspectives

The current terrain of Portuguese sexual orientation equality policy reveals a broader and more active relationship between policy makers and LGBT associations than between academia and other actors.

During our interviews, possible future perspectives for sexual orientation equality policy were debated and diverse ideas emerged. Ideas which enjoyed a consensus are presented as follows:

- It is important to promote greater and more significant participation of women in policy making, as well as in LGBT associations’ activities and leadership. Although a significant number of researchers working on sexual orientation issues in
academia are women, the academic context in general is still dominated by sexism. Rather than merely recruiting a larger number of women, the main objective is to effect a paradigm shift, to give more relevance to diversity, to promote an equal approach to diverse research areas, and reject sexist discourse.

- Mainstreaming equality in policy and academia is necessary, particularly in order to support and reinforce socially responsible academic research.

- Networking and lobbying of researchers working on sexual orientation issues should increase, in order to obtain better visibility and relevance for this area of research within academic curricula.

- It is important to identify more people in politics who are willing to disclose their non-normative sexual orientation or who will adopt a clear position of support for LGBT rights.

- A wider dissemination of research is necessary, leading to change in policy and practice and encouraging the participation of LGBT people in research.

- The participation of LGBT groups in the improvement of a research agenda should be developed, and a partnership approach should be implemented in which LGBT groups share ownership of the agenda.

- Media coverage of LGBT rights should be increased using a range of initiatives, from reporting on actions claiming specific rights to documentaries and debates that include sexual orientation issues.

- A transversal, more inclusive approach to equality policy should be adopted, rather than an identity-based politics, acknowledging intersectionality in peoples’ lives.

The Portuguese context of sexual orientation equality policy would benefit from a deeper alliance between policy makers and a more diverse group of LGBT associations, as this would promote the inclusion of different approaches to equality. Academia could also play a major role in equality policy, by providing minority claims with legitimacy and authority.

While much has been achieved in Portugal in a relatively short period of time, we believe that there is still a lot more to be done.

References


