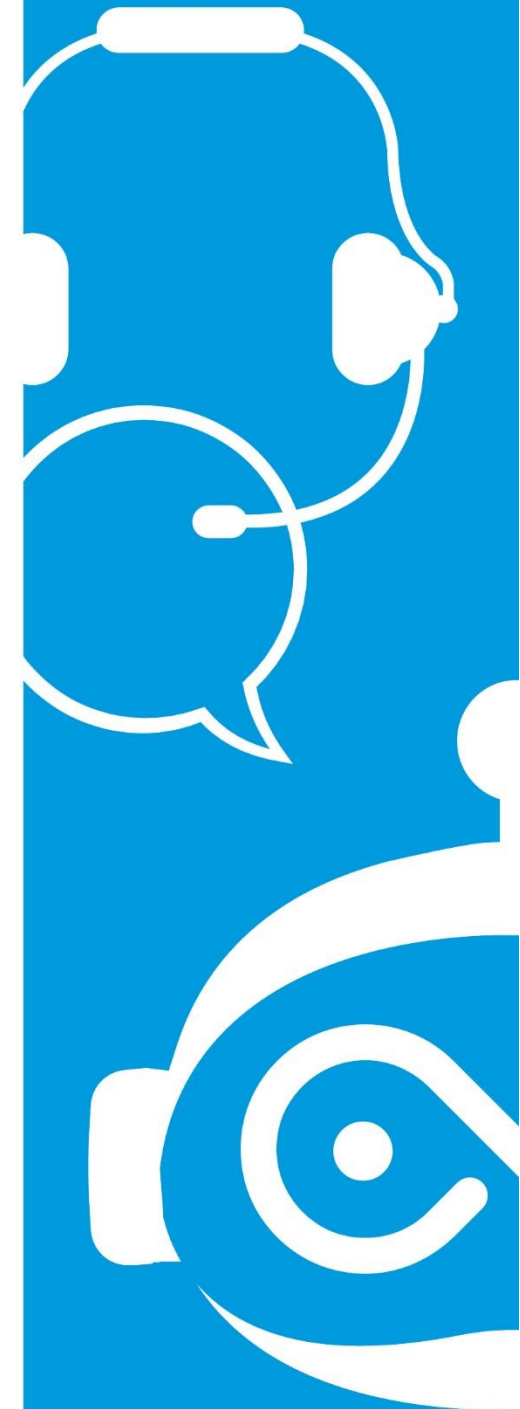




MISCONCEPTIONS AND MISINFORMATION: LGBTQI+ ISSUES

What is it?

Misconceptions and misinformation about LGBTQI+ issues are **digital phenomena**, which appear in the form of widely spread fake news, disinformation campaigns, propaganda on social media and the emergence of pseudo fact-checking websites that, under the guise of combating disinformation, promote specific harmful and distorted narratives in the context of LGBT+ individuals and their lifestyle.



How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

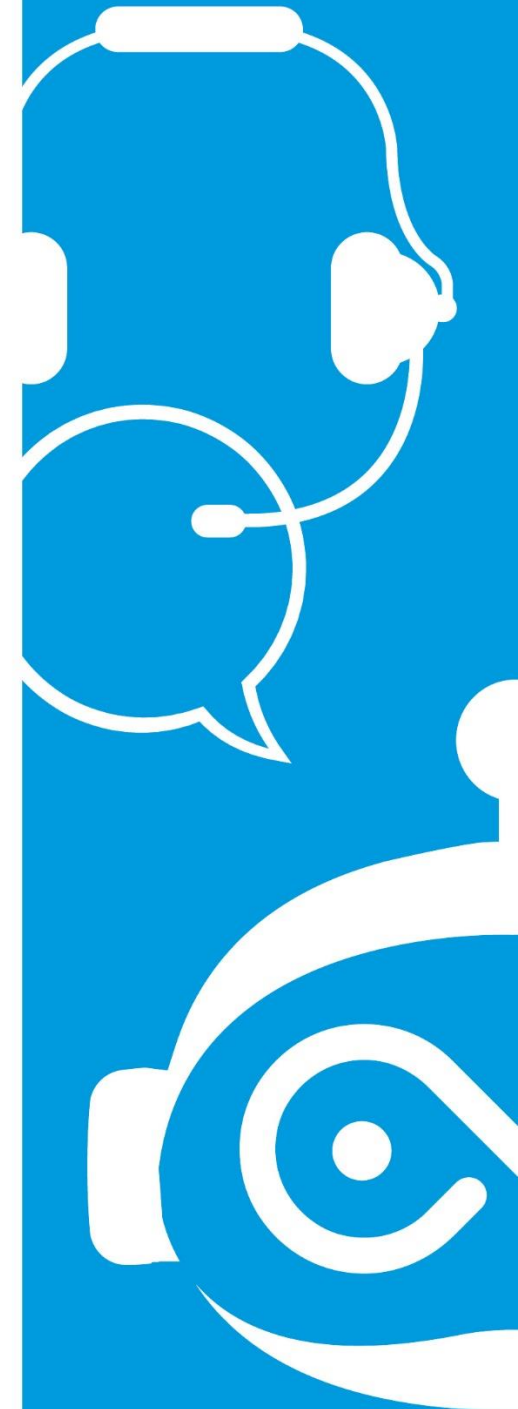
Disinformation and the associated myths that have proliferated around the LGBTQI+ community can have a very negative impact on the SRH of individuals who identify with this group. The most harmful ones propagated online have been:

- Homosexual and transgender people are disturbed, and transitioning to lead a life as a member of these groups is the equivalent to living with a mental illness.

These claims claim to be supported by scientific studies, statistics, and documents, which have turned out to be dishonest and false. An example of this type of false reporting occurred in Poland when a study done by a non-existent institute of sexology was circulated. It claimed that homosexuality was linked to mental illness in 94% of cases. This data was kept in the report despite the fact that in 1990 the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from its list of mental and behavioural disorders.

- Members of the LGBT+ community are paedophiles.

This myth serves to link members of the LGBT+ community to incidents of sexual violence and paedophilia. Misinformation of this type refers to false information about actions promoting love without age limits or rumours about the alleged addition of the letter P - meaning paedo-sexuality - to the abbreviation LGBT+.



Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

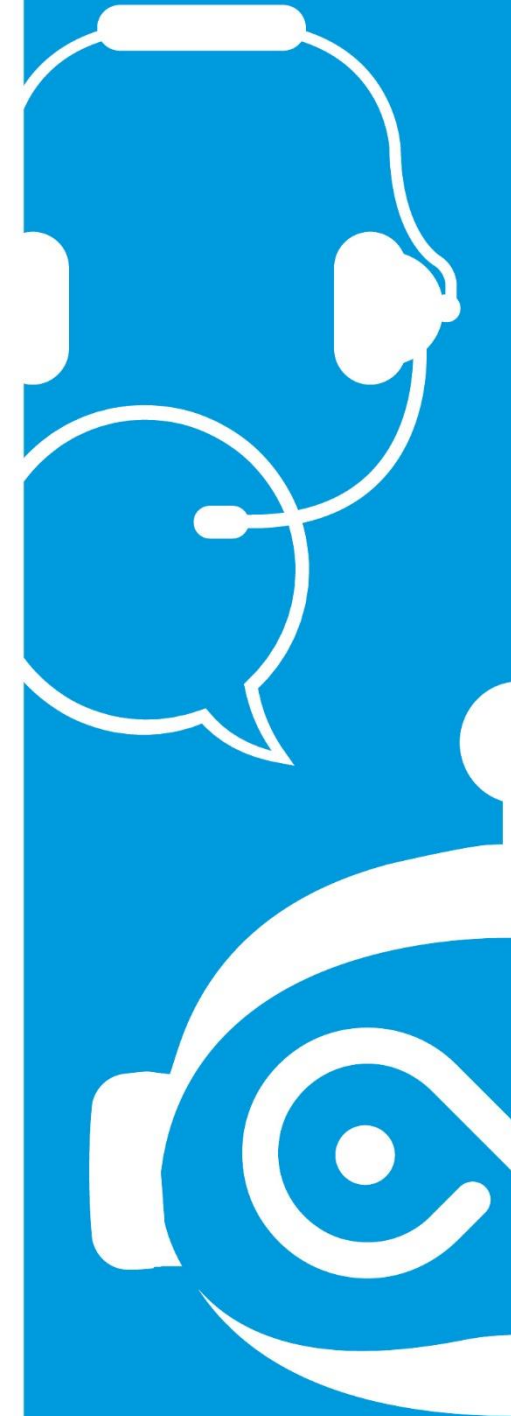
- LGBT+ people are dangerous and violent.

This false narrative proliferated in Europe and the United States after a school shooting in Texas in 2022. It was reported that a transgender person was responsible, which led to false claims that any such person is dangerous.

- Conspiracy theories about the dictatorship of LGBT+ philosophy and indoctrination.

In this myth, western countries are portrayed as those where LGBT+ ideology rules and is imposed on citizens by force.

The untrue beliefs stated above depict the LGBTQ+ community as non-normative, associated with criminality, brutality, and posing a threat to others. Living with such stigmas can have a negative impact on mental health, especially among young people, and consequently hinder their ability to lead conscious and fulfilling sexual lives. Stigmatisation and the belief in the abnormality of their behaviours and needs disrupt the freedom and comfort that is integral for fulfilling sexual relationships. It can lead to these individuals refraining from forming emotional and sexual partnerships.



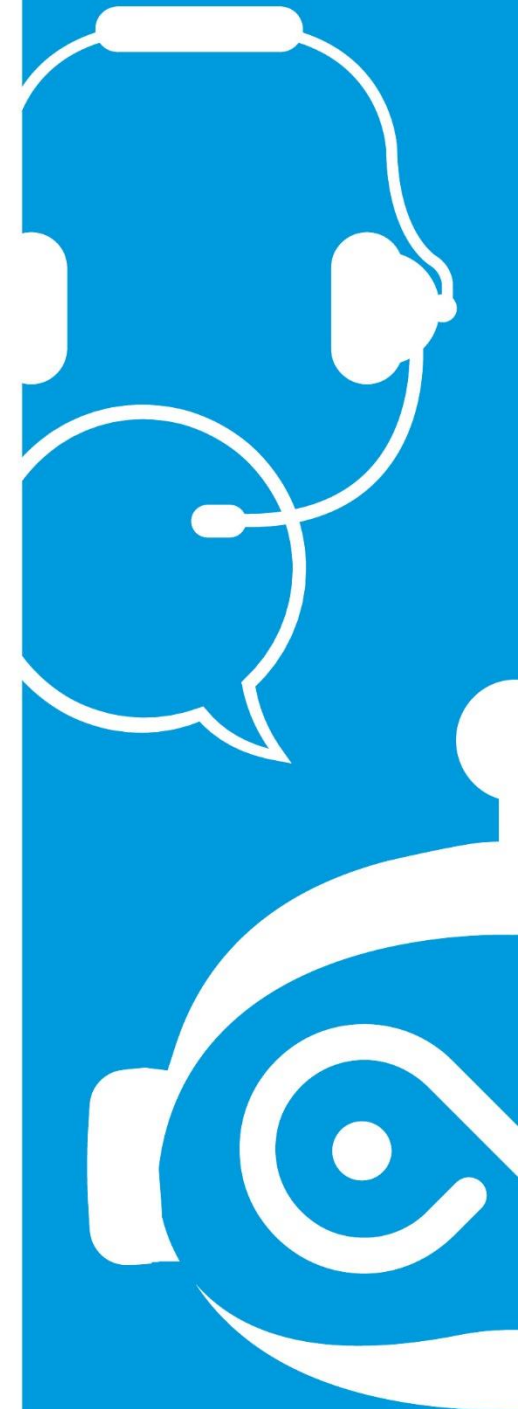
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Have a discussion with youth to educate them and ease their minds on these matters. You can do this by: explaining what sexual orientation is, clarifying the difference between sexual identity and gender identity, discussing whether and how one can influence the sexual orientation or gender identity of another young person, explaining how to understand the increasing diversity among young people and speaking on whether LGBTQ+ teenagers actually require special treatment.
- Encourage the use of professional webinars and workshops that dispel myths and stereotypes about LGBTQ+ individuals and/or organise joint workshops for heterosexual and LGBTQI+ individuals.
- Emphasise on every occasion that non-heteronormativity is not a mental disorder.

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Misconceptions & misinformation: Gender expression
- Misconceptions & misinformation: STDs and contraception
- Misconceptions & misinformation: Reproductive health and anatomy



Further reading:

- Bochyńska, Nikola. “#CyberMagazyn: Kampanie Dezinformacyjne Wobec Osób LGBTI+ ‘Odwracają Uwagę Od Innych Problemów,’” July 17, 2021. <https://cyberdefence24.pl/fake-news/kampanie-dezinformacyjne-przeciwko-osobom-lgbti-odwracaja-uwage-od-istotnych-problemow-spoecznych>.
- European Parliament. Directorate General for External Policies of the Union. “Disinformation Campaigns about LGBTI+ People in the EU and Foreign Influence.” LU: Publications Office, 2021. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/980572>.
- mt. “Polskie Towarzystwo Seksuologiczne Wzywa: Stop Dezinformacji i Atakom Wobec Osób LGBT.” Newsweek POLSKA, 2019. <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/polskie-towarzystwo-seksuologiczne-wzywa-stop-dezinformacji-i-atak-om-wobec-osob-lgbt/4dj8ns9>.

