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# ERASMUS+ FOR EVERYONE? UNCOVERING HIDDEN HURDLES FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS!



## INTRODUCTION: THE UNFULFILLED PROMISE OF EQUITABLE EUROPEAN MOBILITY

Erasmus+ promises a world of opportunity, championing social inclusion and equal access for all young Europeans. Crucially, the program explicitly acknowledges the LGBTQ+ community as "people with fewer opportunities," facing unique barriers due to discrimination.

Yet, this research, analyzing national Erasmus+ frameworks in Greece, Austria, and Italy, uncovers striking gaps. Despite EU directives, many LGBTQ+ students are not officially recognized for the vital financial support they need. From a lack of family support and unique healthcare costs to direct discrimination, these students face specific hurdles that targeted aid could overcome. Without it, the promise of European mobility remains out of reach for too many.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: ILLUMINATING NATIONAL DISPARITIES

This study was designed to systematically address:

- The extent of explicit recognition of LGBTQ+ students as "people with fewer opportunities" in Greece, Austria, and Italy's national Erasmus+ frameworks.
- How diverse socio-political contexts influence LGBTQ+ youth inclusion in mobility programs.
- The identification of convergences and divergences in national practices regarding barriers and opportunities

## METHODOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE POLICY LENS

- Approach: Qualitative comparative policy analysis of official Erasmus+ documents from Greece, Austria, and Italy.
- Rationale: Countries chosen for their divergent LGBTQ+ rights trajectories, youth policies, and ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map positions, representing a spectrum of policy environments.
- Limitations: Research focused on stated policies, lacking quantitative data on participation or direct empirical insights from lived experiences.

## RELATED LITERATURE: THE EU FRAMEWORK & NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

- **Erasmus+ Program Guide:** Explicitly defines LGBTQ+ as "people with fewer opportunities" due to discrimination, expanding grounds to include gender identity.
- **EU Strategies for Youth & LGBTIQ Equality (2019-2027, 2020-2025):** Advocate for empowering all young people and removing barriers for LGBTQ+ youth in EU programs.
- **National Agencies:** Despite EU directives, national agencies define specific criteria for additional financial support, leading to varied implementation. Inclusion support for health conditions is often a "solution for extreme situations" when countries don't grant monthly top-ups.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

### 1. Greece: "Strategic Silence"

- Its Erasmus+ criteria and National Youth Strategy omit explicit LGBTQ+ recognition, using vague terms like "vulnerable people".
- "People undergoing gender reassignment" were added for economic support in 2024, but eligibility for that requires strict income criteria, excluding most tax-dependent students.

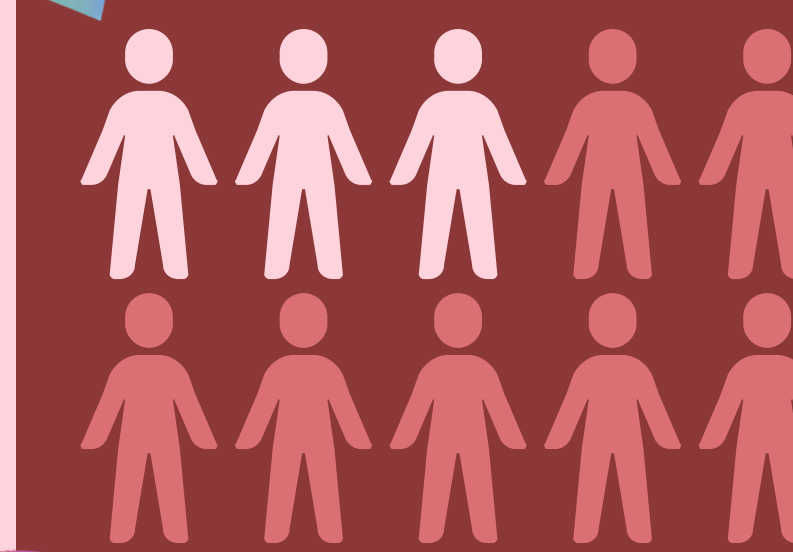
### 2. Austria: "Practical Inclusion despite Policy Ambiguity"

- Austria's national agency explicitly recognizes LGBTQ+ students and provides them with economic support, with additional support for actual costs.
- Its Federal Youth Strategy uses broad diversity terms, lacking specific reference to sexual orientation or gender identity as protected grounds.

### 3. Italy: "Active Exclusion"

- Italy's Erasmus+ framework makes no reference to sexual orientation or gender identity in its eligibility criteria.
- Recognition for gender reassignment occurs only under stigmatizing "certified health conditions," pathologizing trans identities.
  - This reflects broader legislative regression, showing structural neglect.

PEOPLE OUT from the closet in (FRA, 2024)

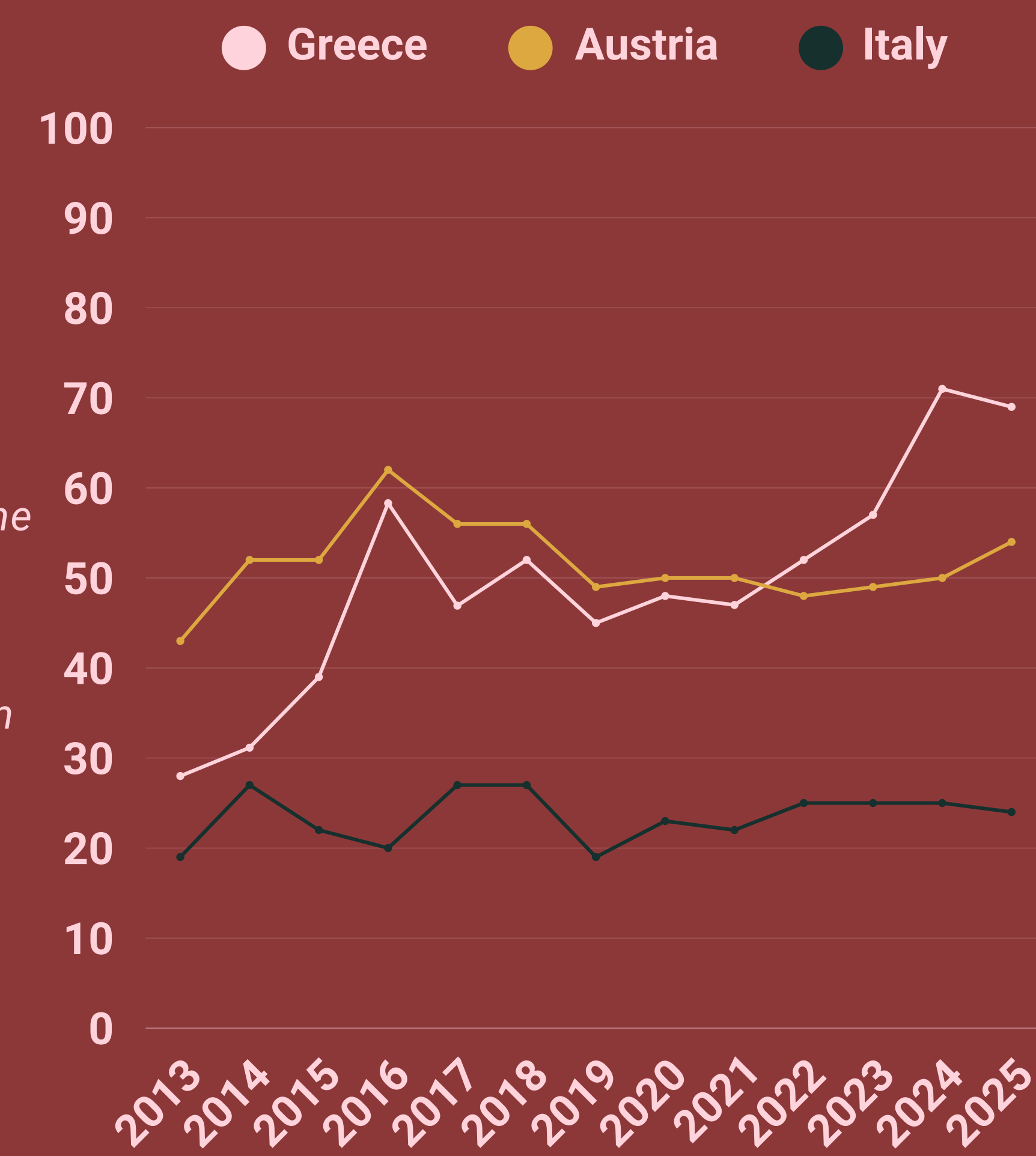


## ANALYSIS

These models reveal a critical gap: strong EU directives for inclusion are undermined by inconsistent national implementation.

- **Greece:** Legislative progress vs. policy inaction due to "strategic silence".
- **Austria:** Practical support despite policy ambiguity, public more progressive than laws.
- **Italy:** Overt exclusion reflecting legislative regression. This lack of harmonized action creates an uneven playing field for LGBTQ+ students

### ILGA Europe: Country Score Evolution



The evolution of the score of the countries in ILGA Europe shows the legislative improvement or not of the countries in regard to the LGBTQ+ rights for the period given

## CONCLUSION

The research highlights distinct models: Austria's practical inclusion, Greece's strategic silence, and Italy's active exclusion. This underscores the urgent need for harmonized EU-level guidance mandating explicit recognition of LGBTQ+ students as a group with fewer opportunities. Explicit inclusion is a practical necessity to address unique barriers (e.g., lack of family support, healthcare costs). Only through coordinated efforts and robust monitoring can Erasmus+ truly fulfill its promise of equitable access for all students.