

The Swedish trans association FPES (Full Personality Expression Sweden) was founded in 1966 on the model of the U.S. association FPE (Phi Pi Epsilon) created by the legendary trans activist Virginia Prince.

- **Our aim is to give support** to and organize social events for the transgender community and to be a strong, serious and reliable voice in society with the goal to attain respect and equal rights for transgender people.
- **FPES cooperates with authorities** on different levels and has a say in legislative and other matters involving transgender people.
- **Information to the general public** on transgenderism is an important part of our external work.

The Trans Flag below: Blue stands for the traditional idea of the masculine, pink for that of the feminine. White is the symbol for trans identities not following traditional gender norms.

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TRANSGENDER

**"Transgender is something
we are, not something
we choose to be"**



Attendees of the 2010 council of the European trans organization TGEU (Transgender Europe) in Malmö. Photo: TGEU/Mirjam Logonder

BEING TRANSGENDER

The possibilities to be our true selves are in certain respects limited by the norms of society. What others might think often determines the way we act and behave. Consciously or not we try to fit in. This applies in a high degree to the roles of the sexes, i.e. our collective ideas that there are only men and women, including a set of views as to how men and women are supposed to be. For those who do not follow these norms, problems might arise within themselves caused by inner conflict or the influence of people around them.

Transgender people are by their gender expression or gender identity not in accordance with the gender roles of the society in which they live. The word transgender is an umbrella term for a variety of ways of being different from the two gender roles. A transgender person may consider themselves as a man, a woman, both, neither, or in between, irrespective of the sex assigned at birth – and may also express gender in all these ways, part time or full time. Variations in gender expression are broad and cannot be captured by the two “boxes” defined in the birth certificate.

Already in childhood many of us discover that we partly or totally belong to another sex. This may give rise to feelings of otherness, shame and guilt. Investigations show that especially young transgender people often feel very miserable. It should, however, also be pointed out that many of us who embrace our transgenderism as



FPES in the Stockholm Pride parade 2011. Photo: Gia

an integral part of ourselves lead a highly fulfilled life.

Being transgender has nothing to do with sexual orientation. Transgender people can have any kind of sexual preference, just like everybody else.

Human beings are characterized by a fairly high degree of variation. Transgenderism is part of that variation. We are known in history as far back as there are written sources. We are to be found in all populations of the world, no matter what their

material conditions, their culture, traditions, ways of life and the like may be.

Transgender is something we are, not something we choose to be. Why some people are transgender is not quite clear. According to science it is probably something we are born with – similar, for example, to being left-handed or having some other type of variation occurring in humans.

How common transgenderism is remains to be determined. Our own experiences tell us it is so common that most people probably know one or more transgender individuals, perhaps without being aware of it.

The life situation for transgender people is dependent on the laws of the land and on how other people look upon what is conceived of as gender transgression. In Sweden and certain other countries discrimination of transgender people is prohibited by law. On the other hand there are many countries where transgender and other LGBT people are hated, oppressed, and persecuted both by the state and by large parts of the population.

As for most people, close relations have the greatest impact on the quality of life for the transgender individual. To be loved and appreciated for who and what you are is fundamental to a happy life. To be able to be yourself is a human right that all human beings deserve.

SOME CONCEPTS... concerning transgender

Transgender is a collective concept referring, as a rule, to individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs, occasionally or constantly, from the norms and established social role of the sex assigned to them at birth.

Trans as in transgender, transvestite, transsexual is Latin for “on/to the other side”. Its opposite is **cis** which means “on this side”. A cisgender person conforms to the gender norms of its culture.

Sexual/ism/ - as for instance in transsexual/ism/- refers to the biological sex, not to sexuality.

Sex and gender. Four dimensions have to be kept apart: Biological sex has to do with the physical parts of the body (chromosomes, genitals, etc.), judicial sex is what is officially registered, mental gender is what a person feels they are, and social gender is related to the culture and environment.

Sex reassignment surgery (SRS) is a medical procedure many transsexuals go through. They actually do not “change sex” but adjust their biological sex to make it fit with their gender identity (i.e. mental gender). A growing number of medical

professionals refer to this procedure as “Gender Reassignment Surgery” or “Gender Confirmation Surgery”.

LGBT means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people. T stands for Transgender, not for Transsexual, which is a common misunderstanding.

Transvestite is a person who more or less regularly appears with the gender expression of another sex, such as clothes, looks, voice, way of behaving etc. Consequently, transvestism may be said to have to do with gender expression. The word transvestite is formed from Latin trans “on/to the other side” and vestitus “dressed”.

Transsexual is a person whose gender identity differs from their legal sex which they were assigned at birth. Transsexualism is a medical diagnosis and may be said to have to do with gender identity.

FtM “Female to Male” and **MtF** “Male to Female”. Frequently used abbreviations to denote what biological sex a person is or was and what sex/gender they express, feel like, or consider themselves to be.

Intersexual/Intersexualism. Several different states and diagnoses are covered by this concept. In the main it denotes a person who by birth shows a non-typical state of biological sex (chromosomes, reproductive organs, genital parts). Inter means “between” in Latin and sexual refers to biological sex.

Intersexual thus means “between the sexes”. Intersexuals form a heterogeneous group. Some may consider themselves transgender and others may not.

Intergender denotes a person who defines themselves as being between, in both, or beyond the traditional sexes.

Bigender denotes a person who alternately defines themselves as a man or a woman.

Nongender denotes a person who does not consider themselves to belong to any of the sexes.

Drag queen and drag king refer to persons appearing as the opposite sex for the purpose of entertainment. Some drag performers view themselves as transgender, and others do not.

Heteronormativity is a commonly used expression meaning that there is a social norm which says that all humans are either men or women, that men are masculine and women feminine and that men and women are attracted by each other. It is taken for granted that everyone feels as belonging to the sex assigned at birth. Those who do not answer to that description run the risk of being disregarded, discriminated, or harassed.