



Union of Equality

**LGBTIQ+
Equality Strategy
2026-2030**

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone in the European Union should **feel safe and free to be their authentic self**. Equality and non-discrimination are founding values and fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. These principles also guide the EU's action on the international scene⁽¹⁾. Equal opportunities are also a cornerstone of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁽²⁾.

As President von der Leyen underlined in her **2025 State of the Union address**: “Europe’s independence is about **protecting our freedoms**. The freedom to decide. To speak out. To move around a whole continent. The freedom to vote. **To love**. To pray. **To live in a Union of equality**.” These freedoms can only be a reality if all people, today’s and future generations, are free from discrimination.

Equality and non-discrimination are vital to the EU’s democratic resilience, economic strength, social justice and cohesion. The Commission remains fully committed to defending equality and non-discrimination whenever they are under threat⁽³⁾. The Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and Member States share a **collective responsibility** to uphold these rights, ensuring equality for all⁽⁴⁾.

In 2020, the Commission adopted its first-ever **LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025**, strengthening EU action against discrimination against LGBTIQ+⁽⁵⁾ people. The strategy marked a key step in **building a Union of Equality**, the Commission’s vision for an inclusive Europe where everyone can live freely, regardless of their identity. It resulted in the implementation of numerous LGBTIQ+ related actions, including key legislative proposals to advance LGBTIQ+ rights, as well as unprecedented support for LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations through the Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values (CERV) programme.

The LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 was complemented by the adoption of **13 national strategies on LGBTIQ+ equality** by Member States and resulted in the implementation of significant LGBTIQ+-related measures at EU level. The creation of the LGBTIQ equality subgroup provided a platform for advancing equality efforts at the national level.

Since the strategy’s adoption, **social acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people has increased**. LGBTIQ+ people are now more open about themselves in their social environment. According to the 2023 **special Eurobarometer on discrimination**, people in the EU are more likely to be comfortable with a lesbian, gay or bisexual colleague (75%, up 3 percentage points from 2019) and with their child being in a same-sex relationship (59%, up 4 percentage points).

The visibility of LGBTIQ+ people in politics, civil society, sport, media and science challenges prejudices and helps foster social acceptance. **Empowering LGBTIQ+ people**, building on the legacy of powerful role models and contemporary culture, embracing their being among family and friends, contributes to a more diverse and globally diverse society. It **drives entrepreneurship, innovation and fosters sustainable economic growth**. For instance, cities that are welcoming and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people have stronger ‘innovation ecosystems’, greater concentrations of skills and talent, higher levels of entrepreneurship and a better quality of life⁽⁶⁾.

Despite progress, challenges persist. According to the **third LGBTIQ survey** carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2023, over a third of LGBTIQ people (37%) reported **experiencing discrimination** in the 12 months preceding the survey, with the highest rates among trans women (64%),

(1) Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

(2) [European Pillar of Social Rights – Building a fairer and more inclusive European Union – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#)

(3) See for instance the [statement by President von der Leyen on the Budapest Pride](#), 25 June 2025.

(4) In view of their path towards EU accession, candidate countries and potential candidates are also encouraged to promote equality and fundamental rights, in line with the relevant EU acquis.

(5) LGBTIQ+ people are people:

- who are attracted to others of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or any gender (bisexual);
- whose gender identity and/or expression does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth (trans, non-binary);
- who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definition of male or female (intersex);
- whose identity does not fit into a binary classification of sexuality and/or gender (queer);
- who identify with other sexual orientations or gender identities not specifically captured by the LGBTIQ acronym (the +).

Throughout this text, the acronyms LGBTI, LGBTIQ, and LGBTIQ+ are used interchangeably, depending on the terminology employed in the specific document, initiative, or policy area being referenced.

(6) Open For Business (2025), ‘[City Ratings 2025](#)’.

trans men (63%), and intersex people (56%). The growing spread of anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives appears to have further intensified this discrimination. [Research by the FRA](#) indicates that LGBTIQ+ organisations and human rights defenders face particularly hostile environments, threats and attacks.

Inequalities in employment, healthcare, education, access to housing, and access to services continue to restrict opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people. In FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, the respondents who reported experiencing discrimination said it occurred most frequently at work, in school, in healthcare settings or in public places.

Discrimination leads to economic losses: a recent [OECD study](#) refers to annual GDP losses in the EU associated with discrimination based on sexual orientation of up to EUR 89 million. The same study highlights that the impact of discrimination extends beyond the economy. It undermines social cohesion, weakens civic trust and erodes support for democratic values. Inclusive societies are more resilient, marked by greater solidarity, stronger institutions and higher levels of civic participation.

Recognising achievements and ongoing challenges, the 2024 Commission [implementation report](#) on the LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 affirmed the strategy's instrumental role in advancing the rights of LGBTIQ+ people but also emphasised the need for stronger efforts at EU level.

In 2024, the **European Parliament** called for a new, more comprehensive LGBTIQ+ equality strategy⁽⁷⁾. Also in 2024, **20 Member States signed a ministerial declaration**, calling for further action and committing to work with the Commission on renewing the strategy. When consulted on the implementation of the previous LGBTIQ equality strategy, civil society organisations echoed these calls, underscoring the urgency of continued action.

This new LGBTIQ+ equality strategy, as **announced in President von der Leyen's 2024 political guidelines**, frames the Commission's work on LGBTIQ+ equality for 2026-2030. It builds on the foundation of the first strategy, drawing from its ambition and the advancements already achieved, ensuring continuity while paving the way for further progress.

The strategy aims to mobilise a **collective commitment** across all levels of governance to safeguard fundamental rights and the values of equality and non-discrimination, enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and binding on all Member States as primary EU law. It also sets a framework that requires active engagement and cooperation from the European Parliament, Council, Member States, and civil society, to ensure its successful implementation.

Implementation of this strategy will follow a dual approach of **targeted measures** and strengthened **equality mainstreaming** across different policy areas. This strategy, as its predecessor, will use **intersectionality** as a cross-cutting principle. It will address how the combination of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sex characteristics with other personal characteristics or identities, such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability and age, contributes to unique experiences of discrimination. In this way, it complements existing and upcoming EU initiatives to promote equality for all⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, the strategy takes into account how geographic isolation can further compound these situations of vulnerability.

To prepare this strategy, the Commission conducted an extensive **consultation process**. This included a call for evidence, an open public consultation and targeted consultations, comprising dedicated consultative meetings, with stakeholders such as LGBTIQ+ umbrella organisations, Member States representatives, social partners and international organisations. The consultative activities on the Commission's [Have Your Say portal](#) alone showed high interest among respondents in the topic.

(7) [European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2024 on the implementation of the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) (2023/2082(INI)).

(8) [The EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, the European pillar of social rights, the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030, the strategy on the rights of the child, the strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, the gender equality strategy 2026-2030 \(planned for Q1 2026\) and the anti-racism strategy 2026-2030 \(planned for Q4 2025\).](#)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. PROTECT

LGBTIQ+ people continue to face **disproportionate levels of violence and hatred**, which are exacerbated by the rise of anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives in the EU and around the world. This undermines fundamental rights and threatens the foundations of democratic societies by promoting fear, exclusion and social fragmentation. It is essential to combat and prevent all forms of violence and dismantle hateful narratives to uphold the common EU values of equality, human dignity and respect of fundamental rights for all.

Combating harmful practices

Conversion practices 'are deeply harmful interventions that rely on the medically false idea that LGBT[IQ+] people are sick, inflicting severe pain and suffering, and resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage'⁽⁹⁾. According to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, 24% of LGBTIQ people have **experienced conversion practices**, including physical and sexual violence, verbal abuse and humiliation. This figure almost doubles to 47% for trans women and 48% for trans men.

Trans, non-binary and intersex people also continue to face severe violations of their bodily autonomy⁽¹⁰⁾: some EU Member States still impose surgical or medical intervention requirements for legal gender recognition⁽¹¹⁾. The FRA's third LGBTIQ survey and the [related report 'Being intersex in the EU'](#), show that 57% of intersex respondents said that they or their parents did not provide informed consent to undergo surgical or hormonal procedures, resulting in lasting physical and psychological harm.

To help Member States ban conversion practices⁽¹²⁾, the Commission will publish a **study** analysing the nature, prevalence and impact of these practices on LGBTIQ+ people. To facilitate coordinated action, the Commission will also promote **structured dialogue** on the topic, in particular through the expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality, under the High-Level Group on non-discrimination, equality, and diversity. Based on the study's findings, the Commission will take appropriate action to combat conversion practices, with a particular focus on supporting Member States, who play a critical role in this area. The Commission will also continue to tackle other harmful practices such as intersex genital mutilation and the forced medicalisation of trans people.

In developing its approach to combating conversion practices, the Commission will, in particular, take into account the recent [European citizens' initiative](#), 'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union'⁽¹³⁾.

ENSURING SAFETY AND TACKLING HATE AGAINST LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE

Hate-motivated harassment and violence against LGBTIQ+ people continue to increase. The FRA's third LGBTIQ survey reported that in 2023, 55% of LGBTIQ respondents had experienced **hate-motivated harassment** in the 12 months preceding the survey, an increase of 18 percentage points from 2019. Reports of physical and sexual attacks have also escalated, with trans, non-binary and intersex people disproportionately affected. Stakeholders consulted for this strategy strongly underlined the urgent need to address these ongoing challenges.

(9) United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, [Practices of so-called "conversion therapy"](#), 1 May 2020.

(10) [Legal gender recognition in the EU: The journeys of trans people towards full equality](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2020; [ILGA Europe 2025 Rainbow Map](#).

(11) The expression legal gender recognition is used in the strategy, as it is commonly employed in policy and academic texts, without prejudice to other expressions used by the Court of Justice of the European Union. In case C-4/23, *Mirin*, 4.10.2024, EU:C:2024:845, the Court uses the expression "change of gender identity" to refer to procedures for a change of legal gender at domestic level, and the phrase "recognition (...) of a change of (...) gender identity lawfully acquired in another Member State" to refer to cross-border situations, that is the recognition in a Member State of a change of legal gender obtained in another Member State.

(12) [European Parliament Research Service](#): eight Member States have already banned conversion practices

(13) The verification of the statements of support of the initiative has been completed successfully and the initiative is expected to be submitted to the Commission for examination.

At EU level, the current legal framework provided by the Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia and by the [Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) only covers hate offences based on racist and xenophobic grounds and cyber incitement to violence or hatred based on gender, respectively⁽¹⁴⁾. There is still no legislation ensuring criminal law protection against offences based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. As a result, the legal framework across Member States is fragmented and inconsistent⁽¹⁵⁾.

In 2021, the Commission proposed that the Council decides to include **hate speech and hate crime in the list of 'EU crimes'** under Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)⁽¹⁶⁾. Such Council Decision would provide the legal basis for secondary legislation that harmonises criminal law definitions of hate offences on grounds not currently provided for under relevant EU law.

Given the absence of progress on such a Council Decision, the Commission is considering **a legislative initiative** based on the existing areas of crime covered by Article 83(1) of TFEU **to harmonise the definition of hate offences committed online**. A comprehensive definition of hate offences at EU level was also one of the key recommendations adopted by those participating in the 2024 [European Citizens Panel on tackling hatred in society](#). The Commission is committed to following up these recommendations.

To help law enforcement and justice professionals identify LGBTIQ+-phobia in offences that amount to hate crimes, the Commission will continue to work with Member States to **improve hate crime recording and victim support** under the Commission's [High-Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime](#). This effort will be carried out in cooperation with EU agencies and international organisations (e.g. the FRA, the Council of Europe and ODIHR⁽¹⁷⁾). The Commission will also continue to support **training for police authorities** on LGBTIQ+-phobia in hate crimes and on non-discrimination⁽¹⁸⁾.

In addition, the Commission remains committed to **supporting civil society organisations** and projects that work to fight LGBTIQ+-phobic hatred and discrimination through relevant EU funding instruments. These instruments include the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme during the current multiannual financial framework, which should be followed by the proposed [AgoraEU programme](#), currently in the legislative process, for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

The Commission will continue to promote a safe environment for LGBTIQ+ victims to report crime through the next **EU strategy on victims' rights**. The Commission is also supporting the Parliament and the Council in adopting the revised [Victims' Rights Directive](#), which aims to strengthen the rights of all victims of crime, including LGBTIQ+-phobic hate crimes.

To ensure the correct and effective application of EU non-discrimination and fundamental rights law, the Commission will actively support judicial training on this topic as part of its **judicial training strategy 2025-2030**. Furthermore, the Commission is providing funding through the **Justice programme**, which aims to facilitate effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all. This includes promoting effective civil and criminal procedures by contributing to the consistent and coherent application of Union law, and by promoting and supporting the rights of crime victims, in line with the priorities set out in the [EU strategy on victims' rights](#) for 2020-2025.

The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence acknowledges that persons affected by intersectional discrimination, including LGBTI people, are at greater risk of gender-based violence and requires Member States to take preventive measures and provide specific support to these victims. In addition, it qualifies as aggravating circumstance committing an offence to punish the victim for the victim's sexual orientation.

(14) See details in section 1.3.

(15) [Study to support the preparation of the European Commission's initiative to extend the list of EU crimes](#), 2021.

(16) [Communication "A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime"](#), COM/2021/777 final.

(17) The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

(18) See the initiatives proposed by the [Facing Facts](#) network.

In accompanying Member States in transposing the Directive correctly, the Commission will pay particular attention to the challenges faced by victims of intersectional discrimination, including LGBTI victims. The Commission will facilitate the exchange of good practices among Member States on this topic through the EU Network for the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence.

In research and innovation, the Commission will support, in cooperation with Member States⁽¹⁹⁾, the implementation of the [Code of Conduct on counteracting gender-based violence in research and innovation](#) developed as part of the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda 2022-2024⁽²⁰⁾ which incorporates an intersectional approach. The Commission will also fund research under [Horizon Europe](#) on disinformation, gender-based violence, hate crime and hate speech, taking into account the specific needs of people in vulnerable situations, such as can be the case for LGBTQ+ persons. As President von der Leyen underlined in her 2025 State of the Union address, 'science has no passport, gender, ethnicity or political colour' – a principle central to the [Choose Europe](#) initiative.

LGBTQ+ youth⁽²¹⁾ often face multiple forms of discrimination, experience prejudice, hate crimes and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse⁽²²⁾. To protect all children⁽²³⁾ from child sexual abuse, the Commission will support the co-legislators in adopting the two legislative proposals⁽²⁴⁾.

Further, the Commission [Recommendation on integrated child protection systems](#) strengthens the EU's commitment to zero tolerance for violence. It encourages Member States to ensure that all children, in all their diversity, can enjoy the same rights of access to and benefit from protection across all of their territories. All children are to be protected, supported and empowered by promoting inclusive, coordinated and systemic approaches within national child protection systems and responding to the specific vulnerabilities.

The right to gather peacefully is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and within its competences, the Commission is committed to defending and upholding it at all times. While Pride marches and other community events are landmark expressions of visibility and identity for LGBTQ+ people across Europe, in some EU Member States attempts to restrict the exercise of this right have raised serious concerns. Violent attacks and harassment against participants also remain a pressing concern in several Member States⁽²⁵⁾, undermining both their safety and their ability to express themselves freely in public spaces.

As part of the Communication on [ProtectEU: a European internal security strategy](#), helping Member States to guarantee security for the public, the EU protective security advisory programme will be strengthened. This programme will carry out vulnerability assessments of high-risk events, including Pride marches, at the request of Member States and financed under the Internal Security Fund. The Commission will also tackle LGBTQ+-phobic extremism in the upcoming EU agenda on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Groups in situations of vulnerability or those facing discrimination or social exclusion are disproportionately affected by crises. Therefore, the [Preparedness Union Strategy](#) specifically identifies inequality as a risk factor for preparedness and aims to foster a culture of inclusive preparedness, leaving no one behind. Mainstreaming equality considerations is essential to ensuring that all EU citizens and communities become active participants in crisis preparedness and response efforts.

(19) [Council conclusions on the New European Research Area](#), (OJ C 374, 22.11.2021, p. 1).

(20) European Commission, [European Research Area Policy Agenda – Overview of actions for the period 2022-2024](#), Publication Office, 2021.

(21) There is no unified EU definition of youth but generally and for data collection purposes, young people are defined as being between 15 and 29 years old, [Overview - Children and youth - Eurostat](#).

(22) See Smith, John, and Anna Brown. 'Child sexual abuse/exploitation and LGBTQ+ children: Context, links, vulnerabilities, gaps, challenges and priorities.' *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 2024, doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2024.100001.

(23) As laid down in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC), a child is any human being below the age of 18.

(24) [COM \(2022\) 209 final](#) and [COM \(2024\) 60 final](#).

(25) According to the [2025 ILGA-Europe Annual Review](#), attacks on LGBTI Pride marches are increasing.

During the Second World War and persecutions by Nazis and their collaborators, it is estimated that 50 000 gay and bisexual men were subject to 'severe jail sentences in brutal conditions', with around 10-15 000 being sent to concentration camps(26). Many lost their lives, and the experiences of survivors went unacknowledged for decades. Recognising that the roots of LGBTIQ+ persecution run deep in European history, the Commission is committed to remembrance as an integral part of promoting equality and preventing future atrocities. To do so, it will make project funding available through the relevant EU funding instruments, such as the CERV programme. The Commission will also support and participate in high-level events commemorating LGBTIQ+ persecution.

1.1. COUNTERING HATE AND DISCRIMINATION ONLINE

The online world offers important opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people. Social media and digital platforms are key spaces for self-expression, identity, and to create a sense of community. They are vehicles to amplify LGBTIQ+ voices, build support networks, and mobilise for equal rights, especially for young people and those in less accepting environments.

Yet, online hate speech and harassment create a hostile digital environment for LGBTIQ+ people, affecting their safety, well-being and freedom of expression and contributing to a climate of fear and exclusion. The FRA's third LGBTIQ survey supports this: 63% of LGBTIQ people said they had often or always encountered hateful content online that calls for violence against them. Moreover, LGBTIQ+ people and women are increasingly targeted by anti-gender narratives online, often as part of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and disinformation campaigns. Foreign actors are increasingly well funded and use FIMI to manipulate public opinion, fuel polarisation, and interfere with democratic processes within the EU and worldwide. Such actions are a direct challenge to the EU's core values of equality, respect for human dignity and non-discrimination.

The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence criminalises for the first time cyber incitement to violence or hatred based on gender. Once implemented in the national laws of Member States(27), this will ensure common protection against gender-based online hate speech in the EU. Furthermore, the Directive criminalises the most widespread forms of gender-based violence online, namely non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyber stalking and cyber harassment.

The [Digital Services Act](#) sets out obligations for providers of hosting services to address illegal content online, including incitement to hate or discrimination, including against LGBTIQ+ people. Also, providers of very large online platforms and search engines are obliged to assess and mitigate the systemic risks stemming from their services, including the impact inter alia on the rights to human dignity and non-discrimination, negative effects related to gender-based violence and serious negative consequences to the person's physical and mental well-being. The Commission, together with the competent national authorities, will continue to enforce this regulation.

In January 2025, the revised [Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online +](#) (the 'Code of conduct+') was assessed positively by the Commission and the European Board for Digital Services and integrated into the framework of the Digital Services Act, providing a response also to the recommendations from the [European citizens' panel on tackling hatred in society](#).

Platforms that sign the Code of conduct+ commit to engaging in industry cooperation and in multi-stakeholder forums to improve prevention against illegal hate speech, including on LGBTIQ+ people. The Commission will monitor implementation of the Code of conduct+, facilitate its regular review and adaptation, and provide support to platforms, including through an **online knowledge hub** gathering relevant resources on illegal hate speech online.

(26) [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust – Gay people](#).

(27) The Directive does not apply to Denmark according to Denmark's position set out in Protocol No 22 to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The Commission is also closely monitoring Member States' implementation of the revised [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#). The Directive strengthens protection against content inciting hatred or violence and bans discriminatory commercial audiovisual communications, including on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation.

Cyberbullying and other forms of violence facilitated by technology are a serious and growing concern and disproportionately affect LGBTIQ+ young people⁽²⁸⁾. The Commission's forthcoming **action plan on cyberbullying** will aim to prevent abusive behaviour online, including when it targets LGBTIQ+ young people. The Commission will also conduct an **EU-wide inquiry into the effects of social media on well-being**, with a focus on young people, including those from the LGBTIQ+ community.

1.2. ENSURING PROTECTION FOR LGBTIQ+ APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND MIGRANTS

LGBTIQ+ asylumseekers face intersectional and additional risks while en route and/or on arrival in the EU and may have different needs than other applicants. According to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, 54% of LGBTIQ people who identified as **asylum seekers or refugees** had experienced discrimination in the year before the survey (substantially higher than the average of 37% among all LGBTIQ respondents). They are also at particular risk of harassment and violence and may be deprived of legal assistance or specific health-care, such as hormone treatment⁽²⁹⁾.

The [pact on migration and asylum](#) strengthened safeguards and guarantees for vulnerable applicants for international protection, including LGBTIQ+ people. According to the [FRA's survey Being Black in the EU](#), among people of African descent, those who self-identify as a minority - including whether on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics - experience more discrimination. Additional sources of discrimination, such as encountering barriers in relation with a disability, can exacerbate the vulnerability of these individuals.

The Commission will continue to build synergies with the [action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027](#), which acknowledges the multiple and intersecting challenges LGBTIQ migrants face. In addition, under the **EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation** and the upcoming **anti-racism strategy 2026-2030**, the Commission will continue tackling the challenges faced by racialised LGBTIQ+ people.

The Commission is collaborating with the **EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA)**, the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)** and Member States to develop tools to help identify vulnerable applicants early on and provide them with support⁽³⁰⁾. Through the **Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF)** and the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**, or any successor instrument, the Commission intends to continue financing initiatives to ensure safeguards for applicants and vulnerable applicants, including sufficient support for LGBTIQ+ applicants.

Key actions by the European Commission:

- ✓ Combat conversion practices, based on the findings of a dedicated study, and considering the related European citizens' initiative on this topic.
- ✓ Explore legal options to strengthen the criminal law framework to combat hate speech and hate crime within the existing Treaty provisions.
- ✓ Monitor the implementation of the Code of conduct+ on countering illegal hate speech online and create an online knowledge hub gathering relevant resources regarding illegal hate speech online.
- ✓ Adopt an action plan on cyberbullying by 2026.

(28) See [study](#) conducted by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO).

(29) See UNCHR, [Protecting LGBTIQ+ people in situations of forced displacement: A Stocktaking on UNHCR progress since the 2021 Roundtable, June 2023](#).

(30) [EUAA Products \(europa.eu\)](#).

2. EMPOWER

In recent decades, legislative and policy advancements have helped create more inclusive societies, including for LGBTIQ+ people. The FRA's third LGBTIQ survey shows that **LGBTIQ+ people are more open** about their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics in their social environment (52%, up 6 percentage points from 2019), with this trend more evident for trans and intersex people.

Ensuring access to employment, healthcare, education, and other public services for LGBTIQ+ people, including in rural and remote areas, unlocks their potential and allows them to contribute fully to their communities and the economy. Promoting inclusion strengthens social cohesion and boosts the EU's innovation, productivity and global competitiveness. This strategy reaffirms the Commission's commitment to empower **LGBTIQ+ people to live free and equal** in all areas of life and when moving across Member States.

2.1. LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LGBTIQ+ EMPOWERMENT

Promoting **inclusion from an early age** is crucial for the well-being and development of LGBTIQ+ people. Inclusive and supportive environments help young people build confidence, resilience, and a positive sense of identity, while fostering empathy and respect among all. When children grow up in environments that celebrate diversity, they are more likely to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, and to carry these inclusive values into adulthood, passing them on to future generations.

However, as already outlined in the [LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025](#), children of rainbow families and LGBTIQ+ young people often face stigma and discrimination from an early age. Moreover, according to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, two thirds of LGBTIQ people (67%) reported that, during their time in school, they had suffered bullying, ridicule, teasing, insults or threats. These incidents can have long-term effects.

The Commission will continue facilitating the exchange of best practices on safe and inclusive education for all among Member States and experts within the European Education Area strategic framework working groups. This action reflects the strong emphasis stakeholders put on education during the strategy's consultations.

These efforts are further strengthened by the [EU strategy for the rights of the child](#) and the EU Network for Children's Rights. The 2024 Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child encourages a multidisciplinary approach to child protection. It supports Member States to develop and strengthen their child protection systems according to children's needs and in their best interests. In addition, the EU Children's Participation Platform provides an inclusive space for EU children to discuss topics that matter to them with policymakers.

The Commission will also build on the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative, which connects sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics, to promote safe and welcoming spaces for all. By fostering inclusive design in public spaces, schools and communities, the New European Bauhaus can contribute to reducing stigma, enhancing visibility, and creating environments where LGBTIQ+ people are included and can feel safe and valued.

The Commission will continue engaging with youth organisations seeking to advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ+ young people through the [EU Youth Stakeholders Group](#). Ensuring that young people have inclusive opportunities for professional and personal development remains a priority. The Commission will continue tackling barriers linked to discrimination in education, training, youth and sport using relevant EU spending instruments, such as the **Erasmus+** and **European Solidarity Corps programmes**⁽³¹⁾.

(31) [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027](#) (OJ L 378, 26.10.2021, p. 15).

Concerning healthcare, 14% of LGBTIQ people report discrimination by healthcare professionals, according to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey. This can lead to disparities in prevention, diagnosis and treatment as many avoid seeking medical care due to fear of a hostile reaction. To tackle these health inequalities, the Commission will continue to raise awareness, share information and facilitate knowledge-sharing, including through the [EU health policy platform](#), the [public health best practices portal](#) and by supporting research projects on better access to health and care services through **Horizon Europe**. To raise awareness on LGBTIQ+ issues among healthcare professionals, the Commission made training material from the [HEALTH4LGBTI project](#) available to Member States.

In preventive care, the Commission will continue to focus on those facing intersecting vulnerabilities and health inequalities. In cancer control, the needs of people in vulnerable situations, including LGBTIQ+ people, will continue to be met through implementation of [Europe's beating cancer plan](#), while the [European Cancer Inequalities Registry](#) will identify trends and disparities in cancer prevention and care. For example, cancer rates related to human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B (HBV) are particularly high among LGBTIQ+ people⁽³²⁾. The Commission will support strengthening and implementing **evidence-based awareness-raising campaigns of the importance of HPV and HBV vaccinations as effective cancer prevention tools**. These campaigns will be LGBTIQ+-inclusive and take into account gender specificities where relevant.

In addition, the Commission will continue supporting the **World Health Organization (WHO) global health sector strategies on HIV and related co-infections**, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections. It will also work with the HERA Civil Society Forum, established under the Health Emergencies Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), to identify systemic barriers for people in vulnerable situations, including LGBTIQ+ people, in accessing vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics, as part of the [EU strategy on medical countermeasures](#).

Mental health is another critical area where LGBTIQ+ people face heightened risks. LGBTIQ+ persons with disabilities, in particular, are at an increased risk of violence, harassment and subsequent mental health issues: according to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, 66% of LGBTIQ people with disabilities reported having considered suicide in the year preceding the survey.

The Commission will continue to focus on all persons in vulnerable situations through the [Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health](#), including the EU support package on stigma and discrimination⁽³³⁾. It will also build synergies with the [strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#) and promote the exchange of best practices on this topic through the Disability Platform.

The Commission will continue promoting diversity and inclusion through the [Creative Europe programme](#) (which should be followed by the proposed AgoraEU programme 2028-2034, currently in legislative process).

The Commission will continue to celebrate initiatives that showcase the role of sport in promoting equality and diversity through the [#BeActive EU Sport Awards](#) and raise awareness during the [European Week of Sport](#) and through the annual EU Sport Forum. It will also promote good practice exchanges between Member States on how to ensure equal access to sport.

Through the **Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group 'Fight against hate speech in sport'**, created under the [EU work plan for sport 2024-2027](#), the Commission will provide a forum for Member States and stakeholders to share practices and develop recommendations on how to ensure sport is a safe and inclusive space for all and how to combat hate speech in sport, including targeting LGBTIQ+ people.

In transport, the Commission will continue to improve diversity, equality, and inclusion through the network of [Ambassadors for #DiversityInTransport](#) and ensure policies are inclusive.

(32) See Moradi, Ghobad, et al. "The prevalence of hepatitis C and hepatitis B in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender populations: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *European Journal of Medical Research*, vol. 27, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40001-022-00677-0> and Sherry, Alexander D., et al. "Overall Survival and Quality-of-Life Superiority in Modern Phase 3 Oncology Trials: A Meta-Epidemiological Analysis." *JAMA Oncology*, vol. 11, no. 7, 2025, pp. 718–724, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoncol.2025.1002>

(33) [Mental health \(europa.eu\)](#).

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the technological landscape and holds immense potential to improve lives and revolutionise industries. However, this potential also comes with challenges, especially the risk of reinforcing existing biases⁽³⁴⁾. To tackle this, the **AI Act** prohibits AI systems that categorise individuals based on their biometric data to infer their sexual orientation or that harm users by manipulating, deceiving or exploiting their vulnerabilities.

In addition, providers of high-risk AI systems must consider risks to fundamental rights, including non-discrimination, before deploying their systems or using them. In implementing these rules, the Commission will focus on discrimination on various grounds, including sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics. To foster informed policymaking, the Commission will also provide a **discussion platform on equality data and AI** for Member States and other stakeholders.

The Commission also plans to present a **2030 roadmap on the future of digital education and skills** as part of the [Union of Skills](#). The roadmap is envisaged to put in place an AI literacy framework for primary and secondary education, strengthening efforts on tackling disinformation and misinformation through digital literacy education, addressing the need for online safety and digital well-being and challenging stereotypes from an early age.

According to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, lesbians (42%) and trans women (64%) reported the highest rates of discrimination in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity respectively. LGBTIQ+ women can experience discrimination both as women and as LGBTIQ+ people. This new LGBTIQ+ strategy will take this intersectional perspective into account. The actions and measures proposed in the upcoming **gender equality strategy 2026-2030** will apply to women and girls in all their diversity.

2.2. EMPOWERING LGBTIQ+ THROUGH EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Diversity and inclusion drive innovation and **strengthen Europe's competitiveness**. Inclusive workplaces that support LGBTIQ+ people benefit from broader perspectives, creativity, and problem-solving. The FRA's third LGBTIQ survey shows a decrease in overall employment discrimination (18%, down 3 percentage points from 2019), including when looking for a job (9%, down 1 percentage point). Moreover, evidence shows that jobseekers value diversity and inclusion policies when looking for job, highlighting the importance of such policies in attracting and retaining talent⁽³⁵⁾.

The **Employment Equality Directive** enshrined in EU law the right to work free from discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, among other grounds. The Commission will continue to ensure the rigorous application of this Directive and will publish a report on its application in 2026. Based on the [Study on sanctions for discrimination](#), the Commission is considering taking further steps to help Member States ensure that the sanctions adopted under national law under the Employment Equality Directive are effective, proportionate and dissuasive. The clarification in the [Pay Transparency Directive](#) that the concept of discrimination includes intersectional discrimination will strengthen the right to equal pay, where discrimination on grounds of sex is exacerbated for instance by discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The [European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination](#) intends to also publish an **academic report on CJEU case law relating to the rights of LGBTIQ people**. This report will analyse the developments in this area over the past three decades.

The Commission will also continue supporting the Council Presidencies and Member States with all possible means to reach the required unanimous agreement on the [proposal for the Equal Treatment Directive](#). This proposal is a building block for achieving the Commission's priority of building a Union of Equality and aims to fill a major gap in the EU's non-discrimination law. It would expand the protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, among others, beyond the area of employment to areas such as social protection, education, and housing.

(34) EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), [Bias in algorithms - Artificial intelligence and discrimination](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

(35) See [Business case of diversity and inclusion at work](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2025

To ensure that **equality bodies** can contribute effectively to enforcing the EU's equality Directives, the Commission will ensure the correct and full transposition of Directives [2024/1500](#) and [2024/1499](#). The Directives aim to guarantee the independence, powers and resources of equality bodies, requiring Member States to ensure that equality bodies can help victims, and extend the mandate of equality bodies to discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment. They also strengthen protection for victims of discrimination based on their gender reassignment⁽³⁶⁾, when such discrimination is recognised under EU law. In 2026, the Commission will adopt an implementing act establishing indicators on the functioning of equality bodies, including in combating discrimination.

As '**guardian of the Treaties**', the Commission will monitor Member States' compliance with EU law, will use all the instruments at its disposal to protect EU values and will not hesitate to take the actions, where appropriate, as it has done in the past. For instance, in July 2022, the Commission referred Hungary to the CJEU over national rules that discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity⁽³⁷⁾. The Commission considered that these rules breached several EU laws, including single market rules, the fundamental rights of individuals, in particular LGBTIQ people, and common values that are at the core of the EU (Article 2 TEU). Sixteen Member States and the European Parliament intervened in the proceedings in support of the Commission. The Advocate General issued an [opinion](#) on 5 June 2025. The judgment of the CJEU is pending at the time of this strategy's adoption.

In the area of **diversity management**, the Commission reaffirms its unwavering commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, particularly at a time when progress in this field is facing increasing pushback. [Evidence from the OECD](#) shows that companies that actively promote diversity and inclusion are more likely to attract and retain talent, foster innovation and achieve stronger financial results.

The Commission will continue strengthening LGBTIQ+-focused efforts within the [EU Platform Diversity Charters](#). The Platform will work closely with the expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality to facilitate dialogue and provide guidance, for instance, on **inclusive hiring practices**. Good practices which emerged in the context of inclusive employment initiatives, such as the [Disability Employment Package](#), will be taken into account including with a view to fostering intersectional approaches. The Commission welcomes the [pledge](#) to promote more inclusive workplaces submitted by Diversity Charters⁽³⁸⁾ to the Commission on 29 April 2025.

Leading by example, the Commission will strengthen internal diversity and inclusion efforts. To this end, the **Diversity and Inclusion Office** will maintain regular dialogue with relevant staff associations and connect LGBTIQ+ employees with services which provide counselling and legal assistance. It will also promote measures to simplify administrative processes for LGBTIQ+ staff and work towards harmonisation of the recognition of rainbow families across institutions. The Chief Confidential Counsellor will combat harassment. Finally, the Commission will continue to collect equality data through regular staff surveys to monitor progress.

Discrimination and a lack of social acceptance contributes to high levels of poverty and homelessness among LGBTIQ+ people. According to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, 38% of respondents reported making ends meet 'with great difficulty' (compared with 22% of the general population based on the [European Quality of Life Survey 2023](#)) and 13% have had to stay with friends and relatives temporarily. To better understand these challenges, the Commission will publish, by early 2027, a **study on housing inequality and discrimination** with an intersectional approach. Its findings will contribute to the implementation of the **European affordable housing plan** and allow the Commission to take appropriate action to promote safe, accessible and non-discriminatory housing, including in cooperation with Member States.

(36) As defined by the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#): 'Gender reassignment' is a term referring to the set of medical measures that can, but do not have to, include psychological, endocrinological and surgical treatments aimed at aligning a person's physical appearance with their gender identity. The term was used in the judgements in Case C-423/04, Richards, 27.4.2006, EU:C:2006 and Case C-117/01, K.B. v National Health Service Pensions Agency and Secretary of State for Health, 7.1.2004, EU:C:2004:7.

(37) C-769/22 Commission v Hungary, Valeurs de l'Union.

(38) There are 27 Diversity Charters, one per each Member State. They are organisations based in the EU Member States that provide support and promote best practice in diversity management to thousands of leading multinational companies, SMEs and public organisations.

To ensure access to essential protection and services and tackle the root causes of poverty, the Commission will launch its first-ever **EU anti-poverty strategy** in early 2026, which aims to address the multidimensional nature of poverty and structural inequalities.

Additionally, the Commission will promote the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities through EU spending instruments, such as the **European Social Fund Plus** in the current programming period and the proposed [national and regional partnership plans \(NRPP\)](#) beyond 2028. As part of the **European Platform on Combating Homelessness**, the Commission will also intensify its efforts to mainstream the needs of vulnerable groups and support evidence-based, integrated and person-centred approaches to combating homelessness.

2.3. ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS ACROSS BORDERS

In the EU, LGBTIQ+ people enjoy marriage equality and/or civil partnerships in 22 Member States. Ensuring equal recognition of family relationships across the EU strengthens the rights, security, and well-being of LGBTIQ+ families, allowing them to fully enjoy their family life and participate equally in society, no matter where they live. However, due to differences in family law among Member States, family ties may no longer be recognised in cross-border situations. According to the FRA's third LGBTIQ survey, 14% of LGBTIQ parents had encountered difficulties in having their parenthood legally recognised in another Member State.

EU free movement law, particularly the [Free Movement Directive](#) together with fundamental rights under the Charter of Fundamental Rights, upholds the right of all EU citizens and their family members, including same-sex spouses and partners and their children, to move and reside freely within the EU. The Commission is committed to ensuring the proper application of EU free movement rules, fundamental rights and relevant judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) (39). To that end, the Commission published, in December 2023, the [Guidance on the right of free movement of EU citizens and their families](#) that provides for the necessary clarifications on specific issues that have been identified when applying the acquis, including with regards to rainbow families.

In parallel, the Commission will continue raising awareness of these rights, including by supporting training for legal practitioners, particularly judges and prosecutors, and through its communication channels (e.g. [Your Europe](#)). If necessary, the Commission will not hesitate to take further action as appropriate to uphold these rights.

While substantive family law falls under the competence of Member States, the EU can adopt measures that have cross-border implications. A number of instruments⁽⁴⁰⁾ already provide for mutual recognition of judgments on divorce, parental responsibilities, maintenance, property regimes and succession. These instruments apply to everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and therefore fully apply to LGBTIQ+ people. The Commission will **monitor and enforce**, where necessary, how Member States apply these instruments to rainbow families in cross-border situations. The Commission will also **engage in discussions with Member States** to identify any practical challenges facing rainbow families in cross-border situations.

EU law on free movement already requires Member States to recognise the parenthood of a child as established in another Member State, so that children can exercise the rights they derive from EU law. The Commission will continue to support Member States in adopting the proposed [regulation](#) to strengthen the protection of the rights of children in cross-border situations through the **harmonisation of Member States' rules on private international law on parenthood**. The proposal would ensure that the parenthood of a child, as established in a Member State, would be recognised in all other Member States for all purposes beyond what is already ensured under EU law on free movement. Negotiations in the Council on this proposal, which requires adoption by unanimity, are ongoing.

(39) See judgment of 5 June 2018, C-673/16, Coman, EU:C:2018:385; judgment of 14 December 2021, C-490/20 V.M.A., EU:C:2021:1008; order of 24 June 2022, C-2/21, K.S., EU:C:2018:385; judgment of 4 October 2024, Case C-4/23, Mirin, EU:C:2024:845; judgment of 3 April 2024, Case C-713/23, Wojewoda Mazowiecki, EU:C:2025:235 and Case C-43/24, Shipov.

(40) See, for example, Regulation 2019/1111 on matrimonial matters and parental responsibility matters, Regulation 4/2009 on maintenance obligations, Regulation 2016/1103 on matrimonial property regimes, Regulation 2016/1104 on the economic consequences of registered partnerships, and Regulation 650/2012 on succession.

Requirements for legal gender recognition vary significantly across Member States. While a number of Member States have adopted self-determination models, others impose medical procedures, which the European Court of Human Rights has found may infringe human rights⁽⁴¹⁾. The Commission will **facilitate exchanges of best practices among Member States** to support the development of legal gender recognition procedures based on self-determination that are free from age restrictions.

Key actions by the European Commission:

- ✓ Continue supporting the Council Presidencies and Member States with all possible means to reach the required unanimous agreement on the proposal for the Equal Treatment Directive.
- ✓ Publish a report on the application of the Employment Equality Directive and provide guidance on inclusive hiring practices, in collaboration with the EU Platform Diversity Charters and the expert group on LGBTQ+ equality.
- ✓ Raise awareness and foster knowledge-sharing on health equality via the EU Health Policy Platform and the Public Health Best Practices Portal, while also building on insights from relevant Horizon Europe research projects.
- ✓ Carry out a study on housing inequality and discrimination to be published by early 2027 and use its findings in the implementation of the European affordable housing plan.
- ✓ Set out a 2030 roadmap on the future of digital education and skills.
- ✓ Continue to support Member States in adopting the proposed regulation on the mutual recognition of parenthood between Member States.

(41) S.V. v Italy, Application No 55216/08, 11 October 2018. A.P., Garçon and Nicot v France, Applications Nos 79885/12, 52471/13 and 52596/13, 6 April 201

3. ENGAGE

In line with Article 21 TEU and through the [EU action plan on human rights and democracy](#) and the [EU guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons](#), the EU is already a global leader in promoting and protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Achieving full equality requires sustained commitment and active engagement at all levels. This strategy reflects the Commission's determination to advance the **full and equal enjoyment of all human rights** by all within the EU and around the world.

3.1. STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE EU

Member States play a vital role in advancing LGBTIQ+ equality on the ground. Thanks to the incitement of the first EU LGBTIQ equality strategy, many Member States have already taken steps to advance LGBTIQ+ equality at national level. The Commission calls now on all Member States to adopt **national action plans on LGBTIQ+ equality by 2027**, in line with the [guidelines for strategies and action plans to enhance LGBTIQ equality](#) and the accompanying [monitoring checklist](#)⁽⁴²⁾. To encourage national measures on LGBTIQ+ equality and their implementation, Member States are also encouraged to nominate **national coordinators** on LGBTIQ+ equality or build on existing structures for this purpose.

The Commission will continue supporting and monitoring these efforts through the High-Level Group on non-discrimination, equality and diversity and specifically its **subgroup of experts on LGBTIQ+ equality**, whose mandate will be strengthened to include representatives from candidate countries and improve cooperation with the Council Presidencies. In the context of the expert group, Member States and other stakeholders will be invited to provide regular updates on their activities and disseminate this information to increase the visibility of LGBTIQ+ equality measures. Member States will also be able to get involved in thematic activities to address specific policy areas, such as healthcare, education and AI.

The Commission will continue to give visibility, celebrate and support local authorities championing inclusivity through the [European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards](#) and foster exchanges of best practices among winners, Diversity Charters signatories and civil society organisations.

The Commission will also strengthen cooperation with **international LGBTIQ+ equality expert groups and networks**. These include the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics which commenced its mandate in 2024 and the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network steered by the Council of Europe.

A healthy democracy relies on an open, thriving civic space, where civil society can operate freely and people can express their identity without fear. However, LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations face mounting challenges as their ability to support their communities, advocate for human rights and safeguard democratic values comes under increasing pressure.

The forthcoming EU Civil Society Strategy will establish a common framework to guide the Commission's engagement with and support for civil society across policy areas. It also seeks to further the work with Member States on promoting and sustaining a thriving civic space across the EU, which includes civil society organisations and human rights defenders active in promoting and protecting EU values, including equality and non-discrimination.

The Commission will also promote a new "LGBTIQ+ Policy Forum" with LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations, social partners and academia to address emerging challenges, assess progress and ensure the effective implementation of this strategy. This will allow for structured and open dialogue with different stakeholders, including regular roundtable discussions with European LGBTIQ+ umbrella organisations.

(42) The European Commission also encourages EU candidate countries and potential candidates to follow good practices of EU Member States in this area.

Young people are key allies in building inclusive and democratic societies. Through the [EU youth dialogue](#) and the targeted youth policy dialogues with Commissioners, the Commission ensures that voices of young people, particularly those from groups at a heightened risk of discrimination, including LGBTIQ+ people, are heard in the policymaking process. This inclusive mechanism will continue to ensure openness to all young people to help shape policies, including those in the LGBTIQ+ community.

The Commission will continue to support Member States in integrating equality principles into national reforms and investments via relevant EU spending instruments, such as the [Technical Support Instrument](#) and the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#).

The Commission ensures EU funds are implemented fairly. It will continue to monitor the fulfilment of the 'horizontal enabling condition'(43) on the effective implementation and application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights throughout 2021-2027 for all funds under the [Common Provisions Regulation](#). It will also enforce the revised [Financial Regulation](#), which explicitly lists incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence as grounds for exclusion from EU funding.

The Commission doubles down its commitment to support LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations, grassroots activism and advocacy, in a context where funding for these organisations is increasingly being cut(44). The Commission will continue to promote equality and non-discrimination under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), in particular via the AgoraEU programme. Within AgoraEU, the Commission proposed to allocate EUR 3.6 billion to the new Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values+ strand, more than doubling the budget under the current Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme.

In addition, according to the proposal tabled, all National and Regional Partnership Plans would enshrine strong safeguards to ensure respect of the Rule of Law and the effective application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights throughout implementation. They also would prevent any discrimination based on, among others, gender and sexual orientation during their preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation(45).

Reliable and comparable equality data are crucial for designing and monitoring evidence-based policies using an intersectional perspective. The mandate of the **equality data expert group** under the High-Level Group on non-discrimination, equality, and diversity will be renewed. In cooperation with the FRA, it will promote the collection of equality data, including data on the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people.

Moreover, the Commission will continue to work with the relevant EU agencies, such as the FRA, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), to provide technical assistance to Member States on equality data, including targeted data on intersectional discrimination. Additionally, it will continue to work with national statistic offices to enhance the collection of harmonised equality data under **Eurostat's equality and non-discrimination statistics task force**. Building on the success of the [first High-Level European Round Table on Equality data](#) that took place in 2021, the Commission will organise a second edition, bringing together key stakeholders to further promote the collection and use of equality data.

The Commission will prepare a **Recommendation** to improve the collection, analysis and use of equality data, in cooperation with the Member States. This will strengthen support for Member States and other stakeholders, providing tools to help monitor the state of equality in the EU and improve mainstreaming equality data.

The Commission intends to publish a new **Eurobarometer on discrimination in the EU** in 2027, and invites FRA to conduct the next wave of its comprehensive **LGBTIQ+ survey** for publication in 2029.

The Commission remains committed to raising awareness of LGBTIQ+ equality and non-discrimination. It will launch a **communication campaign on the Union of Equality** to engage people across the EU on equality and non-discrimination values.

(43) [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021](#) (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159).

(44) See, for instance, [Holding the Line: Defending LGBTI movements in the 2025 Funding Crisis - Global Philanthropy Project](#).

(45) [COM/2025/565 final](#)

The Commission will continue to actively promote LGBTIQ+ equality through appropriate support of and participation in meetings organised by national authorities and the Council Presidencies and in **key public events that serve as milestones for the LGBTIQ+ community**, such as pride month and the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

To make LGBTIQ+ equality part of all EU policies, the Commission will intensify cooperation across its departments and with other EU institutions. This will continue to be facilitated by the **European Commissioner for Equality**, the equality contact point in cabinets, the Commission's Inter-Service Group on the implementation of this strategy and the Commission internal **Task Force on Equality**.

3.2. MAINTAINING WORLDWIDE ENGAGEMENT TO UPHOLD LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE'S HUMAN RIGHTS

The EU remains committed to promoting the **rights of LGBTIQ+ people internationally**. The rights of LGBTIQ+ people are protected under existing international human rights law, and yet in many parts of the world, LGBTIQ+ people face serious human rights violations, including persecution, imprisonment or even the death penalty⁽⁴⁶⁾, simply for being who they are. Increasingly, human rights defenders and their lives are put at risk to advance LGBTIQ+ equality.

At multilateral level, the EU will work to build regional and global alliances to advance equality including in the **United Nations**, the **OSCE**, and the **Council of Europe**. It will continue participating in the UN's LGBTI Core Group, and continue engaging with UN human rights mechanisms, including the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The EU will remain engaged in the analysis of foreign information manipulation and interference activities targeting the LGBTIQ+ community and will actively contribute to preventing and responding to such attacks across different levels and regions worldwide.

Bilaterally, the EU will intensify efforts to combat multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including those based on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The EU will also step up action to prevent, denounce and combat all forms of discrimination and harassment against LGBTI people, LGBTI-phobic violence and hatred. The EU will continue to actively condemn and combat discriminatory laws, policies and practices, with a focus on advocating for the global **decriminalisation of consenting same-sex relations**.

EU Delegations will be instructed to continue closely monitor developments and engage in diplomatic outreach where restrictive laws are proposed. The EU will also continue to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in its political human rights dialogues. LGBTIQ+ equality will also remain in focus in the EU's engagement with countries that benefit from trade preferences under the [Generalised Scheme of Preferences](#) and the [Everything but Arms scheme](#).

In its **election observation missions**, the EU will continue to consider instances of hate speech and inflammatory language, including when they target LGBTIQ+ people, and the portrayal of stereotypes in media coverage. The EU will also examine measures taken by the relevant authorities to facilitate the participation of minority groups, including LGBTIQ+ people, in the electoral process and to counter discrimination against them.

Furthermore, the EU will continue to ensure that **humanitarian aid** and protection measures meet the specific needs of vulnerable LGBTIQ+ people, in line with fundamental humanitarian principles, such as impartiality and non-discrimination. Preventing, mitigating and responding to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, is a key priority for the EU as a humanitarian donor.

(46) According to [UNAIDS](#), 67 countries criminalise same sex relations, with 10 imposing the death penalty (2023).

ith regards to **candidate countries and potential candidates**, in line with the 2020 revised enlargement methodology, the EU will continue to champion the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, including as part of accession negotiations and related association agreements. The Commission's annual enlargement package will continue to assess the human rights situation of LGBTIQ+ people in candidate countries and potential candidates.

In particular, the Commission will monitor compliance with EU legislation and the relevant case law of the CJEU and European Court of Human Rights, issue recommendations and support measures to ensure equality for LGBTIQ+ people and tackle violence, hatred and discrimination. Furthermore, the Commission will continue to promote the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in **its political and human rights discussions with neighbourhood countries**.

In order to support human right defenders, the Commission will continue to provide guidance on the processing of visa applications from human rights defenders through the [EU visa code handbook](#). The handbook was revised in June 2024 with updated guidance and examples, including for LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders. The EU Delegations around the world will also continue to implement the [EU guidelines on human rights defenders](#). Specific support is also provided via the [EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism](#) through emergency grants, relocation assistance, capacity building, and training for human rights defenders at risk.

Finally, to uphold the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, the Commission will apply a human rights-based approach, together with gender and inequality analysis, to all actions funded through EU financing instruments, such as the **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)** and the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**, including under the NDICI's thematic programmes on human rights and democracy, and civil society. These programmes will also continue to provide financial support to LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations and human rights defenders. They should be followed by the proposed [Global Europe Instrument](#), currently in the legislative process, for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Key actions by the European Commission:

- ✓ Provide funding through relevant EU spending instruments to support projects and organisations upholding the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and combating discrimination.
- ✓ Create a new "LGBTIQ+ Policy Forum" with LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations, social partners and academia in 2026.
- ✓ Launch in early 2027 a communication campaign on the Union of Equality to engage people across the EU on equality and non-discrimination.
- ✓ Prepare a Recommendation on equality data, complemented by the publication of a new edition of the Eurobarometer on discrimination in the EU in 2027.
- ✓ Implement actions to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTIQ+ people across the world, both at multilateral and bilateral level, including advocating for the global decriminalisation of consenting same-sex relations.
- ✓ Support the alignment of candidate countries and potential candidates with the relevant EU legislation and case law of the CJEU and the European Court of Human Rights.

CONCLUSION

This strategy reaffirms the vision of a European Union where **LGBTIQ+ people are free to be themselves and to love**. The EU and its Member States have made significant progress in advancing a **Union of Equality**. However, a lot can still be achieved for a truly equal society for all, free from discrimination and hatred.

Building on the LGBTQ+ equality strategy 2020-2025, this renewed strategy **continues the EU's efforts to promote LGBTQ+ equality** and maintains a focus on priority areas, as well as on mainstreaming LGBTQ+ equality into all policies, with an intersectional approach. Achieving equality is not only vital for a resilient democracy and cohesive society but also **essential for fostering thriving and competitive economies** across Europe.

Upholding equality and non-discrimination in the EU is a **shared responsibility**, requiring joint efforts at every level. EU institutions and agencies, Member States, including their regional and local authorities, equality bodies, social partners, businesses, civil society and individuals must continue and strengthen their engagement to achieve this renewed strategy's objectives. **Allies**, people who do not necessarily identify as LGBTQ+ themselves but who actively stand up for LGBTQ+ equality, play a critical role by advocating, speaking out and actively supporting LGBTQ+ equality in their daily lives, helping to turn shared values into tangible realities.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to renew their commitment and support the implementation of this strategy. In addition, the Commission calls on the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to bring together local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society to discuss how to advance LGBTQ+ equality for all.

The Commission will regularly monitor implementation of the measures presented in this strategy and present a mid-term review in 2028.

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