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**NOTE**

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From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Combating hate, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ persons - <i>Exchange of views</i>

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Delegations will find attached a Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the exchange of views at the Council (EPSCO) on 17 October 2025.

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## **Combating hate, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ persons**

### **Introduction**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexual and gender minority persons (LGBTIQ) continue to face discrimination and harassment across the EU despite the existing legislative frameworks, improved political awareness and various initiatives taken to advance equal treatment in this area. This persistent challenge undermines the effective implementation of fundamental rights and the principles of non-discrimination and equal participation of all individuals in social and economic life.

Studies show that meaningful progress is achievable where political commitment and awareness is present. Since 2019, the EU has witnessed an increase in the number of LGBTIQ persons who live openly, without hiding their sexual orientation. For example, LGBTIQ persons report that they feel safer when holding hands with their partners in public and that they feel schools deal more positively with LGBTIQ issues than before<sup>1</sup>.

While these developments represent important strides forward, the overall picture concerning the well-being of LGBTIQ persons remains deeply concerning. According to the third iteration of the EU LGBTIQ Survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), LGBTIQ persons have experienced a significant increase in hate-motivated violence, bullying, and discrimination, with transgender and intersex individuals being disproportionately impacted<sup>2</sup>.

In the EU, we continue to witness anti-LGBTIQ incidents, including verbal attacks, physical violence, hate speech, and homophobic intimidation at peaceful assemblies in what should be safe public spaces, including in connection with public events and demonstrations<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2024). *LGBTIQ Equality at a Crossroads: Progress and Challenges*. Vienna: FRA.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2025). *Being intersex in the EU*. Vienna: FRA.

<sup>3</sup> *LGBTIQ Equality at a Crossroads: Progress and Challenges*.

Moreover, more than one third of LGBTIQ persons reported discrimination in key areas such as employment, housing, and access to other services available to the public<sup>4</sup>. Despite this, reporting to equality bodies remains low, highlighting persistent barriers to justice and redress<sup>5</sup>.

The persistent discrimination and increased harassment and violence pose serious threats to the safety and fundamental rights of LGBTIQ individuals.

The consequences of violence and discrimination are severe and far-reaching; over one third of LGBTIQ persons have contemplated suicide within the last year, with young people, trans, non-binary and gender diverse people being more likely to have suicidal thoughts than the rest of the population<sup>6</sup>. In 2023, 67 % of LGBTIQ persons had experienced bullying, threats and insults because of their sexual orientation or identity<sup>7</sup>.

### **The Principles at Stake**

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (“the Charter”).

Article 21 of the Charter explicitly prohibits any discrimination on a broad range of grounds, including sex and sexual orientation: *“Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.”*

Articles 8 and 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provide that the Union in all its activities shall aim to eliminate inequalities and combat discrimination, including on the grounds of sex and sexual orientation, in defining and implementing its policies and activities, and that Article 19 TFEU empowers the Council to take action to combat discrimination on those grounds.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## A Pivotal Moment

In 2020 the European Commission adopted its first-ever ‘LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ combining a series of targeted measures to enhance LGBTIQ equality with the integration of LGBTIQ equality into all EU policies, legislation and funding programmes. The Strategy also helps to amplify the voices of LGBTIQ people and to bring together Member States and stakeholders in a common endeavour to address LGBTIQ equality effectively.

The year 2025 marks a critical point in time for the promotion of LGBTIQ rights in the EU. The European Commission is launching a new ‘LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026-2030’ that will set the framework for future activities in the EU.

The experiences of each Member State provide valuable input for a constructive dialogue on how EU institutions and Member States can advance the rights and equal opportunities of LGBTIQ persons and how to overcome discrimination and violence against these groups.

**Against this background, Ministers are invited to hold a policy debate based on the following questions:**

- 1) *What has been an effective best practice in your Member State for combating discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ persons?*
- 2) *What additional actions could be taken at the EU level to ensure that LGBTIQ persons and families can live freely and openly, including across borders, free from discrimination and violence?*

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