

Brussels, May 2025

Our full answer to the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy consultation

Language of my contribution

English

I am giving my contribution as

Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

First name / Surname

Forbidden Colours

Country of origin

Belgium

Over the past 5 years, the overall situation of LGBTIQ people in the EU has:

Significantly deteriorated

Which of the following priorities identified in the 2020-2025 LGBTIQ equality strategy should remain a focus for EU action?

- *Enforcing and improving legal protection against discrimination*
- *Strengthening LGBTIQ people's legal protection against hate crime, hate speech and violence*
- *Strengthening measures to combat anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and disinformation online*
- *Improving the recognition of trans and non-binary, and intersex people*
- *Fostering an enabling environment for civil society*

Are there new priorities which you would like EU action on LGBTIQ equality to focus on?

Please explain:

This list is misleading as many listed priorities fall under Member State competence, not the Commission's. Promoting best practices is not a substitute for enforcing rights. The next strategy must focus on what the Commission is actually empowered and obliged to do: systematically use infringement procedures, request interim measures, and apply financial conditionality. The real priority is legal enforcement. No more promotion without protection.

LGBTIQ people may experience discrimination based on the overlap of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics with other aspects of their identity. Which other characteristics require more focused attention in the EU's efforts to ensure LGBTIQ equality?

Other: We won't play the game of which dimensions of discrimination matter most. All must be addressed. The Commission should stop framing rights as if some identities deserve more protection than others.

You may also explain your choices above:

This question is outrageous. LGBTIQ+ people do not face discrimination in neat, isolated categories. Every characteristic listed is relevant and must be addressed. Asking us to choose is reductive and dangerous. It ignores the lived reality of people whose identities intersect and whose vulnerabilities multiply as a result. The Commission must ensure that the strategy tackles all forms of exclusion and violence. Human rights are not a multiple-choice quiz.

Combating discrimination against LGBTIQ people is one of the pillars of the current LGBTIQ equality strategy. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- The EU should support Member States in promoting health equity for LGBTIQ people through guidance and collaboration and the exchange of best practices: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should support LGBTIQ equality in education through guidance and collaboration with Member States: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should support Member States' efforts to advance LGBTIQ equality in sports through guidance and collaboration: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should address LGBTIQ homelessness and socio-economic inequalities: *Strongly agree*

- The EU should focus on promoting a safe and inclusive working environment, including by cooperating with private organisations: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should play a key role in combating bias and discrimination in AI and online: *Strongly agree*

You may also explain your choices above:

These statements are impossible to assess meaningfully. “The EU” is not a single actor with agency. Who are we talking about? Commission? Council of EU? Parliament? Member States? Each area falls under their different competences. This is a strategy for the Commission — not the whole EU. Let’s be honest: the Commission cannot implement most of this. It must focus on what it is empowered — and legally obliged — to do: enforce rights, take legal action, and defend EU values and rights.

Improving LGBTIQ people’s safety is another pillar of the current LGBTIQ equality strategy.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- The EU should play a major role in combating conversion practices: *Strongly agree*
- It is important for the EU to counter intersex genital mutilation: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should prioritise fighting anti-LGBTIQ online hate speech, including in partnership with digital platforms: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should better support countering anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and hate crimes: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should fully support the prevention of bullying (including cyberbullying) and discrimination against LGBTIQ children and young people: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should help better protect LGBTIQ public and private events, including Pride marches: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should further improve support for LGBTIQ victims of crime: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should prioritise safeguarding the rights of LGBTIQ asylum seekers: *Strongly agree*

You may also explain your choices above:

Practices like intersex genital mutilation, conversion therapy or banning prides are clear violations of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Charter and Treaties. The Commission has a legal duty to act, not just “prioritise.” Yet the question again refers vaguely to “the EU” without assigning responsibility. The strategy must be about Commission enforcement, not soft coordination. Rights violations cannot be met with guidance — they demand legal action.

Building more inclusive societies for LGBTIQ people is another pillar of the current LGBTIQ equality strategy. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- The EU should create a conducive environment for LGBTIQ civil society organisations and human rights defenders: *Strongly agree*
- The EU action should focus on countering anti-LGBTIQ narratives: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should play a major role in improving recognition for trans, intersex and non-binary people: *Strongly agree*
- It is important for the EU to uphold the rights of rainbow families and their children: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should play a major role in upholding the rights of LGBTIQ children, like all children: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should challenge and raise awareness of gender stereotypes: *Strongly agree*

You may also explain your choices above:

This language hides the reality: some EU governments are banning Pride marches and silencing civil society with “anti-LGBT propaganda” laws. While rights are crushed, the Commission reacts slowly – or not at all. It has legal tools but refuses to use them systematically. Talking about inclusion and “challenging narratives” rings hollow when real threats go unchallenged. The strategy must centre legal defence, not vague aspirations.

Advancing LGBTIQ equality in the EU’s external relations is another pillar of the current LGBTIQ equality strategy. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- The EU should promote LGBTIQ equality in countries that are candidate members or potential candidates for EU membership: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should promote LGBTIQ equality in its neighbourhood countries: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should promote LGBTIQ equality in non-EU countries: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should play a major role in protecting LGBTIQ human rights defenders and supporting LGBTIQ civil society in non-EU countries: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should counter the spread of anti-LGBTIQ and identity-based disinformation and information manipulation: *Strongly agree*
- The EU should continue to promote the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by LGBTIQ people around the world, including through the UN and other international organisations: *Strongly agree*

You may also explain your choices above:

Promoting LGBTIQ rights abroad is important — but the contradiction is glaring. How can the EU claim global leadership while some of its own Member States ban Pride marches and pass censorship laws at home? The Commission must first defend rights within the Union. It must use infringement, conditionality, and legal tools before preaching equality abroad. External action loses credibility without internal enforcement.

Due to existing inequalities, LGBTIQ people are more vulnerable in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine. How could LGBTIQ equality be better integrated into response mechanisms to pandemics and to crises in general?

This question is not neutral — and we’re not blind to the political manipulation behind it. Equality was downgraded in this Commission, hidden under a crisis preparedness portfolio instead of being treated as a political priority. If the EU wants inclusive crisis responses, it must first restore equality as a standalone priority with full political weight and a dedicated Commissioner fully focused on equality issues. The next strategy should start by demanding that leadership be taken seriously.

Which actions do you think the Commission should prioritise in the next 5 years?

- *Enforcing and monitoring existing EU anti-discrimination legislation*
- *Mainstreaming LGBTIQ equality across all EU policies*
- *Funding civil society working on LGBTIQ equality*
- *Funding LGBTIQ equality projects*
- *Other: New legislation is useless if unanimity is required. The Commission must focus on what it has the power and duty to do: automatic, fast, and systematic enforcement of existing EU laws and values.*

Into which specific EU policy areas do you think LGBTIQ equality should be better integrated?

Other: We reject the idea that LGBTIQ equality should apply more in some areas than others. Equality is not sectoral. The EU must ensure rights are upheld across all policies, not selectively integrated.

You may also specify which parts of the policies chosen should consider LGBTIQ equality more:

This question suggests equality can matter more in some areas than others — as if some rights are optional or secondary. That’s fundamentally wrong. Equality must apply across all sectors, not based on preference or visibility. More troubling, the Commission doesn’t even have equal competence in these areas. Asking us to prioritise where the Commission is powerless, while it avoids enforcing rights where it can, is not strategy — it’s abdication of responsibility disguised as consultation.

Which stakeholders do you believe the Commission should work with more to advance LGBTIQ equality?

- *National equality bodies*
- *EU institutions and agencies*
- *Human rights organisations / civil society organisations*
- *LGBTIQ rights organisations*
- *National law enforcement agencies and justice professionals*

You may also explain your choices above:

Defending LGBTIQ+ rights is no longer just about equality — it is a frontline battle for democracy and the rule of law. The Commission must prioritise actors who play a structural role in this fight: equality bodies, civil society, EU institutions, and legal professionals. These are the stakeholders with the legitimacy and tools to respond to repression, uphold legal standards, and push back when Member States violate rights. This is about democratic resilience — not symbolic partnership.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to improve LGBTIQ equality in the EU?

You may use the space below and/or upload a document.

The Commission must face reality: LGBTIQ equality is no longer just about inclusion — it is a frontline issue of rule of law, democracy, and fundamental rights. Yet its approach still relies on voluntary coordination and still born legislative proposals requiring unanimity. Meanwhile, some Member States are dismantling LGBTIQ rights, banning Pride marches and passing “anti-LGBT propaganda” laws — with no adequate EU response.

The next strategy must shift course. The priority is not more dialogue. It is automatic, fast, and systematic enforcement of existing EU laws and values. Infringement procedures, interim measures, financial conditionality, and direct support to civil society must form the backbone of EU action.

The Commission failed in 2020 by ignoring clear signs of a rising authoritarian, anti-LGBTIQ movement across the EU. That was a political misjudgement with serious consequences. Repeating that failure in 2025 would be outrageous, indefensible, and a historic abdication of the Commission's duty to protect fundamental rights.

The situation has worsened. This is not uneven progress — it is a coordinated rollback of rights used to undermine democracy. Acting as if we remain in a cooperative climate is a dangerous illusion.

The Commission must stop pretending to be powerless where it holds tools, and stop deflecting responsibility. The only question is whether the Commission has the political courage to fulfil its mandate — fully, urgently, and without compromise.