European Commission

LESBIAN
GAY
BISEXUAL
TRANS
INTERSEX
STRAIGHT

ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL #EU4LGBTI

EQUALITY IS AN EU CORE VALUE

We all have the right to be treated equally, regardless of our sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. The European Union (EU) has been promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) equality over the years, but while progress is being made, discrimination is still all around us. People can feel unsafe in public spaces; they may not have the opportunities others take for granted at the workplace; they may feel they need to hide who they are at school. They can face discrimination when accessing healthcare, securing legal gender recognition in official documents or when they are simply going about their everyday lives.

Discrimination against LGBTI people goes against the fundamental values of the EU and as long as it is a problem, the EU won't stop working to end it.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

At EU level, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation at work has been illegal since 2000, under the Employment Equality Directive. This ensures that you are legally protected if, for example, you think you are being treated unfairly on the basis of your sexual orientation when applying for a job or promotion. The Directive also protects you against bullying or harassment in the workplace.

Under EU law, Member States have established national equality bodies, and in a number of countries these also cover discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These organisations, as well as NGOs and trade unions, will be able to help you when you feel you have been discriminated at work or when applying for a job.

The European Commission also made a proposal to extend this protection to social security, healthcare, and access to goods and services such as housing. This proposal still has to be adopted by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. Some Member States have already adopted such legislation at national level.

WHAT IS THE EU DOING TO ADVANCE LGBTI EQUALITY?

To combat the discrimination faced by LGBTI people, the European Commission developed the **'List of actions to advance LGBTI equality'**. Concrete examples are:

Support for civil society

NGOs are key drivers for change. This is why the European Commission supports LGBTI civil society organisations through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme and the Erasmus+ programme. This funding supports, for example: prides in the Baltic Countries and Czech Republic, anti-bullying campaigns in Greek schools or online tools to prevent hate speech in Italy.

Outside the EU, homosexuality is still criminalised in over 70 countries and it can lead to the death penalty in eight of them. LGBTI human rights defenders in those countries are supported through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Hate speech and hate crime

Homo- and transphobic hate speech and hate crimes are an attack on a person's dignity. It affects the victim's enjoyment of their fundamental rights. The Commission fosters discussion between Member States, ensures exchange of best practices and develops informal guidance on how to better prevent and counter hate speech and hate crime.

Diversity management

People spend a great amount of their time at work, where they shouldn't feel vulnerable for just being themselves. The Commission stimulates businesses to create inclusive workplaces for LGBTI people through the EU Platform of Diversity Charters. At the moment 27 % of those companies that have signed the Diversity Charter also focus on sexual orientation in their diversity initiatives. The European Commission is working to increase that number.

Raising awareness

All too often we don't know the kind of challenges LGBTI people face. To give people a voice, the Commission is developing personal video testimonies of LGBTI people and is organising debates in Member States. The videos and debates explore the discrimination LGBTI people face and what can be done to improve their situation.

The Commission also showed public support by illuminating its headquarters, the Berlaymont building in Brussels, in the colours of the rainbow flag on the International Day Against Homophobia (17 May) and by taking part in EuroPride.

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE AND DISCRIMINATION: HOW THE UNITED KINGDOM COMPARES TO THE EU AVERAGE

Over a year, this is how many **LGBTI people experienced discrimination or harassment**.

The EU average shows that only half of the population feels comfortable with the idea of an **LGBTI person being in the highest elected political position**.

Only half of Europeans are comfortable with **gay couples showing affection in public** (e.g. kissing or holding hands).

Discrimination may be widespread, but the vast majority of Europeans are **in favour of equal rights** for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people.

Sources: ***Special Eurobarometer 437- Discrimination in the EU in 2015*** *and* ***EU LGBT Survey, FRA, 2013***

MORE INFORMATION: ec.europa.eu/lgbti #EU4LGBTI

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