

Declaration on the continued advancement of the human rights of LGBTIQ persons in Europe

**Signed on the occasion of the High Level Conference
“Pride Alliances and Policy: Towards a Union of Equality”**

17 May 2024

Equality and non-discrimination are core values and fundamental rights in the EU, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, Article 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The European Union Treaties, the Charter and international law guarantee the enjoyment of human rights to all regardless of differences based on following grounds sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Other grounds including gender, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics are protected by national law in various Member States. The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission share a responsibility in ensuring the promotion and protection of equality and anti-discrimination. Affirming the principle of equality is imperative; putting it into practice is equally essential. This holds specifically true for LGBTIQ¹ persons who remain at risk in this regard.

Over the past five years, the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Member States have actively sought to improve the protection and equal rights of LGBTIQ persons. Together, we are committed to a Union of Equality, free from discrimination and violence.

The Commission’s first ‘LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ has led the way in this regard. The Strategy encourages Member States to develop their own action plans and adopt measures to promote and ensure LGBTIQ equality in all areas of Member State competence. In 2023, the Commission presented a progress report which will serve as a basis for assessing the impact the strategy has had on the lives of LGBTIQ persons in Europe. On 8th February 2024, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the implementation of the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, acknowledging the progress made while emphasizing that real equality is far from achieved for LGBTIQ persons in the EU.

¹ « The acronym “LGBTIQ” is used to encompass a range of sexualities and gender identities and stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer”. The use of this acronym is not intended to exclude anyone. Other variations of this acronym exist and can be used interchangeably.

We are committed to advancing the rights of LGBTIQ persons together. This can only be achieved if the rights of LGBTIQ persons remain a priority on the European agenda. We therefore call on the Member States and the Commission to renew their commitment towards a European Union where the human rights of LGBTIQ persons are fully guaranteed, respected, implemented and enforced.

We acknowledge the need for Member States to play an active role in advancing LGBTIQ equality in all relevant fora, including within the Council of Europe to which all Member States are part.

We recognise the advocacy efforts and groundwork of equality bodies, civil society organizations and human rights defenders working tirelessly on aspects affecting LGBTIQ persons and the human rights violations these communities still face.

We stand united in celebrating diversity and supporting the resilience of LGBTIQ communities across the EU.

We call on Members States to:

- Reaffirm their commitment to advancing equality and preventing and combating discrimination, specifically on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics and sexual orientation;
- Further advance the legal protection and recognition of the fundamental rights of LGBTIQ persons and fully ensure non-discrimination in all areas of life as well as the full application of EU legislation;
- Remain committed to countering the spread of misinformation and the instrumentalization of LGBTIQ persons;
- Further enhance the Protection of LGBTIQ persons, both online and offline, from any form of exclusion hatred, discrimination and violence, including the prohibition of 'conversion practices';
- Commit to continue supporting work on social acceptance of LGBTIQ persons and alliance building, as a key element in countering the growth and influence of the anti-LGBTIQ movement undermining the full enjoyment of human rights for all;
- Further ensure equal access to healthcare services for LGBTIQ persons, taking into account their specific needs;
- Provide for legal status for same-sex couples, in application of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;

- Continue to protect and support civil society organizations and human rights defenders advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ persons;
- Adopt and/or update national action plans and implement strategies to guarantee LGBTIQ equality within the jurisdiction of the Member States, in line with the 'LGBTIQ Equality Strategy' and the 'Guidelines for Strategies and Action Plans to Enhance LGBTIQ Equality' prepared by the LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup;
- Commit to continue working together within the LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup responsible at a high level for the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for non-discrimination, equality, diversity and the fight against violence and hate crimes;
- Support the reappointment of a Commissioner for Equality in the new Commission who will continue to focus and advocate the EU's commitment to inclusion and equality for all with dedicated attention to the rights of LGBTIQ persons.

We invite the Commission to:

- Remain committed to the rights of LGBTIQ persons, to the fight for equality and against discrimination, and to the rights of LGBTIQ persons to non-violent living, through a strong institutional Equality Framework including the full implementation of the current strategy and through formulating a new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for the new mandate that:
 - includes appropriate initiatives, targeted actions and policies, as well as clear targets and indicators for conducting impact assessments, monitoring progress and evaluating results;
 - applies intersectionality as a horizontal principle, recently defined in EU legislation as discrimination based on a combination of grounds protected under EU law in all relevant policy areas;
 - is developed and implemented in collaboration with civil society and is allocated sufficient resources, in particular in order to better support civil society organizations and human rights defenders advocating for the fundamental rights of LGBTIQ people.
- Renew the Equality mandate under the next Commission 2024-2029;
- Continue working towards ensuring full freedom of movement for all LGBTIQ persons and their families;
- Work towards closing the gaps in anti-discrimination legislation especially outside the labour market and for those most vulnerable in the LGBTIQ community;
- Support Member States in their efforts to improve the collection and use of reliable and comparable data, including through working with the Subgroup on Equality Data of the High-Level Group on non-discrimination, equality and diversity;

- Effectively enforce all relevant EU legislation and court rulings of the European Court of Justice of the European Union;
- Continue to cooperate with Member States, especially through the LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup of the High-Level Group on non-discrimination, equality and diversity.

Signing this declaration is open to all Member States wishing to do so. The list of States supporting this declaration may be extended over time.