

ENACT – Enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations to support victims of anti-LGBTIQ hate crimes

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL
PUBLIC BODIES IN THE EU

ENACT

Enhancing the capacity of civil
society organisations to support
victims of anti-LGBTIQ hate crimes



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Executive Summary

This comprehensive policy document presents evidence-based recommendations for strengthening hate crime victim support across the European Union, with particular focus on anti-LGBTIQI hate crimes. These recommendations are informed by the ENACT project research across six EU Member States and aligned with the EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030 as well as Council of Europe standards.

Priority Actions for Immediate Implementation (Within 2 Years)

- 1. Legislative Harmonization:** Advance EU legislative initiative to harmonize hate crime definitions, including sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds across all Member States.
- 2. National Action Plans:** All Member States adopt comprehensive national LGBTIQ+ equality action plans by end 2027, with specific provisions for hate crime prevention and victim support.
- 3. Stable Civil Society Funding:** Transition from project-based to multi-year operational funding for LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations providing specialised victim support services.
- 4. Mandatory Professional Training:** Establish mandatory elaborate training programmes for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on hate crime identification and victim-sensitive responses.
- 5. Third-Party Reporting Systems:** Implement safe reporting mechanisms allowing victims to report through trusted civil society organizations, with guaranteed confidentiality

EU Policy Context

The EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030, adopted in January 2026, establishes a comprehensive framework for protecting and empowering LGBTIQ+ people. The strategy emphasizes three pillars: Protect, Empower, and Engage. These recommendations directly support implementation of the strategy's objectives, particularly:

- Combating hate speech and hate crime, including exploring legislative initiatives to harmonize hate offence definitions
- Strengthening victim support through revised Victims' Rights Directive



- Combating conversion practices through Member State guidance and EU-level action
- Enhancing equality data collection through new Commission Recommendation
- Supporting civil society through expanded AgoraEU funding

Current Hate Crime Situation

Recent data from FRA's 2023 LGBTIQ Survey and ENACT Project research reveals persistent challenges:

- 37% of LGBTIQ people experienced discrimination in 2023. ENACT research found that 13% of LGBTIQ people in partner countries experienced physical or sexual attacks in the past 5 years, with transgender men (23%) and transgender women (29%) facing significantly higher rates than the general LGBTIQ population. Trans people also experienced, with trans women (64%), trans men (63%), and intersex people (56%) facing highest rates
- 55% experienced hate-motivated harassment (18 percentage point increase from 2019)
- Up to 90% of hate crimes go unreported across ENACT partner countries, with 90% of LGBTIQ people not reporting their most recent incident of hate-motivated harassment to any organization or institution. Among transgender individuals, non-reporting rates ranged from 82% to 100% in individual countries
- 24% of LGBTIQ people experienced conversion practices
- Legal frameworks remain fragmented: no EU-level criminal law protection against offences based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity beyond employment

ENACT Research Foundation

The ENACT project (March 2024–February 2026) represents the most comprehensive qualitative and quantitative research to date on anti-LGBTQI hate crime victim experiences and systemic responses. This empirical research conducted across Spain, Slovenia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Lithuania:

- 79 in-depth interviews with hate crime victims (11 Greece, 12 Hungary, 20 Italy, 7 Lithuania, 10 Slovenia, 19 Spain) revealing the profound psychological and social impact of hate-motivated violence, detailed experiences with reporting and criminal justice systems, and critical gaps in support services
- 71 interviews with key professionals (7 Greece, 9 Hungary, 20 Italy, 6 Lithuania, 12 Slovenia, 17 Spain) including law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges,



- lawyers, anti-discrimination body representatives, and NGO staff, documenting implementation challenges, training deficits, and coordination failures
- 6 focus groups with 33 professionals in total (5-7 participants per country) facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue to identify best practices, systemic obstacles, and opportunities for improved inter-agency cooperation
 - Statistical analysis of hate crime reporting and prosecution data

Critical Findings

Underreporting Crisis

- Primary barriers: lack of trust in authorities, fear of revictimization, language barriers for migrants, normalization of discrimination, fear of exposure. A Lithuanian professional observed: *"The LGBTQ+ community has greatly normalised experiencing hate crimes and hate speech... it seems that if you're a queer person, you'll just naturally encounter some hatred"*
- Victims often lack awareness of reporting mechanisms and available support

Implementation Gap

- While legal frameworks exist, practical application remains inadequate
- Hate crimes frequently prosecuted as ordinary offences, failing to recognize specific harm and bias motivation
- Inadequate coordination between law enforcement agencies, victim support services, and civil society organizations.

Service Fragmentation

- Victim support predominantly provided by under-resourced civil society organizations
- Services concentrated in capitals and major cities, leaving rural victims severely underserved
- CSOs rely on temporary project funding rather than stable operational support

Issues Concerning Intersectionality

- Multiple discrimination factors compound vulnerability but rarely addressed in policies. As one victim from Italy described: *"I always suffered from this double stigmatization as Albanian immigrant and, even a f_____t."*
- Data collection systems fail to capture intersectional patterns



Priority Recommendations

These recommendations are organized into seven building blocks aligned with EU and Council of Europe standards:

1. Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Recommendation 1.1: Expand and Harmonize Hate Crime Legislation

All Member States should:

The European Commission should:

- Advance legislative initiative to harmonize online hate speech definitions (as announced in EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy)
- Support Council adoption of hate speech and hate crime as 'EU crimes' under Article 83(1) TFEU

Recommendation 1.2: Combat Conversion Practices

Following the European Citizens' Initiative "Ban on conversion practices in the European Union" and aligned with EU Strategy commitments:

- Member States should prohibit conversion practices targeting LGBTIQ+ persons
- Member States should provide support and compensation mechanisms to survivors of conversion practice committed by medical workers or religious actors

Recommendation 1.3: National LGBTIQ+ Equality Action Plans

All Member States should adopt national action plans on LGBTIQ+ equality by 2027, including specific provisions for hate crime prevention and victim support. These should:

- Designate national coordinators on LGBTIQ+ equality
- Include measurable objectives, timelines, and adequate funding
- Address rural and geographic inequalities in service provision

2. Criminal Justice System Response

Recommendation 2.1: Mandatory Training

Establish mandatory initial and continuous training for:

- Police officers on hate crime identification, victim-sensitive interviewing, and LGBTIQ+ cultural competency



- Prosecutors and judges on hate crime prosecution, victim-sensitive interviewing, LGBTIQ+ cultural competency, bias indicators, and intersectional discrimination
- Training should be developed in collaboration with LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations and victim support services

Recommendation 2.2: Specialized Units and Prosecutors

- Establish specialized hate crime units within police forces
- Designate specialized prosecutors for hate crime cases
- Create hate crime contact points in all law enforcement and prosecution offices

Recommendation 2.3: Safe Reporting Mechanisms

- Implement third-party reporting systems allowing victims to report through trusted civil society organizations
- Establish online reporting platforms with confidentiality guarantees
- Ensure reporting does not affect residence status of migrant victims



3. Victim Support Services

Recommendation 3.1: Stable Funding for Civil Society

Member States should endeavor to:

- Ensure adequate and stable core funding of LGBTIQ CSOs beyond project-based grants for victim support programs
- Implement safeguards preventing exclusion from funding based on LGBTIQ+ advocacy work

Recommendation 3.2: Comprehensive Victim Support

Member States are urged to:

- Ensure access to psychological counseling, legal assistance, and practical support
- Provide immediate safety planning and risk assessment
- Offer peer support groups facilitated by trained LGBTIQ+ community members

Recommendation 3.3: Geographic Accessibility

Member States should:

- Establish support services in rural and underserved areas, not only capitals and major cities
- Develop mobile outreach teams and online support services
- Provide travel cost reimbursement for socially vulnerable victims accessing services from remote locations

4. Intersectional Approaches

Recommendation 4.1: Recognize Multiple Discrimination

Aligned with EU Strategy's intersectional principle and FRA findings on heightened discrimination for LGBTIQ+ persons with disabilities, migrants, and racialized individuals:

- Train professionals to identify intersectional discrimination patterns
- Ensure support services address intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g., disability, migration status, racial/ethnic origin)
- Collect disaggregated data capturing intersectional experiences

Recommendation 4.2: Protection for LGBTIQ+ Asylum Seekers

Protection for LGBTIQ+ Asylum Seekers from Hate Crimes

LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers face heightened risk of hate crimes and violence in



reception facilities and during asylum procedures. Implementing EU Strategy commitments and Pact on Migration and Asylum safeguards:

- Formally recognize sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) as explicit grounds for refugee protection within national frameworks
- Provide safe accommodation for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers preventing violence and harassment in common housing facilities
- Ensure access to culturally competent healthcare

5. Data Collection and Monitoring

Recommendation 5.1: Standardized Data Collection

Aligned with Commission's forthcoming Recommendation on equality data (EU Strategy commitment):

- Implement harmonized hate crime recording systems across Member States
- Record all protected characteristics including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.
- Capture intersectional data on multiple discrimination
- Publish disaggregated statistics annually

Recommendation 5.2: Monitor Justice Outcomes

National public bodies should:

- Track hate crime cases from reporting through prosecution to sentencing
- Monitor attrition rates and identify systemic barriers to justice
- Analyze whether hate crime provisions are effectively applied in sentencing



6. Countering Online Hate

Recommendation 6.1: Digital Services Act Enforcement

Given FRA finding that 63% of LGBTIQ people encountered hateful online content calling for violence, the EU should:

- Ensure rigorous enforcement of Digital Services Act obligations regarding illegal hate content
- Monitor platform implementation of revised Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online+
- Develop action plan on cyberbullying affecting LGBTIQ+ youth (EU Strategy commitment for 2026)

Recommendation 6.2: Counter Disinformation

- Address information manipulation targeting LGBTIQ+ communities implemented by domestic and foreign actors
- Support media literacy initiatives challenging anti-gender narratives

7. Prevention and Education

Recommendation 7.1: Inclusive Education

Given FRA finding that 67% of LGBTIQ people experienced bullying in school, public bodies should be provided with measures to:

- Exchange best practices on safe and inclusive education through European Education Area working groups
- Implement anti-bullying policies explicitly protecting LGBTIQ+ students
- Train teachers on LGBTIQ+ inclusion and responding to bias-based bullying

Recommendation 7.2: Public Awareness Campaigns

National public bodies in cooperation with CSOs, should:

- Develop national campaigns challenging prejudice and promoting hate crime reporting
- Member States establish policies supporting public recognition of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (17 May) through official statements, awareness campaigns, and support for civil society events

Legal and Policy Framework



EU Legal Instruments

These recommendations support implementation of:

- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Articles 21, 23) – non-discrimination and equality
- Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU) – comprehensive victim support
- Commission proposal to extend Article 83(1) TFEU EU crimes list to include all forms of hate crime and hate speech (COM(2021) 777, pending Council adoption) – would enable comprehensive EU-wide criminal law framework
- Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) – workplace discrimination
- Directive on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (2024/1385) – gender-based violence including cyber hate based on gender, recognizing LGBTI people at greater risk
- Digital Services Act – illegal online content including hate speech
- Equality Body Directives (2024/1499, 2024/1500) – strengthened equality bodies
- EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030 – comprehensive framework

Council of Europe Standards

- Recommendation Rec(2006)8 on assistance to crime victims
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity
- Committee of Experts on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (2024) – monitoring and standard-setting
- European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence on LGBTI rights under Articles 8 (private life) and 14 (non-discrimination) ECHR

OSCE-ODIHR Framework

- Understanding Hate Crimes: A Handbook for Civil Society in the OSCE Region (2021)
- Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes: A Resource Guide for NGOs in the OSCE Region (2023)
- Hate Crime Data-Collection and Monitoring: A Practical Guide (2022)



- OSCE-ODIHR Hate Crime Victim Support Portal
Available at: <https://projects.osce.org/odihr/hate-crime-victim-support>
- OSCE-ODIHR (2021). Addressing Anti-LGBTI Hate Crimes: Training for a Professional Response
Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/514165>
- OSCE-ODIHR (2023). Prosecuting Hate Crimes: A Practical Guide
Available at: <https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/568384>

ECRI Framework (Council of Europe)

- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on Combating Hate Speech
Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence>
- ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on Preventing and Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against LGBTI Persons
Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/general-policy-recommendation-no-17-on-preventing-and-combating-intole/1680acb66f>

Implementation Framework

Immediate Actions (2026–2027)

- Member States adopt national LGBTIQ+ equality action plans by end 2027, with Commission facilitation through guidance documents and funding support
- Commission publishes study on conversion practices and Recommendation on equality data
- Establish LGBTIQ+ Policy Forum with civil society
- Strengthen expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality mandate
- Launch cyberbullying action plan

Medium-term Actions (2027–2029)



- Member States harmonize hate crime legislation to include sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics as protected grounds, supported by EU coordination and model legislation guidance
- Member States implement standardized hate crime data collection systems, with EU facilitation of harmonized methodologies and technical support
- Member States establish specialized hate crime units and prosecutors, with EU support for cross-border cooperation and knowledge exchange
- Member States implement mandatory training for criminal justice professionals, leveraging CEPOL (European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training) existing hate crime training initiatives and resource materials
- Launch Union of Equality communication campaign
- Publish new Eurobarometer on discrimination (2027)

Long-term Actions (2028–2030)

- Commission mid-term review of LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy (2028)
- FRA conducts fourth comprehensive LGBTIQ Survey (published 2029)
- Achieve stable multi-year funding for LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations across all Member States
- Establish comprehensive and accessible victim support networks including rural areas
- Measurable reduction in hate crime underreporting and increase in successful prosecutions

Monitoring and Accountability

- Annual reporting by Member States on hate crime statistics and action plan implementation
- Commission monitoring through infringement procedures where EU law not properly implemented
- FRA regular surveys and reports on discrimination and hate crime
- Civil society shadow reporting on implementation gaps
- LGBTIQ+ Policy Forum annual review of progress

Conclusion



The ENACT project has documented persistent and urgent challenges facing LGBTIQ+ communities: massive underreporting of hate crimes, fragmented support services, inadequate criminal justice responses, and overlooked intersectional vulnerabilities.

These evidence-based recommendations provide concrete policy actions to address these gaps. They align with and strengthen the implementation of the EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030, translating its framework into practical measures for protecting and empowering LGBTIQ+ people across Europe.

Effective implementation requires sustained commitment from EU institutions, Member States, regional and local authorities, equality bodies, civil society organizations, and allies.

By 2030, successful implementation are expected to result in:

- Harmonized hate crime legislation protecting sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics across all Member States, following the adoption of the Council Decision extending Article 83(1) TFEU and subsequent directive on minimum rules for hate crime and hate speech definitions and sanctions
- Measurable increase in hate crime reporting rates and successful prosecutions, with transparent monitoring of conviction rates and sentencing practices
- Consistent application of aggravated sentencing provisions for hate-motivated offenses across Member States
- Effective enforcement mechanisms ensuring non-discriminatory access to justice for LGBTIQ+ victims

These recommendations represent a fundamental commitment to hate crime victims: to hear them, believe them, support them, seek justice for them, and work toward a society where all people can live free from fear, discrimination, and violence.

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