IGNITED POWER POLICY RECOMMENDATION GUIDE

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Project Number: 1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000246273

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3. Executive Summary

3.1 Purpose

This Policy Recommendation Guide is a deliverable of the IGNITED-POWER project, developed to translate the lived experience, insight, and expertise gathered through the project's activities into concrete, actionable policy proposals for decision-makers at EU, national, regional, and organisational level. Its purpose is to advance the rights, safety, and full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals, with particular attention to youth across five priority thematic areas: Legal Gender Recognition, Inclusion in Workspace, Hate Crimes, Hate Speech, and the Intersectional Approach. The Guide is designed as a practical, easy-to-navigate reference for policymakers, institutions, educators, employers, and civil society organisations. This document offers recommendations structured as follows: (a) The policy proposed, (b) The actors responsible for advancing it, (c) The main obstacle to implementation, and (d) The measure needed to overcome it. In this way, each recommendation can be read, assessed, and acted on independently."

3.2 Summary of Methodology

The recommendations in this Guide are grounded in three complementary strands of evidence gathered directly from those most affected by, and most engaged in, LGBTQIA+ policy across five EU Member States — Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, and Spain:

- **OpenLabs Workshops:** five two-day, youth-led workshops engaging 268 participants combining interactive sessions with training on the Open Resource eToolbox and familiarisation with the IGNITED-POWER Hub. OpenLabs contributed grounded, practice-level input reflecting the direct experience of young people navigating institutions, workplaces, and communities.
- **The Ignited Power Policy Talks Roundtable:** an online, transnational session bringing together 39 experts, policymakers, LGBT youth, and workers from all five partner countries, structured around dedicated policy discussions for each of the five thematics. The Roundtable contributed more institutionally-focused analysis, legal frameworks, enforcement gaps, and country-level best practice comparisons.
- **Partner-led thematic policy research:** each consortium partner (XENIOS POLIS, UPV, CIP, GenderLens, WECHANGE) holds designated expertise in one of the five thematics, carried consistently across the project: from developing that thematic's training modules for the IGNITED-POWER training course, to coordinating its Roundtable discussion, to authoring its chapter in this Guide. Where Roundtable or OpenLabs input for a given recommendation was incomplete, the responsible partner conducted targeted policy research within their area of thematic expertise to complete the missing elements, ensuring every recommendation is grounded in either direct participant input, expert institutional analysis, or dedicated partner research — rather than left unresourced.

Material from all three strands was compiled, cross-referenced, and synthesised into this Guide by ACCEPT: findings and recommendations were mapped against the five

thematics, with genuinely cross-cutting input consolidated separately rather than forced into a single thematic chapter.

3.3 Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Recognition gaps outpace legal gaps.** In several partner countries, the practical barrier to LGBTQIA+ inclusion is not the absence of law but the *invasive or inconsistent application* of it — courts demanding unlawful documentation, healthcare systems lacking standard protocols, workplaces "preaching but not implementing" equal-opportunity commitments.
- **Education is the most consistently cited lever for change.** Across nearly every thematic — legal gender recognition, hate crime prevention, hate speech normalisation, and intersectional awareness — participants independently identified the same solution: structured, mandatory, early, and continuous education, for both students and the professionals who work with them (teachers, healthcare providers, HR staff, law enforcement).
- **Enforcement, not aspiration, is the recurring gap.** Several countries already have formal non-discrimination commitments; participants were far more concerned with the absence of accountability mechanisms — reporting channels, audits, penalties, and independent oversight — than with the absence of policy language itself.
- **Youth need to be structurally present, not just consulted.** Participants across both the Roundtable and OpenLabs called for LGBTQIA+ and youth voices to be built into decision-making processes as a standing structural feature, not a one-off consultation exercise.
- **Rural and peripheral areas are consistently underserved**, in both service access and funding continuity, compared to urban centres.
- **Intersectionality remains under-institutionalised.** Even where LGBTQIA+ inclusion is addressed, the compounding effect of overlapping marginalisation (migration status, disability, socio-economic background) is rarely built into service design, training, or research as a structural default.

3.4 Top Recommendations

While the full Guide presents over 30 detailed recommendations across five thematic chapters and a crosscutting section, the following represent the highest-priority proposals emerging from this process:

1. **Legislate legal gender recognition based on self-determination**, removing mandatory psychiatric diagnosis and informal proof requirements *(5.1.1)*.
2. **Mandate LGBTQIA+-inclusive education** as a transversal, compulsory element of both initial teacher training and school curricula, rather than optional or one-off provision *(5.1.3, 5.3.1)*.
3. **Introduce EU-supported LGBTQIA-inclusive workplace certification**, anchored to enforceable minimum standards rather than voluntary commitment *(5.2.1)*.

4. **Establish accountability mechanisms — not statements** — for workplace and institutional non-discrimination: clear reporting procedures, response protocols, and real consequences for perpetrators *(5.2.2)*.
5. **Secure a clear EU-level legal definition of hate speech**, classified explicitly as a hate crime with defined penalties *(5.4.1, 5.4.4)*.
6. **Establish dedicated victim support structures** for hate crime survivors, addressing underreporting through legal aid, psychological support, and trusted, confidential reporting channels *(5.3.5, 5.3.7)*.
7. **Build LGBTQIA+ and youth representation structurally into policymaking**, through standing consultation mechanisms rather than ad hoc engagement *(C2)*.
8. **Secure stable, multi-year public funding** for youth empowerment initiatives, with explicit outreach commitments to rural and peripheral areas *(C1)*.

4. Introduction

4.1 About IGNITED-POWER

“Inclusive GeNder and sexual orIenTEation navigation for transformation anD emPOWERment” or just IGNITED-POWER (Project No: 2024-1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000246273) is an EU-funded transnational project addressing the rights, safety, and full social inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals, with a particular focus on youth. Delivered by a six-partner consortium across Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, and Spain, the project combines training, direct youth engagement, and policy development to advance change across five priority thematics: **Legal Gender Recognition, Inclusion in Workspace, Hate Crimes, Hate Speech,** and the **Intersectional Approach**.

The project's core goals are to:

- Build the knowledge, skills, and confidence of young people — particularly LGBTQIA+ youth and Ignited Power ambassadors — to understand, navigate, and challenge discrimination within their institutions, workplaces, and communities.
- Strengthen the capacity of educators, youth workers, and professionals across partner countries to deliver inclusive, LGBTQIA+-aware support, through dedicated training modules developed for each thematic.
- Generate direct, evidence-based dialogue between young people, civil society, experts, and policymakers, translating lived experience into concrete policy proposals.
- Produce lasting, accessible resources — including the Open Resource eToolbox, the IGNITED-POWER Hub, and this Policy Recommendation Guide — that extend the project's impact beyond its funded lifetime.

4.2 Consortium

IGNITED-POWER is delivered by a six-organisation consortium, each holding designated thematic expertise carried consistently through the project — from training module development, to Roundtable coordination, to authorship of this Guide.

Partner	Country	Thematic Leadership
ACCEPT LGBTI CYPRUS	Cyprus	Intersectional Approach (with GenderLens); compilation and editing of this Guide
WECHANGE: RESEARCH AND OUTREACH	Cyprus	Legal Gender Recognition

Partner	Country	Thematic Leadership
XENIOS POLIS: CULTURE, SCIENCE and ACTION	Greece	Inclusion in Workspace
UNIVERSIDAD DEL PAIS VASCO	Spain	Hate Crimes
CENTRUL PENTRU INOVARE SI PERFORMANTA (CIP)	Romania	Hate Speech
GENDERLENS APS	Italy	Intersectional Approach (with ACCEPT)

This structure means each thematic chapter in this Guide carries a named, consistently-engaged expert lead, rather than reflecting general or one-off input — the same partner that developed a thematic's training content also coordinated its Roundtable discussion and authored its policy chapter.

4.3 Methodology

This Guide draws on three complementary strands of evidence and expertise, coordinated by ACCEPT LGBTI Cyprus:

1. **OpenLabs Workshops** — direct engagement with young people and ambassadors (see below).
2. **The Ignited Power Policy Talks Roundtable** — expert and institutional dialogue across all five thematics (see below).
3. **Partner-led thematic policy research** — where Roundtable or OpenLabs input for a specific recommendation was incomplete, the partner responsible for that thematic conducted targeted research within their area of expertise to complete it, rather than leaving the recommendation unresourced.

Recommendations were mapped against the five thematics, structured consistently as: **policy – responsible actors – main challenge – measure to overcome it**. The logic behind is that each can be read and acted on independently by the policymaker, institution, or organisation it addresses. Genuinely cross-cutting input — findings and recommendations relevant across multiple thematics rather than specific to one — was consolidated separately into a dedicated Crosscutting Recommendations chapter rather than forced into a single thematic section.

4.4 OpenLabs

The OpenLabs Workshops were five two-day, youth-led sessions — one in each partner country (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain) — engaging **268 participants**. Sessions combined interactive, participatory activities with practical

training on the **Open Resource eToolbox** and familiarisation with the **IGNITED-POWER Hub**, giving participants both a shared knowledge base and hands-on experience with the project's core resources.

Beyond training delivery, OpenLabs served as a direct listening exercise: participants contributed findings and policy recommendations grounded in their own lived experience navigating schools, workplaces, healthcare systems, and public life. This input runs throughout the Guide both within individual thematic chapters and, where it addressed structural conditions common to all five thematics, within the Crosscutting Recommendations chapter.

4.5 Roundtable

The **Ignited Power Policy Talks Roundtable** was an online, transnational session, held on the 4th of June 2026, bringing together 39 experts, policymakers, LGBTQIA+ youth, and youth workers from across all five partner countries. Facilitated and coordinated by ACCEPT, the Roundtable was structured around dedicated breakout discussions for each of the five thematics, with each discussion coordinated by its designated thematic-lead partner.

The Roundtable's contribution to this Guide is more institutionally focused than that of the OpenLabs: participants examined existing legal frameworks, identified enforcement and implementation gaps, compared country-level best practices, and proposed specific policy measures. These are captured in this Guide against a named responsible actor and a defined obstacle-and-solution pair.

5. Thematic Chapters

5.1 Legal Gender Recognition

Introduction

Legal gender recognition (LGR) refers to the legal process through which a person's gender identity is formally recognised by the state, including through changes to their name and/or gender marker on official documents such as passports and identity documents (TGEU, 2026). Across EU Member States, LGR procedures vary significantly, ranging from self-determination models to procedures involving medical or psychological requirements and other forms of third-party assessment. The European landscape therefore remains fragmented, with significant differences in the conditions under which trans and non-binary people can obtain legal recognition of their gender identity (TGEU, 2026). The Council of Europe has recommended that LGR procedures be quick, transparent and accessible and based on self-determination, without requirements for mental-health diagnosis or compulsory medical treatment (Council of Europe, 2015).

Legal gender recognition remains one of the most contested and consequential areas of policy affecting trans and non-binary people across Europe. The ability to have one's gender identity formally and accurately recognised by the state is not a peripheral administrative matter and is closely connected to the rights to privacy, dignity, and equal participation in public life (Council of Europe, 2015; European Court of Human Rights, 2021).

Without accurate legal recognition, trans and non-binary individuals may face significant practical difficulties, including discrepancies between their gender identity and official documents, which can lead to unwanted disclosure and difficulties in everyday interactions, travel and professional settings. Such discrepancies can also increase vulnerability to discrimination and violence (Council of Europe, 2022; European Commission, 2020).

Despite growing international and European recognition of self-determination in legal gender recognition, significant differences remain across Europe, with a number of jurisdictions continuing to impose medical or psychiatric requirements as conditions for recognition (Council of Europe, 2022). Such requirements have been criticised for perpetuating the pathologisation of trans identities and creating unnecessary barriers to legal recognition, while also raising concerns regarding privacy, dignity and equal treatment (Council of Europe, 2022). Spain represents a significant recent shift towards self-determination, following the adoption of Law 4/2023, which allows legal gender recognition without requiring medical or psychological reports for eligible applicants (Government of Spain, 2023).

This chapter draws on the discussion held during the roundtable on Legal Gender Recognition, convened on 4 June 2026 with participants and experts from Cyprus, Italy, and Spain, representing perspectives from social psychology, sexology, nursing, education, and children's rights law. The discussion made clear that legal gender recognition cannot be addressed in isolation: it is deeply interconnected with

healthcare access, professional training, and the everyday administrative practices of courts and public institutions.

A person's legal status shapes, and is shaped by, the healthcare they can access, the way they are treated in schools, and the extent to which state institutions overreach into demanding proof that the law itself does not require

Accordingly, this chapter presents four interconnected policy recommendations:

1. **Legal gender recognition based on self-determination**, calling for the removal of medical and evidentiary gatekeeping from legal recognition procedures, with specific protections for trans minors.
2. **Standardized gender-affirming healthcare protocols**, addressing the inconsistency and inadequacy of both public and private healthcare provision for trans and non-binary people, including regional disparities within countries.
3. **Mandatory training for teachers** on gender identity and non-binary inclusion, to ensure schools are safe, informed, and supportive environments for trans and non-binary students.
4. **Reform of justice system and administrative procedures**, through an independent supervisory mechanism to curb unlawful documentation demands by courts and administrative bodies, and to hold institutions accountable when they exceed their legal mandate

Together, these recommendations reflect a shared principle raised repeatedly throughout the roundtable: that legal recognition of gender identity should be a matter of self-determination, not medical or bureaucratic permission. Achieving this requires coordinated reform across legislative, judicial, healthcare, and educational systems, reform that treats trans and non-binary people not as subjects to be evaluated and proven, but as rights-holders to be recognized.

Key Findings

The Group discussing on Legal Gender Recognition during the Roundtable Discussion surfaced a consistent pattern across all four thematic areas addressed: existing systems impose burdens on trans and non-binary people that go beyond what the law requires, are inconsistently applied, and place the responsibility for institutional failure onto individuals rather than the systems themselves. The following key findings emerged from the discussion.

- *Legal recognition procedures remain medicalized despite the absence of a legal requirement for this.*
  Participants highlighted that although self-determination is increasingly recognized as the appropriate international standard, in practice courts and administrative bodies in Spain and Italy continue to demand psychiatric or psychological evaluation, formal diagnosis, and forms of "proof" of gender identity — including social media screenshots, evidence of public announcements, or photographic documentation of gender presentation. Critically, participants noted that many of these requirements are not mandated by legislation itself, but are imposed informally by individual judges or officials, revealing a gap between what the law says and how it is applied in practice.

- *The absence of standardized protocols creates a fragmented and unreliable healthcare landscape.*
  European public and private healthcare systems were found to lack consistent, clear protocols for gender-affirming care (Spain and Italy was highlighted by the participants). This fragmentation means access to appropriate healthcare depends heavily on geography and the individual provider or institution encountered, rather than on a predictable national standard. Participants specifically flagged regional disparities within Spain, such as in the Basque Country, where healthcare provision lags significantly behind other regions. This inconsistency affects both trans adults and minors, with minors facing particular vulnerability due to the added complexity of guardianship, consent, and age-appropriate care pathways.

- *Healthcare providers frequently lack the training or willingness to deliver competent, affirming care.*
  Beyond the absence of formal protocols, the discussion identified a workforce readiness gap: healthcare professionals are often personally unprepared and in some cases unwilling to provide affirming treatment. This was framed not as a matter of individual attitudes alone, but as a systemic failure to embed trans health competency into professional training and institutional accountability structures while combating binary stereotypes and standards.

- *Teachers are structurally unprepared to support trans and non-binary students, and change to date has been ad hoc.*
  Participants with direct experience in education (as a child educator and through transyouth rights advocacy) reported that teacher training programs do not currently equip educators with the awareness or practical tools needed to support trans and non-binary students. Where training exists, it tends to be a one-off intervention rather than an embedded, ongoing institutional commitment. This gap contributes directly to unsafe school environments for students undergoing or navigating gender transitions.

- *Courts and administrative bodies exceed their legal authority, and there is no mechanism to hold them accountable for it.*
  A recurring and cross-cutting finding were that the harms experienced in legal gender recognition procedures are often not failures of the law itself, but failures of implementation, courts and officials imposing requirements the legislation does not actually authorize. Participants were clear that no appeals mechanism or oversight body currently exists to challenge these unlawful demands, meaning individuals have little recourse when subjected to invasive or shame-based processes.

- *The four issue areas are structurally interdependent, not separate problems.*
  Across the discussion, participants consistently linked legal recognition to healthcare access, education, and administrative practice, for example, noting that

inconsistent legal status affects a person's ability to access affirming healthcare, and that unprepared school environments compound the vulnerability of trans minors who may also be navigating legal recognition processes. This reinforced the view that piecemeal reform in only one domain (e.g., legislation alone, without judicial training or healthcare protocol reform) is unlikely to produce meaningful change on the ground.

- *Existing international human rights frameworks provide a clear normative basis for reform, but domestic implementation lags behind.*
  Drawing on expertise in children's rights law and engagement with bodies such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, participants noted that international standards already articulate self-determination-based approaches to gender recognition, including protections tailored to minors. The gap identified was not one of normative clarity, but of domestic legal and institutional will to translate these standards into enforceable national practice.

Policy Recommendations

1. Legal gender recognition based on self-determination

- **Actors:** National government / legislative bodies; courts and judicial systems; healthcare regulators
- **Challenge:** Legal frameworks require psychiatric/psychological diagnosis and informal proof of "presentation," creating barriers, delay, and privacy violations.
- **Measure:** Legislate a self-determination model based on individual declaration, with no mandatory medical diagnosis. Remove requirements for psychiatric assessment, presentation proof, or social media documentation. Include clear, age-appropriate protections for trans minors.

2. Standardise gender-affirming healthcare protocols across public and private systems

- **Actors:** National/regional health ministries; public healthcare systems; private hospital associations; hospital ethics committees
- **Challenge:** Inconsistent, often inadequate treatment; no shared protocols; regional disparities; providers frequently unprepared or unwilling to deliver competent care.
- **Measure:** Develop national clinical guidelines based on international best practice, mandatory for public and private providers alike. Train healthcare staff on trans-affirming care. Establish independent oversight for compliance, and create dedicated trans health competency centres, prioritising underserved regions.

3. Mandate teacher training on gender identity and non-binary inclusion

- **Actors:** Ministry of Education; teacher training institutions and universities; school principals/administrators; educational policy bodies

- **Challenge:** Teachers lack awareness and practical knowledge, resulting in unsafe school environments for students undergoing transition.

- **Measure:** Integrate gender identity education into initial teacher training as a **mandatory, transversal component of core Education-degree curricula** — not an optional add-on *(reinforced by OpenLabs)*. Introduce compulsory continuing professional development for practising teachers, covering inclusive policy, correct names/pronouns, and student wellbeing — treated as an ongoing strategic priority, not a one-off session.

4. Establish institutional protocols recognising gender identity in schools

- **Actors:** Ministries of Education, Ministries of Health, Educational authorities and stakeholders, Public authorities.

- **Challenge:** Even where LGR exists in law, schools lack consistent practical mechanisms to reflect a student's affirmed gender identity day-to-day, leaving recognition inconsistent and students unprotected.

- **Measure:** Adopt and enforce institutional protocols covering: use of a student's chosen name; access to gender-inclusive spaces and facilities; and confidential reporting and response mechanisms for gender-identity-based harassment or bullying.

5. Reform justice-system and administrative procedures to remove invasive proof requirements

- **Actors:** Courts and judicial authorities; justice ministry; administrative bodies handling legal documents; legal regulatory boards

- **Challenge:** Courts impose unlawful documentation demands (psychological evaluations, social media evidence, photographic "presentation" proof) beyond legal requirements; individuals navigating LGR also lack accessible legal guidance on what can lawfully be required *(OpenLabs)*.

- **Measure:** Establish judicial guidelines strictly limiting documentation to what is legally mandated. Train judges and court staff accordingly. Prohibit requests for social media or photographic evidence. Create an appeals mechanism for unlawful demands, and issue **public, accessible legal-information guidance** clarifying what can and cannot be required — with courts held accountable for abuse of discretion. This measure ensures that courts and administrative authorities apply the legal framework consistently and do not impose additional

documentation or evidentiary requirements beyond those established by law.

5.2 Inclusion in Workspace

Introduction

Creating workplaces where all people are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect is a fundamental principle of contemporary human rights and sustainable organizational development (Council of Europe, n.d.). Among the groups that continue to experience significant barriers to equal participation in employment are LGBTQIA+ individuals. Throughout this chapter, the term LGBTQIA+ is used to refer to people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics (Council of Europe, n.d.). Although many countries have strengthened legal protections against discrimination, LGBTQIA+ people continue to face unequal treatment during multiple stages of employment, including recruitment, career advancement, workplace interactions, and access to employment benefits (Council of Europe, n.d.; CDAC Network, 2022).

International human rights standards establish equality and non-discrimination as fundamental principles that extend to employment (Council of Europe, n.d.). Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention, while Protocol No. 12 extends the principle of non-discrimination more broadly to any right established by law (Council of Europe, n.d.). Building on these principles, the European Union adopted Council Directive 2000/78/EC, which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation by prohibiting discrimination on several grounds and requiring employers to promote equal treatment and prevent discrimination and harassment in the workplace (Council of the European Union, 2000). Nevertheless, as participants highlighted, legislation alone cannot guarantee meaningful inclusion.

Despite these legal advances, evidence shows that in practice, many LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to experience exclusion in professional environments (CDAC Network, 2022). Effective implementation of the legal framework depends on organizational commitment, leadership, and workplace cultures that actively value diversity rather than merely prohibit discriminatory behavior (CDAC Network, 2022).

Participants from Greece, Romania, Cyprus, and Italy highlighted that, although anti-discrimination protections exist within the European Union's legal framework, significant barriers remain in recruitment processes, career progression, workplace culture, and access to employment benefits within their national contexts. Participants emphasised that discrimination, harassment, exclusion, and the absence of inclusive workplace policies continue to undermine the wellbeing, job security, and professional development of LGBTQIA+ people. They further noted that differences in national legislation, employer practices, and awareness levels contribute to unequal workplace experiences across these participating countries.

Participants' insights further illustrate that implementation remains one of the greatest challenges. Representatives identified several policy gaps, including insufficient legal protection for gender identity, inconsistent enforcement of existing legislation, limited awareness and inclusion training, and a lack of specialized support services for LGBTQIA+ employees. Participants also stressed that although many organizations publicly promote equal opportunity, these commitments are not always reflected in everyday workplace practices. This disconnection between policy and implementation demonstrates that inclusion requires continuous institutional effort rather than symbolic declarations alone (CDAC Network, 2022).

Overall, participants highlighted that creating inclusive workplaces requires coordinated action from governments, employers, human resources professionals, civil society organisations, and employees. These findings informed the policy recommendations presented in this chapter.

Creating inclusive workplaces therefore requires a comprehensive approach that combines effective legislation, organizational policies, leadership commitment, employee education, and continuous evaluation (Council of Europe, n.d.; CDAC Network, 2022). It is evident that the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the workplace represents both a human rights matter and a strategic investment in organizational success. By embedding inclusion into organizational culture, policy, and leadership, workplaces can become environments where diversity is genuinely respected, all employees can participate fully without fear of discrimination, and organizations benefit from the creativity, perspectives, and talents that an inclusive workforce brings (CDAC Network, 2022).

Key Findings

Roundtable discussions surfaced a wide gap between formal commitments and lived experience in the workplace: several countries have isolated good practices, but none has a comprehensive framework, and enforcement is consistently the weak point. OpenLabs participants reinforced this with concrete, practice-level proposals — particularly around pre-employment transparency and internal accountability mechanisms.

Participants proposed several practical policy recommendations that move beyond legal compliance towards meaningful organizational change. Among the most significant proposals was the adoption of zero-tolerance policies addressing discrimination, harassment, and subtle forms of exclusion, including microaggressions. Participants argued that organizations should establish clear internal procedures, train human resources personnel, and explicitly communicate that discriminatory actions will not be tolerated. Additional recommendations included strengthening legal enforcement mechanisms and increasing organizational transparency through annual reporting on diversity and inclusion outcomes.

At the organizational level, introducing inclusive healthcare benefits and confidential support systems, as well as allowing transgender and non-binary employees to use their preferred names or temporary workplace identification where legal recognition is

unavailable, were considered critical measures. These proposals demonstrate that inclusive workplaces require coordinated action from governments, employers, human resources professionals, civil society organizations, and employees themselves.

- **Best practices by country:** recognition of family rights (Greece); mandatory employer anti-harassment methodologies (Romania); "non-discriminative organisation" declarations in job ads (Cyprus); mandatory safeguarding/anti-discrimination policies for NGOs (Italy).
- **Biggest gaps:** no workplace protection for LGBTQIA+ people at all (Italy); lack of awareness/inclusion training (Cyprus); rules exist but are poorly implemented, with no specialised support (Greece); sexual orientation is protected but gender identity is not, and no national audit body exists (Romania); equal-opportunity practice is "preached but not implemented" (Cyprus).
- OpenLabs participants emphasised that inclusion commitments are only credible when made **visible before hiring** and backed by **enforceable internal accountability mechanisms**, not aspirational statements alone.

Policy Recommendations

1. Introduce LGBTQIA+-inclusive workplace certification schemes

- **Actors:** European Commission; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA); European Labour Authority (ELA); national Ministries of Labour; trade unions and employer organisations; LGBTQIA+ NGOs.

- **Challenge:** Divergent legal and political contexts across Member States, together with varying levels of employer commitment to workplace inclusion.

- **Measure:** Map existing national and corporate good practices across the EU, and develop common principles and minimum standards for LGBTQIA+-inclusive workplace certification that can be adapted across Member States.

2. Implement zero-tolerance policies for workplace exclusion, harassment, hate speech and hate crime

- **Actors:** National governments; employers; HR departments; organisational leadership.

- **Challenge:** Subtle exclusionary behaviours are often normalised, while stigma, misinformation, and inconsistent employer commitment continue to undermine workplace inclusion.

- **Measure:** Governments should establish the regulatory framework, while organisations should implement zero-tolerance policies supported by staff training, confidential reporting procedures, rapid response protocols, protective

measures for affected employees, and clear accountability mechanisms for discriminatory behaviour.

3. Require rigorous corporate inclusion policies and benefits

- **Actors:** Corporations; HR managers

- **Challenge:** Lack of clear national guidelines to support the development and implementation of comprehensive workplace inclusion policies.

- **Measure:** Develop written internal policies covering inclusive healthcare benefits, confidential support and safe spaces, and transparent inclusion procedures. Encourage implementation through labour inspectorate monitoring, public procurement eligibility criteria, and recognised workplace inclusion certification schemes. As part of these policies, employers should provide candidates with written inclusion protocols during recruitment, ensuring transparency regarding organisational values and expectations from the outset.

4. Enable use of a chosen name/identity in the workplace without requiring legal ID change

- **Actors:** National governments; employers; HR departments; equality bodies.

- **Challenge:** Enable the use of a chosen name and gender identity in the workplace without requiring legal ID change.

- **Measure:** Allow employees to use their chosen name and gender identity in internal workplace systems, email accounts, staff directories, identification badges, and workplace communications while ensuring confidentiality and compliance with national legislation.

5. Mandate workplace transparency reporting on inclusion outcomes

- **Actors:** National governments; employers; HR departments; equality bodies.

- **Challenge:** Organisations often lack standardised mechanisms for monitoring workplace inclusion while also needing to comply with GDPR requirements regarding special-category personal data.

- **Measure:** Require organisations to publish annual inclusion reports based on process and climate indicators, such as staff training completion rates, the availability and use of reporting mechanisms, and anonymised, voluntary workplace climate survey results, while ensuring full compliance with data protection legislation.

5.3 Hate Crimes

Introduction

Hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people represent one of the most severe manifestations of discrimination and social exclusion in contemporary Europe. Unlike other forms of bias-motivated violence, hate crimes targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals are rooted in deep-seated social stigma, cultural hostility, and the systematic failure of institutions to provide adequate protection and recourse. Across the European Union, data consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ people are disproportionately affected by hate-motivated violence, harassment, and intimidation — and that the vast majority of incidents go unreported (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020).

The IGNITED POWER project places hate crimes within a broader framework of LGBTQIA+ rights, recognising that safety is a precondition for the exercise of all other rights — from political participation to healthcare access, education, and family life. This chapter examines hate crimes not as isolated incidents but as symptoms of structural inequality that require coordinated, multi-level responses from governments, civil society, and European institutions.

At the European level, the Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia (2008/913/JHA) provides a baseline for hate crime legislation, but its scope does not explicitly cover sexual orientation and gender identity in all member states (Council of the European Union, 2008). The EU LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy 2020–2025 calls on member states to ensure that hate crimes are effectively investigated, prosecuted, and sanctioned, and urges the recording and publication of comparable data on hate crimes across the EU (European Commission, 2020).

Despite these frameworks, implementation remains uneven. Several participating countries in the IGNITED POWER Roundtable reported significant gaps between formal legal protections and their practical application — particularly in relation to law enforcement training, victim support, and institutional accountability. This chapter draws on findings from the Roundtable to identify the most pressing policy gaps and propose concrete, evidence-based recommendations.

This chapter addresses hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people from three interconnected angles:

- **Prevention:** through education, awareness-raising, and the promotion of a culture of respect and inclusion at societal level.
- **Protection:** through robust legal frameworks, effective law enforcement, and institutional accountability mechanisms.
- **Support:** through dedicated victim assistance services, safe reporting channels, and psychological and legal support.

The policy recommendations in this chapter are addressed to national governments, public institutions, civil society organisations, and European bodies. They are grounded in the experiences and priorities expressed by LGBTQIA+ communities and

their allies across participating countries during the IGNITED POWER Openlabs and Transnational Roundtable.

Key Findings

The Hate Crimes thematic session of the IGNITED POWER Transnational Roundtable brought together participants from multiple EU countries to share national experiences, identify common challenges, and develop actionable policy proposals. The discussion revealed a consistent pattern across contexts: LGBTQIA+ people continue to face significant barriers to safety, justice, and equal rights, driven by a combination of structural inequalities, institutional failures, and social attitudes.

Participants identified a broad range of structural, institutional, and social barriers. These were grouped into two interconnected categories:

Structural & Social Barriers

- Difficulties dealing with the media and lack of accurate, balanced representation of LGBTQIA+ realities.
- Lack of social awareness and public understanding of LGBTQIA+ communities and their experiences.
- Insufficient recognition and acceptance of Rainbow Families across participating countries.
- Barriers in accessing healthcare services, particularly for trans and gender-diverse people.
- Hate speech and discriminatory narratives actively promoted by right-wing political actors, contributing to a hostile social climate.

Institutional & Legal Gaps

- Insufficient training for law enforcement officers to identify, record, and appropriately respond to hate crimes targeting LGBTQIA+ people.
- Low reporting rates driven by widespread distrust in institutions — particularly acute in Romania and other countries with weak anti-discrimination enforcement. This pattern is consistent with independent monitoring findings for Romania and other Member States (ILGA-Europe, 2024).
- Absence of clear legal protection frameworks and procedures specifically addressing hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people.
- In Spain: a specific and urgent need to raise social awareness and address hate crimes more systematically at the national level.
- Absence of victim support policies, leaving individuals without access to legal aid, psychological support, or safe reporting mechanisms when hate crimes occur.
- Public institutions and large companies largely lack binding equality plans with reporting obligations, a gap also confirmed in the collective findings of partners.

Good Practices & Transferable Initiatives

Participants shared several effective approaches from their national contexts that have demonstrated positive impact and hold potential for replication or adaptation across EU member states:

- Educational programmes specifically designed for children and teenagers, fostering inclusion and respect from an early age.
- Support groups for parents and families of LGBTQIA+ people, helping them navigate acceptance processes and provide a safe home environment.
- Safe community spaces where LGBTQIA+ individuals — especially youth — can develop a sense of belonging and peer support (note: some programmes require parental consent for minors to attend Rainbow meetings).
- Awareness-raising campaigns targeting the general public, aimed at reducing prejudice and improving understanding of LGBTQIA+ realities.
- Holistic education initiatives for parents, young people, and the wider community, promoting a culture of respect and active allyship.

Policy Recommendations

1. Integrate mandatory LGBTQIA+-inclusive education into curricula at all levels

- **Actors:** Schools and educational authorities; local associations; national governments; LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations
- **Challenge:** Lack of political will and funding, and political resistance.
- **Measure:** Make inclusive education mandatory for all schools, via EU mandates and civil society advocacy, obliging schools to integrate content on rights, respect and anti-discrimination from an early age so as to foster respect and inclusion from the outset, and driving change through public awareness campaigns and EU-level pressure.

2. Require equality plans from public institutions and large companies

- **Actors:** Public institutions; large private companies
- **Challenge:** Anti-LGBTQIA+ political ideology and lack of funding.
- **Measure:** Develop and enforce LGBTQIA+ inclusion/equality plans with annual reporting obligations, backed by EU-level requirements and dedicated budgets. This recommendation is grounded in hate-crime and victim-protection frameworks, distinct from the employment-law basis of the equality plans addressed in the Workspace chapter (recommendations 2.1/2.2); the two should be read as complementary actor tracks within a single cross-cutting equality-plan approach.

3. Ensure ID and civil-registry consistency does not obstruct trans people's political participation

- **Actors:** National governments; European Union institutions
- **Challenge:** Political opposition and weak enforcement; legal gender recognition procedures, and the documentary consequences that follow from them, vary widely across Member States.
- **Measure:** Guarantee, through legislative reform and active enforcement, that discrepancies between a person's legal gender marker or name and their identity documents cannot be used to disqualify trans people from candidacy, voter registration, or the exercise of civil rights; this measure should be read alongside the legal gender recognition reforms addressed in Section 5.1, and underpinned by binding EU directives.

4. Strengthen EU monitoring mechanisms for LGBTQIA+ rights compliance

- **Actors:** European Union; national governments
- **Challenge:** Some Member States are reluctant to comply.
- **Measure:** Establish robust EU-level tracking and enforcement mechanisms, backed by infringement procedures and public accountability. This mechanism should be developed as a single cross-cutting EU-level monitoring instrument, also covering compliance monitoring for the definitions and penalties addressed in the Hate Speech chapter, so that the two chapters put forward one coordinated ask rather than two overlapping ones.

5. Establish dedicated support for hate crime victims

- **Actors:** LGBTQIA+ organisations; legal aid services; psychological support networks
- **Challenge:** Underreporting due to distrust in institutions.
- **Measure:** Provide legal assistance, psychological counselling, and accessible, confidential safe-reporting channels; train law enforcement and involve trusted community organisations in outreach.

6. Institutionalise LGBTQIA+ role models and civil society presence in education

- **Actors:** Regional/national education authorities; LGBTQIA+ organisations.
- **Challenge:** The proven impact of lived-experience testimony currently depends on individual teacher initiative rather than structural support.

- **Measure:** Fund and formalise partnerships so LGBTQIA+ organisations have a regular, institutionalised presence in schools and universities.

7. Create dedicated LGBTQIA+ support structures within universities (new — OpenLabs)

- **Actors:** Universities

- **Challenge:** No dedicated units currently coordinate student support, staff training, and third-sector partnerships.

- **Measure:** Establish specific units/services offering student support, ongoing faculty/staff training, and coordination with local third-sector organisations.

5.4 Hate Speech

Introduction

Hate speech targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals remains a pervasive and critical threat to human rights, safety, and social cohesion across European Union Member States. In line with the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16, hate speech is understood as all types of expression that incite, promote, spread, or justify violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group based on protected characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

Driven by deeply ingrained stereotypes, discrimination, and rising political polarization documented in reports across the region (such as the ILGA-Europe Annual Review), anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric continues to infiltrate public discourse, traditional media, political campaigns, and digital platforms. Survey findings from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA LGBTIQ Survey III) highlight that targeted harassment, online violence, and hostility remain a daily reality for a substantial proportion of LGBTQIA+ people across the EU. The rapid proliferation of digital spaces and social media networks has significantly amplified the reach, speed, and visibility of this hostile content.

While legal frameworks addressing incitement to hatred exist within various national legislations and EU standards, significant disparities persist in how Member States define, criminalize, and enforce provisions against hate speech. At the European level, the primary criminal law instrument—the EU Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating racism and xenophobia—does not explicitly mandate the criminalisation of hate speech based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Although the European Commission launched an initiative in 2021 to extend the list of "EU crimes" under Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to include hate speech and hate crime, a harmonised standard is still pending adoption. Consequently, in many national jurisdictions, anti-LGBTQIA+ hate speech remains

insufficiently defined or treated lightly, leaving substantial gaps in legal protection across sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Furthermore, efforts to regulate online hate speech face complex challenges, including flawed content moderation mechanisms (which frequently misinterpret or censor LGBTQIA+ terminology rather than harmful content), jurisdictional limitations, and ongoing debates surrounding the balance between regulating harmful content and safeguarding freedom of expression.

The consequences of pervasive hate speech extend far beyond individual psychological and physical harm. As demonstrated by EU-wide data, it contributes directly to severe underreporting due to lack of trust in authorities, normalizes systemic discrimination, silences LGBTQIA+ voices in public life, and creates hostile environments that impede the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

To address these structural vulnerabilities, this chapter synthesizes insights gathered through the IGNITED Power project—combining findings from the Transnational Dialogue Virtual Roundtable and national Open Labs. It explores the current state of hate speech across partner countries (Cyprus, Spain, Romania, Italy, and Greece), identifies major policy and legal enforcement gaps, and outlines practical policy recommendations to combat hate speech effectively while safeguarding fundamental rights, dignity, and democratic values.

Key Findings

- No common EU definition of LGBTQIA+-based hate speech currently exists, weakening cross-border judicial cooperation and consistent enforcement across Member States.

- Current social media moderation mechanisms are inconsistent and flawed. As highlighted in the Open Labs and Policy Roundtable, automated filters frequently censor neutral identity terms (such as "trans") while allowing targeted, harmful hate speech to circulate without timely intervention.

- Discussions during the participatory sessions revealed a marked lack of awareness among civil society participants and community members regarding existing EU-level regulatory tools, reporting channels, and platform obligations (such as the Digital Services Act and the EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online). This lack of awareness limits the community's capacity to demand platform accountability and utilize available legal and reporting remedies.
- Hate speech targeting sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics is not consistently classified as a hate crime with concrete penalties across national jurisdictions. Where anti-discrimination frameworks do exist, enforcement remains weak and selective, particularly when political figures and public officials generate hate speech.

- Hate speech remains widely normalised across public and digital spheres, compounded by a lack of continuous, early-stage educational initiatives to counter prejudice and build societal resilience.

Policy Recommendations

1. Adopt a common EU definition of hate speech by advancing the Article 83 TFEU initiative

- **Actors:** Council of the European Union; European Commission; EU Member States

- **Challenge:** Divergent national legal traditions, varying criminal code thresholds, and political reservations concerning freedom of expression have stalled progress at the Council level.

- **Measure:** Unblock and finalize the European Commission's 2021 initiative to extend the list of "EU crimes" under Article 83(1) TFEU to encompass hate speech and hate crime. Member States should agree on a common minimum definition covering LGBTQIA+ characteristics (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics) as an EU-wide baseline standard rather than attempting complete national penal harmonization.

2. Strengthen enforcement of Digital Services Act (DSA) obligations for LGBTQIA+-targeted hate speech

- **Actors:** National Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs); Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs)
- **Challenge:** Flawed automated moderation continues to over-censor neutral identity terms (such as "trans") while failing to detect and remove actual incitement to hatred and coordinated harassment. This reflects a significant DSA compliance and enforcement gap rather than a legislative vacuum.
- **Measure:** Enforce DSA risk mitigation provisions by requiring platforms to conduct rigorous fundamental rights impact assessments, improve algorithmic contextual understanding, ensure human oversight in content moderation, and apply transparent, dissuasive penalties (including account restrictions) against repeat hate speech perpetrators without infringing on protected expression.

3. Bridge the knowledge gap on EU regulatory tools and digital rights

- **Actors:** European Commission; Digital Services Coordinators; civil society organisations; LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups
- **Challenge:** Civil society and affected communities often lack awareness of existing EU-level frameworks (notably the DSA notice-and-action mechanisms, trusted flagger schemes, and out-of-court dispute settlement options), which limits their capacity to demand platform accountability.
- **Measure:** Fund and roll out targeted digital literacy and legal awareness initiatives across Member States to equip grassroots LGBTQIA+ organizations and citizens with practical guidance on how to report hate speech, appeal erroneous content removals, and utilize EU regulatory redress mechanisms.

4. Legally classify anti-LGBTQIA+ hate speech as a criminal offense aligned with EU standards

- **Actors:** National parliaments; Ministries of Justice; national policymakers
- **Challenge:** Gaps and ambiguities in national criminal legislation allow anti-LGBTQIA+ hate speech to be downgraded to minor administrative offenses or left entirely unpunished.
- **Measure:** In alignment with the pending EU-level framework under Article 83 TFEU, Member States must explicitly integrate sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics into national penal codes, ensuring clear statutory definitions and enforceable criminal penalties for incitement to hatred and violence.

5. Enforce existing anti-discrimination and hate speech laws impartially against public figures

- **Actors:** National law enforcement; judicial authorities; political party leadership
- **Challenge:** Legislation exists in several Member States (such as Spain's Law 15/2022) but suffers from selective or weak enforcement, particularly when discriminatory rhetoric originates from political leaders and public officials who enjoy de facto impunity.
- **Measure:** Ensure rigorous and impartial application of existing legal frameworks, holding public and political figures accountable through legal sanctions and robust parliamentary ethical codes to prevent the legitimation of hate speech in democratic discourse.

6. Implement structural education and training programmes to counter hate speech normalization

- **Actors:** Ministries of Education; schools; teacher training institutes; law enforcement academies
- **Challenge:** Deep societal normalization of anti-LGBTQIA+ prejudice and insufficient institutional training for educators and first responders.
- **Measure:** Institutionalize early, continuous human rights and diversity education within school curricula and provide mandatory anti-bias training for law enforcement and judicial personnel to address systemic stereotypes and counter the normalization of discriminatory discourse.

5.5 Intersectional Approach

Introduction

Intersectionality is a theoretical and analytical tool for understanding how discrimination - or, conversely, privilege - is not the sum of separate identity traits but the product of how those traits intersect. The term was coined by legal scholar

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who used the experience of Black women to show that discrimination along two axes at once is not simply additive: it produces a distinct condition that cannot be explained by looking at either axis in isolation. The same analytic logic extends well beyond the case that gave the concept its name. Age, disability, and social class function as identity axes in exactly the same way: a person's position along each of them shapes, and is shaped by, their position along every other axis, and the resulting experience of discrimination or privilege has to be read at their intersection (Rodó-Zárate, 2021).

Applied to SOGIESC people, these axes are not background or merely theoretical detail; they determine how, and whether, a person's SOGIESC identity is recognised, respected, and protected at all. Age is one such axis: younger SOGIESC people are routinely denied the standing to self-identify, with age-of-majority rules, parental or guardianship authority, or simple adult disbelief overriding a young person's own account of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Disability is another: a SOGIESC person with a physical or psychosocial disability may depend on caregivers, support workers, or institutional staff who were never trained to hold both dimensions at once, so that disability-related support and SOGIESC-related safety become competing rather than combined considerations, each one likely to be dropped when the other takes priority. Social class shapes the picture just as directly, by determining access to legal protection, safe and independent housing, healthcare, and the time and resources needed to navigate institutions that were not built with SOGIESC people in mind. Migration status can compound all of the above - an asylum seeker or migrant who is also SOGIESC faces additional, specific barriers in reception and protection systems - but it is one possible axis among several, not the premise of the analysis. Race and ethnicity, religion, and other factors intersect in the same way and are addressed throughout this guide; the point is not to rank these axes but to treat their combination, case by case, as the actual unit of analysis.

The consequences of ignoring this compounded vulnerability are concrete and documented (FRA, 2024; ILGA-Europe, 2026) . A young SOGIESC person in care or school may be denied the standing to name their own identity, deferred instead to parents, teachers, or institutional authority. A disabled SOGIESC person may be placed in accommodation, healthcare, or support settings that address one need while overlooking or actively undermining the other. Frontline staff untrained on SOGIESC issues - in schools, health services, social services, or reception structures - may fail to recognise risk signals or may unintentionally reinforce them through binary categories, assumptions, and language. Each of these failures has the same root cause: policies and practices designed around a single axis of vulnerability - age, disability, migration status, or SOGIESC identity treated in isolation - rather than their intersection.

This chapter sets out why an intersectional approach must be treated as a baseline requirement for SOGIESC-related policy and frontline practice, not an optional refinement. It is grounded in the wider international and European human rights architecture: instruments protecting specific groups — the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) — establish the age- and disability-related standing that SOGIESC people are too often denied, while general non-discrimination provisions, notably Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 14 ECHR (read

alongside Protocol No. 12, ratified by a subset of Council of Europe states), prohibit discrimination on multiple, cumulative grounds. None of these instruments, however, name SOGIESC-related intersectionality explicitly; that gap is addressed through soft-law standards, in particular the Yogyakarta Principles, which remain the most direct articulation of how these axes converge for SOGIESC people specifically. This chapter translates that architecture into operational implications for the people who design and deliver education, health, social, and youth services. It moves from definition to context, from the way multiple, intersecting factors shape discrimination and access in practice, to the concrete strategies through which practitioners, institutions, and policymakers can build responses that are tailored rather than generic, and inclusive rather than merely tolerant.

The recommendations that follow are addressed to youth workers, educators, service providers, and policymakers across the partner countries of the project. Their shared premise is simple: recognising how age, disability, class, migration status, and other factors intersect with SOGIESC identity is not an additional burden on already stretched systems, but the condition for those systems to actually protect the people they are meant to serve. This premise was voiced directly by participants across the project's roundtables. In Italy, participants pointed specifically to trans youth as facing compounded vulnerability in school and healthcare settings due to their age; in Cyprus, participants identified SOGIESC asylum seekers as needing urgent, dedicated attention, noting that legal and reception systems tend to process SOGIESC-related claims separately from other vulnerability factors rather than as compounding. Both point to the same structural gap: systems built around a single axis of vulnerability fail those standing at the intersection of several.

Key Findings

- Intersectionality — recognising that LGBTQIA+ people also navigate other, overlapping forms of marginalisation (migration status, disability, race, age, socio-economic background) — was addressed at both policy and practice level. Roundtable input focused on institutional and educational mainstreaming; OpenLabs input added operational tools specific to the IGNITED-POWER project's own methodology and youth-advocacy infrastructure.
- Intersectionality is rarely embedded systematically in institutional training, research, or service design — it is treated as an add-on rather than a structural principle.
- Academic research and policymaking remain shaped by an androcentric perspective, with feminist and intersectional knowledge occupying a marginal position.
- Professional training for those working with trans people and other marginalised groups lacks a consistent intersectional lens, particularly regarding power dynamics such as adultism.
- Youth-led organisations and advocacy structures currently lack embedded tools (frameworks, guidelines, platforms) to operationalise intersectionality in daily practice.

Policy Recommendations

1. Include intersectionality training in schools

- **Actors:** National government; associations
- **Challenge:** Corruption, political will, funding.
- **Measure:** Oblige schools to train students on the complexity of social identity and how intersectionality operates at both societal and individual level.

2. Include diverse voices in policymaking and academic research

- **Actors:** Universities; government (Ministry of Education)
- **Challenge:** Androcentric bias in academia; marginal position of feminist/intersectional knowledge.
- **Measure:** Establish an obligation to apply an intersectional approach in research and publication.

3. Apply an intersectional approach to professional training

- **Actors:** Institutions; LGBTIQ+ associations
- **Challenge:** Political ideology (anti-gender movements) and funding constraints.
- **Measure:** Implement training for health professionals working with trans people, with specific attention to unequal power relationships such as adultism.

4. Build comprehensive intersectional understanding into refugee/asylum-seeker legal support

- **Actors:** Institutions; asylum-seeker support organisations.
- **Challenge:** Asylum-seeker cases are often handled generically, without accounting for the specific characteristics of the individual. Age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity are central to understanding a person's needs and to shaping an appropriate legal strategy, yet this is frequently overlooked.
- **Measure:** Promote comprehensive, intersectionally-aware legal support for refugees and asylum seekers.

5. Create safe spaces and networks for people facing multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination

- **Actors:** SOGIESC and other minority-group organisations; funding bodies and grant-making institutions; local authorities providing space or infrastructure.

- **Challenge:** Organisations supporting people facing multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination struggle to secure sustained funding and physical infrastructure, as their cross-cutting work often falls outside single-issue funding streams designed around one axis of identity at a time.

- **Measure:** Create safe spaces and solid networks connecting different minority groups, giving voice and collective power.

6. Mainstream intersectionality into organisational gender-equality frameworks

- **Actors:** Youth work organisations; institutions and organisations with existing gender-equality policies/frameworks; HR and equality/diversity units; management and leadership bodies responsible for organisational policy.

- **Challenge:** Intersectionality is often absent from formal gender-equality assessment.

- **Measure:** Adopt formal frameworks to assess and improve gender equality within organisational structures, with explicit focus on intersectionality in youth work.

7. Mandate "inclusive planning" in project design

- **Actors:** Institutions and public authorities funding or approving projects; project design and management teams; policymakers and grant-making bodies

- **Challenge:** Needs of marginalised groups are often considered too late in project design, or not at all.

- **Measure:** Make inclusive planning a core, mandatory requirement from the initial design phase of all new projects.

8. Establish "professional allyship" guidelines for educators and youth workers

- **Actors:** Educational institutions (schools, universities, Ministry of Education); youth work organisations and associations; teacher training bodies; professional associations for educators and youth workers; local education authorities.

- **Challenge:** Professionals lack clear tools to advocate for marginalised youth in professional and public settings.

- **Measure:** Define clear allyship guidelines equipping educators and youth workers with practical advocacy tools.

6. Crosscutting Recommendations and Conclusions

Introduction

Beyond the five thematic areas, both the Roundtable and OpenLabs surfaced a set of recommendations that apply *across* Legal Gender Recognition, Workspace, Hate Crimes, Hate Speech, and Intersectionality rather than to any single one or structural conditions (funding, representation, safe spaces, professional capacity-building) that any of the thematic policy measures ultimately depend on to succeed. This section consolidates those, drawing primarily on general OpenLabs input from the 268 participants across the OpenLabs Workshops.

Crosscutting Recommendations

C1. Secure stable, long-term public funding for LGBTQIA+ youth empowerment initiatives

- **Actors:** Regional, national and EU public authorities

- **Challenge:** Structured, cross-national youth initiatives such as IGNITED-POWER demonstrate impact but depend on project-cycle funding, with limited continuity once a project ends — and rural areas and smaller cities are consistently underserved.
- **Measure:** Commit to sustained, multi-year funding streams for LGBTQIA+ youth empowerment work at all three levels of government, with specific outreach targets for young people outside major urban centres.

C2. Increase participation of LGBTQIA+ voices in decision-making processes

- **Actors:** Policymaking bodies at all levels; community initiatives; youth participation mechanisms
- **Challenge:** LGBTQIA+ individuals — and young people in particular — remain underrepresented in the design of the policies and programmes that affect them, so lived experience is often missing from public policy.
- **Measure:** Build formal representation mechanisms into policy development and community initiatives (advisory seats, consultation requirements, youth panels) to ensure LGBTQIA+ experiences and needs are structurally, not incidentally, reflected.

C3. Expand safe, accessible community spaces beyond formal institutions

- **Actors:** Schools, youth centres, and local associations, working in collaboration
- **Challenge:** LGBTQIA+ youth need continuous, non-judgemental spaces to meet and exchange experiences — not one-off sessions — and this is especially scarce in peripheral and rural areas.
- **Measure:** Encourage and resource collaboration between schools, youth centres and associations to establish regular, ongoing participatory spaces and community-based initiatives in both urban and peripheral settings.

C4. Design youth spaces as sites of political empowerment, not only support

- **Actors:** Youth organisations; educational institutions; civil society
- **Challenge:** Existing spaces tend to focus on personal support and peer exchange, but participants identified a separate need to build young people's understanding of the social and political processes affecting their communities.
- **Measure:** Design workshops and collective spaces explicitly as sites of political empowerment — building critical analysis, civic engagement, and advocacy skills alongside peer support.

C5. Train facilitators and educators in participatory, non-invasive facilitation methods

- **Actors:** Youth work training bodies; educational institutions; civil society organisations delivering youth programming

- **Challenge:** The quality of any youth-facing initiative depends on facilitator skill, and facilitators are not consistently trained in LGBTQIA+-aware, dialogue-based methods.
- **Measure:** Provide facilitators and educators with adequate training in inclusive practices, LGBTQIA+ awareness, and group facilitation grounded in dialogue, active listening, creativity, and peer exchange.

C6. Invest in youth-led and community-based initiatives

- **Actors:** Public funders; civil society organisations
- **Challenge:** Young people experiencing isolation or lacking supportive environments benefit most from peer-driven initiatives, which are typically under-resourced relative to top-down programming.
- **Measure:** Increase targeted investment in youth-led and community-based initiatives to expand opportunities for empowerment, participation, and social connection.

C7. Strengthen access to support services and community resources

- **Actors:** National/regional health and social service authorities; community organisations
- **Challenge:** Access to counselling, mental health support, legal information, and community-based services tailored to LGBTQIA+ needs remains inconsistent — a gap that surfaces across nearly every thematic chapter (healthcare in 5.1, legal aid in 5.3, asylum support in 5.5) but is rarely addressed as a single service-access issue.
- **Measure:** Improve access to counselling, mental health support, legal information, and community-based services specifically designed around LGBTQIA+ needs, coordinated rather than siloed by theme.

C8. Formalise collaboration between civil society, educational institutions, and policymakers

- **Actors:** Civil society organisations; educational institutions; policymaking bodies at all levels
- **Challenge:** Progress across all five thematics depends on stakeholders acting in coordination, but cooperation is currently ad hoc rather than structural.
- **Measure:** Establish standing cooperation mechanisms — working groups, formal partnerships, joint reporting — between civil society, education, and policymaking bodies as a foundation for sustainable change across all thematic areas.

6.2 Conclusions

This Guide was drafted at a moment when the direction of LGBTQIA+ rights in Europe can no longer be assumed. For much of the past two decades, progress, however uneven, moved broadly in one direction. That assumption no longer holds. In October

2025, the European Commission adopted its second LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy, covering 2026–2030, addressing hate crime, online abuse, conversion practices and workplace inclusion, and considering whether to finally advance the long-stalled proposal to add hate offences to the list of EU crimes under Article 83 TFEU. Yet ILGA-Europe welcomed the strategy while flagging that its ambition is noticeably lower than its predecessor — a striking assessment given that rights were already deteriorating under the 2020–2025 framework. The gap between the EU's stated commitments and the lived reality on the ground is not a technicality. It is the same gap this Guide's recommendations were built to close — and, unlike the Strategy, this Guide does not stop at intent: the Hate Speech chapter sets out the specific legal mechanism (unblocking Article 83 TFEU, aligned national criminal codes) needed to make that commitment enforceable rather than aspirational.

That reality is visible inside the Union, not only beyond it. Crackdowns on LGBTQIA+ rights in countries including Hungary (Human Rights Watch, 2026), Slovakia (Al Jazeera, 2025), and Bulgaria (ILGA-Europe, 2024) highlight the EU's mixed record and the need for more concerted action to hold member states accountable. In February 2026, a teacher in Pécs, Hungary, was formally charged for organising a Pride march that a court had banned. It is the first time in EU history a Pride march organiser has faced criminal prosecution (Amnesty International, 2026). These are not isolated incidents in distant jurisdictions. They are what happens when legal protection depends on political goodwill rather than structural guarantee — precisely the pattern this Guide's recommendations on Legal Gender Recognition, Hate Crimes, and Hate Speech were designed to interrupt, by shifting protection from discretionary practice to enforceable right, and by ensuring that a person's legal gender marker or civil documentation can never be used, as it has been elsewhere, to obstruct their political participation or civil standing.

The danger is not confined to legislation, or to the offline world. Hate and violence against the LGBTQIA+ community is rising in Europe, and, as the EU's Commissioner for Equality has put it, online hostility does not stay online — it fuels violence in the real world (EUobserver, 2025). This Guide treats that as a design failure as much as a moderation one: automated systems that over-censor neutral identity terms while missing genuine incitement are not a legislative gap but an enforcement gap in tools the EU already has, which is why several recommendations in the Hate Speech chapter are addressed directly to Digital Services Coordinators and platforms, not only to lawmakers — and why closing the awareness gap between what EU digital rights frameworks already offer and what affected communities actually know how to use is treated as a recommendation in its own right.

We, the IGNITED-POWER consortium, the young people and ambassadors of the OpenLabs, and the experts, policymakers, and workers who took part in the Roundtable, do not present these recommendations as a wish list external to the concerns of European societies. LGBTQIA+ rights are human rights, and their erosion is a reliable early indicator of wider democratic strain: the same weaknesses that allow LGBTQIA+ protections to be rolled back — inconsistent enforcement, unaccountable discretion, a widening distance between stated policy and lived practice — degrade the resilience of the whole society that tolerates them. A society that builds durable, enforceable protection for its most targeted minorities builds, in the same act, more resilient institutions, more trustworthy public services, and a more genuine claim to the

equality it professes. The workplace recommendations in this Guide make the same point at smaller scale: written protocols, chosen-name recognition, and transparent but GDPR-compliant reporting are not bureaucratic add-ons but the everyday infrastructure that determines whether a right on paper is a right in practice.

This is also why intersectionality runs through this Guide as a working principle rather than a single chapter. The people most exposed to the risks described above are rarely affected by only one axis of marginalisation. A trans asylum seeker, a Roma LGBTQIA+ youth worker, a disabled non-binary employee. Each carries compounded risk that single-issue policy consistently fails to see, which is precisely what the Intersectional Approach chapter, and the crosscutting call for coordinated support services (C7), exist to correct.

None of this is reason for resignation. It is the reason this Guide and other similar guides exist. Every recommendation in these pages, from self-determination in legal gender recognition, to enforceable workplace accountability and chosen-name recognition, to a shared EU definition of hate speech backed by real platform enforcement, to the crosscutting call for stable funding and structural youth representation (C1–C8), is a concrete, implementable answer to a documented, current risk, not a hypothetical one.

The consortium's role does not end with this draft. Partner organisations will carry this Guide directly into their national and institutional networks, beginning with its formal presentation in Bilbao at the project's final conference, hosted by UPV in October 2026. From there, dissemination continues as a shared, ongoing commitment: each consortium partner will promote the Guide within their own national and international networks, ensuring its recommendations reach the institutions, policymakers, and organisations named as responsible actors throughout these pages — not as a one-off publication, but as a working reference partners return to and advocate around. The 268 participants who gave their time to the OpenLabs, and the 39 experts and policymakers who joined the Roundtable across five countries, did so on the understanding that this work would not stop at description. It is now this Guide's task, and that of every consortium partner carrying it forward from Bilbao onward, to make sure it doesn't.

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