SPHERE+

Cooperation Against LGBTIQ+ Hate Speech in Political & Public Spheres

Evidence Base Report

February 2026

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. [Project Number: 101215091]

Co-funded by the European Union

Sphere+ Cooperation Against LGBTIQ+ Hate Speech in Political and Public spheres
CERV-2024-CHAR-LITI-SPEECH
Project reference number: 101215091

Work package 2:
Deliverable 2.1 Evidence Base Report
Comprehensive report consolidating survey findings, hate speech analysis, and CSO needs analysis.

Due date of deliverable:	31/01/2026
New due date of deliverable:	09/02/2026
Submission date:	09/02/2026
Organisation name of lead contractor for this document:	POLITICAL CAPITAL PIC 930878058
Author:	Political Capital Hungary
Research team:	ECHR France European e-Learning Institute Denmark LGBTI Deystvie Roscommon Integrated Development Company Ireland Momentum Ireland Volonteurope Belgium
Document design:	Momentum

Version	Date	Summary
2.0	09/02/2026	Development of the final version

The project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the results of the desk research, surveys and interviews conducted in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Hungary, and Ireland as part of the EU-funded SPHERE+ project. The research aimed to inform the project's subsequent activities, particularly with regard to the knowledge, attitudes and practices of politicians and public officials concerning LGBTIQ+ people; the needs of politicians, public officials and pro-LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations (CSOs); the situation of LGBTIQ+ people; and anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors and narratives in the project countries. The most important findings of the surveys and interviews are listed below.

Knowledge, attitudes and needs of politicians and public officials

- **Challenges for LGBTIQ+ people:**
    - **Online hate speech was identified as the most significant challenge** by politicians and public officials in all countries, followed by offline hate speech.
    - **Perceptions of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes varied considerably across countries**, with politicians and public officials in Belgium, Denmark, and Hungary reporting a relatively low frequency of such crimes, while French respondents were the most concerned about the phenomenon.
    - **Discrimination** was reported least frequently in Belgium and most frequently in Bulgaria.
    - The **lack of sufficient rights and repressive laws** was perceived as a substantial concern for LGBTIQ+ people in Hungary, Bulgaria, Denmark and France.
- **Acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people:** Across almost all countries, politicians and public officials viewed themselves, their colleagues and staff, and their voters/service beneficiaries as more accepting of LGBTIQ+ people than their respective societies. However, Central and Eastern European countries were perceived as being significantly less accepting than their Western and Northern European counterparts.
- **Participation in training on LGBTIQ+ issues and hate speech** was very limited among both politicians and public officials across all six countries surveyed.
- **Contact with CSOs:** A large proportion of respondents in several countries did not know if their party or political body had ever had contact with civil society organisations (CSOs) on LGBTIQ+ issues. Where contact occurred, the focus areas most commonly reported were ‘advocacy and policy influence’ and ‘awareness-raising and education’.
- **Response to discrimination or insults:** Respondents from Belgium, France, and Hungary appeared to be the most confident in knowing how to respond to discrimination or insults against LGBTIQ+ colleagues or staff in the workplace.

Knowledge and experience of CSOs in collaborating with and training politicians and public officials on LGBTIQ+ issues

- **Experiences with hate speech**
    - **Experiencing anti-LGBTQI+ hate speech was common** among responding CSOs in all project countries, primarily online and particularly among LGBTQI+ focused and human rights NGOs.

    - **Three common ways of handling online hate content** were identified: hiding or deleting the content, responding to it, and reporting it to the social media platform or the authorities.
    - **Formal reporting was rare**, key barriers include lack of trust in authorities, an inadequate reporting environment, limited knowledge or capacity, past negative experiences, fear of victimisation, uncertainty around the definition of hate speech, and the anonymity of perpetrators. Smaller organisations tend to report hate speech informally, while larger organisations are more likely to do so formally.
- **Cooperation with other actors:** Most responding CSOs cooperate frequently with other CSOs; however, cooperation with institutions, authorities, and political actors is limited.
- **Politicians' and public officials' openness to and knowledge on to LGBTQI+ issues**: Perceptions of the openness of politicians and public officials to LGBTQI+ issues varied across countries, whereas perceptions of politicians' knowledge were more consistent and limited to isolated cases.
- **Experiences with training** to politicians or public officials LGBTQI+ issues: The majority of responding CSOs have not participated in or been involved in such trainings. Those that have participated mostly reported that these trainings attract politicians who are already open to these topics.
- **Experiences with advocacy on LGBTQI+ issues**:
    - **Majority of the responding CSOs have been engaged in advocacy activities** related to LGBTQI+ issues.
    - **Applied advocacy methods varied by countries**, but public campaigns, media engagement, and coalition-building were among the most common ones.
    - **As barriers of advocacy** organisations emphasised the lack of political will, political hostility and resistance, insufficient resources, the lack of expertise or training, and limited access to politicians.
    - The effectiveness of coordinated cross-sector advocacy was highlighted in many countries.

Training needs

- **Politicians and public officials in all six countries consistently acknowledged the usefulness of training on LGBTIQ+ issues.** However, the extent to which training was viewed as a personal versus an institutional need varied.
- **Politicians in all countries prioritised training in legal knowledge, countering hate speech and cooperation with civil society organisations (CSOs)** over ethical leadership and inclusive approaches as well as inclusive, respectful and empathetic communication. Public officials generally rated all training areas as equally important.
- **CSO respondents also confirmed the usefulness of LGBTIQ+ issue-related training** for politicians and public officials across most thematic areas. Furthermore, CSOs considered many of the topics to be useful for themselves.
- **The importance of training on cooperation with CSOs was viewed differently** by the two groups: while CSOs considered it to be the least useful area of training, politicians and public officials regarded it as comparatively important.
- **Training features identified by CSOs**:
    - **All training on LGBTQI+ issues should address intersectionality**.

- **Training for politicians and public officials**, among others, should be long-term, combine formal workshops with informal engagement, include real-life examples, and highlight good examples of political action from abroad.
- **Training for CSOs**, among other priorities, should explore the intersections of different forms of hate, include guidance on recognising disinformation and misinformation, and provide information on building safety mechanisms into training frameworks.

01

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The Evidence Base Report summarises the results of the second Work Package (WP2) of the SPHERE+ project.

The aim of WP2 was to develop an evidence base to:

1) inform relevant stakeholders about knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding LGBTIQ+ issues in political and public spheres;
2) refine key learning needs and preferred mechanisms for SPHERE+ training and education interventions;
3) support with findings the collaboration between CSOs, policymakers, and other stakeholders by assessing the current knowledge and experience of CSOs in cooperating with, and training, politicians and public officials on LGBTIQ+ issues and hate speech.

WP2 consisted of three tasks:

- T2.1 Survey of Politicians and Public Officials: aimed at exploring the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of politicians and public officials targeted in WP3.
- T2.2 Analysis of anti-LGTBQI+ Cases: aimed at collecting and analysing anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives and cases.
- T2.3 Needs analysis of CSOs politicians and public officials: aimed at mapping and analysing the needs of CSOs active on LGBTIQ+ issues.

The Evidence Base Report incorporates the findings from all three tasks. It first outlines the results on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of politicians and public officials in the project countries (T2.1). It then presents the findings from the CSO needs analysis (T2.3). Subsequently, it summarises the training needs of both target groups, together with additional insights provided by CSOs (T2.1&T2.3). The report then offers background information on the situation of LGBTIQ+ people in the project countries, drawing on international public opinion polls and relevant legislation. Finally, it provides a detailed overview of anti-LGBTIQ+ actors and narratives in the project countries, including a collection of political cases involving such narratives (T2.2).

As the primary aim was to inform subsequent project activities, the research was not designed to be representative of the target groups in the project countries. The results therefore reflect only the knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of the politicians, public officials, and CSO representatives who participated anonymously and voluntarily. Consequently, the findings should not be considered representative of the broader populations in the project countries.

02

METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

The research employed three methodological approaches: an anonymous survey, anonymised semi-structured interviews, and desk-based research.

2.1 Survey for politicians and public officials

The T2.1 survey was conducted in all project countries among current and former politicians, holders of political office, and members of political parties (hereinafter "politicians"), as well as public officials. The primary aim was to reach members of these two target groups who might participate in later phases of the project – in other words, those who were open to LGBTIQ+ issues and had the capacity and willingness to complete the survey. Therefore, the results only reflect the opinions of those who participated in the survey and should not be considered representative of broader populations in the project countries.

The survey was anonymous, standardised across countries, and translated into local languages. Following joint revision, it was distributed online to participants identified by project partners through publicly available sources and organisational networks. The target was a minimum of 150 responses across the six countries. In the end, we managed to gather 154 responses in total.

2.2 Survey and interviews for CSOs

The T2.3 survey was conducted in all project countries among CSOs (civil society organisations). The aim was to reach (pro-)LGBTIQ+ CSOs as well as both smaller and larger organisations – including those not specifically focused on LGBTIQ+ issues but which engage with them occasionally. Therefore, the results only reflect the opinions of those who participated in the survey and should not be considered representative of broader populations in the project countries.

The survey was anonymous, standardised, and translated into local languages. After revision, it was distributed online to CSOs identified through publicly available sources and partner networks. The target was at least 48 responses across the six countries. In the end, we managed to gather 70 responses in total.

To complement the survey data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with CSOs in each project country. All interviews were anonymised, with a minimum of two interviews per country.

2.3 Desk research on anti-LGBTIQ+ actors, narratives and cases

The T2.2 desk research provided an overview of the situation of LGBTIQ+ actors and a more detailed examination of anti-LGBTIQ+ actors, narratives, and political cases in each country. Partners collected information through desk research using publicly available data sources relevant to their national contexts.

2.4 Ethics and data protection

All research activities involved sensitive or potentially identifiable data. The project complied fully with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and ethical standards for research involving human participants. This applied to the surveys, interviews, and desk research.

Participants received clear information on the purpose of the research, data use, withdrawal rights, and contact points for questions or complaints. Written or digital consent was obtained before interviews. All data were anonymised and used only in aggregated form. Participation was voluntary, with no negative consequences for non-participation.

2.5 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

- **Non-representative sample: t**he research did not aim to generate representative data. Findings reflect only the knowledge and experiences of respondents and cannot be generalised to all politicians, public officials, or CSOs in the project countries.
- **Sampling and self-selection bias: p**articipants were identified through partner networks and voluntarily chose to take part. Individuals or organisations more engaged with LGBTIQ+ issues are therefore likely over-represented.
- **Standardised and translated survey instruments:** While standardisation ensured comparability, it may have limited sensitivity to national contexts. Despite careful translation, questions may have been interpreted differently across languages.
- **Online distribution:** Online-only distribution may have reduced accessibility for some individuals or smaller organisations, affecting response rates.
- **Limited depth of data:** Surveys allowed only limited exploration of complex issues. Although interviews added qualitative depth, the small number conducted in each country restricted the breadth of insights.
- **Desk research constraints:** Desk research relied on publicly available information, which varies in quality and availability across countries. Some gaps and inconsistencies may therefore remain.

Overall, these limitations do not undermine the relevance of the findings but should be considered when interpreting results or comparing countries.

03

POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS

3. KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES OF POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS REGARDING LGBTIQ+ ISSUES

3.1 Introduction

This section summarises the results of a survey conducted in the implementing countries among current and former politicians, holders of political office, or members of political parties (hereinafter "politicians"), and public officials targeted in a later part (WP3) of the SPHERE+ project. The aim was to explore their knowledge, attitudes, and experiences regarding LGBQI+ issues, cooperations with CSOs, and training needs.

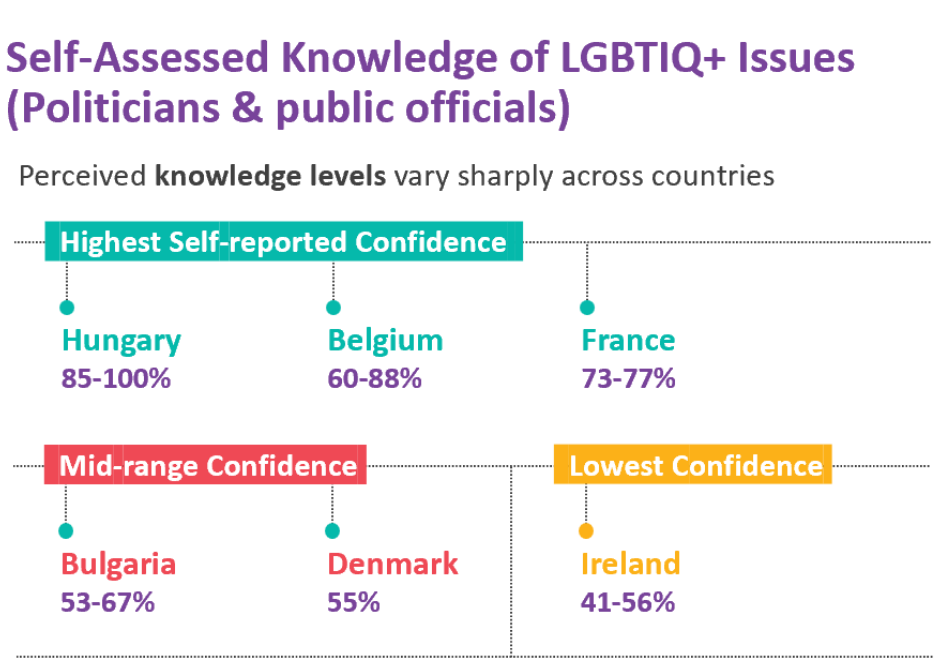
The initial aim was to collect a total of 150 responses After sending out the survey multiple times in most countries, a total of 109 politicians and 45 public officials responded according to the following breakdown:

- Belgium: 17 politicians and 5 public officials;
- Bulgaria: 13 politicians and 9 public officials;
- Denmark: 1 politician and 9 public officials;
- France: 17 politicians and 11 public officials;
- Hungary: 44 politicians and 2 public officials;
- Ireland: 17 politicians and 9 public officials.

The results were summarised by country, also drawing on similarities and differences among them.

3.2 Awareness of LGBTIQ+ issues

When asked to assess their awareness of LGBTIQ+ people's issues – including their social situation, challenges, and exposure to hate speech – in their respective countries, respondents reported varying levels of confidence.



Hungarian respondents reported the highest confidence, with 84.1% of responding politicians and all responding public officials stating they were 'very well informed' or 'well informed' on LGBTIQ+ people's issues.

Belgian respondents reported similar awareness, with 88.2% of responding politicians and 60% of responding public officials claiming to be 'very well informed' or 'well informed' on the matter.

French respondents also categorised themselves similarly, with 76.5% of responding politicians and 72.4% of responding public officials considering themselves 'very well informed' or 'well informed'.

This contrasts with Denmark, where the responding politician and 55.5% of responding public officials assessed their awareness at this level, and Bulgaria, where 53% of responding politicians and 66.6% of responding public officials reported being 'very well informed' or 'well informed'. Irish respondents appeared least confident, with 41.2% of responding politicians and 55.5% of responding public officials reporting the same.

When prompted to assess their immediate colleagues' knowledge of LGBTIQ+ people's issues, awareness among colleagues was perceived to be lower than the respondents' own in almost all countries and across all categories.

In Belgium, only 64.7% of responding politicians and 40% of responding public officials regarded their colleagues as 'very well informed' or 'well informed'. In Bulgaria, awareness levels diverged even more sharply between politicians and public officials. While 53% of responding politicians and 66.6% of responding public officials considered themselves 'well' or 'very well informed', only 22–23% believed the same of their colleagues. As stated before, only one politician in Denmark responded to survey, resulting in uniformly positive scores for politicians. Among Danish public officials, 44.4% of their respondents considered their colleagues 'well informed', which is slightly lower than how they perceived their own knowledge levels.

Similar trends were observed in France, where 70.6% of responding politicians and 45.5% of responding public officials considered their colleagues 'well' or 'very well informed', which is high but still a considerable drop compared to their own perceived awareness. In Hungary, as in all other countries, perceptions of colleagues were substantially lower, with 44.2% of responding politicians and none of the public officials describing their peers as 'very well informed' or 'well informed'. The contrast between self-perception and the perception of colleagues was also stark in Ireland, with only 17.6% of responding politicians and 22.2% of responding public officials viewing people they worked with as 'very well informed' or 'well informed' on LGBTIQ+ issues.

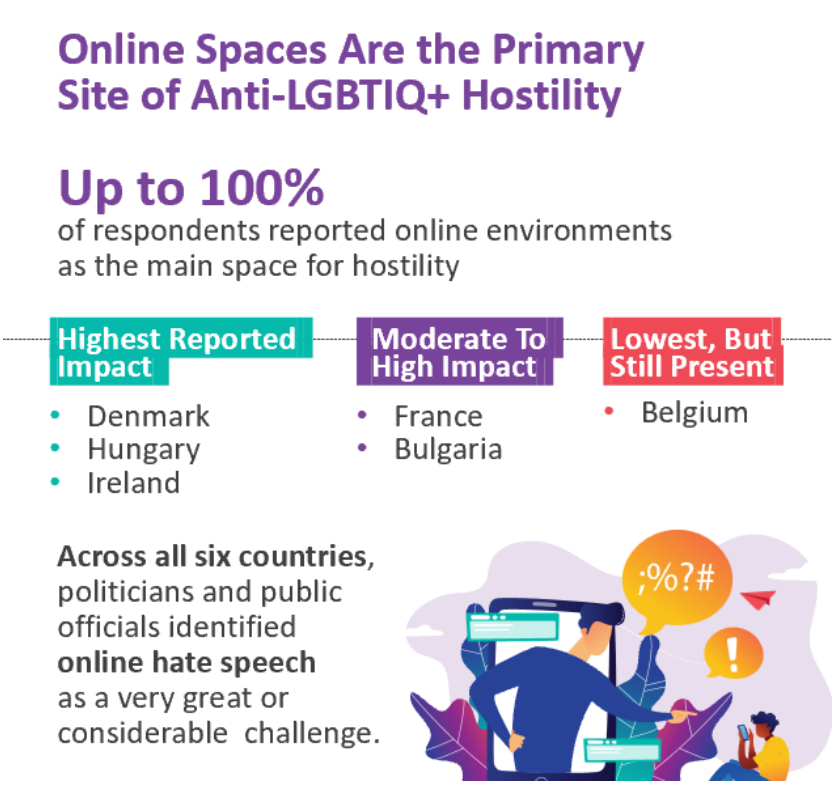
Overall, across all countries except Belgium, public officials tended to report higher awareness than politicians, while both groups consistently expressed scepticism towards their colleagues' level of knowledge.

3.3 Perception of LGBTIQ+ issues

When surveyed about the extent to which they consider hate crimes, online hate speech, offline hate speech, discrimination, and the lack of sufficient rights or repressive laws to be challenges for LGBTIQ+ people in their home countries, respondents' answers were relatively unanimous across countries and sectors alike.

Remarkably, **online hate speech emerged as the most consistently reported challenge across all countries and respondent groups. In all countries, online environments were perceived as the primary space where anti-LGBTIQ+ hostility occurs, regardless of broader societal acceptance levels.**

Online hate speech was reported as a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge in the project countries to the following extents by politicians and public officials: most frequently in Denmark (100% and 88.9%), Hungary (86.4% and 100%), and Ireland (76.5% and 100%), followed by France (88.2% and 81.8%) and Bulgaria (69.2% and 77.8%), and least prominently in Belgium (58.8% and 60%).



Respondents also perceived offline hate speech as a significant challenge in the project countries.

- It appeared most frequently in **France**, with over half (58.8%) of responding politicians regarding it as a 'very great' challenge, and 88.2% of responding politicians and 63.7% of responding public officials considering it a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge.
- The situation was similar in **Bulgaria**, where 76% of responding politicians and 77% of responding public officials placed it in the 'very great' to 'considerable' categories.
- **Hungarian** respondents reported slightly lower frequency of offline hate speech, with 67.4% of responding politicians and 100% of responding public officials regarding it as a challenge to a 'very great' to 'considerable' extent, the majority favouring the latter category.
- In **Ireland**, the respective numbers were 53% of responding politicians and 66.6% of responding public officials.
- Although less prevalent than in the other countries surveyed, offline hate speech was also reported in **Denmark**, where the only responding politician and 88.9% of responding public officials regarded it as a 'considerable' challenge.
- Contrastingly, only 23.5% of responding politicians and 20% of responding public officials in **Belgium** regarded offline hate speech as a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge.

Perceptions of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes varied more across the countries.

- **Belgium** represented the lower end of severity, with responding politicians and public officials alike deeming hate crimes highly unlikely – almost half (41.2%) of them claiming that, in their perception, it is not a problem at all, and around a third (31.1%) reporting it as a small or moderate challenge.
- Responding politicians and public officials from **Belgium, Denmark and Hungary** reported relatively low frequency of hate crimes, with 67.4% of responding politicians and 100% of responding public

officials in Hungary, and the one politician and 88.9% of responding public officials in Denmark considering it a challenge of 'moderate' to 'small' extent.

- **Irish** respondents viewed hate crimes as a slightly more serious concern, with 47% of responding politicians and 44.4% of responding public officials considering it a challenge to a 'very great' or 'considerable' extent.
- **Bulgarian** politicians and public officials viewed hate crimes as even more serious, with 69% of responding politicians and 66% of responding public officials reporting the issue as challenging to a 'very great' or 'considerable' extent.
- **French** politicians and public officials deemed hate crimes the third most likely type of challenge for the LGBTIQ+ community, with 94.1% of responding politicians and 54.6% of responding public officials categorising it as a 'very great' or 'considerable' challenge.

Similarly to the previous categories, discrimination was reported least frequently in Belgium and most commonly in Bulgaria.

- In **Belgium**, respondents regarded discrimination as highly unlikely – around half of the responding politicians (47.1%) and 40% of the responding public officials claimed it was not a challenge at all, while around a third of responding politicians (35.3%) and 40% of responding public officials reported it as a small or moderate threat.
- Discrimination was also perceived as fairly unlikely in **Ireland**, where 29.4% of responding politicians and 22.2% of responding public officials named it a challenge of a 'very great' or 'considerable' extent.
- According to the respondents, the landscape appeared more hostile in **France**, where 82.4% of responding politicians and 45.5% of responding public officials saw discrimination as a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge.
- Discrimination was perceived as even more prominent in **Denmark**, with one responding politician regarding it as a 'very great' challenge and 77.8% of responding public officials considering it at least a 'considerable' threat.
- Survey results were similar in **Hungary**, where 69.7% of responding politicians considered discrimination a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge, and all public officials reported it as a 'considerable' challenge.
- Perception of discrimination was highest in **Bulgaria** among the countries surveyed, with 76% of responding politicians and 77% of responding public officials reporting it as a 'very great' to 'considerable' challenge. It is worth highlighting that Bulgarian respondents saw offline hate speech, hate crimes, and online hate speech as challenges to a similarly high extent.

The lack of sufficient rights and repressive laws was perceived as a substantial concern for LGBTIQ+ people in Hungary, Bulgaria, Denmark, and France alike.

- It appeared most prominent in **Hungary**, where 60.5% of responding politicians and 50% of responding public officials deemed the lack of sufficient rights and repressive laws a challenge to a 'very great' extent.
- Similarly, among **Bulgarian** respondents, 46% of responding politicians and 33% of responding public officials considered the issue a 'very great' challenge.

- In **Denmark**, the only responding politician marked the lack of sufficient rights and repressive laws as a 'very great' challenge, while 77.8% of responding public officials considered it a 'considerable' challenge.
- In **France**, 29.4% of responding politicians and 9.1% of responding public officials saw the phenomenon as a 'very great' challenge.
- By contrast, responses from **Ireland** and **Belgium** painted a much more positive picture. Only 5.9% and 11.1% of responding Irish politicians and public officials, and in Belgium 5.9% of responding politicians and none of the responding public officials, considered the lack of sufficient rights and repressive laws a 'very great' challenge.

Comparing all six countries, several patterns emerge. Firstly, online hate speech emerged as the single most prominent challenge across all countries and respondent groups. Secondly, the nature of the threats facing the LGBTIQ+ community differs greatly across the countries. While Belgian and Irish respondents saw individual hateful acts as more likely, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, and Hungary reported a far more severe and multidimensional challenge landscape. The results therefore suggest that systemic and legal pressures in these countries were perceived as more pressing than individual violent acts in the latter four countries.

3.4 Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people

Personal acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people is high across all countries and groups, with comfort levels reported as 'very comfortable' in nearly all settings (close family member, close friend, colleague, neighbour, country citizen) in Denmark (100% of both groups) and Ireland (between 88-95% of responding politicians and 88-100% of responding public officials). A high proportion of respondents also reported being 'very comfortable' in all settings in France (responding politicians – 82.5%, responding public officials – 72.7%), Hungary (between 70-82% of responding politicians and all responding public officials), and Bulgaria (76-85% of responding politicians and 33-56% of responding public officials).

Respondents in Belgium reported a slightly lower level of acceptance, especially among public officials, with 50-60% of responding politicians being 'very comfortable' and around 80% of responding public officials being 'somewhat comfortable'. Remarkably, variation in responses was most striking in France, where a consistent 9.1% of responding public officials expressed being 'very uncomfortable' with encountering LGBTIQ+ people in their close circles. No other groups in any other countries reported such attitudes.

Perceptions of societal acceptance varied more substantially. When asked to compare how accepting their respective societies, their voter or service beneficiaries, and members and staff within their political organisations or institutions, respondents consistently rated the latter two as more accepting than the societal average.

Generally, Belgium, Denmark and Ireland are perceived as highly accepting societies. Responding Danish public officials unanimously described society as 'accepting' or 'very accepting'. In Belgium, 64.7% of responding politicians and 80% of responding public officials considered society accepting. Danish respondents also regarded their voters and organisations as accepting. The majority of responding Belgian politicians (88-94%) perceived their voters/service beneficiaries and organisations as more accepting than society, while this perception was lower among responding public officials, with only 60% reporting them as 'accepting' or 'very accepting'. Around 70% of responding Irish politicians and 88% of responding public

officials perceived society as accepting or very accepting. Meanwhile, 65% of responding Irish politicians and 66% of responding public officials rated their voters as accepting or very accepting, but around 94% of responding politicians and 88% of responding public officials indicated the same for their organisations.

France occupied an intermediate position – responding public officials appeared to view society as much less accepting than responding politicians, with 58.8% of responding politicians and only 27.3% of responding public officials categorising French society as 'accepting' or 'very accepting'. Regarding their voters/service beneficiaries, all responding French politicians and 45–55% of responding public officials claimed them to be accepting or very accepting.

By contrast, Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents perceived considerably lower societal acceptance. In Bulgaria, 61% of responding politicians and 33% of responding public officials described society as 'not very' or 'not at all' accepting, while in Hungary, 67.4% of responding politicians and all responding public officials characterised society in these terms. In both countries, respondents consistently viewed their own party members, staff, voters, or service beneficiaries as more accepting than society at large, indicating perceived protective micro-environments within institutions and organisations. In Hungary, 90-95% of responding politicians and 50% of responding public officials considered their voters/service beneficiaries and organisations as accepting or very accepting. In Bulgaria, only 38% of responding politicians considered their voters as accepting, the same proportion as neutral, while around 53% categorised their organisations as accepting, 23% as neutral, and 23% as 'not very accepting'. Responding Bulgarian public officials were more evenly distributed in their perceptions, considering their service beneficiaries and organisations as accepting, neutral, or 'not very accepting'.

Across almost all countries, responding politicians and public officials viewed themselves, their colleagues and staff, and their voters/service beneficiaries as more accepting than their respective societies. A slight geographic divide appears to emerge from the results, with Central-Eastern European countries perceived as significantly less accepting towards LGBTIQ+ people than their Western and Northern European counterparts.

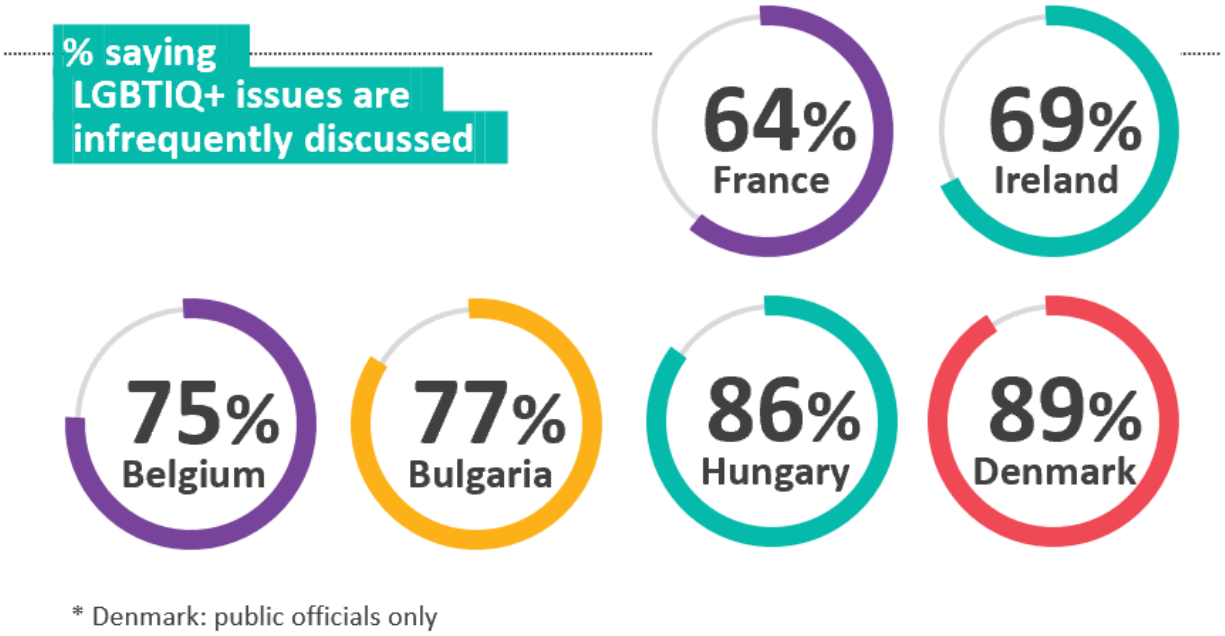
3.5 Discussion of and sensitivity to LGBTIQ+ issues among colleagues

According to the results, across all countries, LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed infrequently in institutional settings, regardless of awareness or attitudes. Even in more accepting contexts, such as Belgium, Denmark, and Ireland, discussions are described as occasional rather than routine. Although LGBTIQ+ issues are not completely absent from workplace conversations in any of the countries surveyed, they often remain marginal and sporadic.

Share of respondents who say LGBTIQ+ issues are infrequently discussed in professional settings

In every country surveyed, a majority of respondents report that LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed only occasionally, rarely, or not at all in their professional environments.

Infrequent = discussed occasionally, rarely, or never)



* Denmark: public officials only

In Belgium, 70.6% of responding politicians and 80% of responding public officials reported that LGBTIQ+ issues are discussed 'occasionally' or 'rarely'. In France, 64.7% of responding politicians and 63.6% of responding public officials reported 'occasionally', 'rarely', or 'never' discussing LGBTIQ+ issues with their colleagues. Denmark showed a similar pattern, with 55.6% of responding public officials reporting 'occasional' discussion and exactly one-third reporting 'rare' discussion.

Ireland displayed slightly higher engagement, with 29.4% of responding politicians and 33.3% of responding public officials reporting 'frequent' discussion, although most still characterised conversations as only occasional. Bulgaria and Hungary reported the lowest levels of discussion. In Bulgaria, 76% of responding politicians and 78% of responding public officials indicated that LGBTIQ+ topics are 'rarely' 'never' discussed. In Hungary, 72.1% of responding politicians and all responding public officials reported only 'occasional' or 'rare' discussion.

Regarding sensitivity, most respondents across countries described LGBTIQ+ issues as 'neutral' to 'somewhat sensitive' rather than taboo. Sensitivity was highest in Bulgaria and France, where a substantial minority of respondents reported that discussions require caution, while Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, and Ireland displayed lower perceived sensitivity overall.

3.6 Experiences with hate speech

Across all surveyed countries, responding politicians and public officials most consistently and frequently encountered anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech in online environments. This pattern holds across both groups and divergent national contexts, suggesting that online hate speech constitutes a shared transnational challenge rather than a country-specific phenomenon. Experiences of hate speech in public places and organisational or institutional settings varied by country.

The majority of responding politicians in France (94%), Bulgaria (77.8%), Hungary (70.5%), and Ireland (64.7%) reported encountering anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech online 'often' or 'very often'. Responding public officials also reported high levels of encountering hate speech, although rates varied across countries (100% in Hungary, 88.9% in Ireland, and 72.7% in France).

According to responding Hungarian politicians, hate speech was less frequent in political settings (45%) and least likely in public places (20.5%). Responding public officials experienced less hate speech in public places and even less in political settings, with all encountering hate speech in the former setting 'sometimes', and half reporting it 'rarely' and half 'never' in the latter.

Responding French politicians also encountered anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech less frequently in public places and institutional settings, with around half reporting exposure in both. The majority of responding public officials in France (63.3%) experienced hate speech 'sometimes' or 'rarely' in institutional settings, and the same proportion in public places.

Irish respondents reported relatively high levels of hate speech in public places, with 35% of responding politicians experiencing it 'often' and 44% of responding public officials experiencing it 'often' or 'very often'. Exposure was lower in political and institutional settings, where 70.6% of responding politicians and 88.9% of responding public officials reported encountering it 'sometimes' or 'rarely'.

Bulgarian results revealed that anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech was also frequent in political settings, with 61.5% of responding politicians encountering it 'often' or 'very often'. It was less common in institutional settings, where 33.5% of responding public officials encountered it 'often' or 'very often' and 55.6% 'sometimes' or 'rarely'. In Bulgaria, hate speech in public places was more frequently experienced by responding public officials (55.6% 'often' or 'very often') than by responding politicians (38.5% 'often' or 'very often', and 53.8% 'sometimes' or 'rarely').

By contrast, Belgium and Denmark reported overall lower exposure, although online hate speech still dominated relative to other settings.

In Belgium, the majority of responding politicians experienced online hate speech 'sometimes' or 'rarely' (76.5%), while the remainder reported encountering it 'very often'. Responding Belgian public officials reported higher exposure, with 60% experiencing it 'often' and the rest 'sometimes'. In public places, all responding Belgian politicians reported experiencing hate speech 'sometimes' or 'rarely', as did the majority of responding public officials (80%), with the remainder encountering it 'often'. Similarly, most responding Belgian politicians (76.5%) and public officials (80%) reported exposure to hate speech in political and institutional settings 'sometimes' or 'rarely', while around 20% in both groups experienced it 'often'.

The one responding Danish politician experienced hate speech online 'very often', and 'often' in other settings. Among responding Danish public officials, 60% encountered online hate speech 'often' and the remainder 'sometimes'. In institutional settings, 66.7% reported 'never' encountering hate speech, with the

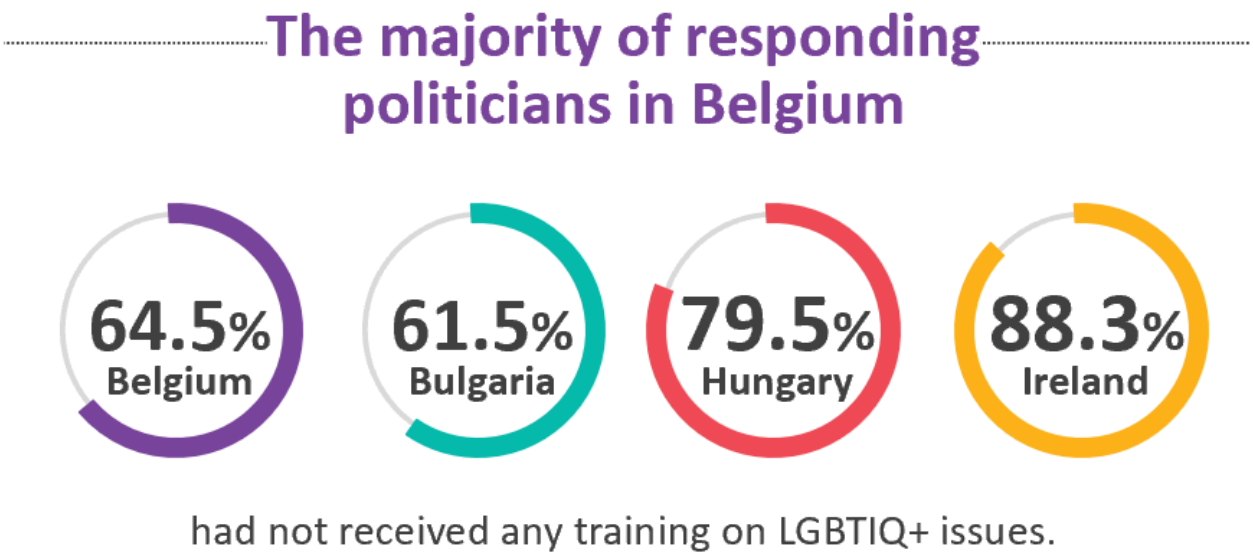
rest reporting it 'sometimes' or 'rarely'. In public places, most reported encountering it 'often' or 'sometimes' (77.8%).

Respondents were also asked whether, and how often, they had to address LGBTIQ+ issues or incidents of hate speech in their official capacities. In Belgium, 88.2% of responding politicians and 80% of responding public officials had addressed such issues at least occasionally. Results were similar in Bulgaria, where 61.5% of responding politicians addressed LGBTIQ+ issues or hate speech incidents occasionally and 15.4% frequently. Among responding Bulgarian public officials, 78% had addressed such issues occasionally, and 11% frequently. In Denmark, a slight majority (55.6%) of responding public officials had addressed hate speech issues at least occasionally, while almost half (44.4%) had never dealt with such incidents. In France, 35.3% of responding politicians dealt with these issues frequently and 47.1% occasionally, while the proportions were 27.3% and 63.3%, respectively, among public officials. **Notably, French respondents appeared to deal with anti-LGBTIQ+ incidents most frequently among all countries surveyed, corresponding with the data recorded regarding offline hate.** In Hungary, 75% of responding politicians dealt with such incidents occasionally and 13.6% frequently, while only 50% of responding public officials reported doing so occasionally. Among Irish respondents, most politicians (76.5%) addressed these phenomena occasionally. Similarly, 77.8% of responding public officials did so occasionally and 11.1% frequently.

3.7 Previous training on LGBTIQ+ issues

Across all six countries surveyed, participation in training on LGBTIQ+ issues and hate speech was very limited in both groups.

The majority of responding politicians in Belgium (64.5%), Bulgaria (61.5%), Hungary (79.5%), and Ireland (88.3%) had not received any training on LGBTIQ+ issues. Even more responding politicians in these countries had not participated in training on anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech (Belgium – 88.2%, Bulgaria – 76.9%, Hungary – 81.8%, and Ireland – 88.2%).



The only responding Danish politician has not participated in training on either topic, whereas the slight majority of responding French politicians (58.8%) had received training on both.

Unlike politicians, the slight majority of responding public officials had received training on LGBTIQ+ issues in Belgium (60%), Bulgaria (55.6%), and France (54.5%). Most responding public officials had not participated in any kind of training on the topic in Denmark (66.7%), Hungary (none), and Ireland (88.9%). Regarding training on anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech, the majority of responding public officials had not received any training in Belgium (80%), Denmark (88.9%), France (63.6%), Hungary (none), and Ireland (88.9%). The only exception was Bulgaria, where most responding public officials (66.7%) had taken part in training on the topic.

3.8 Contacts with CSOs

When asked whether their party or political body had ever had contact with civil society organisations (CSOs) on LGBTIQ+ issues, a large proportion of respondents in several countries answered that they don't know. This included responding politicians in Belgium (58.8%), Ireland (29.4%), and France (23.5%), and responding public officials in Denmark (66.6%), Hungary (50%), Ireland (44.4%), France (27.3%), and Belgium (20%).

The majority of responding politicians and public officials from Bulgaria (84.6% and 66.7%, respectively) reported that their political bodies had some contact with CSOs on LGBTIQ+ issues. Responding politicians from Denmark (all), France (70.6%), Hungary (79.5%), and Ireland (58.8%) reported the same. A majority of responding Belgian (60%) and French (63.3%) public officials also indicated that their institutions had contact with CSOs on the topic.

Where contact between political bodies or institutions occurred, its focus was largely consistent across countries. The most common areas included 'advocacy and policy influence' and 'awareness-raising and education'. Some respondents also reported training related to 'organisational review and inclusive workspaces', 'research and publication', or 'service provision', although these activities were less frequent.

3.9 Preparedness to handle anti-LGBTIQ+ discrimination and insults in work environments

The survey aimed to explore whether respondents would know how to respond if an LGBTIQ+ colleague or staff member were discriminated against or insulted in their workplace, in three aspects: 1) what advice to give them, 2) where to refer them within their organisations, and 3) where they could obtain external help.

Belgian, French, and Hungarian respondents appeared most confident, with a vast majority reporting that they would feel capable in all three aspects. A slight majority (53.8%) of responding Bulgarian politicians reported that they would know what to do in aspects 1) and 3), but considerably fewer (38.5%) said the same regarding aspect 2). Responding public officials in Bulgaria were much more confident than politicians, with the majority (77.8%) responding positively for all three aspects.

In contrast, responding Danish politicians were confident only about aspects 2) and 3), while the majority of responding public officials indicated that they would not know what to do in any of the three scenarios. Irish respondents appeared the least confident overall, with a slight majority of responding politicians indicating

that they would only know what to do regarding aspect 2), and a slight majority of responding public officials reporting that they would not know what to do in any of the aspects.

04

EXPERIENCE OF CSOS

4. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF CSOS IN COLLABORATING WITH AND TRAINING POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS ON LGBTIQ+ ISSUES

4.1 Introduction

This section summarises the results of a survey and semi-structured interviews conducted in the implementing countries among (pro-)LGBTIQ+ CSOs including those not specifically focused on LGBTIQ+ issues but which engage with them occasionally. The aim was to explore their training needs, experiences with hate speech, and experiences in collaborating with politicians on LGBTQI+ issues.

The initial aim was to collect at least 48 survey responses and a minimum of 12 interviews across the six countries. The number of CSOs that completed the survey varied across the partner countries as follows: Belgium – 23, Bulgaria – 9, Denmark – 8, France – 8, Hungary – 12, and Ireland – 10. To supplement the survey results with more in-depth insights, interviews were also conducted: 3 in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Hungary; 8 in France; and 5 in Ireland. In the survey, three types of CSOs were distinguished: human rights CSOs, LGBTIQ+ CSOs, and non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs.

- In Belgium, all types of CSOs were represented in the survey results, with approximately 17% being LGBTIQ+ CSOs, the same proportion human rights CSOs, and the remainder non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs. The majority of organisations were small, with a few medium or larger organisations. More than half of the responding organisations operate internationally, while the rest work at regional or national levels. Most respondents' organisations have some form of inclusion policy, the majority of which include a specific LGBTIQ+ focus. The interviewees represented one human rights CSO and two non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs operating internationally.
- In Bulgaria, almost half of the respondents were from human rights CSOs (44%), followed by LGBTIQ+ CSOs (33%) and non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs (22%). More than half (56%) were small, and the remainder medium-sized. Most organisations (67%) operate nationally, with the rest working regionally (22%) or locally/municipally (11%). A third of the respondents' organisations have a formal inclusion and non-discrimination policy that explicitly addresses LGBTIQ+ issues, around half have no formal inclusion policy, and the remainder have policies that do not explicitly address LGBTIQ+ issues. The interviewees represented two national human rights CSOs and one LGBTIQ+ CSO.
- In Denmark, the majority of respondents (63%) represented human rights CSOs, with the remainder from LGBTIQ+ CSOs. Half of the organisations were small, followed by medium-sized organisations (38%), and one larger organisation with 21-50 staff members. More than half of the organisations operate regionally, with the remainder at local/municipal (38%) or national levels. Most organisations (88%) have a formal inclusion policy, with slightly less than half of these (38% of total respondents) specifically focusing on LGBTIQ+ issues. All interviewees represented non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs.
- In France, the majority of respondents (63%) represented LGBTIQ+ CSOs, a quarter were non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs, and the remainder human rights CSOs. Around a third of the organisations were medium-sized, a quarter were larger, another quarter had more than 50 staff members, and the remainder were small. Half of the respondents' organisations operated at the regional/provincial

level, 38% at the local/municipal level, and 13% at the national level. All organisations had a formal inclusion policy, of which 13% explicitly addressed LGBTIQ+ issues. The interviewees represented two national LGBTIQ+ associations and six local-level organisations. Of the eight organisations interviewed, six were LGBTIQ+ associations, while two were LGBTIQ+-friendly organisations, including human rights associations.

- In Hungary, half of the respondents represented human rights CSOs, a third LGBTIQ+ CSOs, and the remainder non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs. Two-thirds of these organisations were medium-sized, and the remainder larger. Two-thirds of the organisations operated nationally, with the remainder operating either internationally – including a larger human rights CSO and a smaller LGBTIQ+ CSO – or regionally, including a smaller human rights CSO and a non-LGBTIQ+ CSO. Half of the respondents' organisations have a formal workplace policy addressing inclusion and non-discrimination. Among these, three larger human rights CSOs and two LGBTIQ+ CSOs explicitly include LGBTIQ+ issues, while one non-LGBTIQ+ CSO has a general inclusion and non-discrimination policy that does not explicitly mention LGBTIQ+ issues. The interviewees represented a larger and a smaller LGBTIQ+ CSO, and a smaller human rights CSO.
- In Ireland, half of the respondents' organisations were non-LGBTIQ+ CSOs, a third were human rights CSOs, and the remainder LGBTIQ+ CSOs. Slightly less than half were medium-sized, the same proportion were larger organisations, and the remainder were small. Half of the organisations operated regionally, a fifth nationally and internationally, and the remainder locally/municipally. Half of the organisations had a formal inclusion and non-discrimination policy explicitly addressing LGBTIQ+ issues, while a fifth had a policy that did not specifically address LGBTIQ+ issues. The interviewees represented four LGBTIQ+ CSOs of varying sizes and levels of operation, and one non-LGBTIQ+ CSO.

4.2 Experiences with hate speech

Most responding CSOs encounter anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech in most implementing countries. Around 90% of respondents' organisations encountered anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech in the past year in France, Hungary, and Ireland, 80% in Bulgaria, and 70% in Belgium. The only exception was Denmark, where only 37.5% of respondents' organisations experienced hate speech, and even then, only rarely. **Hungarian respondents reported the most frequent experiences, with 50% encountering hate speech often.**

The type of organisations experiencing hate speech varied by country, but in all countries, these were predominantly either human rights CSOs or LGBTIQ+ CSOs. In every country, experiencing hate speech was most common online, except in Bulgaria and Ireland. In both Bulgaria and Hungary, interviewees emphasised that hate speech was often politically amplified. According to interviewees, anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech usually originated from far-right actors and media – this was particularly emphasised in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ireland.

Results also show a correlation between an organisation's visibility and the frequency with which it experiences hate speech. Many larger organisations, and those operating across wider geographical areas, reported higher levels of hate speech.

4.3 Reacting to hate speech

Respondents' organisations identified three main ways of reacting to hateful content appearing on their social media channels. One common approach was to hide or delete such content. Some organisations applied this to all hateful comments, while others did so only for the more serious, violent, or personal ones. Several interviewees highlighted the time sensitivity of this approach, emphasising the need for a prompt response. Other organisations reported positive experiences with support from their followers, who sometimes engaged directly with the hateful content.

The second approach was to respond to the content – either by countering it or by clearly stating the organisation's position on the issue.

The third type of reaction involved reporting the content to the social media platform or to the authorities. Some interviewees noted that they had better experiences with reporting to platforms than to authorities, although experiences varied in both cases. Certain organisations mentioned that they formally report only the more serious incidents, as the process requires additional capacity. Beyond reacting, some organisations also document and analyse the hateful content they receive.

Despite the high levels of hate speech experienced, in most countries the majority of respondents' organisations did not report incidents formally. The exception was Bulgaria, where almost half of the responding organisations reported such incidents. Reasons for low reporting rates were broadly similar across all countries and included:

- **Lack of/low trust in authorities:** low confidence in institutions and law enforcement, particularly the police.
- **Insufficient reporting environment:** reporting mechanisms and institutional support structures are often inadequate for online incidents.
- **Lack of knowledge:** limited clarity about official reporting procedures, insufficient knowledge of documentation requirements, uncertainty about which authority is responsible, and lack of internal procedures for documenting or escalating incidents.
- **Lack of capacity:** insufficient legal capacity and the administrative burden associated with reporting procedures.
- **Past negative experiences:** perceptions of institutional inertia, lack of institutional support, slow or unpredictable sanctions, and a sense that reporting is futile.
- **Fear of victimisation:** concerns about secondary exposure or further harassment.
- **Definition of hate speech:** uncertainty about what constitutes hate speech versus acceptable public expression, the prevalence of coded language, and unclear legal definitions. Negative experiences in this regard included:
    - In Bulgaria, prosecutors often classified hate speech as a "moral offence" rather than discrimination, leading to cases being dropped.
    - In Hungary, some hateful content was considered by authorities to be "mere opinion", and no action was taken.

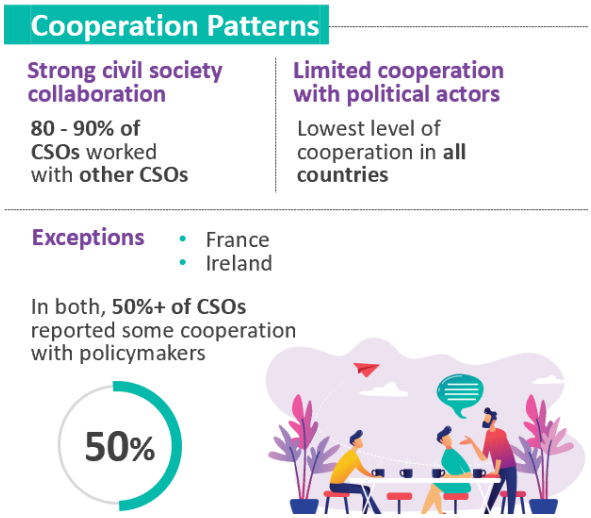
- Also in Hungary, most organisations that did report incidents achieved some successes. However, one interviewee noted that those spreading hateful content quickly adapt and use coded language that does not legally constitute hate speech.

- **Anonymity:** much online hateful content is posted by anonymous perpetrators.

Although organisational experiences and practices vary both within and between countries, a trend has emerged in several contexts: smaller organisations tend to respond to hateful content informally, while larger organisations and those with legal expertise are more likely to report incidents formally.

4.4 Collaboration with other actors

Cooperation with other CSOs was particularly high in all countries: around 80-90% of respondents' organisations had such collaborations in the past year. Cooperation with public institutions, authorities, and political actors was more limited – with cooperation involving political actors being the lowest in all countries. The two exceptions were France and Ireland, where more than 50% of respondents stated that their organisation had some level of cooperation with policymakers.



Several similarities emerged across countries regarding cooperation with politicians.

- **Cooperation – when it occurs – is highly dependent on individual allies and personal relationships.**
- **Collaborations are fragile**, occasional engagements that lack institutional consistency.
- **Collaborations are often issue-driven.**
- **Collaborations depend on favourable political timing**, and align more with political goals than with sustained interest.

However, there are also some positive examples of long-term cooperation, mostly at the local level or involving organisations that provide services or training or have established policy roles.

4.5 Openness of politicians and public officials towards LGBTIQ+ issues

Perceptions of the openness of politicians towards LGBTIQ+ issues varied across the six countries. Respondents in Hungary and Bulgaria reported low or moderate levels of openness. In Hungary, most respondents experienced politicians as either rather closed or entirely closed to the topic. In Bulgaria, the majority also described politicians as rather closed, though some reported neutral attitudes and, to a smaller extent, complete openness or complete closeness.

In Belgium, most respondents perceived politicians as either rather closed or neutral. In contrast, in Denmark, France, and Ireland, the majority of respondents experienced politicians and public officials as open to LGBTIQ+ issues. Belgian interviewees noted, however, that this openness tends to be more

theoretical than practical. Danish respondents emphasised that openness depends more on individual politicians than on an institutional stance.

According to interviewees, in Hungary, politicians are generally open to LGBTIQ+ topics only when they expect political gain, as the issue is widely seen as socially divisive. In Belgium and Bulgaria, public officials were often described as passive or inclined to avoid the topic, due to fears of saying something "wrong", reputational risk, or potential political backlash.

4.6 Knowledge of politicians and public officials about LGBTIQ+ issues

Across all countries, respondents noted that while some politicians possess sufficient knowledge of LGBTIQ+ issues, these tend to be isolated individual cases. Perceptions of politicians' and public officials' knowledge largely align with reported experiences of openness. The majority of respondents in Bulgaria and Hungary stated that politicians have limited knowledge. In Belgium and Ireland, perceptions ranged between limited and moderate, while in Denmark and France, most respondents considered politicians' knowledge to be moderate or higher.

Interviewees in Bulgaria remarked that politicians' understanding of LGBTIQ+ issues is often framed through a moral or ideological lens rather than grounded in human rights principles. According to Hungarian interviewees, although some politicians are genuinely open to LGBTIQ+ topics, their knowledge is generally limited: most are familiar only with the current political context and their parties' narratives but have little deeper understanding. This mirrors experiences from Denmark, where some policymakers appeared unsure how to engage with LGBTIQ+ issues beyond making symbolic statements of support.

4.7 Training experience

The majority of respondents have not participated in, or been involved with, training programmes or workshops aimed at improving politicians' or public officials' awareness, sensitisation, or capacity regarding LGBTIQ+ issues. The proportion of those who had such experience ranged from 20-30% in all countries, except France, where around two thirds of respondents had taken part in such training. Both Belgian and Hungarian experiences indicate that these trainings usually attract politicians who are already open to the topic.

Experiences among Hungarian interviewees who participated in these trainings were mostly negative. They reported that politicians often approached the topic as though they already knew everything, and that active political leaders tended to resist engaging with LGBTIQ+ issues, frequently expressing initial scepticism towards both the topic and the training. However**, interviewees also noted that politicians were most resistant when trainings were labelled as "sensitisation" programmes. When the practical relevance of the training to participants' professional roles was made clear, politicians tended to become more open and engaged.** French interviewees emphasised that **politicians were more responsive when issues were framed in terms of public safety, equality, or community wellbeing rather than ideological debate**. According to the results, in Belgium sporadic and fragmented training opportunities on LGBTIQ+ issues are available for politicians and public officials, most of which are initiated by CSOs.

Respondents identified several barriers to implementing training programmes for politicians: restricted access, lack of staff capacity, unclear institutional entry points, low institutional engagement, lack of political

will, passive attitudes among participants, limited time available for the target group, resistance from certain professional groups (such as prosecutors or law enforcement), the prevalence of one-off opportunities rather than long-term strategic programmes, and a polarised social climate discouraging open discussion on LGBTIQ+ issues.

Respondents were also only limitedly aware of cooperation mechanisms between CSOs and political bodies or public institutions on LGBTIQ+ issues, with only 10-30% aware of such initiatives. Awareness of training initiatives for politicians and public officials varied more widely: none of the respondents in Belgium or Denmark were aware of such programmes; in Hungary and Ireland, the figure was around 20-25%; and in Bulgaria and France, around 50% of respondents were aware of such initiatives.

4.8 Examples of trainings provided by CSOs to politicians

Two interviewees who frequently deliver training for public institutions and political actors provided examples of the topics they include and how their trainings are structured. One of them described a basic training for public officials and another for politicians, while the other one outlined a beginner-level session.

These trainings usually begin with a basic introduction to LGBTIQ+ issues, which may include:

- A general overview of the situation of LGBTIQ+ people in the respective country, the challenges they face, and/or the broader human rights context;
- Clarification of basic concepts related to LGBTIQ+ issues and a contextual overview of the effects and background of anti-LGBTIQ+ activities;
- A basic introduction to LGBTIQ+ terminology.

For public officials, the second half of the training typically includes role-specific knowledge such as the legal context for LGBTIQ+ people, anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, or guidance on how to interact with LGBTIQ+ clients within an institution.

For politicians, training may include strategies for addressing anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives, engaging with LGBTIQ+ voters, and/or presenting data from public opinion polls, as politicians often have inaccurate perceptions of societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ issues.

For both target groups, after the basic introduction, beginner-level training also includes guidance on understanding the different identities encompassed within the LGBTIQ+ umbrella, guidance on pronouns, information on how to be an ally, and an introduction to inclusive practices.

4.9 Advocacy experience

Engagement in advocacy activities was relatively high among respondents' organisations across all countries. Around 60% of responding organisations in Bulgaria, Denmark, and Hungary were involved in advocacy, around 50% in Belgium and France, and the exception was Ireland, with around 30%.

Advocacy methods varied significantly across countries. Public campaigns, media engagement, and coalition-building with other organisations were common everywhere. Direct meetings with policymakers were frequent among advocacy-engaged organisations in Ireland and the majority of those in Hungary, but were among the least commonly used methods in the other countries**. Legal actions or formal complaints** were used by around half of Danish and Hungarian organisations but were much less common elsewhere. Organisational size, capacity, and legal expertise were strongly linked to the use of a broader range of

advocacy methods. **Larger organisations and human rights or LGBTIQ+ CSOs tended to use a wider variety of tools in most countries.**

In Bulgaria and Hungary, results suggest that working with political actors and public officials on LGBTIQ+ issues is difficult due more to systemic than capacity-related challenges. **The lack of political will** was identified as the main barrier by the vast majority of respondents in Bulgaria, France, and Hungary, followed by **political hostility or resistance** in Bulgaria and Hungary. **Insufficient resources or funding, and lack of expertise or training**, were the most common barriers in Ireland, followed by **limited access to politicians** – factors also appearing prominently in France. In Belgium and Denmark, most barriers appeared as well, though at much lower levels than in the other countries.

Interviewees in Belgium described a political environment in which institutional actors express theoretical support but often avoid concrete commitments. Similarly, in Bulgaria, some politicians reportedly express private support but avoid public endorsement due to political risk, and communication with authorities tends to involve formal participation without subsequent action. Hungarian interviewees noted additional barriers, including hostility towards CSOs, a power-driven political culture overriding democratic principles, and a general lack of competence – where political loyalty is valued more highly than expertise.

Across countries, respondents identified public advocacy campaigns, media engagement or reporting, and strategic partnerships with other organisations as the most effective tools for encouraging politicians and public officials to support LGBTIQ+ rights. Policy recommendations and monitoring and reporting on discrimination and hate speech were also identified as useful methods, especially in France and Denmark. Belgian interviewees emphasised that combining evidence, media presence, and partnerships creates the strongest pressure. Bulgarian interviewees agreed that media visibility and collective pressure tend to generate short-term reactions more effectively than direct lobbying. A Hungarian interviewee highlighted that the effectiveness of advocacy tools depends heavily on the specific national context.

Interviewees from nearly all countries highlighted the effectiveness of coordinated advocacy involving multiple organisations or cross-sector cooperation, as this increases visibility, credibility, and political pressure. The role of national and international networks in effective advocacy was also emphasised in several countries. Interviewees additionally identified the following as necessary elements for effective advocacy: clear and well-reasoned messages and informational materials; targeted communication; the use of concrete examples rather than abstract arguments; shared resources among CSOs; regular and formalised dialogue opportunities; participation in official hearings and forums; building personal relationships; combining grassroots activism with professional lobbying; operating through both formal and informal channels; and strategic alignment with democratic values and electoral relevance.

05

TRAINING NEEDS

5. TRAINING NEEDS

5.1 Introduction

Both the surveys for politicians and public officials and the surveys for CSOs included questions regarding training needs.

Politicians and public officials were asked to identify which training areas they would find useful for a) themselves, b) their colleagues, and c) their broader institution.

CSO respondents were similarly asked to select the training areas they considered most useful for a) politicians and public officials, and b) themselves. Survey results from CSOs were supplemented by insights from interviews; therefore, these parts also focus on qualitative findings.

Possible training topics in both surveys covered five thematic areas for the two target groups: 1) legal knowledge; 2) countering hate speech; 3) cooperation with CSOs; 4) inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication; and 5) ethical leadership and inclusive approaches.

This section first provides a summary of training needs results, followed by an analysis of the results by thematic area, and a summary of insights from CSO interviewees on the training needs of politicians, public officials, and CSOs.

5.2 Summary of training needs

Across the six countries, politicians and public officials consistently acknowledged that they would find training on LGBTIQ+-related issues useful. The extent to which training was viewed as a personal versus an institutional need varied.

- Politicians in France and Ireland generally considered training across all thematic areas particularly necessary for their broader political bodies, and less so for themselves individually.
- Politicians in Hungary similarly viewed training as more relevant for their broader organisation, although their views on the training needs of colleagues were inconsistent – sometimes ranking these as more important than institutional needs, and at other times less important than their own.
- Politicians in Belgium identified the thematic training areas as highly relevant at both individual and institutional levels.
- In Bulgaria, politicians generally saw training as more important for individuals than for organisations.
- Politicians in Denmark consistently considered training least relevant for their colleagues.

According to politicians, the three most prioritised training areas across all countries were legal knowledge, countering hate speech, and cooperation with CSOs. Opinions on the remaining two areas – inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication; and ethical leadership and inclusive approaches – varied between countries but were recognised as potentially useful everywhere. **Public officials generally rated all training areas as more equally important. CSO respondents also confirmed the usefulness of training related to LGBTIQ+ issues.**

- According to survey results, they generally found it beneficial to offer training opportunities for politicians and public officials across most thematic areas, and the findings also suggest that many of these topics would be useful for CSOs themselves.
- **Politicians/public officials and CSOs considered training on legal knowledge related to LGBTIQ+ issues to be particularly important for politicians and public officials.** CSOs (excluding Hungarian ones) also found this area useful for their own organisations.
- While politicians and public officials across all countries consistently prioritised training on countering hate speech for themselves (and for their colleagues and broader institutions), CSOs saw it as less important for politicians and public officials but prioritised it for themselves.

Perceptions of the importance of training on cooperation with CSOs differed markedly between the two groups: CSOs considered it the least useful training area both for themselves and for politicians and public officials, whereas politicians and public officials regarded it as comparatively important.

- The majority of politicians and public officials agreed that training on ethical leadership and inclusive approaches would be useful. CSOs found this area less important than other topics, with the exception of CSOs from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ireland, who viewed it as more relevant. Overall, CSOs regarded this topic as less useful for themselves.
- CSOs in most countries considered training on inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication more important for politicians and public officials than for themselves – except CSOs from Belgium and France, who did not view it as important at all. In general, CSOs saw this topic as moderately useful for their own organisations, although Hungarian CSOs found it less important.

5.3 Summary of results by topic

5.3.1 Legal knowledge

Legal knowledge related to LGBTIQ+ issues was considered highly important training for both politicians/public officials and CSOs across countries, with CSOs – except those in Hungary – also considering it useful for themselves.

Responding politicians in Belgium found training on legal knowledge most useful for themselves and slightly less important for their colleagues and the broader political body. Responding Danish politicians identified it as equally important for themselves and their political body, but less relevant for their colleagues. Responding politicians in Bulgaria and France regarded it as less important for their broader organisation, more relevant for themselves, and even more important for their colleagues. In contrast, responding Hungarian and Irish politicians considered it least relevant for their colleagues, while finding it useful for themselves and even more important for their political bodies.

In all countries, CSO survey respondents identified legal knowledge as one of the most important training areas for politicians and public officials. In their view, legal knowledge is framed less as a technical competence and more as a foundational awareness and institutional responsibility. Interviewees argued that political actors and public officials need a clearer understanding of LGBTIQ+ rights, anti-discrimination obligations, and the legal consequences of hate speech, particularly in public communication. This expectation was especially strong in Bulgaria, Ireland, and France, where CSOs link insufficient legal awareness among decision-makers to inconsistent enforcement, hesitant responses, or harmful rhetoric.

Across countries, legal training for politicians is described as a prerequisite for credibility, accountability, and consistent institutional practice.

For their own organisations, CSOs found training on legal and policy guidance on LGBTIQ+ rights generally useful, except in Hungary. They emphasised the need for detailed, procedural, and practice-oriented legal training. This was particularly pronounced in Bulgaria, where respondents described widespread uncertainty around legal thresholds for hate speech, distinctions between civil and criminal liability, and the correct sequence of actions when incidents occur. Bulgarian CSOs also stressed the importance of understanding European Court of Human Rights standards and developing capacity for strategic litigation. Similar, though less acute, needs were expressed in Ireland and France, where organisations seek to translate existing legal frameworks into operational guidance for advocacy and casework. In Belgium and Denmark, legal training was still valued but framed more as deepening and systematising existing knowledge rather than building it from the ground up. In Hungary, most respondents reported having sufficient knowledge of legal issues, and therefore did not consider training in this area necessary.

5.3.2 Countering hate speech

Training on countering hate speech was consistently prioritised by politicians and public officials across all countries, whereas CSOs placed less emphasis on such training for politicians but considered it more important for themselves.

Responding politicians from Belgium and Hungary explicitly identified this topic as a high priority both for themselves and for their broader political bodies, and as somewhat less important for their colleagues. Responding French politicians identified a stronger need for training for themselves than for their colleagues and broader organisations. Similarly, the Danish politician considered it more useful at the individual level – applying equally to themselves and their colleagues – than at the organisational level. In contrast, responding politicians in Ireland identified a greater need for their colleagues and the broader political body than for themselves.

Responses from public officials in most countries presented a completely or slightly different picture. In Bulgaria and France, public officials considered training on countering hate speech more useful for their colleagues and even more important at the institutional level than for themselves. In Hungary, they stated that such training was more necessary at the institutional level than at the individual one. Conversely, respondents in Belgium identified a greater need at the individual level. In Denmark, public officials found it more useful for themselves, followed by their colleagues, and least important at the institutional level. The only country where public officials' views aligned with those of politicians was Ireland, where they also regarded training as least necessary for themselves and most necessary at the institutional level.

According to CSO survey respondents in most countries, training on countering hate speech would be somewhat useful for politicians and public officials, except in Belgium and Ireland, where respondents considered this area more important. CSOs framed training on hate speech as a matter of norm-setting and responsibility in public life. They argued that political actors must be trained to recognise the broader societal impact of their rhetoric, avoid normalising discriminatory narratives, and respond to hate speech in ways that do not legitimise or amplify it. This expectation was particularly urgent in Hungary and Bulgaria, where CSOs associated political discourse directly with increased hostility towards LGBTIQ+ communities. In Ireland and France, the focus was more on ensuring consistency between legal commitments and everyday

political communication. Danish respondents emphasised the need for role-specific training to recognise and respond to anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives, while Belgian CSOs viewed the capacity to respond without escalating tensions as one of the most important areas of training for politicians and public officials. Across all countries, CSOs presented training for politicians in this field as essential to shaping the overall tone of public discourse.

CSOs from all countries stated that training on countering hate speech would be useful for them. In Belgium, Bulgaria, and France, this area was among the most important training priorities identified by CSOs for their own organisations. CSOs framed training on countering hate speech primarily as a matter of strategic defence and resilience. Organisations emphasised the need to develop skills for responding to hate speech without escalating conflict, crafting effective counter-narratives, and maintaining organisational and emotional sustainability. These concerns were expressed most strongly in Belgium and Bulgaria, where CSOs described responses to hate speech as fragmented and reactive, and also in Hungary, where a hostile political environment makes countering hate speech a constant and resource-intensive challenge. In France and Ireland, CSOs linked this training more closely to advocacy professionalism and public credibility, while in Denmark the emphasis was more on monitoring narratives that shape policy debates.

5.3.3 Cooperation with CSOs

Perceptions of the importance of training on cooperation with CSOs differed between the target groups: CSOs regarded it as the least useful for both themselves and for politicians/public officials, while politicians and public officials viewed it as rather important for their own training.

Responding politicians in Belgium, Bulgaria, and France identified training on cooperation with CSOs as least useful for their broader organisations and most relevant for themselves. Politicians in Hungary and Ireland found it most needed for their broader political bodies. In Hungary, respondents considered it less relevant for their colleagues, while in Ireland they viewed it as less relevant for themselves. Belgian politicians identified it as equally relevant for themselves and for their broader organisations.

Public officials in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ireland similarly identified training on cooperation with CSOs as less relevant for themselves and most important for their broader institutions. In Belgium and Denmark, respondents found it more useful at the individual level than at the institutional one. French public officials regarded it as most useful for their colleagues and least useful for themselves.

CSOs in all countries found training on cooperation with CSOs generally less useful for politicians and public officials than the other thematic areas. They framed training on alliance-building as necessary to overcome institutional barriers to cooperation. They argued that political actors need to develop the skills and willingness to engage systematically with civil society, rather than relying on informal or personality-driven relationships. In Belgium, Denmark, France, and Ireland, CSOs stressed that meaningful cooperation requires institutionalised mechanisms and shared practices, which training can help to establish. In Hungary, respondents reported a divided and at times hostile culture among politicians and public officials regarding LGBTIQ+ issues, which further emphasised the need for comprehensive training. In Bulgaria, cooperation with CSOs was seen as necessary for building mechanisms that would enable politicians and public officials to act as allies and multipliers.

CSO respondents in all countries found training on cooperation with CSOs the least useful for themselves, showing that they already consider cooperation a well-established part of their work. They emphasised

the importance of cooperating and coordinating with other civil society organisations, including developing shared response protocols, building trust among organisations, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility. This need was articulated most strongly in Belgium and Bulgaria, where respondents described civil society responses to hate speech as fragmented and dependent on individual initiative. In Ireland and Denmark, smaller organisations in particular highlighted the importance of coalition-building to compensate for limited resources. French respondents identified cooperation as important for ensuring the effective application of training and improving both organisational practices and community outcomes. Respondents in Hungary expressed a degree of scepticism regarding the feasibility of effective cooperation, pointing to an environment of complex challenges.

5.3.4 Inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication

CSOs in most countries considered training on inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication more important for politicians and public officials than for themselves – except CSOs from Belgium and France, who also did not regard it as important. Overall, CSOs found this topic moderately useful for themselves, with the exception of Hungarian CSOs, who considered it less important.

Responding politicians in Hungary and Ireland identified training on communication as most relevant for their broader political bodies. While Hungarian politicians also considered it important for their colleagues and least needed for themselves, Irish respondents regarded it as less useful at the individual level. French politicians described it as highly relevant for themselves and least needed for their colleagues. Politicians in Bulgaria and Denmark identified it as least relevant for their colleagues; however, Danish respondents found it equally important for themselves and their organisations, whereas Bulgarian respondents found it more useful for their organisations than for themselves.

Public officials in Bulgaria, France, Hungary, and Ireland identified training on communication as most useful for their institutions and least useful for themselves – except in Hungary, where it was considered equally less relevant for their colleagues. In contrast, Danish respondents regarded it as more useful at the individual level than at the institutional one. Belgian respondents found it most relevant for their colleagues, and equally of lesser importance for themselves and their organisations.

CSO respondents stated that they would find training on inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication for politicians and public officials highly useful. In most countries, it was identified as one of the most important training areas. The exceptions were Belgium and France, where respondents considered it less necessary.

CSOs emphasised inclusive communication as a matter of ethical public conduct. They argued that training should focus on avoiding exclusionary language, engaging respectfully with diverse communities, and demonstrating empathy in public roles. This expectation was particularly evident in Ireland and France, where CSOs noted a gap between formal equality commitments and everyday institutional interactions. Across countries, inclusive communication training for political actors was framed less as a skill enhancement and more as a responsibility inherent to public office.

CSOs in most countries stated that training on inclusive, respectful, and empathetic communication would be moderately useful for them, and only respondents from Hungary considered it less useful. They viewed communication training as a necessary tool to ensure consistency, credibility, and inclusivity within the sector itself. In France, respondents highlighted uneven understanding of intersectional issues, including

trans and non-binary experiences, even among committed organisations. In Belgium, Bulgaria, and Ireland, CSOs stressed the need to communicate effectively with sceptical or undecided audiences without reinforcing polarisation. In Denmark, communication training was seen as most effective when tailored to specific roles, particularly for frontline staff working with young people or diverse service users. In Hungary, respondents expressed a need for a comprehensive overview of CSO practices abroad to provide valuable context and guidance, including in the area of communication.

5.3.5 Ethical leadership and inclusive approaches

The majority of responding politicians and public officials agreed that training on ethical leadership and inclusive approaches would be useful. Responding CSOs considered it less important for politicians and public officials compared with other thematic training areas, except those in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ireland, who regarded it as of greater importance. CSOs in general found this area less useful for themselves.

Responding politicians in Belgium and Bulgaria identified this area as the most relevant for themselves and less relevant for their organisations. Danish and French politicians found it less useful for their colleagues, but while French respondents considered it more needed for themselves, Danish respondents identified it as equally important for themselves and their broader organisations. Politicians in Hungary regarded it as least useful for themselves and most useful for their colleagues. Irish politicians identified it as less relevant at the individual level but more needed at the organisational level.

Public officials in Belgium and Denmark found training on ethical leadership and inclusive approaches more useful at the individual level but less relevant at the institutional level. Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Irish respondents identified it as most needed for their institutions and least needed for themselves — except in Hungary, where public officials found it equally less relevant for their colleagues. French public officials also regarded it as less relevant for themselves but considered it most needed for their colleagues.

CSO respondents' views on the usefulness of training on ethical leadership for politicians and inclusive approaches for politicians and public officials varied across countries. Respondents from Bulgaria, Denmark, and France considered it less useful, while respondents from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ireland identified it as rather important. In Belgium and Bulgaria, ethical leadership was associated with responsible communication and non-escalatory responses to hate speech. In Ireland and France, it was more closely linked to advocacy professionalism and policy engagement. Hungarian CSOs regarded ethical leadership as relevant but secondary, reflecting a prioritisation of immediate defensive capacities over normative leadership development.

CSOs identified training on ethical leadership and inclusive approaches as less important for themselves. The exceptions were respondents from Belgium and Ireland, who found training in this area more useful than those in the other countries. Across countries, CSOs tended to see themselves as normatively committed and value-driven. As a result, ethical leadership training was perceived as less critical than practical tools for action, coordination, and resilience.

5.4 Summary of training needs based on the CSO interviews

5.4.1 Realities of LGBTIQ+ people

For politicians and public officials, this should be an important part of training and should include the following:

- Introducing the everyday realities of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Building awareness of the real-life consequences that policies have on LGBTIQ+ people.
- Building awareness of the impacts of discrimination and hate speech on LGBTIQ+ people.
- Presenting real-life case studies and examples to support deeper understanding.
- Including positive examples, such as community-based approaches and how inclusion measures directly affect young people and marginalised groups.
- Addressing intersectionality, such as intersections between LGBTIQ+ issues and racism or disability.

5.4.2 Public discourse and language

Training should address different aspects of public discourse and the use of language:

- The role of the language they use in connection with LGBTIQ+ issues in shaping public discourse and public attitudes.
- The existence and characteristics of unconscious bias (including their own).
- How bias influences policy framing and communication relating to LGBTIQ+ issues.
- Exploring how different forms of hate intersect and reinforce each other.
- Supporting the analysis of patterns within hate movements, including their coordination and messaging cycles.

5.4.3 Responding to hate and misinformation

Training should focus on responding to hate speech and misinformation to support:

- Understanding how hate narratives and misinformation spread.
- Identifying red flags and different levels of severity of hate speech
- Approaches to handle hate speech and misinformation
- Practical tools for addressing and responding hate speech and misinformation
- Building counter- and alternative narratives.
- Understanding and responding to coded hate speech.
- Responding to hate speech without escalating tensions.

5.4.4 Legal knowledge

For politicians and public officials, it is particularly important that training addresses:

- How legislation affects marginalised groups.
- Identifying political and administrative options for action to support LGBTIQ+ rights and people.
- Presenting policy approaches and political acts from other countries as good examples.
- What legal possibilities they have for advocating for LGBTIQ+ issues.

For CSOs, the following should be particularly important to include in training:

- The definition of hate speech and hate crimes according to national and EU law.

- Practical knowledge on reporting hate speech and hate crimes, advocacy strategies, strategic litigation, international legal mechanisms, and the European Court of Human Rights standards.
- Legal options of handling coded hate speech.
- Ways and advantages of joint, cross-sector advocacy.
- Presenting international best practices and comparative approaches as good practices.

5.4.5 Institutional practices

It is important to include the following in training:

- Inclusive approaches, particularly in service delivery.
- Knowledge and practices for making inclusion operational.
- Awareness-building for frontline and enforcement roles.

5.4.6 Training design and delivery

CSOs offered several suggestions and insights for designing and delivering training on LGBTIQ+ issues:

- Training for public institutions, politicians and public officials ideally should be long-term and embedded within organisational practices.
- For public officials, training should include practical elements they can apply directly in their professional roles.
- Training should not be labelled as “sensitisation”.
- Training should be practical and content-specific.
- It should combine formal workshops with informal engagement, such as roundtables and site visits.

5.4.7 Organisational safety and internal protocols

The safety of organisations, as well as of those providing and receiving training, is extremely important:

- Safety mechanisms should be built into training frameworks in contexts where state protections are limited.
- Safety considerations should be embedded across all organisational response frameworks.
- Guidance on developing clear internal codes of conduct is necessary to ensure incidents are addressed before they escalate to authorities.

5.4.8 Accessibility, wellbeing, and sustainability

Training should consider the diverse situations and levels of knowledge of learners:

- Training materials should be suitable for participants with both lower and higher levels of knowledge on the addressed topics.
- Training materials and resources should be accessible to diverse learners.
- Addressing intersectionality.
- Wellbeing and resilience techniques should be included to support people who are exposed to hate speech.

5.4.9 Good practices

Presenting good practices should be an essential part of training on LGBTQI+ issues:

- Training materials should build on share European experiences and also national characteristics.

- Ensure that varying legal and social contexts are considered.
- It should include best practices from EU Member States.
- Training should be supported by comparative approaches, testimonies, and case studies.
- Consider different legal and social context.
- Including information on the history of the LGBTIQ+ movement, including examples of successes from other social movements.

06

SITUATION OF LGBTIQ+

6. SITUATION OF LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE IN THE PROJECT COUNTRIES

6.1 Attitudes toward and situation of LGBTIQ+ people in the project countries, based on EU-wide polls

Between 2020 and 2025, the situation of LGBTIQ+ people across several EU member states has been shaped by shifting public attitudes, varying levels of societal acceptance, and significant differences in lived experience. Two major data sources – the 2023 Eurobarometer Survey on Discrimination of LGBTIQ+ People[1] and the 2020[2] and 2024[3] EU LGBTIQ+ Surveys conducted by the European Union – provide a detailed picture of how LGBTIQ+ people in, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Hungary, and Ireland experience discrimination, support, safety, and institutional trust. Together, these survey results highlight sharp contrasts between Western and Eastern Europe and point to persistent challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ communities across the region.

According to the 2023 Eurobarometer findings, there is a clear East–West divide in perceived discrimination.

- Widespread **discrimination based on sexual orientation** is most commonly recognised in France (65%), Belgium (56%) and Hungary (53%), while perceptions are lower in Ireland (46%), Denmark (43%) and Bulgaria (40%), where a further 20% respond "don't know".
- **Perceived discrimination against transgender people** follows a similar pattern, with high levels in France (65%), Belgium (63%), Denmark (56%) and Ireland (54%), but lower levels in Hungary (47%) and Bulgaria (37%).
- **For intersex people, perceived discrimination** is reported at 54% in France, 50% in Belgium, 42% in Ireland, 40% in Denmark, 39% in Hungary and 35% in Bulgaria, accompanied by a substantial share of "don't know" responses in every country.

Comfort with LGBTIQ+ people in everyday settings also varies sharply.

- In Ireland and Denmark, 94% and 93% respectively report **feeling comfortable with an LGBTIQ+ colleague**, followed by France (88%) and Belgium (76%). Comfort drops to 48% in Hungary and 28% in Bulgaria, where discomfort reaches 49%.
- **Comfort with a transgender colleague** remains high in Denmark (90%), Ireland (88%), France (82%) and Belgium (69%), but is again much lower in Hungary (44%) and Bulgaria (25%).

Similar divisions appear in family contexts.

- Respondents **comfortable with their child having a same-sex partner** include 83% in Denmark, 80% in Ireland, 72% in France and 67% in Belgium, compared with only 31% in Hungary and 16% in Bulgaria.
- Comfort levels fall further when asked about a **transgender partner**, with Denmark at 71% and Ireland at 65%, France at 55% and Belgium at 48%, while Hungary (24%) and Bulgaria (10%) show overwhelming discomfort.

[1] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972
[2] https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-lgbti-equality-1_en.pdf
[3] https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtiq-equality_en.pdf

Support for equal rights shows the same regional split.

- Large majorities in Denmark (92%), Ireland (84%), France (78%) and Belgium (77%) agree that **LGBTIQ+ people should have the same rights as heterosexual people**, whereas majorities in Hungary (51%) and Bulgaria (50%) disagree.
- **Support for transgender rights** remains high in Denmark and Ireland (both 80%), Belgium (72%) and France (70%), but falls to 42% in Hungary and only 21% in Bulgaria.
- Reflecting these trends, **acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people in high political office** is strong in Ireland (91%), Denmark (85%), France (78%) and Belgium (73%), but weaker in Hungary (41%) and very low in Bulgaria (20%).
- **Support for same-sex marriage** ranges from 93% in Denmark and 86% in Ireland to 42% in Hungary and only 17% in Bulgaria.
- Likewise, **legal gender recognition** enjoys strong support in Denmark (86%), Ireland (71%), France and Belgium (both 68%), but lower support in Hungary (47%) and Bulgaria (34%).

The EU LGBTIQ+ Surveys from 2020 and 2024 show that these attitudinal divides are mirrored in lived experience.

- In 2020, **openness about one's sexual orientation or gender identity** was highest in Denmark (66%) and Belgium (60%), followed by Ireland and France (53%). It was lower in Hungary (33%) and particularly low in Bulgaria (22%), where 54% said they were "almost never open".
- **Avoidance of public places out of fear** ranged from 19% in Denmark to 45% in Bulgaria. Between 2020 and 2024, experiences of harassment increased sharply in every country, reaching 60% in Bulgaria, 57% in Hungary, 56% in France, 53% in Belgium, 52% in Ireland and 47% in Denmark.
- **Rates of physical or sexual attacks** remained comparatively stable but were highest in Bulgaria (19%), France (16%) and Belgium (15%).
- **Reporting such attacks to the police was low**, with only 6% of respondents in Hungary and 15% in Bulgaria doing so in 2024, compared with 22–26% in Denmark, Ireland and France.

Employment-related discrimination also rose.

- **Discrimination while job-seeking** increased from 2020 to 2024 in all six countries, reaching 28% in Bulgaria and 23% in Hungary, compared with 13% in Denmark and 15% in Belgium.
- **Hiding one's LGBTIQ+ identity at work** "often" or "always" was most common in Bulgaria (66%) and Hungary (61%), and least common in Denmark (24%).

Trust in national governments to combat intolerance remained highest in Denmark (53%) and Ireland (40%) in 2024, followed by Belgium (55%), while confidence was low in France (20%) and extremely low in Bulgaria (6%) and Hungary (3%).

Life-satisfaction scores among LGBTIQ+ people were lower than the general population in almost every country, except Belgium where they were equal, and Bulgaria, where LGBTIQ+ respondents reported slightly higher satisfaction.

Taken together, these surveys reveal three consistent trends between 2020 and 2025:

- a marked **East–West divide in public attitudes and legal support**;

- significantly **lower acceptance of transgender and intersex people** than of LGB people;
- and a clear **gap between legal or attitudinal progress and the day-to-day realities faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals**, who continue to experience discrimination, harassment and low institutional trust even in countries with broadly supportive public opinion.

6.2 National legal frameworks between 2020–2025 in the project countries

Between 2020 and 2025, legal developments affecting LGBTIQ+ people varied sharply across the six countries. Belgium, Denmark, France, and Ireland generally strengthened existing protections, while Bulgaria and Hungary introduced increasingly restrictive measures.

6.2.1 Belgium

Belgium maintains one of Europe's strongest legal protection systems for LGBTIQ+ people. Same-sex marriage (2003) and adoption (2006) remain fully recognised, and the 2007 Anti-Discrimination Act provides a robust legal foundation. Between 2020 and 2025, this framework was further strengthened. A 2023 amendment recognised intersectional discrimination and increased sanctions, particularly in employment. Belgium also banned conversion practices for all ages in 2023. The Federal LGBTIQ+ Action Plan (2021–24) advanced protections across safety, education, and health. Legal gender recognition reforms continued: although the civil registry remains binary, a 2025 measure allows ID cards without gender markers. Hate-crime and hate-speech legislation explicitly includes sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; family, employment, healthcare, and asylum laws also contain strong protections. Throughout this period, Belgium demonstrated a consistent commitment to expanding LGBTIQ+ rights.

6.2.2 Bulgaria

Bulgaria offers minimal and shrinking LGBTIQ+ legal protection. The 2004 Protection Against Discrimination Act includes sexual orientation but omits gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics. Although a 2023 Criminal Code amendment recognised hate crimes based on these grounds, enforcement remains weak. Same-sex couples receive no legal recognition, despite multiple rulings from the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the EU (2019–2024), which Bulgaria has largely ignored. Legal gender recognition is effectively banned, following restrictive Constitutional Court rulings in 2018 and 2023. In 2024, amendments to the Preschool and School Education Act banned the "promotion" of non-traditional sexual orientation and gender identity, significantly limiting freedom of expression, education, and access to information. Pride events continue but face hostility and inconsistent policing. Proposals such as the recurrent "Foreign Agents Bill" signal attempts to restrict CSO activity, including LGBTIQ+ organisations. Overall, Bulgaria's legal environment between 2020 and 2025 is characterised by regression, non-compliance with international obligations, and increasing restrictions on LGBTIQ+ rights.

6.2.3 Denmark

Denmark remains a leader in LGBTIQ+ equality. Gender-neutral marriage has existed since 2012, and self-declaration legal gender recognition since 2014. The main gaps concern non-binary recognition and age restrictions for legal gender change. From 2022, anti-discrimination and hate-crime laws were expanded to explicitly cover gender identity, expression, and characteristics, alongside existing protections for sexual

orientation. Enforcement occurs through labour-market discrimination law and the Board of Equal Treatment. The Danish Institute for Human Rights plays a central role in monitoring hate crimes and advising on reforms. Successive national action plans—the 2018–21 LGBTI Plan and the 2022–25 "Room for Diversity" Plan—strengthened measures on safety, family rights, youth support, and healthcare. Denmark's framework offers some of the strongest protections in Europe, with remaining challenges focused mainly on non-binary recognition.

6.2.4 France

France's core LGBTIQ+ legal protections remain stable and comprehensive. Same-sex marriage and joint adoption have been legal since 2013, and civil-status reform in 2016 simplified legal gender change and expanded gender-identity protections. The 2021 Bioethics Law significantly broadened access to assisted reproductive technologies for female same-sex couples and single women, improving family rights. Anti-discrimination and hate-crime provisions are embedded in both Press Law and the Penal Code, covering sexual orientation and gender identity across employment, services, and education. France's legal landscape during this period is characterised by stability, with the Bioethics Law representing the most significant expansion of LGBTIQ+ family rights.

6.2.5 Hungary

Between 2020 and 2025, Hungary introduced a series of laws that significantly restricted LGBTIQ+ rights. The Constitution defines marriage and family in strictly heterosexual terms, reinforced by amendments in 2020 stating that "the mother is a woman, the father is a man" and that children must be raised according to their "birth sex" and "Christian culture." Legal gender recognition for trans people was abolished in 2020, and adoption by same-sex couples was effectively prohibited. From 2021 onwards, the government pursued a state-led campaign portraying LGBTIQ+ visibility as harmful, culminating in the "child protection law," which bans the "promotion" of homosexuality and gender diversity to minors and restricts LGBTIQ+ representation in media, schools, and public spaces. The 2025 Fifteenth Amendment introduced a de facto ban on Pride and constitutionally declared that "a person is either a man or a woman," erasing trans and intersex identities in law. Hungary also removed gender identity from protected characteristics in equality legislation. Overall, the period is marked by systemic legal disenfranchisement and state-sponsored hostility.

6.2.6 Ireland

Ireland has worked to strengthen protections between 2020 and 2025. The 2015 Gender Recognition Act provides self-declaration for adults, and reviews during this period explored extending recognition to under-16s and non-binary people, though full non-binary recognition is still pending. The National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy 2024–28 broadens protections in health, education, public services, and online safety. Major legal changes included the 2024 Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act, which created hate-aggravated offences and added gender identity and sex characteristics as protected grounds. Equality legislation underwent review in 2025 to improve clarity regarding gender identity and expression. Family rights have been advanced through reforms to donor-assisted reproduction and parental recognition. A Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy on the Island of Ireland was signed by key health bodies stating that conversion therapy in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation (including asexuality) is unethical, potentially harmful and is not supported by evidence. Media regulation and online safety

enforcement also expanded through Coimisiún na Meán and the publication of the 2024 first Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Irish audio and audio visual sector. Ireland has made substantial progress, though gaps remain around non-binary legal recognition and a full conversion-therapy ban.

07

ANTI-LGBTIQ+ POLITICS

7. ANTI-LGBTIQ+ POLITICAL ACTORS, NARRATIVES AND CASES IN THE PROJECT COUNTRIES

7.1 Anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors

Across the project countries, anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors emerge from a range of far-right, ultra-conservative, religious, and fringe movements, each contributing in different ways to the spread and normalisation of anti-gender rhetoric. While the intensity and form of their engagement vary, several common patterns appear throughout the national cases. In some countries – such as Belgium, Bulgaria, France, and Hungary – far-right political parties play a central role in driving openly hostile narratives and shaping public debate. In others, including Denmark and Ireland, anti-LGBTIQ+ mobilisation is less institutionally entrenched, instead carried by religious revivalist groups, small nationalist parties, advocacy networks, and individual activists who exert discursive influence, particularly online.

Across contexts, these actors frequently target transgender people and gender diversity, oppose LGBTIQ+ visibility in public spaces, and challenge inclusive education or legal recognition. Some mainstream or centrist political figures also adopt selective anti-LGBTIQ+ positions, helping to legitimise rhetoric that previously belonged to the political fringes. Together, the country cases show how diverse actors – whether parliamentary parties, religious organisations, or online campaigns – contribute to reinforcing hostility and polarisation around LGBTIQ+ rights and identities.

7.1.1 Belgium

Belgium's most active and prominent anti-LGBTIQ+ political actor is Vlaams Belang (VB), a Flemish nationalist party. VB rejects the very existence of transgender and non-binary identities, often describing them as "confusing" and "dangerous." The party opposes LGBTIQ+ visibility in public spaces and frequently attacks civil society organisations such as Çavaria, RainbowHouse, and Genres Pluriels. VB members are highly active online, where they regularly launch targeted campaigns against drag events or Pride marches. Owing to the generally supportive stance of the Belgian population towards sexual diversity, VB strategically highlights its openly gay politicians, thereby deflecting accusations of homophobia while fuelling hostility specifically towards transgender people.

While in Flanders the far right – particularly VB – dominates anti-LGBTIQ+ politics, in francophone regions discrimination tends to be more subtle. Actors include francophone municipal leaders objecting to LGBTIQ+ visibility in public spaces; conservative Catholic politicians framing LGBTIQ+ visibility as "politically divisive"; members of the Reformist Movement (RM) portraying debates on gender diversity education as a matter of "parental choice"; and isolated elements within Les Engagés advocating for "neutrality" in public spaces to justify the removal or refusal of LGBTIQ+ symbols. Unlike VB, these actors usually do not present a comprehensive anti-LGBTIQ+ political platform, but instead engage in issue-specific discrimination. Nevertheless, they contribute to the normalisation of hesitation and discomfort surrounding LGBTIQ+ visibility.

Although anti-LGBTIQ+ policymaking is not a dominant feature of Belgian national politics, Belgium's anti-gender movement is becoming more vocal, more organised, and increasingly visible. Across the country,

anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors often portray themselves as pro-LGBTIQ+ but anti-trans in an attempt to appear "reasonable" and tap into growing polarisation around gender diversity.

7.1.2 Bulgaria

Between 2020 and 2025, the most significant anti-LGBTIQ+ political actor in Bulgaria was Kostadin Kostadinov, leader of the ultra-nationalist and culturally conservative far-right party Vazrazhdane. During this period, the party grew rapidly in popularity and electoral success, frequently weaponising fear and prejudice to gain support. Kostadinov and his party have played a central role in normalising discriminatory language and radical narratives targeting sexual and gender minorities.

Another important far-right actor is Korneliya Ninova, former leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). She illustrates how increasingly radical anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric has moved beyond the political fringes. As a powerful centre-left politician, she has regularly echoed points typically associated with the far right, thereby helping to normalise them. Anti-LGBTIQ+ comments by representatives of the nationalist party VMRO in parliament further demonstrate how elected officials exploit their platforms to spread hostility.

These actors represent a growing problem in Bulgaria: discriminatory rhetoric is now employed by both far-right and prominent mainstream politicians, contributing to the widespread normalisation of hate against LGBTIQ+ people.

7.1.3 Denmark

In Denmark, there are no major established political parties with explicitly anti-LGBTIQ+ platforms. The most significant actors are religious revivalist groups such as Indre Mission, Luthersk Mission, and Evangelisk Luthersk Mission. Alongside these, various online and offline anti-gender campaigns also appear in the country. These groups and initiatives often describe LGBTIQ+ rights and inclusion as "queer ideology," which they claim threatens conventional gender and sexual norms.

Their primary focus is typically on trans people – particularly trans rights – and especially legal gender recognition for minors. Most anti-LGBTIQ+ actors in Denmark aim to challenge the status quo whereby gender identity is considered a matter for public policy rather than purely private life. Their impact is largely discursive rather than parliamentary: they use online platforms to gain visibility, attract media attention, and provoke public debates on LGBTIQ+ issues.

7.1.4 France

In France, the most significant anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors are the two main parties on the (far) right.

Rassemblement National (RN), during the 2020–2025 period, became the largest party on the right in terms of support base and electoral performance. Led by Marine Le Pen until 2022, and since then by Jordan Bardella, the party publicly claims to defend individual freedoms while simultaneously opposing initiatives they classify as "gender ideology." Its elected officials frequently criticise and vote against trans-inclusive education, public funding for Pride events, and gender-neutral language reforms. RN, in line with other far-right European parties, portrays LGBTIQ+ discourse as a symptom of moral decline caused by foreign cultural influence.

A newer far-right party, Reconquête, was founded by Eric Zemmour in 2021. The party adopts an even stronger anti-gender and self-described "anti-woke" stance. Although it holds no seats in the National

Assembly, its provocative rhetoric – especially online – has garnered significant media attention. It explicitly rejects any mention of sexual or gender diversity in schools and has questioned the adoption rights of same-sex couples.

In addition to far-right parties, several anti-gender groups operate in France. One of the most prominent is La Manif Pour Tous, founded in 2013 as a religiously inspired advocacy movement opposing the Same-Sex Marriage Law. It has remained active, campaigning against assisted reproduction, gender education in schools, and gender-affirming care for minors. Similar actors include Les Veilleurs, Sens Commun, and Alliance VITA, all of which lobby parliamentarians, frame "gender theory" as a social threat, and participate in public hearings on bioethics legislation.

7.1.5 Hungary

In Hungary, the most prominent anti-gender political actors include the governing parties Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance) and Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party, KDNP), as well as the far-right Mi Hazánk Mozgalom (Our Homeland Movement, MHM).

Fidesz, led by Viktor Orbán since its establishment, has shifted from radical liberalism in the late 1980s to conservatism in the 1990s, and to the far right since 2010. Fidesz has governed Hungary since 2010 in coalition with KDNP, holding a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Since 2020, the party has increasingly designated LGBTIQ+ people as a primary political adversary.

The far-right Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, founded in 2018 and led by László Toroczkai, is explicitly anti-LGBTIQ+ and is linked to various far-right paramilitary movements.

Beyond political parties, numerous additional anti-gender actors operate in the country. These include far-right groups; government-organised non-governmental organisations (GOCSOs) and think tanks; media outlets; family, youth, and anti-abortion organisations; and religious organisations.

7.1.6 Ireland

The vast majority of political actors in Ireland are openly supportive of LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Nonetheless, a number of fringe parties, advocacy groups, and religious movements exert influence – particularly online – despite their limited electoral support.

Two small right-wing parties, the National Party and the Irish Freedom Party, present gender identity and inclusion, especially in education, as threats to Irish society and traditional values. Additional relevant far-right actors include activists Philip Dwyer and Enoch Burke, who use online platforms and public protests to instil fear and spread hostile anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives.

Alongside far-right actors, several organisations play a key role in anti-gender mobilisation in Ireland:

- The Iona Institute, a conservative religious advocacy group that claims to defend families by challenging gender recognition and sexual education in schools.
- Síol na hÉireann, a fringe nationalist movement promoting cultural protectionism and social conservatism, linking LGBTIQ+ visibility to the perceived erosion of Irish identity.
- The Human Dignity Alliance, a socially conservative advocacy group campaigning on "family values" to oppose gender recognition and trans inclusion reforms.

7.2 Anti-gender narratives

Across all six project countries, anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives follow a broadly similar pattern and frequently overlap or reinforce one another. The most widespread themes centre on **"gender ideology"**, which frames LGBTIQ+ inclusion as an externally imposed threat; **protecting children**, which portrays LGBTIQ+ visibility – especially in education – as harmful or confusing; **defending the traditional family model**, which positions heterosexual, cisgender families as the only legitimate norm; and **anti-trans narratives**, which rely on misinformation and moral panic to oppose trans rights and healthcare. Alongside these core narratives, each country also exhibits additional patterns – such as conspiracy claims, anti-migrant rhetoric, "anti-woke" framings, and portrayals of LGBTIQ+ visibility as provocation – that interact with, and often amplify, the main narratives.

After presenting the shared narratives across countries, additional country-specific narratives that further reinforce the wider anti-gender discourse are outlined.

7.2.1 "Gender ideology"

Across all six project countries, the narrative of "gender ideology" is the most widespread and consistent anti-LGBTIQ+ narrative. It is universally depicted as a foreign, elite-driven or externally imposed ideology that threatens local traditions, the natural order, and established social norms. Despite national differences, several elements repeat everywhere: the claim that gender diversity and LGBTIQ+ inclusion are not organic parts of society; the portrayal of gender-inclusive policies as harmful to children; and the suggestion that protecting the nation, family, or religion requires resisting these ideas.

- In Belgium, "gender ideology" is used to frame gender diversity, trans identities, and inclusive education as a dangerous doctrine imposed on society. It is presented as an attack on traditional gender roles, portraying any move towards gender inclusion as a threat to cultural norms and social stability. This narrative frequently depicts gender-inclusive policies as externally imposed agendas that undermine Belgian values and the well-being of children.
- In Bulgaria, "gender ideology" is portrayed as a foreign cultural threat. The narrative frames LGBTIQ+ rights and gender equality as imported ideas that corrode the moral foundations of Bulgarian society. Diversity, inclusion, and equality are described as dangerous concepts incompatible with "Bulgarian traditions," "Christian values," and "national identity." Through this framing, LGBTIQ+ existence is rhetorically positioned outside the boundaries of legitimate society, while opposition to it is cast as patriotic or morally necessary.
- In Denmark, "gender ideology" – often referred to as "queer ideology" – is used by anti-LGBTIQ+ actors to depict feminism, LGBTIQ+ rights, and gender studies as dangerous phenomena that undermine natural or God-given gender roles. The narrative argues that concepts such as gender identity are ideological constructions imposed by elites, academics, or international organisations, and that they divide society rather than promote equality.
- In France, the "gender ideology" narrative presents LGBTIQ+ rights – especially trans inclusion and gender education – as an ideological project imposed by elites or foreign influences, threatening traditional family values and the social order. This framing has been widely used by figures from Reconquête! and Rassemblement National, including Éric Zemmour and Marine Le Pen.

- In Hungary, “gender ideology,” often referred to as the “gender lobby,” and so-called “homosexual propaganda” are portrayed as harmful values imported from Western societies. They are framed as incompatible with Christian conservative values, the traditional family model, and established gender roles, and therefore as dangerous to Hungary and even to “civilisation” as a whole.
- In Ireland, the “gender ideology” narrative claims that recognising gender identity contradicts biological reality and the natural order. As such, “gender ideology” is framed as encompassing gender recognition legislation, school curricula, and public services for LGBTIQ+ – particularly transgender – people. The narrative suggests that “gender ideology” is a project to “indoctrinate” children, overturn traditional family roles, and advance a “gay agenda.”

7.2.2 Protecting the children

The “protecting the children” narrative appears across all examined countries. In every context, it presents LGBTIQ+ inclusion – especially in education – as a direct threat to children’s safety, innocence, or development. While the specific targets vary, the claim of protecting children consistently functions as a central tool used to restrict LGBTIQ+ visibility and rights. Although the core message is shared, the narrative takes on distinct forms in each country.

- In Belgium, the “protecting the children” narrative focuses mainly on education. It portrays sexual and gender education as harmful to children and frames inclusive teaching as a form of confusion or coercion. This narrative has been amplified through misinformation campaigns that escalated into intimidation and threats against schools, educators, and sexual health organisations.
- In Bulgaria, the “protecting the children” and “defending traditional family values” narratives suggest that LGBTIQ+ activism, education about gender and sexuality, or even the public visibility of LGBTIQ+ people represents a deliberate attempt to “corrupt youth” and “destroy family values.” These narratives are often linked to broader conspiratorial claims about “Western cultural colonisation,” depicting human rights advocacy as an instrument of moral decay imported by the European Union or “liberal elites.” Children are repeatedly invoked as symbols of innocence under threat, helping to moralise discrimination and legitimise censorship. Educational initiatives promoting tolerance are denounced as “LGBTIQ+ propaganda,” and public officials have demanded their removal from schools, arguing that they “confuse children about their gender.”
- In Denmark, the narrative focuses primarily on education, especially sexual education. LGBTIQ+ inclusive curricula, teaching materials, and children’s media are often framed as confusing or sexualising children, or as imposing “gender ideology” in schools. It is commonly claimed that parents’ rights are undermined when schools present sexual orientation and gender identity in a positive or normalising way.
- In France, the narrative frames LGBTIQ+ visibility, inclusive education, and events such as drag shows as harmful or confusing for minors. It is frequently used to oppose trans youth healthcare and gender-inclusive policies, presenting such measures as a moral obligation to safeguard children.
- In Hungary, the “protecting the children” narrative is closely intertwined with several other anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives. It asserts that homosexuality, LGBTIQ+ identities, and gender diversity are harmful or dangerous for children. This narrative most commonly appears in the following sub-narratives:

- Conflation of homosexuality and paedophilia: This sub-narrative falsely equates homosexuality with paedophilia, suggesting that homosexual people are paedophiles and therefore pose a sexual threat to children.
- The visibility of LGBTIQ+ people threatens children: This sub-narrative typically frames Pride events as a threat to children's healthy identity development and as being in conflict with constitutional values, using this reasoning to oppose same-sex marriage and adoption. It also extends to claims that any visual representation of LGBTIQ+ identities is harmful to children.

- In Ireland, the narrative centres on education. Anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors and numerous online influencers argue that LGBTIQ+ inclusive books, lessons, and events confuse and endanger children, and therefore should be banned from schools. This narrative is most visible at protests targeting libraries and educational institutions.

7.2.3 Protecting the traditional family model

The "protecting the traditional family model" narrative appears in all six countries, consistently portraying heterosexual, cisgender family structures as the moral, cultural, or natural cornerstone of society. Across contexts, LGBTIQ+ inclusion is framed as weakening, replacing, or threatening this ideal. While the core message is shared, each in each country different dimensions of the narrative are emphasised.

- In Belgium, LGBTIQ+ rights are often framed as threats to "traditional families," accompanied by opposition to gender-inclusive education and warnings of "moral decline."
- In Bulgaria, the narrative is closely linked with the "protecting the children" discourse, portraying LGBTIQ+ activism, education about gender and sexuality, or even the public visibility of LGBTIQ+ people as dangers to children and family values.
- In Denmark, this narrative echoes wider European heteronormative discourses presenting heterosexual, cisgender families as the natural and morally superior model. LGBTIQ+ rights are portrayed as undermining the "natural" family and cultural values. Academic literature describes this as "heteroactivism" – the promotion of heterosexuality and traditional gender roles as best for society, while marking other identities as inferior or harmful.
- In France, the "traditional family" is commonly framed as threatened by LGBTIQ+ identities and by reproductive and gender-inclusive reforms.
- In Hungary, the narrative defines family exclusively as a heterosexual couple with children, linking this ideal closely to Christian values. It is promoted as a core element of national identity and demographic survival, positioned against perceived external threats and alternative family forms, and used to legitimise resistance to actors who question traditional families and established gender roles.
- In Ireland, this narrative links LGBTIQ+ inclusion to a perceived decline in traditional family structures or religious values. It appears frequently in debates on parenthood, constitutional language, and education policy.

7.2.4 Anti-trans narratives

Anti-trans narratives feature prominently in Ireland, France, Denmark, and Belgium, where they form a central pillar of anti-LGBTIQ+ discourse and appear with particular intensity. In these four countries, misinformation, moral panic, and biologically essentialist claims drive public debates on gender recognition, youth healthcare, and the visibility of trans identities. While such narratives also exist in the other project countries, they tend to appear with lower frequency or are less developed, often folded into broader anti-LGBTIQ+ or anti-gender framings rather than forming a standalone focus.

- In Ireland, anti-trans narratives are driven by recurring false claims about biological sex, access to services, and participation in sports. These narratives are often framed as part of a broader "LGBTQ+ agenda," spreading rapidly through social media and contributing to offline hostility. Much of this content is imported from international networks and adapted for domestic audiences.
- In France, anti-trans disinformation and moral panic have been intensifying, particularly around trans youth and drag events. There has been a rise in online false claims, reflecting broader transnational anti-trans and anti–gender equality narratives. These include attempts to link LGBTIQ+ activism to the sexualisation of minors.
- In Denmark, anti-trans narratives target trans rights and gender-affirming care, focusing on debates over legal gender recognition, access to youth healthcare, and the visibility of trans identities. Such narratives portray trans-affirming policies as erasing biological sex, pressuring young people into transitioning, and endangering the safety of women and girls. These claims reflect wider anti-gender patterns seen across Europe.
- In Belgium, anti-trans rhetoric often targets trans visibility, depicting trans women as a threat to women and children. Transphobic messaging frequently escalates, with anti-LGBTIQ+ political actors framing gender-affirming healthcare as "child mutilation" and dismissing non-binary identities as "nonsense," "a trend," or "a mental disorder." In online spaces, right-wing group chats and even party accounts often trivialise trans experiences through mockery, memes, or slurs.

7.2.5 Additional narratives

Besides the main narratives, there are several other anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives appearing in the project countries, which many times overlap with the previous ones and each other.

- In Belgium LGBTIQ+ visibility is often framed as a public provocation, used to justify rejecting Pride flags, rainbow crossings, or drag events under claims of "neutrality." Far-right actors also blend anti-migrant and anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, weaponising LGBTIQ+ rights to advance Islamophobic positions. Civil society organisations are increasingly targeted through narratives portraying them as ideological lobby groups, "subsidy parasites," or threats to parental authority. Some francophone Catholic circles contribute religious conservative narratives centred on Christian moral decline. Finally, Belgian far-right online spaces show strong convergence with international anti-gender narratives, adopting slogans such as "stop the gender lobby" and reinforcing more aggressive, coordinated anti-LGBTIQ+ messaging.
- In Bulgaria, LGBTIQ+ visibility — especially around events like Sofia Pride — was framed as a deliberate moral provocation and an attack on national values. Anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric was also tightly intertwined with claims of Western interference, portraying human rights advocacy and civil society

work as foreign agendas imposed on Bulgaria. These narratives fed into a broader strategy of political polarisation, where hostility toward LGBTIQ+ people was used to mobilise resentment and reinforce nationalist identity.

- In Denmark, some actors link LGBTIQ+ inclusion to broader conspiracy narratives, portraying equality initiatives as part of an international or elite-driven agenda that threatens national identity and ordinary people's values. Anti-LGBTIQ+ ideas also intersect with anti-migrant and anti-elite rhetoric, situating queer rights within a wider narrative of cultural decline. These discourses contribute to a measurable impact on the climate of hate speech and hate crime, providing justification for harassment, shaping online hostility, and normalising prejudice even in the absence of explicit calls for violence.
- France's anti-LGBTIQ+ discourse is shaped by a prominent "anti-woke" / "free speech" framing, in which equality advocacy is cast as an elite cultural agenda that threatens French identity and restricts open expression. In parallel, online disinformation and moral-panic narratives intensified—particularly around drag events and alleged public disorder—circulating widely on digital platforms and amplifying polarisation. These dynamics are reinforced by media commentators and online influencers, helping move the narratives beyond organised movements into broader public debate, with reported spikes in online hate speech and offline hostility following periods of heightened controversy.
- Hungarian anti-LGBTIQ+ discourse frequently mobilises demographic decline ("demographic winter") arguments, presenting the LGBTIQ+ community as one of several alleged causes of falling birth rates alongside migration, abortion, and other scapegoats. Closely connected are "great replacement" / "population replacement" framings and broader enemy-construction narratives, in which the EU and "the West" are depicted as forcing alien concepts (gender, liberalism, gender equality) onto Hungary and threatening "Christian Europe." These themes are reinforced through symbolic and institutional battlegrounds—such as the refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention, the ban on gender studies, and attacks on institutions like Central European University—as well as through recurring claims that LGBTIQ+ visibility (notably Pride) constitutes an attack on Hungarian culture, normality, and Christianity, sometimes paired with assertions that Pride does not even represent gay people.
- Ireland's anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives also include conspiracy-based messages linking LGBTIQ+ rights to threats against Irish identity or global control, often merging anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-migrant rhetoric within the same online spaces and protest networks. These claims are reinforced by the importation of wider international conspiracy frames, with Irish digital ecosystems amplifying far-right narratives originating abroad and reshaping them for local mobilisation. This environment contributes to a documented increase in hostility, hate speech, and offline harassment, as online disinformation, protests targeting schools and libraries, and emotionally charged narratives converge to intensify the impact on LGBTIQ+ peoples lived experience.

7.3 Political manifestos of anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives

The following cases are examples from the project countries collected and chosen by partners to serve as illustrations of political appearances of anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives between 2020 and 2025. The aim of the

collection is on the one hand to demonstrate what political manifestations and consequences of anti-gender narratives exist in the project countries. On the other hand, these cases aim to support the further activities of the project by providing possible content for the training materials which will be produced in WP3.

7.3.1 Belgium

Vlaam Belang's Cultuurstrijd (Culture Battle) brochure[4]

Vlaams Belang emerged between 2020–2025 as Belgium's principal political driver of anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-gender narratives, promoting a worldview in which gender diversity is denied and LGBTIQ+ rights are framed as "acquired" and no longer legitimate grounds for further progress. Central to this was the party's 2023 Cultuurstrijd brochure, which depicted gender-inclusive education as "confusing, dangerous, and pedagogically irresponsible," opposed reforms to gender markers, gender-neutral toilets, public reimbursement for gender-affirming care, and expressed preference for heterosexual parenting as a norm ("children have the right to a mum and dad"). The brochure also proposed structural tools – disciplinary commissions, reporting hotlines, and investigations into "woke ideology" in schools – to exert political oversight over education. Media such as VRT and De Standaard highlighted that VB was nearly alone in turning "gender ideology" into a major electoral issue, while ILGA-Europe and academic researchers identified this positioning as part of a broader European anti-gender mobilisation.

Chris Janssens attacking LGBTIQ+ CSOs[5]

Chris Janssens contributed significantly to anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric by targeting civil-society organisations, at one point stating that the best thing for lesbian, gay and bisexual people would be for LGBTIQ+ associations to "cease to exist." In parliamentary debates between 2021 and 2025, he repeatedly characterised LGBTIQ+ organisations as activist lobbies undermining family values and misusing public funds. Groups such as Çavaria and Wel Jong publicly refuted his claims, while media outlets like De Morgen and Knack placed his interventions within VB's broader objective to delegitimise civil society. Academic experts on democracy and participation further criticised his tactics as attempts to weaken Belgium's pluralistic model of state–civil society cooperation.

Dries Van Langenhove attacking drag shows[6]

Dries Van Langenhove, a former MP aligned with Vlaams Belang, used extra-parliamentary activism to spread misinformation about LGBTIQ+ cultural events, particularly drag performances. His most viral claim accused the city of Bruges of spending €16,000 on a drag queen reading for children – a story later thoroughly debunked by local authorities and fact-checking outlets such as FactCheck. Vlaanderen and Apache. Through Telegram channels, YouTube videos and social media, he framed LGBTIQ+ cultural programming as a threat to children and part of an alleged indoctrination effort. Following his posts,

[4] https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2024/05/26/vlaams-belang-gender-lucienne-de-zevende-dag/?utm, https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Belgium.pdf?utm, https://www.belganewsagency.eu/elections-2024-vlaams-belang-faction-leader-attacks-lgbtqi-associations?utm

[5] https://www.belganewsagency.eu/elections-2024-vlaams-belang-faction-leader-attacks-lgbtqi-associations?utm

[6] https://www.knack.be/factcheck/factcheck-neen-de-stad-brugge-betaalde-geen-16000-euro-voor-een-dragqueen-die-voor-kinderen-kwam-voorlezen/

LGBTIQ+ organisations reported increases in online abuse, highlighting how such disinformation campaigns can rapidly escalate into moral panic with real-world consequences.

Benoît Cerexhe's anti-LGBTIQ+ symbolic politics[7]

Benoît Cerexhe became a notable francophone-centrist figure in anti-LGBTIQ+ symbolic politics when he opposed the installation of rainbow pedestrian crossings in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre in 2023, describing the Brussels Region's push for the crossing as a "coup de force" and defending his refusal on grounds of municipal neutrality. He also rejected a similar proposal earlier in the year, citing the need for non-politicised public space. The Region publicly criticised his decision, and LGBTIQ+ organisations argued that neutrality rhetoric was being misused to diminish queer visibility. Commentators in Le Soir and RTBF saw the case as revealing a tension within centrist political spaces, where symbolic LGBTIQ+ inclusion is sometimes resisted even outside far-right circles.

VB Jongeren's anti-LGBTIQ+ campaign

VB Jongeren, memer of the Vlaams Belang Youth Wing played a key role in digital dissemination of anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives by producing and circulating memes, short videos and posts mocking non-binary identities, portraying LGBTIQ+ rights as Marxist ideology, and framing queer-inclusive education as "state grooming." Their content spread widely across TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, and university campuses, contributing to a generational amplification of anti-gender messaging. Student groups in Ghent, Leuven, Brussels, and Antwerp condemned the campaigns, and media analyses noted that VB Jongeren's output closely mirrors international far-right meme culture. Researchers highlight this as evidence of a transnational digital pipeline through which anti-gender narratives are adapted and localised for Flemish youth audiences.

7.3.2 Bulgaria

Kostadin Kostadinov and the Vazrazhdane party's anti-gender actions[8]

Kostadin Kostadinov and his party Vazrazhdane became central actors in Bulgaria's anti-LGBTIQ+ landscape by portraying LGBTIQ+ rights as a foreign, Western ideological project imposed on Bulgaria. Through parliamentary interventions, media appearances, and an extensive social-media presence, Kostadinov

[7] https://bx1.be/categories/news/woluwe-saint-pierre-le-bourgmestre-en-colere-contre-un-passage-pour-pieton-arc-en-ciel/, https://bx1.be/categories/news/benoit-cerexhe-ne-veut-pas-dun-passage-pour-pietons-arc-en-ciel-a-woluwe-saint-pierre/

[8] General Anti-LGBTIQ narratives and statements: https://www.svobodnaevropa.bg/a/lgbt-vazrazhdane-zakon/33098537.html, https://vazrazhdane.bg/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%84%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%B7/; After the law for banning ''LGBITQ propaganda' in schools they publicly distributed ''Black list'' with the names and contact details of the teachers that were opposing it: https://epicenter.bg/en/article/PP-DB-i--quot-Vazrazhdane-quot--v-spor-zaradi-cheren-spisak-na-uchiteli--podpisali-se-protiv-LGBT-zakona/359276/2/0; Actions against Pride: https://vazrazhdane.bg/%D0%B2%D1%8A%D0%B7%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D1%89%D0%B5-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0/; Vazrazhdane introduces the "foreign agent" narrative copying the russian law: https://www.rferl.org/a/bugaria-foreign-agent-law-far-right-revival-kostadinov/33107205.html, https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107638186

repeatedly framed LGBTIQ+ equality, gender studies, and European human rights norms as threats to "traditional Bulgarian values," warning that they aim to "destroy the family," "corrupt children," and "erase Bulgarian identity." This narrative strategically merged anti-LGBTQI rhetoric with nationalism and Euroscepticism, strengthening Vazrazhdane's position as the defender of "moral purity" and sovereignty. Despite sustained criticism from organisations such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Bilitis, and Deystvie, no institutional sanctions followed, illustrating the impunity with which political hate speech circulates in Bulgaria.

Kornelia Ninova's mainstream "moral protection" rhetoric[9]

Kornelia Ninova and the Bulgarian Socialist Party demonstrated that anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric is not confined to the far right, repeatedly presenting LGBTIQ+ equality and the Istanbul Convention as threats to Bulgarian morality and the well-being of children. In parliamentary debates and public statements, Ninova invoked "gender ideology" as an "immoral" and dangerous influence, positioning herself as a protector of traditional values. This framing resonated with conservative voters and blurred ideological boundaries between left-wing populism and nationalist discourse. CSOs submitted complaints to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, arguing that the rhetoric incited hostility and harassment. The CPD's mixed responses – sometimes acknowledging discrimination, sometimes prioritising freedom of expression – revealed institutional reluctance to hold influential political figures accountable.

Education and "protecting children from propaganda"[10]

Between 2023 and 2024, groups of MPs proposed legislation to ban so-called "LGBT propaganda" in Bulgarian schools, echoing Russian-style restrictive laws. These initiatives sought to prohibit discussion of gender diversity, non-traditional families, or sexuality outside strictly heteronormative terms, claiming such information would "confuse" or "harm" minors. The proposals were heavily backed by far-right and socially conservative politicians who depicted them as essential to protecting Bulgarian children from moral decline. Academic experts, human-rights defenders, and organisations such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and Bilitis condemned the proposals as unconstitutional and incompatible with EU anti-discrimination norms. International bodies, including the European Commission and ECRI, warned that such legislation would violate fundamental rights. The debates fuelled a broader moral panic around education and identity, amplified by extensive media coverage.

The attack on the Rainbow Hub – violence as the outcome of hate narratives[11]

[9] Not supporting the Istanbul Convention: https://bntnews.bg/news/socialist-party-leader-we-will-not-support-the-istanbul-convention-in-a-resolution-against-corruption-1309642news.html, Protectig children from LGBTIQ+ propaganda: https://www.novinite.com/articles/227645/Kornelia+Ninova%3A+New+Law+in+Bulgaria+Protects+Children+from+Gender+Identity+Propaganda

[10] https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-anti-lgbtq-law-ban-propaganda-school-ruman-rudev/, https://www.ilga-europe.org/press-release/bulgaria-passes-anti-lgbti-propaganda-law/

[11] https://glasfoundation.bg/en/attack-on-the-lgbti-community-centre-rainbow-hub/, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/bulgaria-presidential-candidate-must-be-investigated-and-held-accountable-after-attack-on-lgbti-centre/

The 2021 attack on Sofia's Rainbow Hub, an LGBTIQ+ community centre shared by multiple organisations, exemplified the violent consequences of escalating anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric. The centre was stormed and vandalised by individuals linked to nationalist movements, among them a then-presidential candidate, following an extended period of online hate speech portraying LGBTIQ+ visibility as provocation. Despite public condemnation from civil-society organisations, international partners, and foreign embassies, Bulgarian prosecutors treated the incident merely as vandalism, failing to recognise the bias-motivated nature of the crime. This institutional refusal to classify the attack as hate-motivated highlighted systemic failures in protecting LGBTIQ+ people and reinforced a climate of impunity surrounding anti-LGBTQI violence.

Conservative parental movements – "parents as protectors", protection of the family and the lineage, religion and traditional values narrative[12]

Conservative parental associations and civic groups became influential actors in spreading anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives, particularly regarding school curricula and children's rights. These groups organised petitions, demonstrations, and coordinated online campaigns that claimed diversity education and sexual-health programmes were tools of "foreign indoctrination" designed to undermine traditional Bulgarian values. Their messaging that international organisations, CSOs, and experts were "corrupting Bulgarian children" gained traction with conservative politicians and sympathetic media, framing education reforms as existential threats. Human-rights organisations and education specialists warned that these campaigns encouraged censorship, spread misinformation, and fuelled discrimination within schools, ultimately reinforcing a hostile environment for LGBTIQ+ youth.

This is a continuation of the far-right rhetoric and the work of political parties, but now it's transformed to smaller groups and NGOs that are protecting the family, traditions, religious values.

These types of groups are also opposing the Sofia Pride by organising 'March for the family' which is the same day as the pride and positions as an alternative to the LGBTIQ narratives.

7.3.3 Denmark

Folketing motion against legal gender recognition for children[13]

[12] https://www.family.bg/sabitia/pohod-za-semeystvoto/, Some examples of these groups: Association 'Community and Values'- https://www.sva.bg/; Moviment 'For the Bulgarian Family'-https://vmro.bg/archives/36022, https://www.facebook.com/p/%D0%94%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%91%D1%8A%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D0%A1%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%B9%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-100064698252764/; 'Freedom for everyone' - https://svobodazavseki.com/; Association 'Lineage Interantional':. 'Bulgarian Parents Central Committee' - https://www.facebook.com/p/%D0%91%D1%8A%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%A0%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%A6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%9A%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%82-100079698546789/, https://brck.bg/, in Vkontakte (the russian version of FB): https://vk.com/public201946259

[13] Folketinget. (2020). B 80 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om, at regeringen pålægges ikke at indføre en ret til juridisk kønsskifte for børn [Decision proposal on ordering the government not to introduce a right to legal gender recognition for children]. Folketingstidende. https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/beslutningsforslag/b80/index.htm, Foreningen for Støtte til Transkønnede Børn [FSTB]. (2021, January 17). Henvendelse til Ligestillingsudvalget

A coalition of MPs from Dansk Folkeparti, Det Konservative Folkeparti, Nye Borgerlige, and Liberal Alliance, including prominent figures such as Liselott Blixt, Peter Skaarup, Birgitte Bergman, Mai Mercado, Mette Thiesen, Pernille Vermund, Henrik Dahl, and Ole Birk Olesen, backed Decision Proposal B 80, which sought to prevent the government from introducing legal gender recognition for minors. The accompanying material submitted to the Ligestillingsudvalget framed gender recognition as dangerous and linked it to "LGBTQI ideology," claiming children required protection from confusing or ideological influences. The proposal prompted strong objections from trans and LGBTIQ+ organisations such as Foreningen for Støtte til Transkønnede Børn and LGBT komiteen, which argued that the motion reinforced stigma and undermined children's rights. Although B 80 was rejected at its second reading in May 2021, Danish trans groups continue to cite it as a significant moment of parliamentary resistance to trans minors' recognition and dignity.

Motion to recognise "only two sexes" and abolish legal gender recognition[14]

In 2024–25, Mette Thiesen, together with fellow MPs from Dansk Folkeparti, advanced Decision Proposal B 145, which demanded that the Danish state recognise only two sexes in all public authorities and legal frameworks. The proposal called for abolishing legal gender recognition entirely, ensuring sex markers reflect "biological reality," removing the "X" gender marker from passports, and ending publicly funded hormonal and surgical treatment for trans people. This move represented a direct challenge to Denmark's self-determination model established in 2014 and sought a sweeping rollback of trans healthcare and administrative rights. Trans and LGBTIQ+ organisations condemned the initiative as an unprecedented attack on fundamental bodily autonomy and legal equality, and the proposal garnered substantial media attention. Within community commentary, B 145 has become emblematic of a coordinated anti-trans mobilisation aimed at reversing established rights and normalising biological essentialism within Danish law.

Motion to stop norm-critical LGBTIQ+ teaching in schools[15]

In 2022, local politicians from Det Konservative Folkeparti, Liberal Alliance, Nye Borgerlige, and Dansk Folkeparti submitted a proposal in Københavns Borgerrepræsentation seeking to terminate the city's cooperation with Normstormerne. The motion claimed that norm-critical teaching "creates confusion about sex and gender identity," risks "uncertainty and polarisation," and is overly political, arguing instead for sex-education content delivered only by "objective" teachers or health professionals. Proponents framed the programme as part of "gender ideology" infiltrating schools and insisted that children must be protected from content that challenges the idea of two biological sexes. The proposal was ultimately voted down after opposition from Socialdemokratiet, SF, Radikale Venstre, Enhedslisten and others, who stressed that inclusive, accurate teaching is essential to counter discrimination against LGBTI+ pupils. Several parties attached protocol remarks underscoring the importance of evidence-based diversity education.

---

vedrørende beslutningsforslag B 80 [Submission to the Equality Committee regarding decision proposal B 80]. Folketinget, Ligestillingsudvalget. https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/beslutningsforslag/b80/bilag/2/2315053.pdf

[14] Folketinget. (2025). B 145 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om, at den danske stat, offentlige myndigheder m.v. kun skal anerkende to køn [Decision proposal that the Danish state, public authorities, etc. shall only recognize two sexes]. Folketingstidende. https://www.ft.dk/samling/20241/beslutningsforslag/B145/index.htm

[15] Københavns Borgerrepræsentation. (2022, August 25). Referat for Borgerrepræsentationen møde: Medlemsforslag om Normstormerne og seksualundervisning (Punkt 36) [Minutes of the City Council meeting: Member proposal on Normstormerne and sex education (Item 36)]. https://www.kk.dk/dagsordener-og-referater/Borgerrepr%C3%A6sentationen/m%C3%B8de-25082022/referat/punkt-36

National politicians' campaign against drag show for children[16]

In March 2023, a children's drag performance at Frederiksberg Hovedbibliotek during Lille Kulturnat became the target of a political campaign by Mette Thiesen and Mikkel Bjørn, then recently moved from Nye Borgerlige to Dansk Folkeparti. They publicly accused the event of sexualising children, forcing "identity politics" onto families, and demanded public protest. Their statements helped trigger intense online hostility, two demonstrations outside the library, and a wave of threats and moral-panic commentary casting drag as inherently inappropriate for children. Despite the backlash, the show proceeded under police presence, and accounts in the Danish library sector noted that families experienced the event positively. Media and civil-society responses criticised the framing of drag performers as a danger, highlighting parallels with US-style drag moral panics and noting how such rhetoric fuels harassment of queer cultural workers and public institutions hosting inclusive programming.

Cluster of Folketing motions to limit or roll back legal gender recognition[17]

Across the 2024–25 parliamentary session, MPs from Dansk Folkeparti and allied right-wing parties introduced a series of motions aimed at restricting or dismantling Denmark's legal gender recognition model. These included Decision Proposal B 47, which sought to "limit legal gender change as much as possible" within human-rights boundaries, and the more sweeping B 145, which would abolish legal gender recognition entirely, re-anchor law in "biological reality," remove the X marker in passports, and end public funding for trans healthcare. Collectively, these motions signalled a coordinated attempt to reverse Denmark's internationally recognised self-determination framework and to reintroduce medicalisation and biological essentialism into legal identity. Trans rights groups and LGBTI organisations responded critically, situating the proposals within a broader anti-gender trend and warning that they mark a significant political shift toward the erosion of established protections for trans people.

7.3.4 France

Éric Zemmour's anti-gender and anti-"woke" rhetoric[18]

Between 2020 and 2025, Éric Zemmour emerged as one of the most visible national figures promoting anti-gender narratives in France, repeatedly denouncing "gender theory," trans rights, and LGBTIQ+ inclusion as ideological threats to French civilisation. In campaign rallies, television appearances, and Reconquête!

[16] The Copenhagen Post. (2023, March 17). 'Paedo' and 'porn' accusations ahead of drag queen children's show courting controversy in Copenhagen. https://cphpost.dk/2023-03-17/news/paedo-and-porn-accusations-ahead-of-drag-queen-childrens-show-courting-controversy-in-copenhagen/, Danmarks Biblioteksforening. (2023, March 23). Frederiksberg: Trods voldsom SoMe-uro blev børnearrangement en god aften [Frederiksberg: Despite violent social media unrest, children's event was a good evening]. https://db.dk/bladartikel/frederiksberg-trods-voldsom-some-uro-blev-boernearrangement-en-god-aften/

[17] Folketinget. (2024). B 47 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om begrænsning af retten til juridisk kønsskifte [Decision proposal on limiting the right to legal gender recognition]. Folketingstidende. https://www.ft.dk/samling/20241/beslutningsforslag/b47/index.htm, Folketinget. (2025). B 145 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om, at den danske stat, offentlige myndigheder m.v. kun skal anerkende to køn [Decision proposal that the Danish state, public authorities, etc. shall only recognize two sexes]. Folketingstidende. https://www.ft.dk/samling/20241/beslutningsforslag/B145/index.htm

[18] https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/5176-zemmour-as-a-morbid-symptom?srsltid=AfmBOoqBYH1KiagmxNE9_8K01PDHBp6Ek7xH0iHfe41J6DsszEX24yYH&utm

communications, he portrayed gender diversity and LGBTIQ+ education as forms of "woke" indoctrination that confuse children and undermine national identity. His discourse – often framing equality measures as foreign or elite-driven – was widely analysed as fitting squarely within the broader European anti-gender movement. By associating LGBTIQ+ rights with cultural decline, demographic danger, and erosion of traditional family structures, Zemmour helped mainstream a moral-panic narrative that blurred cultural conservatism with civilisational defence, while civil society and equality groups repeatedly denounced the stigmatising effects of his rhetoric.

Jordan Bardella's mainstreaming scepticism toward trans rights[19]

As party leader (Rassemblement National) and MEP, Jordan Bardella contributed to the normalisation of anti-woke and anti-gender rhetoric by criticising gender-inclusive education, trans-related policies, and LGBTIQ+ visibility whenever these became part of national debates. Through speeches, interviews, and campaign messaging, he positioned trans inclusion as evidence of ideological excess in schools and public institutions, often warning that such reforms threatened traditional values and parental authority. His interventions helped embed sceptical narratives within the mainstream right, reinforcing a frame in which trans rights are presented as culturally destabilising rather than as equality measures. Bardella's public communications received regular media attention, prompting criticism from LGBTIQ+ organisations and commentators who identified his discourse as part of a broader effort by the RN to legitimise anti-gender sentiment under the banner of opposing "woke ideology."

Marine Le Pen's long-standing opposition to LGBTIQ+ equality[20]

Marine Le Pen's leadership of Rassemblement National continued the party's cautious but persistent resistance to several LGBTIQ+ equality measures, with selective amplification of narratives against "gender ideology" and alleged threats to family norms. While RN rhetoric has become more coded over time, Le Pen has consistently opposed reforms that expand LGBTIQ+ rights, and public debates have resurfaced past writings and statements from RN officials – including homophobic content – revealing the endurance of stigmatizing language inside the party's orbit. Her interventions frequently framed inclusive education, trans rights, or Pride visibility as ideological provocations, arguing that such policies disrupt social cohesion. Media coverage and equality groups have repeatedly criticised these positions, underscoring how RN's messaging contributes to the widespread normalisation of anti-LGBTIQ+ themes in French political discourse.

François-Xavier Bellamy's "protect the family" framing against PMA reform[21]

François-Xavier Bellamy (Les Républicains) served as a central conservative voice opposing progressive reforms such as the extension of assisted reproduction (PMA) to single women and lesbian couples, arguing that such policies represented harmful departures from the traditional family model. In interviews,

[19] https://www.lemonde.fr/en/campus/article/2024/06/09/why-is-jordan-bardella-so-popular-among-young-french-voters_6674276_11.html?utm
[20] https://gender.stanford.edu/news/gender-card-far-right-political-discourse-eric-zemmour-and-marine-le-pen-france-case-study?utm
[21] https://www.publicsenat.fr/actualites/non-classe/la-pma-pour-toutes-sera-notre-malediction-estime-bellamy-lr-145350?utm

parliamentary interventions, and public commentary, he framed PMA expansion as ideological rather than equality-driven, invoking the protection of children and defence of "biological truth." This rhetoric aligned him with broader anti-gender narratives circulating within the European right, where scientific language is used to legitimise moral objections to LGBTIQ+ family rights. Feminist, LGBTIQ+ and equality groups strongly criticised his framing, arguing that it reinforced exclusion and misrepresented the objectives of the bioethics reforms.

Reconquête! and associated youth/digital networks' online amplification of anti-gender narratives[22]

Reconquête! and its youth and online affiliates intensified anti-gender and anti-"woke" messaging through sustained digital campaigning, particularly targeting trans rights, inclusive education, and queer cultural events. These networks deployed combative rhetoric across social media, mobilising concepts such as "LGBT ideology," "indoctrination," and "child protection" to oppose policy reforms and visibility initiatives. Their content – designed for rapid online circulation – amplified narratives first articulated by high-profile party figures, ensuring that anti-gender themes remained highly visible among younger and digitally active audiences. Monitoring bodies and civil-society groups described these campaigns as significant vectors of online hostility, echoing transnational far-right communication strategies.

7.3.5. Hungary

Dóra Dúró sredding the book A Fairytale for Everyone[23]

In September 2020, Dóra Dúró of the far-right Mi Hazánk Mozgalom publicly shredded the children's book A Fairytale for Everyone, denouncing it as "homosexual propaganda" and claiming it smuggled an "abnormal lifestyle" into Hungarian culture. She described homosexuality as "an aggressive lobby" that endangers children by presenting what she labelled "unnatural" as normal. Her action crystallised multiple anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives: the notion that LGBTIQ+ content threatens children, that queer people are culturally alien, and that diversity education is harmful. The backlash was immediate – Hungary's Publishers and Booksellers Association condemned the act as reminiscent of totalitarian book-burnings, psychologists issued statements affirming the book's safety and social value, and sales soared, with well-known actors reading excerpts online. The incident acted as a flashpoint, intensifying national debate and foreshadowing an escalating government-aligned campaign against LGBTIQ+ communities.

Viktor Orbán: "leave our children alone"[24]

[22] https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/A-Year-of-Hate_Anti_Drag-Mobilisation_France.pdf?utm
[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNh1oQKJyUQ, https://mkke.hu/hirek_esemenyek/kozlemeny, https://hvg.hu/elet/20200928_A_konyvkiadok_Duro_Doranak_El_a_kezekkel_a_konyvektol, https://24.hu/kultura/2020/09/29/duro-dora-meseorszag-mindenkie-mesekonyv-sikerlista-elorendeles/, https://hvg.hu/elet/20201209_meseorszag_mindenkie_felolvasas_mesekonyv_magyar_szineszek, https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/10/10/meseorszag-mindenkie-pszichologusok-allasfoglalasa-nem-veszelyes-a-gyerekekre-sem-a-tarsadalomra, https://444.hu/2020/10/06/orbannak-ellenseg-kellett-eppen-egy-mesekonyv-akadt-a-keze-ugyebe, https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/10/21/gender-lmbtq-identitaspolitika-fidesz-2022-kampany-lengyelorszag
[24] https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/10/04/orban-viktor-kossuth-radio-interju-koronavirus-jarvany-meseorszag-mesekonyv, https://hatter.hu/hirek/a-hatter-tarsasag-allasfoglalasa-orban-viktor-nyilatkozata-kapcsan, https://helsinki.hu/orban-gyuloletkelto-szavai-miatt-ombudsmanhoz-fordult-nyolc-szervezet/

Shortly after Dúró's book-shredding, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán used a 2020 interview on public Kossuth Rádió to position homosexuality as a tolerated but burdensome "phenomenon" and drew a hard line by declaring that "children must be left alone." His comments framed LGBTIQ+ existence as inherently provocative and dangerous to minors, implying a distinction between Hungarians and homosexuals and reinforcing a narrative that the visibility of queer people threatens child safety. This messaging aligned with the government's emerging discourse conflating homosexuality with paedophilia—a rhetorical pattern previously used by far-right actors. Independent media sharply criticised Orbán's remarks, and organisations such as Háttér Society condemned the statement for perpetuating harmful stereotypes and excluding LGBTIQ+ Hungarians from the national community. Eight major CSOs jointly appealed to the ombudsman, urging the state to reject government-sponsored hate speech.

Gergely Gulyás's claim on "homosexual propaganda" and endangerment of minors[25]

In 2020, at an official government briefing, Minister Gergely Gulyás echoed and strengthened anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives by questioning whether "homosexual propaganda" should be allowed around children and suggesting it might constitute "endangerment of minors" or even raise suspicions of criminality. His statements blurred the line between LGBTIQ+ visibility and child abuse, implying that merely depicting gay people could be harmful. He also introduced pseudo-scientific uncertainty by refusing to "go into" whether homosexuality is genetic, thereby casting doubt on its legitimacy. Made against the backdrop of Dúró's book-shredding and intensifying government rhetoric, Gulyás's comments reinforced the merging of LGBTIQ+ issues with discourses on paedophilia—an established strategy among far-right actors. Psychologists, child-development experts, and CSOs such as Háttér Society responded by reaffirming that inclusive books do not endanger children, and independent media highlighted how the minister's framing deepened stigma and moral panic.

László Toroczkai conflating homosexuality and paedophilia[26]

At a Mi Hazánk protest in February 2024, party leader László Toroczkai falsely claimed that "scientific research" shows a disproportionately high number of homosexuals among paedophiles, using this pseudo-scientific assertion to criminalise LGBTIQ+ people under the guise of child protection. This narrative emerged amid public anger over the Bicske children's home abuse case and the revelation that President Katalin Novák had pardoned one of the convicted perpetrators. Mi Hazánk reframed a scandal rooted in institutional

25 https://hvg.hu/elet/20201008_Gulyas_Gergely_A_Meseorszag_mindenkie_nem_erzekenyites_hanem_felveti_a_kisko ruak_veszelyeztetesenek_buncselekmenyet, https://magyarnarancs.hu/feketelyuk/meseorszag-mindenkie-csepel-fideszes-polgarmestere-betiltotta-az-ovodakban-a-konyvet-133843, https://444.hu/2020/11/07/tarlos-egykori-helyettese-betiltotta-volna-leanyfalun-a-meseorszag-mindenkie-konyvet-nem-sikerult-neki, https://telex.hu/belfold/2020/10/10/meseorszag-mindenkie-pszichologusok-allasfoglalasa-nem-veszelyes-a-gyerekekre-sem-a-tarsadalomra, https://rtl.hu/hirado/2020/10/09/mesektol-senki-nem-lesz-meleg

26 https://24.hu/belfold/2024/02/13/bicske-faklyas-felvonulas-tuntetes-mi-hazank-toroczkai-kasztracio-k-endre/, https://telex.hu/belfold/2024/02/13/bicske-gyermekotthon-k-endre-mi-hazank-mozgalom-tuntetes-momentum, https://index.hu/belfold/2024/02/13/tuntetes-mi-hazank-mozgalom-demonstracio-bicske-novak-katalin-momentum-toroczkai-laszlo-koztarsasagi-elnok/?token=1331f9f0cfcf199ca9eecf59c588e608, https://444.hu/2024/02/02/novak-katalin-kegyelmet-adott-a-bicskei-gyerekotthon-pedofil-exigazgatojat-fedezo-buntarsnak, https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/megtelt-a-hosok-tere-ezrek-tuntetnek-a-kegyelmi-botrany-miatt-budapesten/32822959.html, https://telex.hu/belfold/2024/02/13/bicske-gyermekotthon-k-endre-mi-hazank-mozgalom-tuntetes-momentum

failure into a cultural-homophobic narrative that scapegoated LGBTIQ+ people rather than holding state actors accountable. The protest sparked a counter-demonstration where activists and community members chanted "neither paedophilia nor homophobia," joined by representatives from the centrist Momentum Mozgalom party, highlighting public resistance to far-right instrumentalisation of the case.

Klaudia Szemereyné Pataki linking declining birthrate to LGBTIQ+ people[27]

In April 2025, Kecskemét mayor Klaudia Szemereyné Pataki invoked an anti-LGBTIQ+ demographic winter narrative by telling a person wearing a rainbow T-shirt that declining numbers of children implied reduced need for university capacity, implicitly linking LGBTIQ+ identities to falling birthrates. Her framing shifted attention away from the real issue: the mismanagement of HUF 127.5 billion in state funds invested in risky bonds under her leadership as head of the Neumann János University Foundation. By implying that queer people—not political decisions—were responsible for institutional decline, Pataki deployed a homophobic scapegoating strategy common in demographic-nationalist rhetoric. Independent media reported on the remark, but the incident did not generate significant public or institutional pushback, illustrating how such narratives can circulate with limited accountability.

7.3.6 Ireland

Rónán Mullen: "radical new definition of gender" [28]

During a 2024 Seanad Éireann debate on the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill, Senator Rónán Mullen warned against what he described as a "radical new definition of gender," citing long lists of gender identities found online to portray gender diversity as absurd, excessive, and inherently dangerous. He argued that recognising such identities in law could criminalise those who reject them and claimed that gender identity concepts "put children at risk" when incorporated into school curricula. While not directed at LGBTIQ+ people specifically, his framing echoed international anti-gender narratives by positioning gender diversity as ideological, confusing, and a threat to childhood innocence. His remarks were circulated in Irish and international media, including conservative outlets, as an example of political resistance to gender-inclusive reforms, prompting criticism from equality advocates who noted the risk of fuelling stigma toward gender-diverse youth.

Carol Nolan's opposition to gender-identity content in schools[29]

Within wider public debates in Ireland on education, parental rights, and the role of schools in addressing gender and identity, in 2024 Independent TD Carol Nolan criticised elements of the SPHE curriculum that reference gender identity, arguing that the content was "unscientific claims based on gender ideology", was inappropriate for schools and should be subject to review. Speaking on proposed updates to relationship

[27] https://telex.hu/zacc/2025/04/16/kecskemet-polgarmester-szemereyne-pataki-klaudia-neumann-janos-egyetem, https://telex.hu/gazdasag/2025/04/16/kecskemet-neumann-janos-egyetemert-alapitvany-korrupcio-szemreyne-pataki-klaudia-tudasvaros

[28] Oireachtas Éireann. (2024, 16 October). Seanad Éireann debate on the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill [Parliamentary debate]. KildareStreet.com.

[29] Gript. (2024, September 24). TDs say entire SPHE course needs review after family-area uproar. Gript. https://gript.ie/tds-say-entire-sphe-course-needs-review-after-family-a-uproar

and sexuality education, she framed her concerns around child protection, parental rights, and the introduction of what she described as contested or ideological concepts into classroom teaching.

This framing positions gender-identity education as potentially confusing or unsuitable for children and presents curriculum reform as a challenge to parental authority. While her statements did not directly oppose LGBTIQ+ people or rights, they reflect a broader conservative narrative seen across Europe in which gender-inclusive education is portrayed as destabilising for children and families.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The research revealed that, in many aspects, politicians, public officials and CSOs have different experiences and face different challenges across the project countries. However, there are also experiences and needs which are similar across all of them. Hence, in conclusion, the following points can be identified as relevant for the further activities of the project:

- **Providing training for politicians and public officials would be important and relevant**.
    - Even though CSOs' experiences with the openness of politicians and public officials to LGBTIQ+ topics varied by country, it was a common experience that their knowledge is limited.
    - In line with this, even though the responding politicians and public officials were generally accepting of LGBTIQ+ issues, and most of the responding CSOs had dealt with LGBTIQ+ topics, most respondents had not participated in training on LGBTIQ+ issues.
    - The importance of training for politicians and public officials on LGBTIQ+ issues was acknowledged by both themselves and CSOs.
- **CSOs could also benefit from tailored training materials**.
    - Even though some LGBTIQ+-focused CSOs explicitly stated that they do not need training on the topic, many of the responding organisations would require more knowledge in certain areas.
- **Anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech is widespread.**
    - Hate speech, particularly online hate speech, was encountered as a challenge in all countries.
    - Anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives also appear in the political discourse in all countries to some extent.
- **There is a lack of cooperation among CSOs and politicians/public institutions on LGBTIQ+ issues.**
    - Most CSO respondents reported that their cooperation with political actors and institutions is limited. The situation was similar from the side of politicians and public officials, with a large proportion not knowing whether their political body or institution had contact with CSOs.
- **There are several thematic areas connected to LGBTIQ+ issues where politicians, public officials and most CSOs would need or would benefit from receiving training.**
    - As the most useful training areas, politicians primarily identified training in legal knowledge, countering anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech, and cooperation with CSOs
    - CSOs also prioritised countering hate speech and legal knowledge as potentially useful training topics.
    - According to CSO respondents, besides theoretical background, practical guidance on areas such as legal issues and ways of handling hate speech are necessary components of training for all target groups.
    - Providing case studies and real-life examples from both national and EU contexts would be especially beneficial for all participants.

The findings of the research activities, on the one hand, proved the relevance of the further activities of the project, and, on the other hand, provide a solid basis for the further activities of the SPHERE+ project.

The SPHERE+ project

SPHERE+ Cooperation Against LGBTIQ+ Hate Speech in Political and Public Spheres is co-funded by the European Union's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

The project is working to deliver research on hate speech and cooperation models between CSOs and politicians; training and microlearning for political and public actors; a digital learning platform open to all; and a European Code of Conduct promoting inclusive, respectful communication in public life. Together, these actions seek to strengthen democratic resilience and empower leaders to confront LGBTIQ+ hate and foster a more inclusive Europe for all. (Project Number: 101215091)

www.sphereproject.eu

Co-funded by the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The author is solely responsible for this publication (communication) and the Commission accepts no