Inclusive communication
Guidelines

for DG COMM output

European Parliament
Directorate-General for
COMMUNICATION

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Guidelines
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CONTEXT The resolution of 15 January 2019 on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament [P8_TA-PROV(2019)0010](#) states the following:

Article 49. [Parliament] Recommends that Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication include a stronger and more active gender perspective in its reporting of Parliament's policy-making and especially in preparing the campaign for the European elections in 2019.

In response to the resolution, these internal guidelines have been drafted with the purpose of setting out how DG COMM will ensure equal representation of women and men in all our communication output, as well as effective outreach and engagement with women and men alike.

Equality between women and men is a European value firmly enshrined in the treaties, which DG COMM has been increasingly committed to for a long time. Recently DG COMM widened its equality scope to also embrace diversity and include proactive measures not only for women, but also for other diverse communities of European citizens.

DG COMM's output is public, open and available to all citizens. However, in order for its communication efforts to be effective, DG COMM works with an approach whereby all actions have clearly defined target groups. The content and channels used for each action are tailored to the needs and preferences of the particular audience targeted, based on data. These guidelines do not aim to alter this way of working, but to recognise that widely defined target groups (youth, managers, etc.) have diverse segments within them, for example women, men, persons identifying as LGBTI, persons with disabilities, persons of different social or ethnic origin, etc.

Hence, these recommendations aim to recognise the full diversity of the defined audiences, and make efforts to ensure nobody is turned away because of our choice of vocabulary, images, speakers, or other.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to ensure DG COMM's output is inclusive, and increasingly appealing to the diverse segments of the defined target groups. It is a matter of reaching out beyond the usual suspects, and our output being relevant to our audiences.

Gender equality and diversity issues should be mainstreamed into all DG COMM strategies and campaigns. These inclusive communication guidelines have been drafted with the aim of achieving long-term change by fostering an equality and diversity mind-set.

SCOPE

It is DG COMM's mission to help build the European Parliament's reputation; to help citizens understand what the European Parliament is, what it does, and what it stands for.

It is essential that DG COMM staff are fully engaged in and understand the purpose of mainstreaming gender equality and diversity into communication output, the challenges and opportunities it brings, and the role they will play in it.

These guidelines are applicable to all DG COMM services, and are subject to updates over time. Inclusion issues related to human resources (selection, recruitment, promotion, work/life balance, etc.), while of utmost importance for the success of an active inclusion policy, are **not** within scope for this paper.

IMPLEMENTATION

This document builds on input from DG COMM units on their current practices of inclusivity and initiatives for the near future. All original contributions from different units are available on the sharing platform **Confluence**.

All staff and services are asked to continually consider and apply these guidelines by mainstreaming the horizontal principles in chapter two into their work. Specific checklists are presented in chapter three for quick reference to benchmark practice in DG COMM's different areas of activity.

Horizontal
principles

1

Horizontal principles

There are a number of key drivers that will influence the inclusiveness of our communication output and citizen engagement which should be applied across all DG COMM activity:

USE OF DATA

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

At the outset of any action, consult available data (Eurobarometer, satisfaction surveys, etc.) on the target group. This allows us to fine tune its messaging to the concerns and interests of citizens. Most of this data can be disaggregated for women and men, and some also per age group, as well as social and occupational categories.

DG COMM's Public Opinion Monitoring unit (POMU) can offer detailed insights into the results of the Eurobarometer data with regards to gender, and present corresponding graphs and charts. They can help identify possible 'gender gaps' concerning the attitudes towards the European Union, values and socio-demographics. This adds an important perspective when planning actions and campaigns.

For each question, POMU can provide additional information about how socio-demographic, economic and political attitudes can influence the opinions also within the same gender group. These insights should feed into campaign strategies and help to design the right communication messages. Identifying differences in values, policy priorities and preferred topics allows for informed strategic decisions and circumvents any underlying gender bias.

- ☐ Analyse the data available about the defined target groups disaggregated by gender.

- ☐ Adjust messaging and other aspects of the action to the insights about the particular audience addressed.

MONITORING

Collecting data on DG COMM output, for example on female and male speakers at our public events, will allow us to identify patterns, successes and shortcomings.

- ☐ Identify which data to collect for each specific activity, e.g. on the gender balance among speakers at public events.

- ☐ Establish a benchmark and set targets for the year to come.

Satisfaction surveys are also a means of collecting valuable data. *An example of good practice is how the Youth Outreach Unit included "other" as a third gender option in their feedback questionnaire for participants. This allows for individuals who may not necessarily identify with traditional gender categorisations to still feel included, while monitoring whether our activities reach this group, and learning about their opinion of the Parliament experience.*

REPRESENTATION

People who do not feel represented in our communication output are likely to think our communication does not concern them. For example, all male panels effectively convey the message that this is not a place for women to have their voices heard. This is why it is important to strive to represent the full spectrum of the population, challenging stereotypes related to gender and other aspects, in DG COMM activities and campaigns. By offering women and men roles of equal value, and including different aspects of diversity we ensure that everyone feels involved.

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

When making decisions regarding images and design, apply the Consistent Communication [guidelines](#) to ensure coherence with Parliament's identity. These inclusion recommendations are to be seen as a complement to the Consistent Communication approach.

- ☐ Choose images of people that are diverse in terms of gender, disability, age and ethnicity, ensuring specific groups feel visually represented.

- ☐ People should be depicted in their everyday environment and in natural poses.

- ☐ Avoid using an image showing only women or only men if the group addressed or referred to is mixed.

- ☐ Show women and men, and people of different origins in roles and functions of **equal value**.

- ☐ Avoid the stereotypical tendency to choose a full body picture of women and close up shots for men, which could be perceived as objectifying the female body.

- ☐ Favour pictures of active behaviour (speaking, shaking hands, walking, writing, voting…).

- ☐ Challenge gender stereotypes in images. This could mean choosing a woman to illustrate a topic traditionally considered male, e.g. technology or science. Inversely, choose a man to illustrate a subject traditionally considered female, e.g. family care, human resources management, house-hold related tasks, etc. *An example of good practice is how the Visitors offer for families has been promoted with a video of a father with children attending the House of European History*.

- ☐ Challenge traditional definitions of femininity such as submissiveness or sentimentality, expressed through clothing, cosmetics, style, etc.

- ☐ Avoid stereotyping or "tokenism"[1] in images. This can be done by portraying "diverse" individuals participating in a DG COMM activity, or at work, or as leaders, etc. *An example of good practice is the Youth Outreach Unit, which engages regularly and long-term with underrepresented groups, by inviting and including them in their events and seminars. They can then use regular photos of their own activities with a diverse set of participants as visual material when needed*.

- ☐ Images of persons with a disability should aim neither to hide a visible disability nor over-emphasise it. Persons with a disability should be portrayed with able-bodied persons, in a setting where they have equal value.

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1 **Tokenism** is the practice of making only a symbolic effort to be *inclusive* to members of *minority groups*, especially by including a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of equality and inclusion. The effort of including a token individual is usually intended to create the impression of social inclusiveness and *diversity* (racial, religious, sexual, etc.) in order to deflect accusations of *discrimination*.

☐ Avoid using images that give the impression that Parliament has a gender, age, ethnic, or any other type of bias. Ensure Parliament is portrayed as open and welcoming of all types of citizens.

Checklist of useful questions to ask when making the final choice of pictures:

☐ Who is in the picture? Are there both women and men?

☐ What are the apparent power relations between them? This can be expressed through their physical positions or postures, their facial expression, their clothing, etc.

☐ Is there diversity? Is there inclusiveness?

☐ What are the possible underlying messages that could be interpreted from this image (ask several people for their opinion, since this can vary enormously)?

☐ Does it correspond to the message we want to get across?

☐ If any of the questions above make you doubt the picture's suitability, choose another one.

When working with contractors, ensure they are also aware of these guidelines.

LANGUAGE

Inclusive visuals need to be reinforced with inclusive language. Societal perceptions and media portrayal can feed into gender stereotypes, not only through imagery and narratives, but also language. Gendered language is so common that it can be difficult for many to even notice it. Language powerfully reflects and influences attitudes, behaviour and perceptions, thus using gender-fair and inclusive language can help to reduce gender stereotyping, promote social change and contribute to achieving gender equality.

Apply the EP gender-neutral language guidelines in the production of all DG COMM's output, for all languages.

The same principles should be applied when we speak about vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and our choice of words when describing controversial topics such as migration and refugees. It is important to be respectful and to use neutral language when referring to these groups. Please refer to the Ethical Journalism Guidelines for recommendations.

Apply these tips when referring to persons with disabilities:

☐ Use person-first language: a person with a disability.

☐ Emphasise each person's individuality and capabilities rather than defining them by a condition.

☐ Avoid phrases like 'suffers from' and passive 'victim' words.

☐ Avoid terms that define the disability as a limitation.

☐ Do not use collective nouns such as 'the deaf' as these groups are not homogeneous.

☐ Remember that a large majority of disabilities are invisible.

Remember to apply the Consistent Communication guidelines to language: write short sentences, using simple and familiar words. Avoid EU-jargon.

ACCESSIBILITY

While physical accessibility is mainly the responsibility of other internal stakeholders, such as DG INLO, DG COMM needs to be proactive in this area to ensure disabled citizens can access and participate in our citizen engagement on equal terms.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

☐ Ensure event venues and visitors areas are accessible for persons with disabilities, both in terms of physical access to the venue, and access to the content. Useful information on services (portable induction loops, sign-language interpretation, how to book mobility scooters in advance, etc.) that are available for venues in Brussels and Strasbourg can be found here.

☐ More information on how disabled persons can move around Parliament's buildings can be found here.

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

DG COMM is committed to web accessibility, and is constantly working to improve the user experience for disabled and non-disabled users. When creating new web products and maintaining existing ones, use this checklist:

☐ Apply the Guidelines for conception and implementation of EP websites by the Webmaster Unit, which incorporate good practices on accessibility and user experience.

☐ Conduct internal audits on a regular basis to verify and improve the level of accessibility of different sections of the website, including multimedia assets such as pictures, videos, audios and static and dynamic infographics.

☐ Ensure procurement procedures for the provision of IT services include accessibility as a mandatory requirement being, if appropriate, part of the technical selection criteria.

☐ Use accessibility tools for Quality Assurance procedure before deploying a new version of a website or new contents, in particular for multimedia infographics.

☐ Provide alternative text on pictures in digital content, both on websites and on main social media platforms.

☐ Include alternative text on images that contain information and subtitles on videos.

☐ Use Camel Case (capitalize first letter of every word) for hashtags as far as possible.

☐ Ensure compliance with the directive for accessibility of **websites** and **mobile apps**.

Furthermore, the European Disability Forum's recommendations for accessible campaigns are available on **Confluence**.

CONSULTATION

Consultations with organisations representing the different communities we are addressing informs us on how we can adapt our communication output to better suit their specific interests. It can also help to reach out to new segments of our audiences and strategically engage with them.
It is important to keep in mind that communities are in general heterogeneous and it is better to consult with a number of individuals from different organisations, rather than to be guided by the opinion or advice of one single person. Long-term partnerships and consultation with relevant stakeholders in civil society will contribute to improve the inclusiveness of our communication output.
For these guidelines, several organisations were consulted on what inclusive communication means to them.

OBSERVE EMBLEMATIC DAYS FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

While it is important to apply principles of equality and inclusion in every day work, DG COMM takes the opportunity of occasions such as International Women's Day (8 March), to give additional visibility to this topic.
The particular days are based on EU values, and decisions made by the political authorities and DG COMM's governance bodies, and include for example IDAHO - International Day Against Homophobia (17 May) and the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November).

Mainstreaming in DG COMM's areas of work

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Mainstreaming in DG COMM's areas of work

Each type of communication has its specificity. This chapter offers specific recommendations for how to mainstream gender equality and diversity into different DG COMM output or areas of action.

EVENTS AND PUBLIC PANEL DEBATES

DG COMM is committed to a strong gender perspective when organising events and public debates. Speaking events are an arena for change. DG COMM committed to strive to ensure gender balance among speakers at public events in March 2017. All-male panels are to be avoided[2]. Publicly available databases on women experts can be used to find potential speakers, e.g. the Brussels binder.

☐ Ensure gender balance among speakers at any public event organised.

☐ Make efforts to engage both female and male speakers, of diverse backgrounds.

☐ Challenge gender stereotypes by making an extra effort to involve male speakers and participants in events dealing with equality issues or issues considered traditionally part of women's sphere of interest. Inversely, make an extra effort to engage women in topics traditionally considered to be male, e.g. technology, science, industry, trade, etc.

☐ Monitor presence of male and female speakers, and compile statistics.

☐ Each unit which organises public events with panel debates are to establish annual targets for gender balance among speakers based on their statistics for the previous year, with the objective of redressing imbalances.

☐ Instruct moderators to encourage equal participation of female and male voices when opening up for questions from the audience.

☐ Ensure accessibility (refer to section 2.5. of the horizontal principles).

Examples of good practice:

☐ *EPLO Spain has taken a lead in Spain by launching an initiative named "Dónde están ellas?", with the explicit aim to increase the number of female experts as speakers on panels and at conferences. As many as 30 universities, think tanks and institutions have endorsed the manifesto, including the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

☐ *The Youth Outreach Unit put strong efforts into balancing speakers by gender, nationality and where relevant, religion. They invited speakers of different minorities to the EYE, e.g. refugees, persons of immigrant background and a transgender person. The programme addressed issues put forward by disadvantaged groups e.g. the Roma minority, LGBTI persons, persons from rural areas, etc.*

☐ *The Youth Outreach Unit also upgraded the logistics support provided at the EYE event, for example, sign language interpretation; additional mobility support; a "quiet room" for groups of people with mental disabilities and for participants who wished to use it.*

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2   An exception to this rule would be events where the choice of speakers is not within DG COMM control, e.g. an event at national level which require participation of MEPs only, or MEPs in protocol order, resulting in an all-male set-up.

PRESS AND MEDIA

AUDIO-VISUAL

☐ Ensure optimal gender balance among women and men present in DG COMM's audiovisual products, taking into account the difficulties caused by the gender (im)balance among MEPs as well as among MEPs appointed rapporteurs for legislative dossiers with high media interest. When possible, include female MEPs relevant to the topic to ensure a certain gender balance in the news item produced.

☐ Monitor the presence of male vs. female MEPs in DG COMM's production and work to redress the imbalance as indicated above.

☐ Improve monitoring by gender disaggregating data in the production and planning tool.

☐ Expand monitoring to include guest channel programmes recorded in the EP.

☐ Engage with external partners to promote increased participation of women in their programmes.

☐ Establish targets for presence of women in in-house illustrative footage productions (info-clips), and widen scope to increase presence also of the LGBTI community, religious or ethnic minorities, and people subject to social exclusion.

PRESS AND MEDIA WORK

☐ Choice of coverage - include a strong gender equality and diversity perspective in the reporting of Parliament's policy making[3].

☐ Apply the gender-neutral language guidelines in all editorial work and for all languages, and include it in the Press Unit's Newcomer's guide.

☐ Ensure the language used in press releases reflects the position of the European Parliament and the EU values enshrined in the treaties, one of which is equality between women and men.

☐ Ensure editors monitor for gender equality and diversity in texts.

☐ In media relations, strive to ensure gender balance when proposing MEPs or other speakers for possible interviews.

☐ Ensure gender balance when inviting journalists to plenary sessions and media seminars.

☐ Monitor invitations disaggregated by gender over time.

☐ Reinforce the promotion of impact of legislation or EP action on gender, disability, race, age, and other groups when reporting or organising seminars for journalists, when possible and relevant.

☐ Ensure participation of individuals from minority groups or civil society organisations representing vulnerable groups in seminars, when possible and relevant.

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3   Caveat: DG COMM's editorial policy is to report on relevant change and action, in order not to risk damaging our reputation with journalists. Two main principles apply: firstly, DG COMM reports what is adopted by committees and plenary. Secondly, Parliament has to create real change and action on these issues for it to be newsworthy.

SPOKESPERSON'S SERVICES

- ☐ Take gender equality and diversity aspects into consideration when preparing recommendations and advice.

- ☐ Provide gender balanced suggestions for MEPs to interview on a given topic, when requested and where possible. Idem for staff proposed to give interviews on EP's work (interpreters, ushers, etc.).

- ☐ Apply the gender neutral language guidelines when drafting for the section "Frequently Asked Questions" on Parliament's website, as well as for "Lines To Take" for use by DG COMM staff.

- ☐ Liaise with the High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity to ensure internal EP gender equality and diversity measures are taken into account when preserving the image of EP as an inclusive institution.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- ☐ Apply the Web Communication Unit's moderation policy, which states that DG COMM's social media pages shall be a space where everyone feels comfortable to participate. To ensure this *"comments that are either offensive in themselves or clearly offensive to other users" are not accepted. Users are asked "to avoid obscenities and other insulting language, to show respect for fellow users, public figures and the fundamental principles we all share (you know what we mean: no racism, xenophobia, calls to violence, discrimination based on religion, ethnic origin, gender, age, language, intemperate, or provocative messages...)".* These types of comments will be deleted and users who keep on using offensive language may be banned.

- ☐ Challenge gender and LGBTI stereotypes, promote female role models and increase awareness of gender issues, through the choice of content, when possible.

- ☐ Ensure gender balanced panels and presenters in live videos on social media.

MEDIA MONITORING

- ☐ Monitor equality and diversity issues when they appear on Parliament's agenda and trigger media coverage.

CAMPAIGNS

□   Apply the horizontal principles outlined in chapter two of these Inclusive Communication Guidelines, starting by using gender disaggregated data provided by POMU before designing the campaign.

VISITORS

DG COMM's visitors offer (visitor centres Parlamentarium and Europe Experience, the House of European History, welcome centres, as well as the visitors groups and individual visitors to the hemicycle) aims to be fully accessible to persons with disabilities. This is done in liaison with internal stakeholders responsible for infrastructure (DG INLO) and for security (DG SAFE).

□   Apply an active gender perspective when reviewing permanent exhibition content. *An example of good practice is how the House of European History section dealing with the founding of the European Union has been named "the EU architects", thus avoiding the concept of "the founding fathers".*

□   Consider gender balance when selecting experts and speakers for events.

□   Consider gender balance in all exhibition content and communication products.

□   Provide devices to help disabled persons access exhibition content, e.g. audio guides with head phones, and tablets with subtitles, but also wheelchairs and folding chairs.

□   Improve external and internal signage where needed, including exhibition content. *Example of good practice; the House of European History is taking a structural approach to reviewing all its signage, and aims to develop a graphic charter taking into account accessibility requirements concerning formats and supports for permanent and temporary signage. Furthermore, the House of European History also intends to put in place a standard vocal announcement system.*

□   Develop accessible way-finding signage for the entire EU quarters, in close cooperation with the other EU institutions.

□   Provide interactive tours adapted to the specific group's need (e.g. using easy to understand language) when relevant and possible.

□   Provide disabled visitors who are entitled to it with an additional financial contribution as established in the rules[4].

□   Consult DG INLO's accessibility consultants for expert advice on accessibility of media content in exhibitions. *Example of good practice: The Parlamentarium is upgrading the accessibility in alignment with new recommendations, in parallel with the on-going review of the permanent exhibition.*

□   Ensure staff are trained on welcoming disabled visitors and on accessibility.

□   Consult and engage strategically and long term with organisations representing persons with disabilities.

□   Partner with Visit.Brussels to promote EP activities to a disabled audience.

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4   Implementing rules for the additional financial contribution for visitors with a recognised disability (Article 23 of the Rules governing the reception of groups of visitors).

PRIZES

☐   Promote gender balance on selection panels for Parliament's prizes, e.g. the Lux Prize.

ART WORK

Women artists have been found to be under-represented in Parliament's art collection, which is managed by DG COMM. This imbalance should be redressed by giving preference to women artists in new acquisitions.

Implementation

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Implementation

TRAINING

DG COMM colleagues are encouraged to take regular training courses offered by DG PERS on inclusion related topics, e.g.

- ☐ Breaking the barriers - valuing our differences

- ☐ Un-conscious bias

- ☐ What is your intercultural intelligence?

Furthermore, internal knowledge-sharing between teams is encouraged on these topics. Specific seminars or workshops involving partner organisations might be organised on subjects like how to remove bias when developing our communication narratives, or how to ensure diversity in imagery.

CONTRACTS

It is important that third parties providing services to DG COMM also apply the inclusive communication guidelines. Ensure they are aware of the part of the guidelines that concern the service they are providing. Furthermore, there is by default a standard clause (article 12) in all contracts with third party providers to DG COMM on equality, for which they can be held to account:

"12. Policy on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities
Tenderers shall undertake to observe a policy on the promotion of equality and diversity in the performance of the contract, should it be awarded to them, by applying the principles of non-discrimination and equality set out in the Community Treaties in full and in their entirety. More particularly, the tenderer awarded the contract shall undertake to establish, maintain and promote an open and inclusive working environment which respects human dignity and the principles of equal opportunities, based on three main elements:

- ☐ *equality between men and women;*

- ☐ *employment and integration of disabled persons;*

- ☐ *the removal of all obstacles to recruitment and all potential discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or convictions, disability, age or sexual orientation."*

NETWORK

A transversal network of contact points in relevant DG COMM units will be created to promote the further implementation and development of these guidelines across DG COMM's areas of action. Timing: September 2019.

Definition of terms

Gender Mainstreaming

'Gender mainstreaming' is an internationally recognised strategy towards realising gender equality. At European level, the EU Institutions are in charge of implementing gender mainstreaming. It is not only the responsibility of specific individuals working in certain areas or units, but the responsibility for implementing gender mainstreaming should be with the entire staff of public institutions, under the leadership of the management. More information on what the EU is doing in the area of gender mainstreaming at institutional level here.

Intersectionality

Coined in 1989, the term 'intersectional' was constructed to classify the plurality of discriminations a woman belonging to other marginal communities could be subjected to. Intersectionality as a theory has since developed and is now defined by the English Oxford dictionary as '*the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage*'.

Persons with Disabilities

According to the UN Convention, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the EU is a part of, all discrimination on the basis of disability and against persons with disabilities is prohibited. EP and the Council agreed on the Commission's proposal for a European Accessibility Act in November 2018. Final adoption by EP in expected in April 2019. For more information on how the EU promotes the active inclusion and full participation of disabled people in society, in line with the EU human rights approach to disability issues, please click here.

Ethnic Minority

Definitions of 'ethnic minority' remain internationally contested, so for the purpose of this document we adopt the English Oxford Dictionary definition: "*a group of people from a particular culture or of a particular race living in a country where the main group is of a different culture or race*". For example, people of Roma origin are considered the biggest ethnic minority group in the EU with a populace of approximately six million[5]. At EU-level, discrimination on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin is prohibited. For more information on how the EU supports the full realisation of rights for ethnic minorities, through the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, please click here.

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5   Source: European Agency for Fundamental Rights.

LGBTI

LGBTI is an internationally recognised acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. This acronym is used by many organisations, others may use different formulations to more accurately describe their own work, for example LGBT*, LGBTQ. Under article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, discrimination based on sexual orientation is strictly prohibited. Further information on what the EU is doing to protect the rights of LGBTI people, through the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, can be found here.