Trans people must not be left behind: TGEU highlights critical gaps in the new EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-30

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TGEU welcomes the publication of the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030 and the European Commission's renewed pledge to advance the rights of all LGBTIQ+ people while embedding an intersectional perspective across all its initiatives. The new Strategy establishes a comprehensive policy framework that integrates social inclusion and protection of fundamental rights, marking substantial progress toward a more coordinated approach that seeks to mainstream LGBTIQ+ equality across all policy areas.

Persistent gaps in trans protection

However, TGEU is deeply concerned that this Strategy ultimately fails trans people. The Strategy inadequately addresses the scapegoating of trans people, misses the opportunity to ensure the full protection of the rights of trans people under EU law, and lacks specific measures aimed at ensuring the equality of trans people in the EU. In Member States such as Hungary and Slovakia, direct measures targeting trans people have made legal gender recognition impossible, suppressed content relating to gender identity, fuelled a climate of stigma and isolation, and left trans people bereft of autonomy, legal security, and dignity. Yet the Strategy falls short of directly confronting these threats to the rights of trans people and implementing the necessary measures to safeguard rights across the EU. This is in stark contrast to the previous Strategy 2020-25, which made wide-ranging ambitious commitments on strengthening the legislative and policy protections for trans people.

Rising discrimination and anti-trans attacks

The Strategy 2026-30 acknowledges that while acceptance based on sexual orientation has grown, discrimination on the grounds of gender identity is increasing. This rise reflects the ongoing influence of anti-gender movements targeting trans people and the increasing disregard for EU law and the rights of LGBTIQ+ people by several EU Member States. As Commissioner Lahbib noted in the press conference launching the Strategy, what was once assumed as accepted is facing regression. In this political moment where trans people are on the frontlines of the attack on democratic values and structures in the EU, a new LGBTIQ+ Strategy must do more to signal that the EU will not tolerate the systemic exclusion of trans people. We note the Commission's assurance in the Strategy to use all tools at its disposal to protect EU values and uphold the rule of law. We call on the Commission to take seriously its role as the guardian of the EU treaties and ensure that all EU Member States comply with key CJEU decisions on the rights of trans people. Ensuring the implementation of these decisions consistently across the EU is essential to guarantee equality and non-discrimination for all trans people.

Support for civil society and combating online hate

Across Europe and Central Asia, TGEU's members face mounting challenges, including restrictions on civic space and online hate campaigns. These threats must be countered through enhanced legal protections and effective enforcement mechanisms. TGEU welcomes the Commission's continued support for civil society through its funding programmes – which are critical for sustaining trans-led and community-based organisations in increasingly

hostile contexts – and its proposal to address harmful online stereotypes and discrimination based on gender identity and expression in the implementation of its digital regulation. However, we regret that tackling hate speech and hate crimes at the highest levels of the EU continues to be blocked and will not be pursued as a priority under the new Strategy.

Better protection for trans children

The emphasis on judicial training on fundamental rights and non-discrimination is encouraging, and is crucial for the consistent application of EU law and jurisprudence established by the CJEU. TGEU also welcomes several measures to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ children. We reiterate that special attention must be paid to the impact of targeted anti-trans policies on trans children and young people in the EU, across various aspects including education, health, and sports. Persistent restrictions on trans children in Member States such as Bulgaria and Italy, including limits on name and pronoun use and bans on discussing gender identity in schools, remain deeply concerning.

Addressing the needs of trans asylum seekers

We regret that the Strategy largely overlooks trans people seeking asylum in the EU, who continue to face violence, discrimination, and procedural barriers under the reformed Common European Asylum System. This omission of their specific protection needs is a missed opportunity to uphold the rights and dignity of a highly vulnerable group. The Commission must ensure that all aspects of EU asylum policy fully respect and protect trans asylum seekers, in compliance with EU law, relevant international law, and the principle of non-refoulement. The Strategy acknowledges that LGBTIQ+ people face grave human rights violations around the world, yet it fails to ensure that those fleeing such persecution can find protection in the EU.

EU's role in defending trans rights

This ties in closely with Strategy's lack of a strong stance against the global scapegoating of trans people, which is increasingly exploited by anti-gender movements and opportunistic politicians to consolidate power. The EU has the leverage to confront these trends decisively at an international level, and especially in its neighbourhood. Candidate countries such as Georgia, Türkiye, and Serbia have actively curtailed the rights of trans people, creating perilous conditions for trans communities. It is imperative that the EU makes clear that membership of the Union requires full adherence to the protection of trans people's fundamental rights as enshrined in EU law. Similar patterns are emerging in Central Asia, where the EU must use its influence to promote comprehensive legal and policy protections for trans people. By linking accession, trade, and diplomatic engagement to these standards, the EU must ensure that equality and fundamental rights are non-negotiable and safeguard vulnerable communities globally.

Ensuring implementation and accountability

It remains to be seen whether the new Strategy can meet the moment and build a true Union of Equality for trans people. The success of this Strategy will depend on effective implementation and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that trans people are not left behind. Achieving the Strategy's objectives requires coordinated action across all EU institutions and Directorates-General, ensuring that equality remains a core political priority throughout the Commission's mandate. This demands clear monitoring, accountability, and the meaningful participation of civil society organisations, including trans-led groups, in shaping and assessing EU policies. Most importantly, the success of this Strategy will depend on the Commission putting its full weight behind it and taking all measures to ensure the full enforcement of EU law, including case law of the CJEU, and using all available tools to hold Member States accountable when they systematically flout their legal obligations.

What’s next

TGEU will soon publish a detailed analysis of the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-30 and what its commitments mean for trans people in the EU. As with the previous Strategy, TGEU will continue to monitor the implementation of the new LGBTIQ+ Strategy 2026-30. The Commission has the duty to act to ensure protections for trans people, and we will work together with the Commission to turn that duty into concrete progress.

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