

EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026-2030

Reply to Call for Evidence

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Introduction

Pearle*-Live Performance Europe is the European federation representing over 13,000 organisations and companies in the music, performing arts, and live event sectors. As a European employers' association, Pearle* takes part in the European sectoral social dialogue.

Pearle* supports the European Commission's ongoing initiatives to advance LGBTIQ equality and inclusivity across the EU. The live performance sector, deeply rooted in freedom of expression, diversity, and the celebration of individuality, is instrumental in promoting equal rights and acceptance for LGBTIQ people. Cultural spaces serve as vital platforms for open dialogue, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing opportunities for LGBTIQ individuals to express their identities freely. These spaces help drive societal progress and create inclusive communities by reflecting the diverse experiences of all citizens.

Pearle* acknowledges the critical need to continue safeguarding the rights of LGBTIQ people, in an environment where equality thrives in all areas of life and supports the Commission's approach to adopting a stronger intersectional dimension and by enhancing mainstreaming efforts in other initiatives.

Comments

Pearle* is aware that LGBTIQ individuals in the workplace may struggle to participate fully, depending on the attitudes and prejudices of colleagues, supervisors, and employers. Inclusive internal and external communication plays a crucial role in creating an environment where diversity is not only accepted but valued.

Legal recognition of gender identity remains inconsistent across Member States, creating challenges for trans and intersex individuals in accessing essential rights, including employment and healthcare. Pearle* supports the Commission's efforts to renew and strengthen the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, in particular those aiming to protect LGBTIQ people from hate speech, violence, and discrimination. These efforts are vital to advancing equality, especially in the cultural sector, where freedom of expression and cultural participation are often challenged by broader societal issues of intolerance.

In this context, Pearle* would like to highlight three key considerations for the cultural and creative sector, where artists and creators may face heightened vulnerability due to the public nature of their work:

- **Promoting LGBTIQ Equality in Arts and Culture:** Arts and culture play a vital role in shaping public perception and fostering empathy. Pearle* encourages the European Commission to reflect more prominently on LGBTIQ equality in the upcoming Culture Compass. This could include promoting the integration of LGBTIQ themes in public cultural programming, highlighting best practices, and supporting inclusive artistic expression. Furthermore, Pearle* calls for Creative Europe to include LGBTIQ equality more prominently as a criterion.
- **Better Support for LGBTIQ Artists and Cultural professionals:** LGBTIQ artists must be protected from discrimination and hate speech—both online and offline—especially when performing or producing public works. The strategy should offer clear tools, guidance, and financial support to enable LGBTIQ cultural professionals to safely engage in EU-funded projects, festivals, and cross-border collaborations, with the backing of equality bodies and human rights institutions.
- **Ensure that LGBTIQ Artists and Cultural professionals** are protected when touring in Europe: the free movement of citizens and of workers is a key principle of the EU, and everyone should feel equally welcome and protected when they perform and tour in Europe.
- **Tackling Discrimination in the Digital Sphere:** Online hate speech and cyberbullying directed at LGBTIQ individuals remain widespread. A stronger EU policy framework on digital hate must be accompanied by initiatives to promote digital inclusivity, raise awareness, and equip users with the means to report and counter abusive behaviour.

By supporting advocacy efforts, creating platforms for dialogue, and improving access to funding, the EU can empower civil society and social partners—including Pearle*—to amplify the voice of LGBTIQ communities in the cultural and creative sectors.

Conclusion

As we move towards the renewal of the EU's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, Pearle* joins the aims of the Commission to foster diverse, inclusive, and discrimination-free environments. Through active collaboration with social partners, stakeholders, and civil society, we can continue to address the barriers faced by LGBTIQ individuals, ensuring their full participation and representation.

We support the proposed policy areas for the 2026-2030 strategy and are eager to contribute to the development and implementation of the actions outlined. Pearle* is committed to working with European institutions, Member States, to ensure that LGBTIQ rights are protected, celebrated, and integrated to its best possible capacities in the daily running of an organisation.

In closing, Pearle* emphasises the importance of ongoing dialogue and cooperation to make meaningful progress in advancing LGBTIQ equality, in a similar way as regards other areas of diversity and inclusion.