

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children

Policy Position Statement on SAFEGUARDING AND ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQIA+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Adopted by the ENOC 30th General Assembly, 2 October 2026, Barcelona, Spain

“States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”¹

“The Committee has identified multiple forms of discrimination, many of which have particular implications in adolescence and necessitate an intersectional analysis and targeted holistic measures...”

The Committee emphasises the rights of all adolescents to freedom of expression and respect for their physical and psychological integrity, gender identity and emerging autonomy. It condemns the imposition of so-called “treatments” to try to change sexual orientation and forced surgeries or treatments on intersex adolescents. It urges States to eliminate such practices, repeal all laws criminalising or otherwise discriminating against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status and adopt laws prohibiting discrimination on those grounds. States should also take effective action to protect all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex adolescents from all forms of violence, discrimination or bullying by raising public awareness and implementing safety and support”²

PREAMBLE

The ENOC 2026 position statement is based on a shared understanding across the ENOC membership that LGBTQIA+ children and young people continue to face barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights across many areas of their lives, including education, healthcare, family life, child protection, participation, leisure time activities, and social inclusion.

Throughout this statement, we refer to LGBTQIA+ children and young people as those whose sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics do not conform to dominant

¹ [UNCRC – Article 2](#)

² [UNCRC – General Comment No. 20, para. 21 & 34](#)

cisgender, binary and heterosexual norms. These dimensions are encompassed by the acronym SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics).

ENOC recognises that children and young people are active rights-holders who develop and express their identities within their social environment and are entitled to do so free from stereotyping, discrimination and violence. Despite existing human rights and equality frameworks, children may experience discrimination based on their actual or perceived SOGIESC, regardless of how they identify themselves.

The protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people is grounded in existing international and European human rights standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) requires States Parties to ensure that all children enjoy their rights without discrimination, and that the best interests of the child, children's development, and children's right to express views and to participate are respected in all decisions affecting them.

The present statement is informed by the research *"Safeguarding and Advancing the Rights of LGBTQIA+ Children and Young People"*, to which 29 ENOC member institutions contributed. It is also informed and enriched by the views and direct experiences of young people participating in the ENYA (European Network of Young Advisors) 2026 project³ and by the views, experiences and expertise shared by ENOC members during the ENOC spring seminar.

The findings of the ENOC-wide research revealed that, while general equality and anti-discrimination legal or policy frameworks exist in most jurisdictions, child-specific measures addressing the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people remain limited across different areas. It also highlighted the persistent challenges in implementation, including insufficient disaggregated data, unequal access to specialised support services, insufficient professional training, limited cross-sector coordination and barriers to effective monitoring and accountability.

As a result, a substantial gap remains between existing legal standards and the reality experienced by many LGBTQIA+ children and young people who continue to encounter discrimination, exclusion and violence in settings that should be the safest and most supportive. Such experiences may affect their physical and mental health, educational outcomes, family relationships, participation opportunities and overall well-being. Particular risks arise where children and young people face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination linked to factors such as disability, immigration status, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic circumstances or family situation.

³ [ENYA 2026 report and recommendations](#)

Where reference is made to the ENYA recommendations, this indicates that the recommendations contained in the ENYA 2026 Report have been adapted and integrated into this statement to improve readability and ensure consistency throughout the document.

The full ENYA 2026 Report, including the original wording of the recommendations, can be accessed through the hyperlink above.

With this statement, Ombudspersons for Children, members of ENOC, seek to draw attention to the implementation of the rights enshrined in the CRC as they relate to LGBTQIA+ children and young people. These include, among others, the right to non-discrimination (Article 2); the right for the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (Article 3); the right to be heard and to have views given due weight (Article 12); the right to identity (Article 8); the right to privacy (Article 16); the right to protection from violence, abuse, harmful practices and exploitation (Articles 19, 36 and 37); the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24); the right to education (Articles 28 and 29); the right to rest and leisure (Article 31); to engage in play and recreational activities; and the right to family life and protection (Articles 9 and 16).

Therefore, advancing the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people is not about creating new rights, but about ensuring the effective implementation of the rights already guaranteed under the CRC. In this regard, listening to children's views and taking them into account is an essential component of determining and promoting their best interests. These two fundamental principles are intrinsically interdependent.

ENOC members recognise their responsibility, within their institutional mandates, to protect and advance the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people and to hold relevant authorities accountable where those rights are not fully respected. Children and young people whose rights are undermined because of their actual or perceived SOGIESC are entitled to the same protection, dignity and opportunities as all other children. Ensuring their safety, well-being and full enjoyment of their rights is an inherent responsibility of State authorities and a key priority for children's rights institutions across Europe.

Therefore, we, members of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), urge States, national and regional authorities and relevant European and international organisations to fulfil their obligations by implementing the following recommendations⁴:

A. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Ensure that all laws, policies, programmes and services affecting children explicitly recognise and protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Fully incorporate the CRC across all jurisdictions;
- Address gaps in national and regional legal and policy frameworks by ensuring the explicit recognition and protection of LGBTQIA+ children and young people, rather than relying solely on general non-discrimination provisions;

⁴ The recommendations should be implemented through effective, proportionate and sustainable measures adapted to national legal and institutional contexts, without lowering the level of protection guaranteed by international children's rights standards.

- Conduct Child Rights Impact Assessments⁵ regarding the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people when developing laws and policies⁶;
- Implement swift, accessible, and transparent administrative procedures for legal name and gender marker changes; these processes must recognise LGBTQIA+ children and young people's right to self-determination in line with their maturity and evolving capacities;
- Develop cross-sectoral, whole-of-government approaches on LGBTQIA+ children's rights;
- Ensure that children's rights policies include specific measures, indicators, measurable targets, implementation timelines, periodic evaluation and transparent reporting mechanisms;
- Clearly assign responsibilities to competent authorities and establish accountability mechanisms to assess progress and address shortcomings.

B. CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Data Collection, Research and Evidence

Strengthen the evidence base on the experiences, rights, barriers and inequalities affecting LGBTQIA+ children and young people through rights-based research, data collection and knowledge generation, while fully respecting children's privacy, safety and data protection rights.

- Strengthen the evidence base on barriers, inequalities, and rights violations related to SOGIESC by conducting rights-respecting research and collecting proportionate, high-quality data;
- Ensure that all data collection processes protect children's privacy and autonomy by avoiding any pressure to disclose sensitive information and by putting in place robust safeguards for confidentiality and data protection, recognising that some children may be questioning, may not use identity labels or may choose not to disclose SOGIESC-related information;
- Strengthen the collection, analysis and publication of disaggregated data and research on the experiences, rights and well-being of LGBTQIA+ children across all areas of public policy, including education, health, participation, family life, child protection, justice, the digital environment, migration and international protection, with particular attention to data minimisation, anonymisation and the risk of re-identification;
- Ensure that public policies are evidence-based and informed by children's lived experiences and views;
- On education, collect data on bullying, discrimination, absenteeism, school exclusion and dropout rates related to actual or perceived SOGIESC;

⁵ ENOC [CRIA](#)

⁶ [ENYA recommendation](#)

- On health, improve collection of data on the physical and mental health of LGBTQIA+ children or perceived SOGIESC.

2. Mandatory Training and Professional Capacity Building

Ensure that all professionals working with and for children and young people receive mandatory, ongoing and child-rights-based training on the rights, needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ children, non-discrimination, child participation and child-centred approaches.

- Provide mandatory, regular and rights-based training for all professionals working with and for children, including in education, healthcare, child protection system, child justice, leisure activities, social services, migration and asylum systems;
- Ensure that training covers diversity, non-discrimination, inclusion, safeguarding, child participation, privacy, confidentiality, evolving capacities and child-centred approaches;
- Equip professionals to create safe and trusting environments in which children can express their views and identity freely, without pressure to disclose their SOGIESC, and with full respect for their privacy, autonomy, safety and evolving capacities;
- On education, initial and continuous training should be provided to teachers, school leaders and other school staff. This training should include what a safe and inclusive environment is and how to create one, how to challenge stereotypes, and effectively address prejudice, homophobic, and transphobic bullying or behaviour. It should also cover gender identity, diverse relationships and rights to ensure that teachers are aware⁷.
- Healthcare professionals should be trained on the specific rights and health needs, including child-centred communication, particularly for intersex and transgender children, or children who are questioning their gender identity, in order to assess their evolving capacities in a child-centred and rights-based manner;
- Increase workforce capacity and provide specialist training for professionals working within the child protection and child justice systems on the rights, needs and protection of LGBTQIA+ children;
- Provide specialised training for professionals working in reception, asylum and border procedures on the rights, needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ children.

3. Monitoring, Complaints and Accountability Mechanisms

Establish accessible, child-friendly and confidential complaints, reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and ensure effective oversight, accountability and follow-up to identify rights violations affecting LGBTQIA+ children and young people, prevent repetition and guarantee appropriate remedies and protection.

⁷ [ENYA recommendation](#)

- Ensure that children's rights policies include specific measures, indicators, measurable targets, implementation timelines, periodic evaluation and transparent reporting mechanisms;
- Clearly assign responsibilities to competent authorities and establish accountability mechanisms to assess progress and address shortcomings;
- Establish child-friendly, confidential reporting and complaint mechanisms across all settings supported by trained contact personnel, with clear referral pathways and safeguards against retaliation, to support timely intervention;
- Protect children from reprisals or unwanted disclosure, provide child-centred support throughout the process, ensure safe placement and accommodation where necessary and adopt and implement child protection policies that explicitly incorporate an LGBTQIA+ perspective;
- Ensure effective oversight, accountability and follow-up to identify rights violations, prevent repetition and guarantee appropriate remedies and protection;
- On education, establish effective anti-bullying frameworks, inspections and reporting systems that record bullying based on SOGIESC.

4. Meaningful Participation and Child-Centred Decision-Making

Ensure that LGBTQIA+ children and young people are informed, heard and meaningfully involved in decisions affecting them, with their views given due weight in accordance with their age, maturity and evolving capacities, providing transparent feedback on how their contributions have influenced outcomes and establishing follow-up mechanisms to assess the impact of their participation.

- Ensure the meaningful participation of LGBTQIA+ children in decisions, policies and services affecting them;
- Ensure that participation opportunities are safe, inclusive and accessible to vulnerable groups, including children in care, children with disabilities, migrant children;
- Establish specific and sustainable participation mechanisms at local, regional and national levels;
- Promote the meaningful participation of children and young people in initiatives, advisory bodies, and decision-making spaces concerning LGBTQIA+ rights and social inclusion⁸;
- Provide transparent feedback on how children's views have influenced decision-making and outcomes;
- Ensure that children receive information about decisions affecting them in a timely, accessible, age-appropriate and inclusive manner;

⁸ [ENYA recommendation](#)

- Ensure that children's views are taken into account regarding whether, when and with whom information concerning them is shared, in accordance with their evolving capacities, as an essential component in determining and promoting their best interests;
- Remove barriers to participation, including administrative barriers and disproportionate parental restrictions where they are inconsistent with children's rights and evolving capacities;
- Allocate adequate resources to support meaningful and continuous participation, including through the support and strengthening of youth-led LGBTQIA+ organisations, advisory structures and other child-led participation mechanisms;
- Actively promote awareness of all support services for LGBTQIA+ young people- both in their communities and online so that they know where they can access safe spaces and help when they need it⁹;
- On health, guarantee the right of LGBTQIA+ children to express their views freely in all healthcare decisions affecting them and ensure that those views are given due weight in accordance with Articles 3 and 12 of the CRC.

C. THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education

Ensure inclusive, safe and child-rights-based education systems for LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Introduce mandatory, evidence-based, age-appropriate Comprehensive Relationships and Sexuality Education (CRSE) reflecting the realities, lived experiences and voices of LGBTQIA+ young people¹⁰;
- Ensure inclusive curricula and learning materials that reflect diversity in identities, bodies, expressions, relationships and family compositions;
- Ensure that all schools are inclusive, safe environments for LGBTQIA+ children and young people, with a culture that promotes respect, recognises their names and pronouns, and provides access to private, safe facilities¹¹;
- Develop and implement clear national and regional inclusive education policies, accompanied by operational guidance for schools;
- Establish effective anti-bullying frameworks and reporting systems, and ensure early identification and support mechanisms to prevent absenteeism, school disengagement and early school leaving;
- Ensure that schools take responsibility for preventing and addressing bullying through effective reporting, investigation and follow-up procedures;

⁹ [ENYA recommendation](#)

¹⁰ [ENYA recommendation](#)

¹¹ [ENYA recommendation](#)

- Conduct a review of current anti-bullying strategies/policies/procedures in schools and new ones created through direct engagement with teachers, families, and LGBTQIA+ youth with lived experiences¹²;
- Support student-led initiatives and make schools safe places through a whole-school approach to inclusion;
- Strengthen dialogue and cooperation between schools, families and communities, consistent with privacy and confidentiality safeguards;
- Develop policies to support continuity during educational transitions and monitor the experiences of children who leave mainstream education because of discrimination or exclusion based on SOGIESC.

2. Health

Ensure equitable access to child-centred, evidence-based, multidisciplinary and inclusive healthcare services for LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Promote constructive dialogue between children, families and healthcare professionals while respecting privacy, confidentiality, autonomy and evolving capacities;
- Guarantee children's right to participate in healthcare decisions affecting them, ensuring that their views are given due weight and form an integral part of best-interests assessments. Establish procedures that enable safe, confidential and meaningful participation in matters relating to their health, treatment and care, while respecting their privacy, autonomy and evolving capacities;
- Explicitly prohibit by law and adequately sanction the performance of non-urgent, non-essential, unnecessary and deferrable medical or surgical treatment on intersex children, ensuring that such interventions are deferred until the child is able to provide their free and informed consent. Investigate all violations, provide effective remedies and reparations, including, where necessary, through extended limitation periods, ensure adequate support services for intersex children and their families, and establish independent monitoring mechanisms¹³;
- Ensure access to multidisciplinary services addressing the physical, psychological and social needs of LGBTQIA+ children and young people, particularly transgender, intersex and gender-questioning children, in light of the specific challenges and barriers they face in accessing health care and support;
- Strengthen evidence-based research on the health needs of LGBTQIA+ children and young people, particularly transgender, intersex and gender-questioning children, taking into account their specific needs and circumstances;

¹² [ENYA recommendation](#)

¹³ [CRC/C/ESP/CO/7](#), [CRC/C/NOR/CO/7](#), [CRC/C/BGR/CO/6-7](#), [CRC/C/GBR/CO/6-7](#), [CRC/C/FIN/CO/5-6](#), [CRC/C/SWE/CO/6-7](#).

- Improve timely access to regulated healthcare pathways while protecting children from risks associated with unregulated or illicitly obtained medication;
- Resource public health services to provide multidisciplinary care tailored to each child's needs in matters relating to gender identity;
- Ensure coordination between health, education and social services;
- Ensure smooth transitions between child and adult health services recognising children as rights-holders and active participants in healthcare decision-making.

3. Violence

Strengthen protection against all forms of violence, discrimination, hate crime, hate speech, and victimisation affecting LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Ensure that violence prevention policies explicitly recognise LGBTQIA+ children and young people as potential victims of targeted abuse;
- Develop comprehensive protocols for preventing, identifying, reporting and responding to violence;
- Address the underreporting of violence by providing safe and confidential reporting channels and referral pathways;
- Strengthen responses to bullying, harassment, coercive control, family violence, conversion practices and online abuse;
- Introduce a legislative ban on so-called conversion practices;
- Address intersectional forms of discrimination and violence.

4. Child Protection System and Child Justice

Strengthen child protection and child justice systems to ensure equal protection and specialised support for LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Develop specific policies, protocols, referral mechanisms and procedures;
- Ensure that discrimination, family rejection, exclusion, homelessness and pathways into care are recognised and addressed as child protection concerns where appropriate;
- Strengthen coordination between child protection, child justice, education, health, housing and community services;
- Increase the availability of specialised support services and reduce waiting times for accessing them;
- Ensure child protection responses integrate an intersectional approach;
- Develop and implement safeguards to prevent discrimination, victimisation and exclusion, while ensuring confidentiality, safety and protection from retaliation;
- Guarantee access to appropriate support and safe accommodation where necessary;

- Ensure that justice and complaint processes are child-friendly, accessible, rights-based and adapted to children's age and evolving capacities, guaranteeing their participation, safety, confidentiality and access to effective remedies¹⁴.

5. Family

Strengthen family support systems to promote LGBTQIA+ children and young people's well-being, prevent family breakdown and reduce homelessness, ensuring that all support measures are guided by the best interests, rights and safety of the child.

- Develop and provide holistic, state-funded support services for children and families, including counselling, mediation, conflict-resolution services, psychosocial support and educational resources, where appropriate;
- Promote early intervention and provide accurate information on SOGIESC issues to prevent family rejection;
- Address family conflict that may result in homelessness, placement in care or social exclusion and strengthen support for LGBTQIA+ children and young people who experience unresolved family situations;
- Support parents to advocate for and protect their children's rights while respecting children's identity, evolving capacities and choices;
- Promote access to legal advice, advocacy and other relevant supports for children experiencing disputes with parents or guardians regarding identity-related issues.

6. Digital Environment and Access to Information

Promote safe, inclusive and rights-based digital environments for LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

- Ensure access to reliable, evidence-based and age-appropriate information and to safe and inclusive spaces where LGBTQIA+ children and young people can connect with peers, access support and foster a sense of belonging;
- Ensure access to safe online spaces and peer support networks and avoid unnecessary restrictions;
- Regulate children's exposure to harmful online content while respecting their rights to information and participation, requiring digital platforms to address hate speech, harassment and discrimination, and strengthening accountability for the algorithmic amplification of such content, and adopt privacy and safety by design approaches;

¹⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child [General Comment No.24](#) (2019) and No.27

- Establish independent, confidential and child-friendly reporting and complaints mechanisms for harassment, threats, outing, doxing, grooming and image-based abuse, without unnecessary parental involvement;
- Develop digital literacy programmes for children, families and professionals;
- Promote positive and inclusive representation of LGBTQIA+ children and young people in the digital and media environments;
- Strengthen age-verification and child-protection safeguards while respecting privacy, access to information, and safe peer communities;
- Develop specific protections on the use of AI technologies to effectively safeguard LGBTQIA+ children and young people from harm.

7. Social, Cultural and Leisure Development

Promote inclusive societies where LGBTQIA+ children and young people can thrive free from stigma, discrimination and exclusion.

- Adopt national and regional policies and legislation specifically addressing discrimination and exclusion affecting LGBTQIA+ children and young people;
- Challenge heteronormative and cisnormative approaches and harmful stereotypes in policy and practice, including assumptions that may result in discrimination against LGBTQIA+ children and young people;
- Promote the use of inclusive and non-discriminatory language and communication across policies, services and institutional communications;
- Promote public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing prejudice, stigma and social polarisation, based on evidence;
- Promote an inclusive sports model that challenges gender stereotypes, encourages participation, and supports LGBTQIA+ teams and sports initiatives¹⁵;
- Ensure that state-funded organisations adopt inclusive policies and practices;
- Provide public funding and support for NGOs and community organisations working with LGBTQIA+ children and families, recognising their key role in providing support, advocacy, participation opportunities, peer connections, safe environments and access to rights and services;
- Facilitate cooperation between civil society organisations, children's rights institutions and human rights bodies;
- Promote inclusive spaces that value diversity and enable LGBTQIA+ children and young people to participate, develop and thrive free from stigma, discrimination and exclusion, thereby fostering their sense of belonging within their communities;

¹⁵ [ENYA recommendation](#)

- Ensure equal access to sport, leisure, recreation and inclusive community facilities. Support public services and other environments used by children, ensuring safe and non-discriminatory access for all, particularly for children living in rural or underserved areas.

8. International Protection

Ensure that LGBTQIA+ children and young people and families seeking international protection or living in migration contexts enjoy equal access to rights and protection, recognising SOGIESC as grounds that may give rise to persecution and international protection needs.

- Ensure that asylum, migration and international protection procedures fully respect the best interests of the child, including through child-sensitive assessments that take into account SOGIESC-related protection needs, experiences of persecution, family rejection and risks upon return;
- Guarantee access to education, healthcare, child protection and psychosocial support services;
- Ensure tailored, coordinated and long-term support for children facing multiple vulnerabilities;
- Establish effective safeguarding and reporting mechanisms in reception and protection settings;
- Apply an intersectional and child-rights-based approach to all protection measures.



Co-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 Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).
Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.