

LET'S TALK YOUNG,
LET'S TALK ABOUT

THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQIA+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ENYA 2026



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01

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises preparation and delivery of the ENYA programme, Let's Talk Young – Let's Talk about LGBTQIA+ Children's Rights.

The programme brought together children and young people aged 13–17 from across Europe to explore the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people and develop recommendations for children's rights institutions, governments, schools, youth services and other public bodies.

From the outset, preparation recognised that the topic carried particular ethical and safeguarding sensitivities, including the risk that participation, visibility or communications could expose young people to harm.



02

PROGRAMME SET-UP AND GOVERNANCE

A project management structure was established with the ENOC Secretariat, Child Protection Coordinators from Georgia, Ukraine and Malta, and General Coordinators from Northern Ireland and Ireland. This ensured that programme planning was not limited to logistics or participation, but included early and explicit consideration of ethics, safeguarding, child protection and communications.

The first step in the project was to explore the ethics and safeguarding of the programme, given the potential risks to some participants, and to minimise physical and psychological risk. This included an ethics overview, child protection and safeguarding plan, risk assessment, critical incident plan and ethical communications plan.

Young people also contributed to the development of the programme. A young leaders advisory group from [NICCY](#) and [Cara-Friend](#) supported programme development, while past ENYA participants from France and Northern Ireland were identified to support delivery during the Forum in Dublin. This helped ensure that planning reflected lived experience, youth voice and practical understanding of safer participation.

ETHICAL APPROACH

The ethical approach was rights-based, youth-led, trauma-informed and inclusive. Preparation was grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the principles of non-discrimination, best interests, participation, expression, association, privacy, identity and access to information. LGBTQIA+ children and young people were treated as rights holders, not as a policy issue to be discussed without their involvement.

Preparation recognised that participation could involve sensitive personal information and potential risk. Ethical planning therefore focused on voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, accessibility, non-discrimination and the right of young people to choose what to share. The programme did not require young people to disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or personal experiences of harm in order to participate meaningfully.

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION PLANNING

Safeguarding and child protection were built into the programme design from the beginning. The framework required participating organisations to designate safeguarding leads and deputies, maintain clear links to national child protection systems and prepare written risk assessments for in-country events and the residential element in Ireland.

Child protection procedures included arrangements for responding to disclosures of abuse, self-harm, suicidal ideation, bullying and hate incidents. These procedures were supported by coordinator training, including compulsory child protection training led by Georgia and awareness raising and inclusive participation training led by the island of Ireland.

The programme also considered context-specific risks for LGBTQIA+ young people across different European jurisdictions. Coordinators were expected to consider local laws, school policies, community attitudes and potential risks linked to visibility, online activity, travel or association with LGBTQIA+ rights work. This allowed activities, publicity and documentation to be adapted to reduce legal, social or psychological harm.

CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Consent was treated as a safeguarding and ethical process rather than a one-off form. Young people received age-appropriate information explaining the programme purpose, activities, risks, benefits, confidentiality limits and right to withdraw. Parent or guardian consent was also sought, while recognising that disclosure to parents or carers may be unsafe for some young people.

Information relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, contact details, photographs, video, quotes and participation was treated as sensitive. The preparation documents emphasised data minimisation, secure storage, limited access, separate consent for different uses, clear retention arrangements and the right to withdraw consent where practicable.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

The ENYA Communications Plan adopted a safety-first, youth-led and rights-based communications approach. Communications were designed to support participation, safeguarding, accessibility, public accountability and post-forum influence, while minimising avoidable risks for young participants.

A key principle was “safety before visibility”. The communications plan recognised that public identification may not always be empowering for LGBTQIA+ young people and could create risks including outing, bullying, family conflict, community hostility, online harassment, discrimination, targeted grooming, legal risks in some jurisdictions and long-term digital footprint concerns.

The default position was therefore that young people’s identifiable faces would not be photographed, filmed, named or published unless there was a clear, rights-based purpose, informed consent from the young person, parent or guardian consent where required, and safeguarding approval that the proposed use was safe and proportionate.

MANAGING COMMUNICATIONS RISK

Communications risk was managed through practical controls before, during and after the Forum. These included approved messaging, youth-friendly information, parent and carer information, granular consent, photographer briefings, non-identifying imagery, restrictions on personal device photography, moderation of online comments and delayed use of public-facing social media content until after the event.

During the Forum, communications were limited to safe content gathering rather than live exposure. The communications plan specified that no content would be shared online during the event because of risk from activists, and that post-event communications should use safer assets such as graphic recorder outputs, anonymised quotes, adult video content and non-identifying images.

03

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR COORDINATORS

Coordinator training was a central part of preparation. Training covered child protection, inclusive participation, rights-based and LGBTQIA+ affirming practice, safeguarding and risk management, consent, confidentiality, data protection, safer inclusive spaces and cross-border residential practice.

This helped ensure that adults involved in the programme understood not only procedural safeguarding duties, but also the specific risks associated with LGBTQIA+ youth participation, including minority stress, outing, harassment, online abuse, disclosure, confidentiality, pronouns, accommodation, supervision and critical incident response.

The project introduced coordinators to inclusive participation by setting clear learning intentions and expectations. Coordinators were encouraged to ask questions, contribute actively, reflect on their own assumptions, and engage with shared tools for discussion and feedback. This created a learning environment where participation was modelled as active, respectful and rights-based.

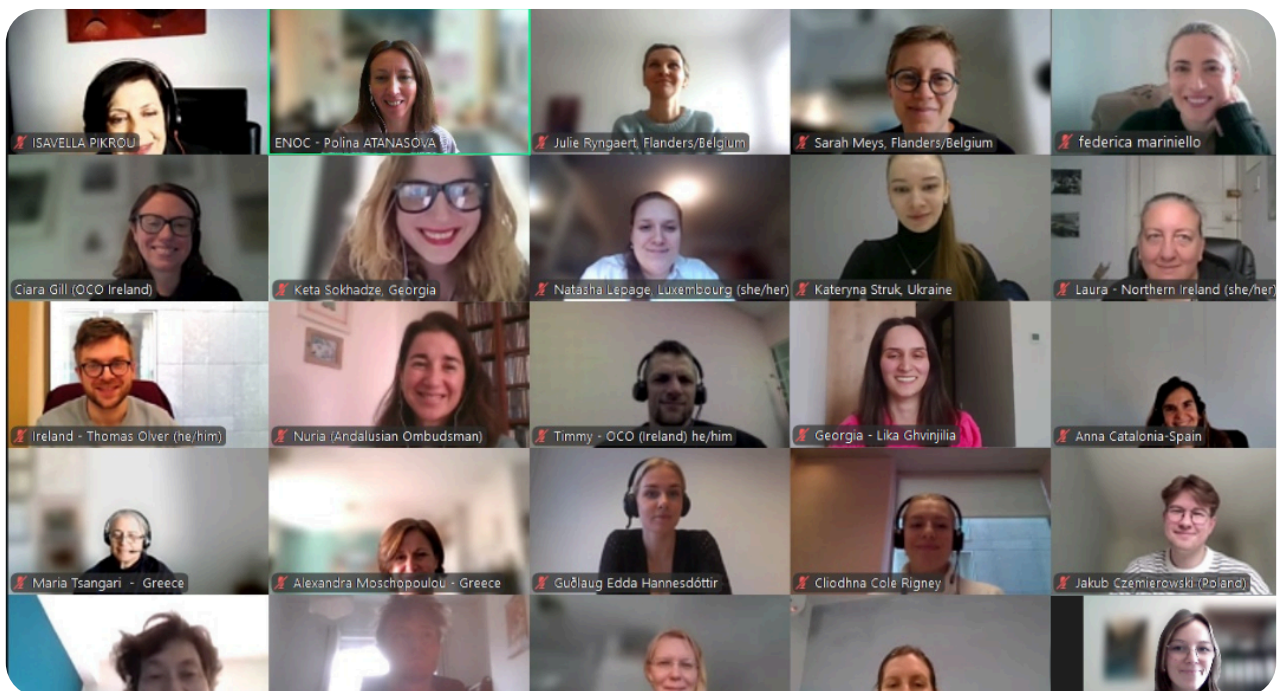
Coordinators explored key language linked to LGBTQIA+ identities, including gender identity, sexual orientation and the wider queer umbrella. This supported a stronger shared vocabulary and helped coordinators consider how terms may be understood differently across national and cultural contexts. The training also focused on inclusive language, encouraging coordinators to use respectful terminology, avoid assumptions, respect names and pronouns, and adapt communication so that children and young people feel recognised and safe.

A central part of the project was helping coordinators understand LGBTQIA+ inclusion through a children's rights framework. The training linked practice to the UNCRC, including the rights to be heard, non-discrimination, education, protection from harm, healthcare, identity, bodily autonomy and evolving capacities. Coordinators considered how these rights apply in project activities and how they should shape decisions about safety, participation, consent, confidentiality and support.

The training supported coordinators to think beyond single-issue inclusion by exploring how LGBTQIA+ identities may intersect with ethnicity, religion, disability, living circumstances and culture. This helped coordinators recognise that children and young people may experience multiple and overlapping barriers to participation. The project also gave coordinators space to consider safeguarding risks such as bullying, forced outing, family rejection and harmful practices, strengthening their ability to identify children's rights implications and respond appropriately.

The project helped coordinators learn through a mix of presentations, facilitated discussion, breakout rooms, scenarios, reflection exercises and feedback activities. Scenario-based work encouraged coordinators to apply rights-based thinking to real issues they may face in-country. Questions such as identifying children's rights implications and considering what a coordinator could do helped translate principles into practical decision-making.

Coordinators learned practical approaches for creating safer, more inclusive spaces. This included co-creating ground rules, listening to and validating young people, respecting confidentiality, avoiding outing, challenging discrimination, supporting mental health, and being visible in support. The training also encouraged coordinators to identify local support services, consider reporting pathways, and recognise the importance of self-care for those supporting children as human rights defenders.



The training gave coordinators a clearer route from learning to delivery. Coordinators were supported to plan in-country activity that would explore the UNCRC, the experiences of LGBTQIA+ young people, self-care, action projects and recommendations. This helped coordinators understand not only the content they needed to deliver, but also the process of supporting young people to shape priorities and contribute meaningfully to the wider project.

Overall, the project helped coordinators to develop knowledge, confidence and practical skills. Coordinators learned how to approach LGBTQIA+ inclusion from a children's rights perspective, how to recognise and reduce risk, how to use inclusive language, and how to support participation in ways that are safe, respectful and meaningful. The training also encouraged coordinators to reflect on their own role as facilitators, allies and safeguarding adults.



04 IN COUNTRY ACTIVITY

Initially 13 countries signed up to take part in ENYA 2026. Ireland and Northern Ireland were general coordinators and also ran the programme in their own jurisdictions.

Other participants included Andalusia, Basque Country, Catalunya, Cyprus, France, Malta, Belgium/Flanders, Luxembourg, Iceland and Italy. The Children's Commissioner from Ukraine had hoped to participate but was unable to due to disruption from the ongoing war.

In total 276 young people had some level of engagement with the project at country level with a core group of 185 young people participating regularly in the work. Preparation recognised that LGBTQIA+ children and young people are not a single group, and that communications and participation needed to be accessible and inclusive for young people with different identities, backgrounds, disabilities, levels of family support, legal contexts and comfort with visibility.

GROUP COMPOSITION

Across the participating countries and regions, ENYA 2026 activity was largely built around existing youth participation structures, with several offices widening or adapting these structures to strengthen LGBTQIA+ representation. This included youth advisory panels, children's councils, school-based groups, NGO-linked recruitment and partnerships with LGBTQIA+ organisations. In some places, new groups or project-specific structures were formed to ensure that young people with relevant lived experience could take part safely and meaningfully.

Participation levels varied, but the overall picture was of small to medium-sized groups of young people, generally aged between 13 and 18. Country reports show a strong emphasis on diverse participation, including LGBTQIA+ young people, young people from different geographical and socio-economic backgrounds, young people from migrant-origin families, young people in care or alternative settings, young people with health or neurodiversity needs, and young people from a range of school and community contexts.

MAIN ACTIVITIES ORGANISED

The in-country activities used a flexible mix of formats designed to suit local contexts and young people's availability. These included online preparation sessions, evening meetings, full-day workshops, residential weekends, school-based lessons, office-based meetings, site visits, film screenings, thematic discussions and creative group work. Rather than following one standard model, countries adapted the ENYA process to create safe, accessible and participatory spaces where young people could explore the theme in depth.

Common activities included introductory sessions on children's rights and LGBTQIA+ terminology, trust-building and safe-space work, reflections on identity and disclosure, expert inputs, peer dialogue, scenario-based exercises, creative methods, online collaboration and structured recommendation development. Many groups used participatory methods such as collages, podcasts, performances, games, debates, Q&A sessions and film-based discussion to help young people connect rights-based concepts with personal, school, family, community and digital experiences.

ENGAGEMENT WITH OMBUDS OFFICES AND EXPERTS

Ombuds offices played an important role in hosting, facilitating and framing the activities. Across the participating countries, young people engaged with Commissioners, Ombudspersons, Deputy Ombudspersons, office advisers, policy staff and participation teams through office visits, workshops, video calls, plenary meetings and rights-based activities. This helped position the work within a children's rights framework and gave young people opportunities to understand how Ombudspersons for children institutions can respond to discrimination, exclusion and gaps in protection.

Expert input was also a major feature of the project. Young people heard from or worked with LGBTQIA+ organisations, young activists, community groups, psychologists, legal specialists, equality and diversity practitioners, sexuality education specialists and professionals with expertise in trans, intersex and non-binary rights. These contributions strengthened the link between law, policy and lived experience, particularly in relation to schools, healthcare, sport, public services, families, community support, media and online spaces.

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EMERGING THEMES

Shared concerns emerged across the country reports following in-country activity. Young people highlighted bullying, discrimination, rejection, fear of exclusion, lack of acceptance, loneliness, mental health impacts, lack of LGBTQIA+ education, family or community conflict, the need for confidential support, access to accurate information, access to justice, safe support outside home and school, and the need for safer schools, public services, community spaces and youth spaces. There was a recurring concern that policies and protocols are not enough unless they are implemented consistently, supported by trained adults, made accessible to young people and communicated in ways that protect young people's safety and privacy.

Support for trans, non-binary, intersex and gender-diverse young people appeared particularly prominently across the reports. Young people raised concerns about school guidance, bullying, misgendering, deadnaming, gender-neutral facilities, access to gender-affirming healthcare, privacy in public facilities, inclusive sports, hate speech reporting, family and community resistance, and the need for confidential support. They also emphasised that visibility must be balanced with safety, privacy and young people's right to decide when, how and whether to disclose their identity.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES FROM IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITY

01

Safe and inclusive education:

All countries emphasised the need for schools to be safer, more inclusive and better equipped to prevent and respond to LGBTQIA+phobic bullying, discrimination, exclusion, deadnaming, misgendering and isolation.

Inclusive relationships, sexuality and rights education:

Countries called for age-appropriate, evidence-based education that reflects diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, intersex experiences and family forms, and that is embedded across curricula, school culture, awareness campaigns, parent education and professional training.

02

03

Training for adults and professionals:

Teachers, school staff, healthcare workers, police officers, public service personnel, youth workers, counsellors, parents and other adults need ongoing training so that services and home, school and community environments are respectful, informed, rights-based and non-discriminatory.

Implementation of protocols, legal protections and services:

Young people repeatedly stressed that policies, legal protections, healthcare pathways, hate speech reporting systems, complaints mechanisms, anti-bullying protocols, school practices and support services must be actively implemented, monitored, simplified where needed and reviewed to create real change.

04

05

Visibility, representation and role models:

Positive representation of LGBTQIA+ people in schools, public services, sport, culture, television, state media, social media and public campaigns was identified as important for normalising diversity, challenging stereotypes and reducing stigma, while avoiding tokenism.

Participation, privacy, disclosure and allyship:

Young people should be recognised as rights holders, active participants and allies, while also being protected from forced disclosure, visible naming systems that create risk, tokenism or unsafe visibility in conservative or hostile contexts.

06

07

Safe public, community and digital spaces:

Participants called for accessible safe spaces, queer youth houses or support groups, gender-neutral or individualised facilities, confidential counselling or support without unnecessary barriers, inclusive public services, specialist support centres, helplines, stronger responses to online hate and misinformation, and digital platforms that provide reliable information and reporting options.



05 ENYA FORUM

The principal aim of the ENYA Forum in Dublin was to agree on a set of shared, rights-based recommendations among participants.

Two young people from each country were selected to represent their peers at the forum. From the in-country activity, it was clear that many young people held a lot of trauma or anger about how they had been treated because of their identity.

General coordinators wanted to make sure they had space to reflect this, but that the event was focused on a positive reimagining of how rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people can be protected rather than pointing out system and policy failures.

The programme included an initial session to agree how to work together during the event to help young people feel that they had a voice in the ground rules of the project and ensure they could all participate safely.

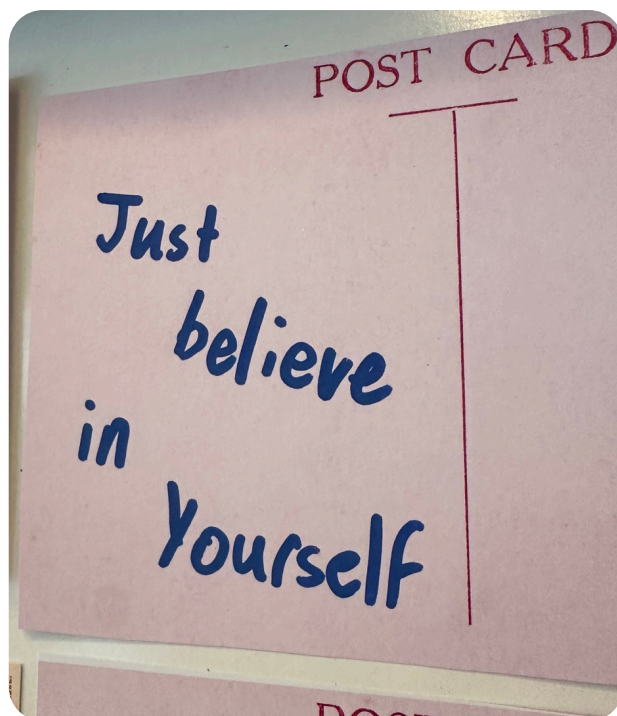
Participants took part in group discussions of their recommendations by theme and an interactive 'zine' creation session to help them reimagine a society where LGBTQIA+ children's rights were respected.



Having reflected on an increasingly hostile environment towards LGBTQIA+ rights, particularly online, organisers wanted to ensure that participants knew how to set safe boundaries for their own activism as Child Human Rights Defenders.

In this sense, the Forum hosts facilitated a discussion with a former Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, followed by a personal reflection session on how to get support, set boundaries and how to prioritise their own wellbeing.

The Special Rapporteur also carried out a session with Coordinators and Ombudspersons for Children on their role of protecting CHRDs. The programme also included a cultural element by outlining queer history on the Island of Ireland and exploring Dublin city and historical landmarks.



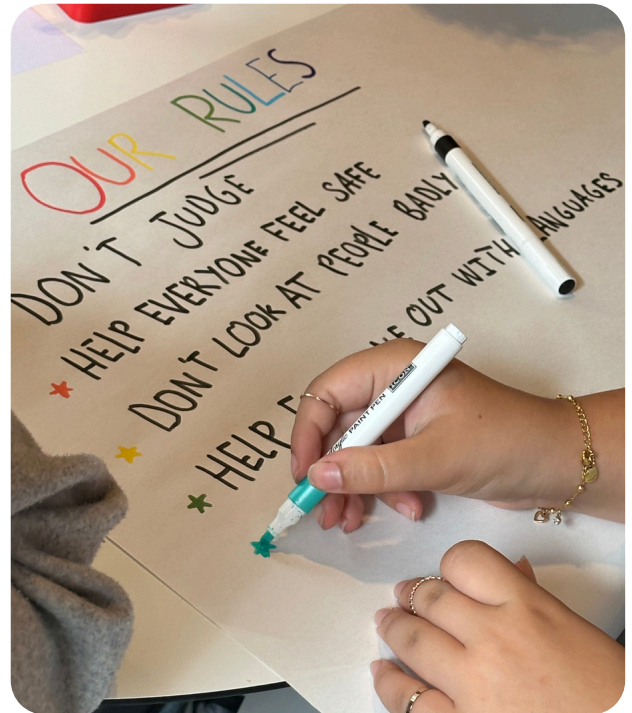
PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Participant feedback from the ENYA Forum 2026 in Dublin was exceptionally positive. Evaluation responses were received from 19 of the 23 young people invited to complete the form, giving a response rate of approximately 83%. All respondents rated their overall experience as either good or very good, with 18 out of 19 selecting very good. The overall forum rating was also very high, with 18 participants awarding the meeting five stars and one participant awarding four stars.

The evaluation suggests that the Forum succeeded in creating a participatory and engaging environment. Eighteen of the nineteen respondents felt they had enough opportunities to participate, share their ideas and express their opinions. Participants also reported very strong enjoyment of the activities, with all respondents indicating that they enjoyed the activities either quite a bit or very much.

When asked which activity they liked most, the Scavenger Hunt was the most frequently named activity, mentioned by five respondents. The presentation from the Special Rapporteur and “all activities” were each mentioned four times, while other positive references included the zine activity, social space, the quiz, dinner, creative activities, sharing opinions and receiving diplomas. This range of responses indicates that young people valued both structured rights-based content and informal, social and creative elements of the programme.

The strongest improvement theme was a request for more time. Several respondents suggested that the Forum should be longer, including having an additional day, more time to talk to other participants, and more time to work on recommendations. A smaller number of comments suggested more serious activities, more debate, more substantive input on legislation, and improved lunch choices. However, the most common response to the question about changes was that nothing needed to change, with several participants describing the Forum as perfect.



Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that the ENYA Forum 2026 was experienced by participants as meaningful, enjoyable and well facilitated. The feedback indicates that young people felt able to contribute, valued the balance of activities, and formed positive connections with one another. The main learning for future forums is to protect and extend time for social connection, reflection and recommendation development, while retaining the creative and participatory methods that participants responded to so strongly.

06

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

HEALTHCARE AND WELLBEING

01

Transgender healthcare

Improve LGBTQIA+, especially transgender, children's access to healthcare by reducing waiting times, expanding access to psychological support, free counselling and specialised transgender care teams. Strengthen existing safe and free counselling and support services for the mental and physical health of LGBTQIA+ children, including transparent discussions on hormone therapies, and ensure access to such services (physical or virtual) where they do not exist, while ensuring anonymity and protection of personal data.

02

Health professionals

All health professionals must be trained in order to prevent discrimination and to create a safe space. Especially on intersex and trans matters. Departments of Health must train more and diverse specialists, from all marginalised groups, to ensure that gender-affirming healthcare is publicly available and reliable in all countries in Europe and capping all waiting lists at least 24 months

03

Support services

Strengthen supports for LGBTQIA+ young people who experience conflict within their family or community, such as eviction, harassment or rejection. This should include safe emergency accommodation and confidential online and telephone support services.

EDUCATION, SCHOOLS AND TRAINING

04

Schools

All schools should be inclusive and safe for LGBTQIA+ children and young people – All schools should be inclusive and safe environments. This should be present and promoted in the culture and ethos of the school/education environment and cover the whole school. This can include updating physical spaces by providing private, individual, single-stall bathrooms and changing facilities that ensure privacy and safety for LGBTQIA+ children and young people. Children and young people's pronouns and names should be recognised and used.

05

Implement mandatory, age appropriate, and inclusive reform of the school and education curriculum

The core education curriculum and what is taught should be revised to ensure that it is fully LGBTQIA+ inclusive, which will normalise and reflect different relationships and sexual/gender diversity in all relevant subjects. Mandatory, evidence-based, comprehensive and age-appropriate relationship and sexuality education must also be rolled out to all children and young people, earlier in the school system, directly integrating the realities, lived experiences and voices of LGBTQIA+ youth.

06

Comprehensive and mandatory training for teachers, school staff and professionals working with children and young people

Teachers, school leaders, and all professionals working with children and young people must have mandatory training in anti-discrimination, rights and needs of LGBTQIA+ children and young people. 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 aware.

07

Bullying must be tackled, and eradicated

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 experiences. Victims of bullying should not have to 'change' or 'leave' the classroom or school, having their education disrupted, because of the actions of another student or teacher. There should be the means to challenge homophobic and transphobic behaviour and bullying in schools, and appropriate consequences implemented.

LAW, POLICY AND RIGHTS PROTECTION

08

Children Rights Impact Assessment

When making policies and laws, government should do a Child Rights Impact Assessment including how the rights of LGBTQIA+ children and young people might be impacted.

09

Stronger legislation

Reform national laws relating to marriage, adoption and fostering so that all couples are treated equally regardless of their gender or sexuality. Systems for reporting and prosecuting hate speech and hate crimes must be robust, effective and easily accessible for young people.

10

Prevention of Harassment and Hate Crimes

Introduce ongoing mandatory training for police officers to sensitively support victims of hate crimes, including the LGBTQ+ community.

11

Intersex young people

Strengthen recognition and support for underrepresented identities within the LGBTQIA+ community. Intersex children and young people should have the same rights as those of female or male gender. Right to identity (Art. 8, UNCRC): represent intersexuality (I) in official documents as a distinct gender, if desired. Right to health (Art 24, UNCRC): prohibition of mutilation of children (surgeries at birth to force them into a binary sex category).

SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION SPACES

12

Inclusive social spaces

Increase investment in safe, inclusive social spaces for LGBTQIA+ young people outside the home and school, such as youth cafés, youth houses and community hubs. This should include mandatory gender-neutral bathrooms in all public spaces without reducing spaces for people with disabilities.

13

Empowering rights organisations

Support the work of organisations and networks that actively promote the rights of LGBTQIA+ young people in our societies. Ensure they have the resources they need to develop awareness campaigns, educational resources, and training for young people related to inclusion and diversity.

14

Visibility of services and supports

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 it.

15

Participation

Promote the meaningful participation of children and young people in initiatives, advisory bodies, and decision-making spaces concerning LGBTQIA+ rights and social inclusion.

16

Sports

Promote an inclusive sports model that challenges gender stereotypes, encourages mixed participation, and supports LGBTQIA+ teams and sports initiatives. Using alternative ways for categorisations of athletes (not just male/ female but also based on each person's hormones and skill level).

ONLINE SPACES, MEDIA AND DIGITAL SAFETY

17

Online spaces

We need

- (1) free and accessible online groups and spaces for communication and
- (2) awareness-raising campaigns on social media co-designed by young people and representation on film and tv, that prioritise positive and realistic representation of LGBTQIA+ people, promoting normalisation, respect, and non-discrimination, using people with authority and/ or influence and/or lived experience (e.g. Commissioners, Parliamentary Members, celebrities) to talk about LGBTQIA+ rights and
- (3) the creation of a platform/ website that is a safe space and has accurate information about all LGBTQIA+ issues that children and young people can access for free.

18

Tackle Online Harm

Strengthen efforts to tackle online LGBTQIA+phobia against young people, from overt bullying and harassment to the impact of mis- and dis-information about the queer community. We want more effective monitoring, through a human verification, which is currently more reliable and more effective; more accessible reporting mechanisms, and concrete action to be taken when violations of community guidelines and LGBTQIA+ rights are happening.



ENYA 2026