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# Strengthening the LGBTIQ+ Voice

as Part of the Centre-Right Narrative



Wilfried  
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for European Studies

# Strengthening the LGBTIQ+ Voice As Part of the Centre-Right Narrative

Position Paper by

Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

EPPride, the LGBTIQ+ network of EPP

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## Background of EPPride

EPPride is a European network of Conservative, Christian-Democrat, and Liberal-Conservative LGBTIQ+ groups. Its objective is to strengthen cooperation between its member organisations, provide an LGBTIQ+ voice in the centre-right policies at the European and national level, and give a centre-right voice in the LGBTIQ+ community. EPPride was founded as The European Centre-Right LGBT+ Alliance in Berlin in 2013 and has been an associated entity of the European People's Party (EPP) since February 2023 – although EPPride has worked with EPP since its beginnings. There are currently eleven member organisations from ten different countries in EPPride.

### 1. Current Situation

Significant progress has been made in several aspects of national legislation in most European countries. However, backlashes towards societal support have also taken place and show the fragility of the positions on social justice achieved in European societies. Foreign interference, particularly from Russia and different conservative groups, has contributed to the development of hybrid warfare against the foundations of our liberal and open political order. We also see serious and partly successful attempts to remove rights and protection from discrimination of LGBTIQ+ individuals in several European countries.

### 2. Elements of a Centre-Right Narrative

For too long, the discourse on the rights of the LGBTIQ+ communities and individuals has been neglected in the political narrative and campaigning of conservative and Christian-democratic parties in Europe - leaving this space to be occupied by left-wing and green parties. Consequently, voting for EPP-affiliated political parties remained low in several countries. However, there is no reason for the EPP family to stay in this weak position.

The core values of the EPP and its member parties are built upon respect for each individual and the unwavering demand for individual freedom, inclusion, and openness. Our objective is to keep building a society where each and every citizen can live freely and safely as individuals, as a part of a family and of society, and be respected for who they are.

We strongly believe that these basic values endorsed by the political family of EPP are the strongest guarantee to ensure the rights of the LGBTIQ+ communities across Europe: freedom, respect, and the right for individuals to be different; but also to see and recognise the multitude of individuality, of which sexual orientation and gender identity are as important as other characteristics. In acknowledging and emphasising this fact, we reject the notion that being LGBTIQ+ is just some form of ideology.

### 3. Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed during a joint workshop of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and EPPride in September 2024. We discussed and explored how the EPP as a political family can further develop centre-right policies on issues important to the European LGBTIQ+ community.

We believe that there is a need to:

- Strengthen the LGBTIQ+ message as part of a renewed centre-right and Christian-Democratic narrative by formulating pragmatic positions and responses on relevant LGBTIQ+ issues to lower the threshold for LGBTIQ+ persons to vote for EPP parties in upcoming European and national elections.
- Strengthening the position of the EPP family among European LGBTIQ+ communities by developing a comprehensive message that clarifies that the EPP is a relevant force for the interests of the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Enhancing the exchange among national and transnational/European party members and interest organisations of the LGBTIQ+ community and extending the network of EPP-affiliated LGBTIQ+ groups in EU member states, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Continuous monitoring of LGBTIQ+-related legislation in EU member states to avoid one-time attention and react to backlashes quickly and in a coordinated way.

## 4. Important Fields of Political Action

Beyond these general recommendations, we debated specific areas where LGBTIQ+-related issues are of concern at local, national, and European levels. We highlight some urgent fields of concern and propose ways to promote and implement LGBTIQ+ issues. These subjects and arguments have already been raised by one or several EPP parties over the last few years.

### 1) 'The best conditions for everyone to start a family'

Today's families are as diverse as life itself. A modern family policy needs to aim to support the well-being of *all* families and family situations. This includes families with mothers, fathers, and children, as well as single parents, families after divorces, blended families, and rainbow families.

The EU and its member states must strive to ensure that all children have the same legal and social rights, regardless of what their family looks like. The issue needs a harmonised European framework, which includes concrete measures for mutual recognition of (registered) partnerships and same-sex marriages for EU citizens and their children (*rainbow families*). Only by this can the principle of free movement of persons within the EU be guaranteed.

Further, the EU must take a clear stand against removing children's rights to parents by denying parenthood due to gender definition.

### 2) Ban on 'conversion therapy'

The European Parliament has already called for a ban on so-called 'conversion therapy', which tries to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. The consequences of these therapies have a disruptive influence on the person's psychological and physical health, which, in the worst scenarios, can lead to suicide.

Countries like Germany, Cyprus and Norway have implemented legislation that can be used as models for other countries. The EU, too, must take concrete measures to ensure that effective bans are implemented in all member countries.



### 3) Improved legislation regarding transgender persons

National parliaments in several European countries are currently working on legislation to improve the rights of transgender persons and their right to self-determination. Most of this legislation deals with aspects of legal gender recognition (LGR-legislation) as well as ending the practice of compulsory sterilisation. To support these processes, it is important that the EU takes a clear stand and support this LGR legislation across Europe.

### 4) Criminalisation of hate crime and hate speech

The EU must raise awareness of hate crimes and take further initiatives to make this kind of public speech, which expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on sexual orientation, a European crime. This will empower LGBTIQ+ persons and other victims of hate crimes to report discrimination in all EU member countries. The EPP has clearly stated that politics must secure European citizens online and offline and fight against hate crime and violence based on hate.

### 5) Safe areas for young people

Important public and private spaces for (young) LGBTIQ+ people, such as educational institutions and sports associations, are safe for everyone to be themselves without any fear of discrimination. The EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy has already acknowledged this as an area where the EU fosters non-discrimination and works to ensure participation without discrimination.

### 6) Vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers

In the context of its migration and asylum policy, the European Union should emphasise the need to protect vulnerable asylum seekers, such as LGBTIQ+ people. Any revision of the common EU migration policy should take this as a key concern.

### 7) One voice against criminalisation on a global level

As part of our clear statement on "Europe with one voice", the EU must explicitly support LGBTIQ+ rights in its relations with other countries and international organisations such as the UN, pointing out that LGBTIQ+ rights are human rights. In times where we can see the rise of authoritarian regimes with distinct anti-LGBTIQ+ agendas, the European Union should take a leading international role in the fight against the criminalisation of LGBTIQ+ people.

## 5. Further Information:

- EPPride: [www.eppride.eu](http://www.eppride.eu)
- ILGA-Europe: [www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org)
- EPP Manifesto 2024: <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-manifesto-2024>
- European Parliament: The 2020-2025 LGBTIQ equality strategy:  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReData/etudes/STUD/2023/753174/EPRS\\_STU\(2023\)753174\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReData/etudes/STUD/2023/753174/EPRS_STU(2023)753174_EN.pdf)

## Credits

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP), dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

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For more information, please visit <https://www.martenscentre.eu/>

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