

Equality for lesbians and gay men – a relevant issue in the civil and political dialogue

[Report, Inclusion and Equality, Anti-discrimination, European Union](#)

This report maps the legal and social situation of lesbians and gay men in all 15 EU member states and formulates a series of recommendations to improve this situation. It is available in 5 languages.

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Equal rights and social justice for lesbians and gay men have never been high up on the political agenda of the European Communities. Although the European Parliament has adopted several resolutions calling for steps to be taken to promote equality for lesbians and gay men, the first as early as 1984 and the most comprehensive (Equal rights for homosexuals and lesbians in the EC – Document A3-0028/94) in 1994, these have not been acted on by the Commission or the Council. The Treaty of Amsterdam, once ratified, will remove any doubt as to whether the European Union has the power to introduce anti-discrimination measures which address discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Article 6a of this Treaty, to become Article 13 of the consolidated EC Treaty, states that “the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”. However, such action can only be taken “within the limits of the powers conferred ... upon the Community” by the Treaty. Therefore, the key question now is whether the Council (that is, the fifteen Member States) will unanimously agree to adopt substantial measures against such discrimination, including that based on sexual orientation.

As this report shows, while lesbians and gay men continue to face significant discrimination in many areas of their lives, a majority (eight) of the EU Member States now have at least some form of national anti-discrimination provisions which include discrimination based on sexual orientation. There is thus both the need for concrete measures to be taken at a European level and some positive indications of a basis of support for such measures.

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