

Going Beyond the Law: promoting equality in employment

[Report](#), [Legal Protection](#), [Employment](#)

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The introduction in 2000 of the EU Directive prohibiting discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation represented an unexpected and much welcomed advance in the progress toward real equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. The legislation offered the possibility of a transformation in the working life of lesbians, gays and bisexuals. No longer did they need to hide their sexual orientation for fear of harassment or discrimination. Such freedom would enable them to participate fully and openly and thus enjoy better social and professional relationships with their colleagues. Because of the new environment, they would better realise their career potential and bring home concrete benefits for their partners. Such was the promise.

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An important position taken in the discussions is that legislation is not enough. If equality for lesbians, gays and bisexuals is to become a reality in the workplace, then reacting to inequality is not going to do it. The focus has to be on measures and initiatives that actively promote equality. Employers and trade unions have a central and unique role to play in this respect. Therefore, relying on the testimonials of lesbians, gays and bisexuals with first hand experience, as well as the good practice available, the document points to practical steps that employers and trade unions can be taken to help realise the promise of equality in the workplace.

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