

Diagnosis

Combating anti-LGBTIQ hate speech
and promoting inclusive narratives

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Diagnosis

Combating anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and promoting inclusive narratives

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Executive summary

This report explores the role of local governments in countering anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and building inclusive narratives, with a focus on the Spanish cities of Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet. The analysis is based on surveys and focus groups with over 120 participants from the two cities mentioned above and four additional ones,¹ including municipal staff, educators, civil society representatives, and community members.

This diagnosis also represents the first step towards the development of an Anti-Rumours LGBTIQ Toolkit, which will build on these findings to provide concrete tools and methodologies.

While legal protections have advanced, LGBTIQ individuals still face exclusion, stigma, and hostility - especially trans women and visibly non-conforming people. Schools, healthcare, families, and public spaces are often marked by silence, prejudice, or a lack of institutional support.

At the local level, key challenges persist:

- Fragmented communication and low visibility of existing initiatives.
- Lack of strategic coordination and inclusive messaging across departments.
- Training gaps that leave professionals under-equipped to respond to hate speech.
- Inconsistent leadership and limited cross-sector collaboration.

Despite these barriers, the diagnosis also identifies promising opportunities. Stakeholders expressed strong interest in approaches based on empathy and dialogue. The [Anti-Rumours Strategy](#)² was seen as particularly adaptable to LGBTIQ narratives. There is clear potential to mobilise a wider network of actors, including:

- Schools and teachers facing growing pressure from far-right discourse.
- Health and mental health professionals, especially in sexual and reproductive care.
- Urban planning and sports services, as spaces for inclusion and visibility.
- Disability and elder care centres, where intersectional inclusion is often overlooked.

Initial ideas for a toolkit include hybrid formats, emotional storytelling, and inclusive communication tools. However, participants underlined that real impact requires more than physical materials - it demands institutional alignment, cross-departmental leadership, and sustained investment in professional development.

This diagnosis offers a shared foundation for that effort, and a roadmap for embedding LGBTIQ inclusion within broader local strategies.

¹ Barcelona, Tenerife, Castelló de la Plana and Cartagena.

² Anti-Rumours Handbook - <https://rm.coe.int/anti-rumours-handbook-a-standardised-methodology-for-cities-2018-/168077351c>

01

Introduction

01. Introduction

This report presents the results of an initial diagnostic phase carried out by [Diversit](https://diversit.net/en/),³ focusing on two municipalities - Santa Coloma de Gramenet and Getafe - both members of the Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities (RECI) and with experience in implementing Anti-Rumours Strategies (ARS) to promote diversity and inclusion.

The ARS, developed in the context of the [Intercultural Cities \(ICC\) Programme](https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/home)⁴ of the Council of Europe and initially designed to address prejudice related to sociocultural origins and ethnic minorities, offers a powerful and adaptable framework to counter anti-LGBTIQ narratives and build inclusive ones.

The diagnosis was conducted within the Council of Europe's broader efforts to combat anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and discrimination, and in the framework of the EU-Council of Europe joint project "Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons."

Hate speech targeting LGBTIQ persons is not merely an expression of individual prejudice: it reinforces systems of exclusion, inequality, and violence. When unchecked, hate speech normalises discriminatory attitudes, undermines public discourse, and contributes to a broader climate of hostility and fear. Combating it requires more than legal responses; it calls for a cultural shift in how difference is perceived, represented, and discussed.

Narratives - understood as socially shared frames through which people make sense of the world - play a central role in this process. Dominant narratives that portray LGBTIQ persons as deviant, threatening, or politically instrumentalised contribute to the persistence of stigma and discrimination. Conversely, inclusive narratives can challenge these framings, promote empathy, and foster a collective sense of belonging. Local institutions, civil society organisations and community actors all have a role to play in constructing and amplifying such narratives, particularly in contexts where polarisation and disinformation are on the rise.

This report aims to identify the main challenges, needs, and contextual dynamics shaping how local authorities and civil society address prejudice, misinformation, and hate speech based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Through surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder engagement, we gathered data on local perceptions, institutional barriers, and opportunities for action.

The findings reflect both the current state of awareness and the potential of coordinated, community-based approaches rooted in interculturality, empathy, and social cohesion. This diagnosis serves as a preliminary step to inform future processes and contributes to the wider reflection on how to tackle anti-LGBTIQ narratives in local governance. It engaged 121 participants from the two pilot cities and four additional RECI municipalities, and is a preliminary step to inform training, strategic planning, and targeted tools for tackling anti-LGBTIQ narratives in local governance.

³ <https://diversit.net/en/>

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/home>

02

Methodological
notes

02. Methodological notes

To gather information on perceptions and experiences related to prejudice against LGBTIQ individuals within public administrations and civil society organisations (CSOs), two main qualitative data collection techniques were employed: surveys and focus groups.

A total of **121 individuals participated** in the process, allowing for a diverse range of perspectives across multiple territories. Respondents came from various backgrounds, including local government staff, professionals from social organisations, and users of those services.

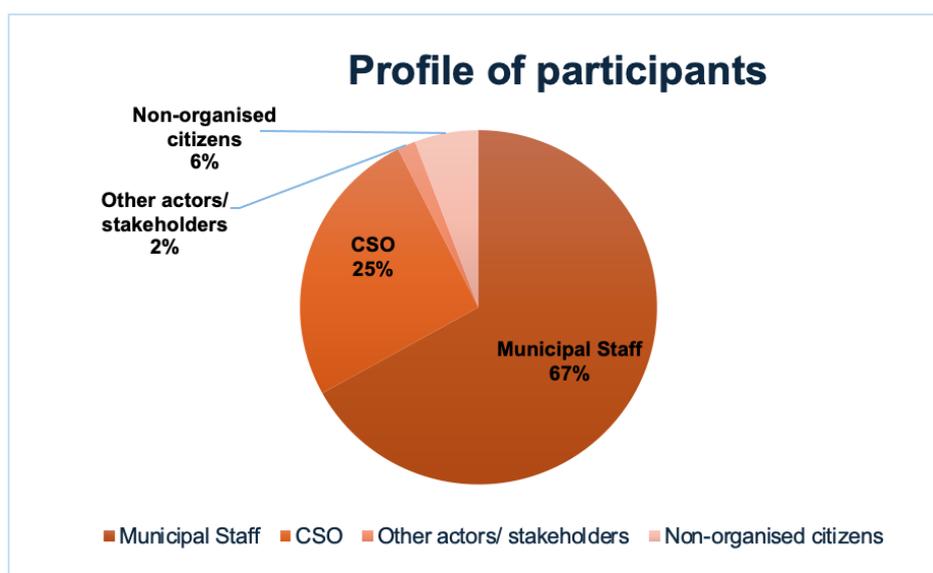


Table 1: Profile of participants that were involved in surveys and focus groups

Survey responses were collected in six municipalities. Two of them (Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet) were directly engaged in the project, while four others (Barcelona, Tenerife, Castelló de la Plana and Cartagena) contributed as partners through their affiliation with the Spanish Intercultural Cities Network (RECI).

In total, **81 staff members from local administrations** participated in the survey. Their professional profiles are categorised by area of work in table 2.

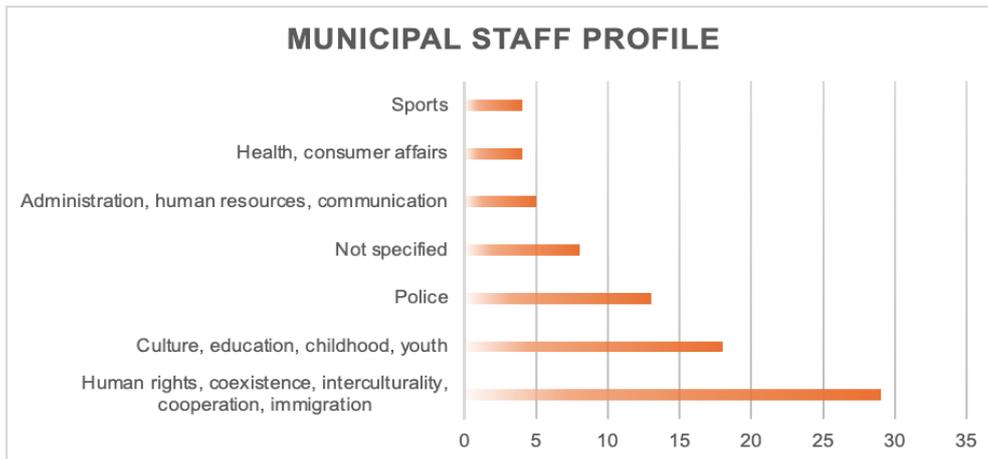


Table 2: Municipal Staff Profile

Additionally, 33 professionals from civil society organisations and other stakeholders completed the questionnaire; their distribution by type of organisation is presented in a related chart.

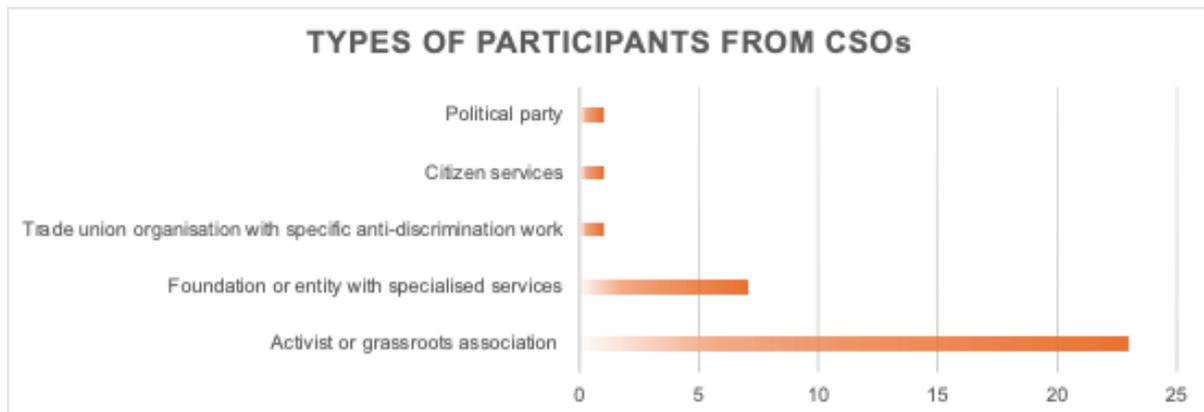


Table 3: Types of participants from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

Although information on years of service was not available for 24% of respondents, the data allows for the identification of some trends. Overall, 50% of participants can be classified as having medium or long-term professional experience (more than 4 - 6 years within their respective institutions). This trend is more pronounced among municipal staff, 40% of whom have over 10 years' experience.

To further explore relevant narratives and discourses, **three focus groups were conducted**. Two of them took place in Getafe on 30 June 2025. The first session brought together 14 participants, including local police officers, municipal staff from departments such as Women and Equality, Social Services and Education, as well as one person from a local social organisation. The second session included eight participants from non-organised civil society, except for one individual affiliated with a civil society organisation.

The third focus group was held in Santa Coloma de Gramenet on 11 July 2025 and included 10 participants. This group brought together municipal staff from the areas of Coexistence, Cooperation and Equality, alongside professionals from local civil society organisations - some of whom work on programmes supported by the municipality.

To conclude the data collection phase, a **feedback workshop** was held on 24 July 2025. The session brought together participants involved in the surveys and focus groups and served to present and validate the initial diagnosis findings. This space also enabled an open exchange of reflections and insights among the different stakeholders. The workshop gathered around 20 participants, including municipal staff as well as professionals from migrant and LGBTIQ organisations. Participation was relatively balanced between the two cities - Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet - and also included individuals affiliated with other entities or networks.

03

Legal and institutional strategies for LGBTIQ protection and inclusion

03. Legal and institutional strategies for LGBTIQ protection and inclusion

3.1 Institutional frameworks for LGBTIQ protection: The Council of Europe's contributions

The Council of Europe has played a pioneering role in the promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTIQ people across Europe. Prior to the adoption of formal recommendations, its engagement with these issues evolved gradually, particularly through the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the work of human rights monitoring bodies, which began identifying patterns of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These developments laid the groundwork for a more structured and policy-oriented response.

A key milestone came in 2010 with the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)5](#),⁵ the first comprehensive intergovernmental standard in Europe focused on combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Although not legally binding, this recommendation represents a political and normative commitment by member States to take proactive and coordinated measures in areas such as legal recognition, protection from violence, freedom of assembly, asylum, and education. Its adoption marked a turning point in establishing a common European framework for LGBTIQ equality and has since served as a reference point for both national policies and international advocacy.

Subsequent developments have further reinforced this framework. These include the [Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 on combating hate speech](#),⁶ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 on combating hate crime](#),⁷ the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons](#),⁸ and the [Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 2417 \(2022\) on combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe](#)⁹.

⁵ Council of Europe. (2010, March 31). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity*. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/soqi/rec-2010-5>

⁶ Council of Europe. (2022, May 20). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech*. Council of Europe. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680a67955

⁷ Council of Europe. (2024, May 7). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime*. Council of Europe. <https://search.coe.int/cm?i=0900001680af9736>

⁸ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). (2022). *ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/general-policy-recommendation-no-17-on-preventing-and-combating-intole/1680acb66f>

⁹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (2022, January 25). *Resolution 2417 (2022): Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Council of Europe. <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/29712/html>

The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit was established in 2014 to support the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity⁵. It became the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit in 2024 following the setting up of the ADI-SOGIESC expert committee. The Unit provides technical assistance, facilitates capacity-building, and fosters cooperation among member States. It also contributes to raising awareness and promoting standards through projects, expert groups, and intergovernmental initiatives.

The ADI-SOGIESC met most recently in Malta in May 2025. A key item on the agenda was the adoption of a new draft Recommendation on the rights of intersex persons, aimed at establishing a future international standard that ensures dignity, legal protection, and visibility for intersex individuals. The committee also reviewed the status of implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5, with particular attention to the rise in anti-LGBTI hate speech, and began drafting the Council of Europe Strategy for the Equality of Rights of LGBTI Persons (2027–2032), designed to strengthen institutional responses to emerging threats and promote coherence across national frameworks.

The Council of Europe has increasingly addressed intersectional dimensions of discrimination. In December 2024, following the adoption of [PACE Resolution 2576 \(October 2024\)](#),¹⁰ which calls for urgent action to combat lesbophobia and systemic violence against LBQ women the Parliamentary Assembly's LGBTI Platform co-organised with the SOGIESC Unit a high-level conference focused on violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women, with a specific focus on those who are racialised, disabled, migrants, or otherwise marginalised. The event brought together institutional and civil society actors – including the Gender Equality Commission and the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) – to call for inclusive policies and proactive allyship.

In parallel, the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network (EFPN), hosted by the Council of Europe since 2020, plays a key role in peer learning and monitoring policy progress across more than 35 member States. This network strengthens coordination and supports the effective implementation of equality standards throughout the region.

It is important to note that the Council of Europe, with a broader geographical membership than the EU, plays a complementary and often more expansive role in shaping the LGBTI agenda. Its resolutions and the [case law of the European Court of Human Rights](#)¹¹ have significantly influenced the normative environment in Europe, including landmark judgments on issues such as legal recognition of same-sex couples, legal gender recognition, LGBTI hate crime and hate speech, freedom of assembly, and protection from discrimination.

¹⁰ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (2024, October 3). *Resolution 2576: Preventing and combating violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and queer women in Europe*. Council of Europe. <https://pace.coe.int/files/33902/html>

¹¹ Edel, F. (2015). *Case law of the European Court of Human Rights relating to discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity* (ISBN 102114ENG). Council of Europe. <https://book.coe.int/en/human-rights-and-democracy/6472-case-law-of-the-european-court-of-human-rights-relating-to-discrimination-on-grounds-of-sexual-orientation-or-gender-identity.html>.

Also consulted through the *Contra el Odio* website: https://www.contraelodio.org/recursos/ue_jurisprudencia_en.pdf

3.2 European Union policy and governance framework on LGBTIQ equality

At the European Union level, the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#)¹² explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation (Article 21). However, binding legal protection under EU secondary legislation remains limited in scope, primarily applying to the field of employment through directives such as the [Employment Equality Directive \(2000/78/EC\)](#).¹³ Discrimination in areas such as education, healthcare, housing, and access to goods and services is not yet comprehensively addressed at the EU level, resulting in significant legal fragmentation and uneven protection across member States.

To respond to these challenges, the [LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025](#)¹⁴ was adopted by the European Commission as the first comprehensive EU framework dedicated to advancing the rights and inclusion of LGBTIQ people. The strategy identifies four main pillars of action:

- Tackling discrimination;
- Ensuring safety;
- Building inclusive societies; and
- Leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world.

It promotes the development of national action plans, the mainstreaming of LGBTIQ concerns into broader EU policies, and the use of EU funding instruments to support civil society and institutional action.

In terms of governance, the EU coordinates efforts through interinstitutional cooperation and supports evidence-based policymaking. The European Commission's LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup, composed of representatives from member States, facilitates peer learning, exchange of practices, and monitoring of national-level progress.

In addition to legislative and strategic tools, the EU benefits from the contributions of specialised agencies and civil society actors. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) regularly publishes research, country reports and legal analyses related to LGBTIQ rights, including comparative surveys on experiences of discrimination, hate crime, and access to justice. The [Special Eurobarometer Surveys on Discrimination in the EU](#)¹⁵ further provide valuable insights into citizens' attitudes and perceptions, helping to monitor progress and identify persisting challenges across member states.

¹² European Union. (2007). *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2012/C 326/02). Official Journal of the European Union. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

¹³ European Union: Council of the European Union. (2000, November 27). *Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation* (OJ L 303, 2 December 2000, pp. 16-22). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/78/oj/eng>

¹⁴ European Commission. (2020). *Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en

¹⁵ European Commission. (2006–2023). *Special Eurobarometer on discrimination in the European Union* [Survey series]. Eurobarometer Series 20803. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/browse/all/series/20803>

Key European networks play a central role in advocacy, capacity-building, and monitoring. Among them are ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – Europe), IGLYO (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation), OII Europe (Organisation Intersex International Europe), EL*C (EuroCentralAsian Lesbian Community), and TGEU (Transgender Europe). [ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map and Index](#)¹⁶ in particular serve as widely used reference tools to assess progress and identify gaps in legal protection and policy implementation across EU countries.

Despite this growing ecosystem of support and coordination, [a 2025 briefing by the European Parliament](#)¹⁷ underscores that implementation remains uneven, with some Member States failing to develop concrete national strategies or extend protections beyond the workplace. The report also notes the persistence of political resistance and the need for stronger mechanisms to ensure accountability and coherence in the application of EU principles on LGBTIQ equality.

The European Union has long served as a normative and legal driver for LGBTIQ rights, dating back to the adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Building on this foundation, the EU has issued key legislative and policy instruments. These tools, complemented by [guidance from the Council of the European Union](#)¹⁸ and the [EU Handbook on promoting and protecting the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTIQ persons](#),¹⁹ serve as references for national adaptation and development.

Nonetheless, the implementation of EU standards continues to face political challenges. Some governments²⁰ have actively resisted advances in LGBTIQ equality, prompting concern and censure from EU institutions. Legal actions, funding freezes, and political pressure have been used in recent years to demand compliance with fundamental rights obligations. This highlights both the EU's growing role as an enforcer of LGBTIQ protections and the continued vulnerability of these rights in politically hostile contexts.

¹⁶ ILGA-Europe. (2024). *Rainbow Map and Index 2024*. ILGA-Europe. <https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/>

¹⁷ European Parliamentary Research Service. (2025, January). *LGBTIQ rights in the EU: Developments and challenges* (Briefing, EPRS_BRI(2025)772856). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)772856](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2025)772856)

¹⁸ Council of the European Union. (2010). *Toolkit to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people*. Council of the European Union. https://www.contraelodio.org/recursos/ue_toolkit_embajadas.pdf

¹⁹ Council of the European Union. (2013). *EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons*. Council of the European Union. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/07_hr_guidelines_lgbti_en.pdf

²⁰ Examples include: [Hungary's 2021 "Child Protection Act"](#) banning the portrayal of homosexuality and gender transition to minors (criticised by the European Commission and referred to the Court of Justice of the EU); [Poland's so-called "LGBT-free zones" adopted by several municipalities between 2019–2021](#), which triggered infringement procedures and suspension of EU regional funds; and Bulgaria's repeated blocking of the ratification of the [Istanbul Convention](#), often framed with strong anti-LGBTI rhetoric.

It is also important to note that competences in the field of equality and human rights legislation and policy vary significantly across member states. In some countries, equality frameworks are primarily defined at the national (or federal) level, with local governments having limited discretion to develop specific measures. In others, regional and municipal authorities enjoy broader competences in areas such as education, healthcare, social services, and anti-discrimination initiatives, which allows for more proactive local policies. This diversity of governance arrangements needs to be taken into account when analysing local responses, as the scope of municipal action often depends on the institutional distribution of powers.

3.3 National and regional frameworks and LGBTIQ trends in Spain

Spain is among the countries with the highest proportion of LGBTIQ people worldwide. According to the [Ipsos Global Advisor \(2023\)](#),²¹ around 14% of the population does not identify as heterosexual, and 4% does not identify with the binary categories of “man” or “woman”. Generational differences are striking: three in ten Gen Z respondents (born between the late 1990s and 2010) do not consider themselves heterosexual, bisexuality is up to six times more common than in older generations, and 5% of Gen Z and 6% of millennials (born in the 1980s and 1990s) identify as non-binary or trans, compared with just 1% among baby boomers (born between the mid-1940s and late 1960s).²²

This demographic openness goes in parallel with Spain’s strong legal framework on LGBTIQ rights, which in 2023 placed the country 4th out of 49 European countries in [ILGA-Europe’s Rainbow Index](#).²³ Spain is widely recognised as one of the most progressive countries in Europe regarding LGBTIQ rights. The recognition of LGBTIQ rights in Spain is embedded in broader constitutional and legal guarantees. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 lays the foundation for a social and democratic state governed by the rule of law and enshrines the principle of equality before the law (Article 14). Legislative progress over the last few decades has further embedded this principle into practice.

A landmark moment came in 2005, when it became one of the first countries in the world to legislate for marriage equality, including joint adoption rights. Additional key milestones include the repeal of discriminatory laws such as the [Law of Social Danger and Rehabilitation](#)²⁴ (derogated in 1979), the amnesty of LGBTIQ prisoners in 1981, and the repeal of the criminal offence of ‘public scandal’ in 1988.

²¹ Ipsos. (2023, June). *LGBT+ Pride 2023 Global Survey*. Ipsos. <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-06/Ipsos%20LGBT%2B%20Pride%202023%20Global%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

²² Ipsos. (2023, junio). *Encuesta mundial sobre el Orgullo LGBT+ 2023* [Informe regional ESP_LATAM]. Ipsos. <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-06/Ipsos%20LGBT%2B%20Pride%202023%20Global%20Survey%20Report%20ESP%20LATAM%5B70%5D%20%20-%20Solo%20lectura.pdf>

²³ ILGA-Europe. (2023). *Rainbow Europe 2023*. ILGA-Europe. <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/rainbow-europe-2023/>

²⁴ España. (1970, 4 de agosto). *Ley 16/1970, de 4 de agosto, sobre peligrosidad y rehabilitación social*. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 187, 12551– 12557. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?lang=es&id=BOE-A-1970-854>

Spain's criminal code now recognises hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and law enforcement agencies operate under a specific Protocol of Action for Hate Crimes and Discriminatory Conduct. The Spanish Victim Statute provides enhanced protection for victims of hate crime, while national strategies - such as the [Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance \(2023-2027\)](#)²⁵ - include LGBTIQ persons as a vulnerable group.

Sector-specific laws have also contributed to mainstreaming LGBTIQ inclusion, such as the [Organic Law on Education](#) (LOE),²⁶ which mandates measures against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, and [Law 19/2007](#),²⁷ which addresses intolerance in sports. Spain's Workers' Statute includes provisions against workplace discrimination, and further legal instruments ensure equal access to healthcare and public services.

In recent years, national legislation has continued to evolve. The most significant milestone is the adoption of [Law 4/2023 for the Real and Effective Equality of Trans People and for the Guarantee of the Rights of LGBTIQ People](#).²⁸ This comprehensive legal framework recognises the right to gender self-determination from the age of 16 (with specific provisions for minors aged 14–16), prohibits all forms of conversion therapies, and mandates active measures in education, healthcare, employment, sports, and public administration to combat discrimination and promote inclusion. However, the process and aftermath of its adoption have been marked by intense public debate, often highly politicised and polarised, which has amplified misinformation and exacerbated social divisions. Seven in ten LGBTIQ individuals believe that the controversy surrounding the law has negatively impacted societal attitudes towards trans people.²⁹

The law also establishes new institutional obligations, including the development of LGBTIQ Equality Plans, training of public officials, and the creation of dedicated equality units within public administrations. Despite its scope, the effective implementation of the law is mediated by Spain's decentralised governance model, which grants autonomous communities significant powers in education, health, social services and equality policies. This has led to territorial asymmetries, with some regions adopting robust instruments for LGBTIQ equality, while others show limited political will or institutional capacity to enforce national standards.

Despite these advances, civil society organisations continue to highlight gaps in enforcement and the need for more systematic training, data collection, and inter-institutional coordination.

²⁵ Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. (2023). *Summary of the Strategic Framework on Citizenship and Inclusion, against Racism and Xenophobia (2023–2027)* [PDF]. Government of Spain. <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/documents/3976301/4202317/Resumen+en+ingl%C3%A9s+del+Marco+Estrat%C3%A9gico+de+Ciudadan%C3%ADa+e+Inclusi%C3%B3n%2C+contra+el+Racismo+y+la+Xenofobia+%282023-2027%29.pdf>

²⁶ España. (2020, 29 de diciembre). *Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación*. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2020-17264>

²⁷ España (2007, 11 de julio). *Ley 19/2007, de 11 de julio, contra la violencia, el racismo, la xenofobia y la intolerancia en el deporte*. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2007-13408>

²⁸ España. (2023, 28 de febrero). *Ley 4/2023, de 28 de febrero, para la igualdad real y efectiva de las personas trans y para la garantía de los derechos de las personas LGTBI*. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 51, 27592–27678. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2023-5366>

²⁹ Unión General de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores (UGT). (2023). *Resumen ejecutivo: Estudio sobre la situación de las personas LGTBI en el empleo*. UGT. https://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/Resumen%202023%20ejecutivo%20estudio%20situaci%C3%B3n%20personas%20LGTBI%20en%20el%20empleo_compressed.pdf

The Community of Madrid

The Community of Madrid adopted [Law 2/2016 on Gender Identity and Social Equality and Non-Discrimination](#)³⁰ and [Law 3/2016 on Protection against LGTBIQphobia](#),³¹ positioning the region (at least formally) as one of the most advanced in terms of regional legislation at the time. These laws established the right to gender self-identification within regional healthcare and administrative systems, defined infractions and sanctions for LGTBIQ-phobic conduct, and created the Regional LGTBIQ Council as a participatory and consultative mechanism. Law 11/2001 on De Facto Unions also contributes to the regional framework by recognising diverse family structures.

However, implementation and political continuity have been limited. Monitoring reports from civil society organisations such as COGAM³² and FELGTBI+³³ have repeatedly highlighted deficiencies in enforcement, a lack of budget allocation, and political reluctance to apply sanctions or develop detailed action plans.³⁴ According to COGAM's assessments, the Community of Madrid has failed to systematically implement the provisions of its own legislation, with delays in convening the LGTBIQ Council and in approving strategic action plans. FELGTBI+ has echoed these concerns, pointing to a broader trend of institutional disengagement.

Recent years have seen setbacks in institutional commitment, including the elimination or dilution of LGTBIQ visibility campaigns and the interruption of cooperation with LGTBIQ-focused services and organisations.

Catalonia

Catalonia stands out as one of the first regions in Spain to adopt a comprehensive legal framework for LGTBIQ equality. A landmark in this regard is [Law 11/2014 to Guarantee the Rights of LGTBIQ People and to Eradicate LGTBIQ-phobia](#),³⁵ which introduced a proactive protection model, recognising not only the right to non-discrimination but also the obligation of public authorities to promote inclusion and visibility.³⁶

³⁰ Comunidad de Madrid. (2016, 29 de marzo). *Ley 2/2016, de 29 de marzo, de Identidad y Expresión de Género e Igualdad Social y no Discriminación de la Comunidad de Madrid*. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 169, 54694–54717. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2016-6728>

³¹ Comunidad de Madrid. (2016, 22 de julio). *Ley 3/2016, de 22 de julio, de Protección Integral contra la LGTBIfobia y la Discriminación por Razón de Orientación e Identidad Sexual en la Comunidad de Madrid*. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 285, 109961-110024. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2016-11096>

³² The LGTB+ Collective of Madrid - <https://cogam.es/portada/>

³³ Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Trans, Bisexuales, Intersexuales - <https://felgtbi.org/>

³⁴ Radiografía de las políticas LGTBI en la Comunidad de Madrid (2016–2021), COGAM (2022). Available at <https://www.cogam.es/radiografia-politicas-lgtbi-madrid>

³⁵ Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña. (2014, 10 de octubre). *Ley 11/2014, de 10 de octubre, para garantizar los derechos de lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, transgéneros e intersexuales y para erradicar la homofobia, la bifobia y la transfobia* (texto consolidado a 31 de diciembre de 2020). Boletín Oficial del Estado, núm. 281, de 20 de noviembre de 2014, pág. 79811-79821. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2014-11990&lang=es&tn=2&p=20201231>

³⁶ One of its most innovative elements is the inverted burden of proof in administrative proceedings, which shifts responsibility to the accused party to demonstrate that no discriminatory action took place.

The law also established the LGBTIQ Affairs Council, promoting interdepartmental coordination and civil society participation, and mandated the adoption of equality measures in key areas such as education, health, culture, and public communication. In terms of implementation, the LGBTIQ Information and Assistance Office and the Office for Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination (OITND) serve as central mechanisms to prevent and address discrimination across multiple axes, offering legal and psychosocial support to victims, raising awareness, and advising public institutions.

Catalonia's legal framework is further reinforced by earlier and complementary legislation that expanded the recognition of rights for LGBTIQ individuals in areas such as family law and inheritance.³⁷ In addition to these legal protections, [Decree 141/2007 created the National Council of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons \(Consell Nacional LGBT\)](#).³⁸ This body serves as a formal space for participation, dialogue, and coordination between public institutions and civil society, and plays a key role in shaping, monitoring, and evaluating equality policies at the regional level.

Successive LGBTIQ Action Plans have been adopted, and the Catalan Regional Government has supported local implementation through agreements and technical guidance. Nonetheless, challenges remain, particularly regarding territorial equity, consistent sanctioning procedures, and stable funding for civil society organisations.

Recent evaluations by both institutions and civil society have called for stronger cross-departmental coordination and the development of more robust indicators to assess impact. Overall, Catalonia's legal infrastructure offers a strong foundation, but its continued effectiveness will depend on sustained political will and investment in inclusive public policies, as highlighted by the Catalan Observatory Against Homophobia.³⁹

3.4 The role of cities in combating anti-LGBTIQ hate speech

Local governments are essential actors in the implementation of equality policies. While national frameworks provide the legal and institutional scaffolding, it is at the local level where these principles are either translated into tangible action, or neglected. Cities are where daily life unfolds, and public authorities at the local level are essential actors in many of the spaces that can be leveraged as cradles of narrative change and social cohesion, as much as places where discrimination and hate speech unfold: schools, healthcare centres, youth programmes, cultural venues, police-community interactions, and local media.

³⁷ [Law 3/2005](#), which amended previous civil codes to allow for adoption and guardianship by same-sex couples; [Law 10/2008](#), regulating succession rights and explicitly including diverse family structures; and [Law 25/2010](#), which reformed the Civil Code of Catalonia regarding persons and family, promoting inclusive definitions of kinship and legal recognition.

³⁸ Generalitat de Catalunya. (2007, 26 de juny). *Decret 141/2007, de 26 de juny, de creació del Consell Nacional de lesbianes, gais i homes i dones bisexuals i transsexuals (LGBT)*. Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya, núm. 4914. DOGC. <https://portaljuridic.gencat.cat/ca/document-del-pjur/?documentId=451035>

³⁹ Informe anual sobre l'LGTTBI-fòbia a Catalunya (various years), Observatori Contra l'Homofòbia. Available at: <https://och.cat/publicacions>

Importantly, municipalities are also the level of governance with the greatest proximity to communities. This makes them uniquely placed to understand local dynamics, engage with marginalised groups, and intervene swiftly when new risks or tensions emerge. When cities take an active role in countering anti-LGBTIQ narratives - through public messaging, inclusive training, community-building initiatives, and support for local actors - they help reshape public discourse and establish themselves as credible guarantors of rights and belonging. Conversely, when they remain silent or neutral in the face of growing polarisation and hate speech, they might contribute to the normalisation of exclusion and the erosion of trust in institutions.

The Council of Europe's [Intercultural Cities Programme](#) has repeatedly highlighted this dual potential: cities can either amplify structural inequalities, or become strategic actors in defending democratic values, human rights, and inclusive societies.

In the field of education, these debates were also taken up at the [IGLYO Proud Pupils LGBTQI Inclusive Education Conference](#),⁴⁰ held on 25–27 June 2025 in Barcelona, Spain.⁴¹ The event brought together national and regional authorities, educators, researchers, and activists from across Europe to reflect on how education systems can better respond to diversity and prevent discrimination. A recurring theme was **the importance of multilevel and interdepartmental coordination and the use of participatory methodologies in designing inclusive policies that resonate with communities**. Within this context, the case of Barcelona's Anti-Rumours Strategy, which has progressively incorporated LGBTIQ perspectives, was highlighted as an innovative example of municipal engagement.

However, as shown in the diagnosis conducted in Santa Coloma de Gramenet and Getafe, municipal approaches remain uneven. Some cities have strong technical teams, stable partnerships with civil society, and long-term commitments to equality, while others rely solely on symbolic gestures and lack any dedicated staff or strategic plans.

In summary, while European and Spanish legal frameworks provide a strong basis for protecting LGBTIQ rights, their effectiveness depends on coherent, local-level implementation. **Cities must be empowered to act beyond compliance, using innovative tools like the Anti-Rumours Strategy to shape a culture of equality, counter harmful myths, and ensure that rights are felt, not just declared.** A more detailed overview of the legal and policy frameworks, together with existing local strategies, tools and resources in Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet, is provided in section 6.2.

⁴⁰ Council of Europe. (2025, June 26). *LGBTI Inclusive Education: the CoE SOGIESC–IGLYO Proud Pupils Conference has started* [News release]. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sogil-/lgbti-inclusive-education-the-coe-sogiesc-iglyo-proud-pupils-conference-has-started-1>

⁴¹ The conference was co-organised by IGLYO, the Council of Europe's [SOGIESC Unit](#), [FELGTBI+](#) (Federación Estatal LGTBI+), the [Department of Social Psychology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona](#), the research group [Epi4Health](#), and the [Observatori Contra l'LGBlfòbia](#).

04

LGBTIQ

discrimination and
hate speech: evolving
patterns and lived
realities

04. LGBTIQ discrimination and hate speech: evolving patterns and lived realities

4.1 Contextual overview: prevalence of discrimination and underreporting

Across the European Union, LGBTIQ individuals continue to experience high levels of discrimination, exclusion and violence, despite advances in legal frameworks. According to the [FRA LGBTIQ Equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges 2024 report](#),⁴² almost 40% of all LGBTIQ respondents reported avoiding certain locations for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed, figures that rise even higher for racialised LGBTIQ persons. Also, nearly 70% of trans and intersex people across the EU feel discriminated against in at least one area of life. **Particularly concerning is that only 14% of victims of physical or sexual attacks reported the incident to the police, reflecting persistent distrust in institutional responses and fear of secondary victimisation.**

Data from the [Special Eurobarometer on discrimination in the EU \(2023\)](#)⁴³ echoes these concerns, noting that 54% of EU citizens believe discrimination against gay, lesbian and bisexual people is widespread, rising to 57% in the case of trans people and 47% for intersex individuals. These figures reveal not only **societal prejudice but also the perceived normalisation of discriminatory attitudes** in many member States.

The FRA 2024 report also draws attention to **structural barriers within public institutions**. A significant proportion of LGBTIQ people who interact with healthcare providers, law enforcement, and education systems report negative experiences, ranging from subtle bias to overt hostility. **In education, more than 50% of LGBTIQ students feel unsafe in school environments**, especially those who are trans, non-binary or have an intersectional identity. These patterns underscore the need for systemic change and the urgent implementation of inclusive policies.

These findings mirror those of the earlier [EU LGBTIQ Survey II \(2020\)](#),⁴⁴ which already indicated that 43% of LGBTIQ people in Spain had experienced discrimination in the previous year. For trans and intersex respondents across Europe, over 60% and 45% respectively reported avoiding public spaces. The 2024 data confirm that little progress has been made in addressing these fears and normalised exclusions. The FRA report also found that 30 to 43% of LGBTIQ employees in Spain experience workplace discrimination, while 34% hide their

⁴² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2024). *LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: Progress and challenges* [PDF]. FRA. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtiq-equality_en.pdf

⁴³ European Commission. (2023, December). *Discrimination in the European Union: Special Eurobarometer 535* [Survey 2972]. European Commission. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972>

⁴⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality: FRA LGBTI Survey 2020*. FRA. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

identity at work. Alarming, one in four reported having experienced at least one attack at work due to their identity.

In terms of hate crime, the [2024 report on hate incidents of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior](#),⁴⁵ shows that although overall hate crimes decreased by 13.8% compared to the previous year, anti-LGBTIQ incidents remain among the most prevalent categories. In 2023, there were 466 recorded incidents related to sexual orientation or gender identity, representing 16.5% of all hate crimes reported nationally.

In Spain, several recent studies document the specific vulnerability of LGBTIQ youth. The [2024 State of LGBTIQ Education Report](#)⁴⁶ by FELGTBI+ reveals that **seven out of ten LGBTIQ students have witnessed or experienced bullying due to their LGBTIQ identity**. In nearly two-thirds of these cases (64%), the school failed to take any meaningful action in response. The most frequent forms of aggression included verbal harassment (14.75%), discrimination (13.75%), physical violence (7.4%), and cyberbullying (7.25%). Teachers often lack tools or institutional support to intervene effectively, and this hostile environment is closely linked to academic disruption. The school dropout rate among LGBTIQ youth stands at 18.9%, notably higher than the general population average of 13%.

The [2025 State of Hate Report](#),⁴⁷ also by FELGTBI+, further indicates that **hate speech (particularly online) has intensified. Trans people and non-binary individuals are frequent targets**, with narratives that portray them as threats to children, women's rights, or public values. These narratives are often echoed or tolerated by political actors, particularly in contexts where anti-gender or anti-rights ideologies have gained institutional ground.

These findings confirm a wide gap between legal recognition and lived realities, where discrimination, invisibility, and fear continue to define the daily lives of many LGBTIQ persons. Underreporting remains a structural obstacle, rooted in fear of secondary victimisation, social stigma, or distrust in institutional actors.

This European overview must also be read in the context of a broader political shift in parts of the region. In recent years, the rise of populist and far-right discourses has led to renewed challenges for LGBTIQ rights, with some states introducing or reinforcing restrictive measures under the banner of "protecting traditional values." In certain cases, these developments have resulted in the curtailing of public expressions of LGBTIQ identity, reduced institutional support, or increased tolerance of discriminatory rhetoric in political debate. At the same time, local and regional authorities in some countries have taken a proactive stance to safeguard LGBTIQ rights, even in adverse national contexts - illustrating how the defence of equality can depend heavily on political will and governance at multiple levels.

⁴⁵ Ministerio del Interior. (2024). *Informe sobre la evolución de los delitos e incidentes de odio en España 2024* [PDF]. Gobierno de España. https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2024/INFORME_Evolucion_delitos_de_odio_2024.pdf

⁴⁶ Federación Estatal LGTBI+ (FELGTBI+). (2024). *Estado de la educación LGTBI+ 2024* [Informe]. FELGTBI+. https://felgtbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Estado-de-la-educacion-LGTBI-2024_FINAL.pdf

⁴⁷ Federación Estatal LGTBI+ (FELGTBI+). (2025). *Estado del Odio: Estado LGTBI+ 2025* [Informe]. FELGTBI+. <https://felgtbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Estado-LGTBI-Estado-odio-2025.pdf>

4.2 Local realities: Discrimination, prejudices and hate speech

The focus groups and surveys conducted in Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet, combined with the results of an online survey carried out in four additional municipalities, reveal a complex and often hostile environment for LGBTIQ individuals. Across these cities, participants described contexts marked by invisibility, prejudice, and structural gaps. Taken together, these lived experiences underscore the disconnection between formal legal protections and daily life, and highlight the urgent need for proactive, community-informed responses.

Lived experiences of discrimination and spaces of exclusion. Participants reported feeling unsafe not only in certain neighbourhoods but also in environments dominated by specific social profiles, particularly groups of young heterosexual men. Across the two cities, LGBTIQ individuals described avoiding healthcare and administrative services due to anticipated stigma or previous negative experiences, and experiencing bullying, especially in educational settings. The most acute forms of discrimination were reported by trans women and visibly non-conforming individuals. As one young participant put it: “You learn quickly that being open about who you are, has a cost.”

These forms of discrimination often take place in everyday **environments and reflect how exclusion and violence are spatially and socially distributed. Discrimination is particularly critical in schools and public spaces, but also extends to workplaces and public services**, revealing a systemic pattern rather than isolated incidents. These manifestations of anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and exclusion are not limited to overt acts of violence, but also include subtle forms of microaggression, social distancing, and institutional neglect.

Additionally, participants and surveys pointed to key environments where anti-LGBTIQ attitudes and hate speech are particularly present:

- Schools: Bullying and isolation, especially for gender non-conforming students. In both cities, focus group participants strongly emphasised that schools are among the least safe environments.
- Healthcare and municipal services: Avoidance due to perceived or experienced prejudice.
- Workplaces: Microaggressions, exclusion, and assumptions of unprofessionalism.
- Family and community environments: Traditional homophobia and cultural conservatism lead many youths to hide their identity or face exclusion from their households. As an example, in Roma families or families from Bangladesh and Pakistan, some members are sent away to protect family honour.
- Social media platforms: TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others act as accelerators of hate speech, spreading misinformation, slurs, and reinforcing anti-LGBTIQ narratives such as references to 'gender ideology' and the 'indoctrination' of children.
- Leisure and public spaces: Constant harassment, ridicule, and threatening looks were reported. Many respondents avoid particular areas due to fear of verbal or physical assault. This becomes especially evident during LGBTIQ celebrations (such as Pride events) when incidents of hate are more frequent, and visibility often triggers backlash.

Many participants highlighted a broader climate of conditional tolerance: “It’s like we’re accepted as long as we don’t show it.” This conditional acceptance reinforces self-censorship and contributes to mental health burdens and social exclusion.

The combination of institutional neglect, familial silence, and digital hostility creates a climate where LGBTIQ individuals are forced to navigate fear, risk, invisibility, or resistance on a daily basis.

Prejudices and social imaginaries. Participants identified a wide spectrum of harmful narratives and persistent stereotypes:

- Misconceptions such as “being LGBTIQ is an ideology, a phase, or contagious.”
- Stereotypes that frame gay men as weak, lesbians as man-hating, bisexuals as hypersexual, and trans individuals as mentally unstable.
- Effeminate behaviour in men is equated with being gay; masculinity remains idealised.
- Intersex people are widely misunderstood and stigmatised.
- Claims that LGBTIQ people receive unjustified privileges or funding, often labelled as “pocket money” or the work of the “gay lobby”.
- Accusations of threatening traditional values or “erasing the family”.

These narratives reflect a backlash against inclusive discourse, often intensified by digital misinformation and political instrumentalisation. As noted in various interventions, **the pressure to remain invisible permeates both public and private spheres.**

It is important to note that social acceptance and visibility vary considerably within the spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities. While gay and lesbian people tend to enjoy higher levels of public recognition and representation - both in media and political discourse - other identities such as bisexual, trans, non-binary, and intersex individuals face greater levels of misunderstanding, invisibility, and social stigma. This uneven acceptance translates into different lived experiences, with some groups benefiting from increasing normalisation while others remain at the margins of public empathy and institutional protection.

Generational and attitudinal data also suggest a more complex picture, where greater openness among younger cohorts coexists with the rise of reactionary narratives. Surveys indicate that younger generations in Spain are more likely to self-identify as LGBTIQ+ and to support equality measures,⁴⁸ yet social media has also amplified discourses hostile to sexual and gender diversity. This polarisation means that, while it may be more common today for a young person to openly express their sexual orientation at school than 30 years ago, visibility continues to entail significant risks - particularly for those whose identities remain more stigmatised or politicised.

⁴⁸ See section ‘National and regional frameworks and LGBTIQ trends in Spain’ in Legal, Institutional and Local Strategies for LGBTIQ Protection and Inclusion

05

Challenges in shaping inclusive narratives and responding to LGBTIQ hate speech

05. Challenges in shaping inclusive narratives and responding to LGBTIQ hate speech

Despite growing legal protections and formal commitments to equality, LGBTIQ people continue to face structural hostility, public disinformation, and a climate of normalised exclusion. These conditions are shaped not only by individual prejudice but also by the narratives (or absence thereof) circulated by public institutions. Inclusive, accurate and empathetic communication has the potential to challenge harmful stereotypes, build social cohesion, and strengthen trust in democratic institutions.

This section explores the specific challenges that local governments face when trying to shape and sustain such inclusive narratives.⁴⁹ While acknowledging broader political, social, and institutional dynamics that foster hate speech, this chapter focuses in particular on the internal and external communication barriers that hinder narrative change. The chapter is structured around three dimensions:

- the political and institutional inconsistencies that weaken trust and reduce the impact of anti-discrimination efforts,
- the lack of coherent and strategic institutional communication, both internally and externally, and
- the persistence of knowledge gaps and limited access to training, tools and resources.

Together, these dimensions reveal that the struggle against hate speech is not merely a matter of legal reform or public condemnation. It requires an intentional, well-resourced, and emotionally intelligent effort to reshape the ways in which institutions speak about - and with - LGBTIQ communities.

Institutional gaps and political inconsistency. Institutional commitment to combating anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and promoting inclusive narratives varies widely between cities. In Santa Coloma de Gramenet, the lack of dedicated staff or local leadership results in symbolic, externally-driven action. In Getafe, although more developed initiatives exist, efforts are still hampered by a reactive logic and insufficient integration across policy areas.

Respondents across the six cities highlighted:

- A disconnection between political discourse and operational implementation.
- Mistrust among LGBTIQ individuals towards public services.
- Public employees' fear of "saying the wrong thing" leading to silence or inaction.

⁴⁹ The analysis draws on input collected across six municipalities, combining focus groups and surveys in Getafe and Santa Coloma with an online survey in four additional cities. The challenges presented here reflect both shared patterns and city-specific observations: while not every issue applies equally to all six municipalities, they represent the most recurrent themes raised by participants.

- Uncoordinated structures between departments such as equality, youth, education and communication.

These inconsistencies are further compounded by regional dynamics. Participants noted that shifting political priorities at the regional level (particularly in the Community of Madrid, where policies are perceived to be regressing on LGBTIQ rights) limit the scope and continuity of local action. The resulting tension between municipal efforts and regional agendas weakens institutional coherence and reduces the effectiveness of local strategies.

As one civil society participant put it: “Everything is done because the Regional Government says so. Locally, there’s nothing”. Another local officer acknowledged: “There’s political will, but we lack the mechanisms and follow-through”.

Ultimately, **the lack of a stable, cross-sectoral approach undermines credibility and reduces the transformative potential of public discourse. Without clarity of leadership, adequate resourcing, and consistent implementation, inclusive narratives struggle to take root and counter the hostility that many LGBTIQ persons continue to face.** This challenge is exacerbated by the speed and reach of toxic narratives on social media, where misinformation, stereotypes, and hostile rhetoric can be amplified far beyond the original source, shaping public opinion and reinforcing prejudice in ways that are difficult to counter.

Fragmented communication and the absence of inclusive narratives. Local authorities often lack a unified communication strategy capable of effectively addressing LGBTIQ issues. Internally, siloed communication across departments results in fragmented action and the duplication of efforts. Externally, inconsistent messaging and outdated materials undermine public engagement and trust.

Participants from both focus groups and the online survey emphasised:

- The absence of clear objectives or communication standards.
- Low visibility of inclusive initiatives and weak digital presence.
- Lack of specialised staff.
- Strategies that are not tailored to diverse audiences.
- Public narratives that are reactive, symbolic or diluted, rather than transformative.

An additional challenge lies in the inherently evolving nature of LGBTIQ issues and the absence of broad societal consensus around them. Narratives in this field often need to address emerging identities, concepts, and rights, which can lead to differences of opinion even within LGBTIQ communities themselves. Tensions may also arise in relation to certain positions held by other social movements, such as specific strands of feminism, creating contested spaces where alliances are fragile and public messaging becomes more complex. In this context, local authorities may struggle to articulate narratives that are both inclusive and unifying without oversimplifying or erasing legitimate diversity of perspectives.

As one municipal staff member explained: “We communicate better about recycling than we do about inclusion.”

This disconnection is not only technical: it reflects a broader **institutional hesitation to engage with LGBTIQ identities as legitimate subjects of public policy. As a result, inclusive narratives are often marginal, confined to occasional events or visibility campaigns with limited impact.**

Limited capacities and uneven access to knowledge. Effective narrative change requires informed and confident public actors. However, many professionals (across youth, education, health and communication sectors) report a lack of tools, training, and conceptual clarity to address LGBTIQ diversity or recognise hate speech.

Professionals consulted in both Getafe, Santa Coloma and the other participating cities reported:

- Clarification of basic concepts (SOGIESC, intersectionality, structural discrimination).
- Guidance on how to detect and respond to hate speech and microaggressions.
- Legal literacy on anti-discrimination frameworks.
- Practical tools for designing inclusive messages and challenging dominant prejudices.

While there is interest in methodologies such as the Anti-Rumours Strategy, familiarity remains low. Many professionals expressed support for the approach but noted the need for structured, sustained capacity-building. One educator shared: “We want to support, but we don’t know how.” Even among those who have received some training, many reported that it was too superficial or isolated to be truly useful. “They gave us a session once, but it felt like ticking a box rather than learning”.

06

Building narratives at
local level:

Stakeholders, tools and
the strategic role of
cities

06. Building narratives at local level: Stakeholders, tools and the strategic role of cities

6.1 Cities as key actors in countering anti-LGBTIQ narratives and building inclusive narratives

Local governments do not only implement national policies, they are also powerful shapers of public discourse. Through their institutional voice, public space management, education and cultural initiatives, and community engagement policies, **cities actively influence the way diversity is understood and lived in everyday contexts. In this regard, cities hold both the responsibility and the opportunity to dismantle harmful narratives and foster inclusive ones.**

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme of the Council of Europe has consistently highlighted the capacity of local governments to build more cohesive and equitable societies through intercultural governance, though primarily focusing on the inclusion and integration of migrants, persons of migration background, and other minorities. Over time, however, the approach has proven adaptable and has been increasingly applied to other groups and forms of diversity, offering a flexible framework for addressing different types of exclusion and discrimination.

The programme is grounded in four core principles that can provide a valuable framework for municipal action. These four principles can be adapted to counter anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and narratives as follows:

- **Equality requires cities to guarantee the rights of all residents**, including LGBTIQ persons, by ensuring that institutional structures and public services are free from discrimination and that everyone enjoys equal protection and opportunities.
- **Recognition of diversity means acknowledging the multiple dimensions of people's identities**, including sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Cities should foster positive representations of LGBTIQ lives and actively counter invisibility, stigma, and pathologisation.
- **Meaningful interactions involve fostering safe, respectful, and sustained opportunities for encounters** between LGBTIQ people and the wider community. These interactions go beyond visibility, aiming to promote dialogue, dismantle stereotypes, and generate empathy-based narratives that recognise diversity as a source of shared belonging.

- **Active citizenship and participation refers to enabling the involvement of residents in public life** and recognising LGBTIQ persons as full social and political actors.

From public communication campaigns and educational programmes to municipal protocols and anti-discrimination observatories, cities have multiple tools at their disposal to influence perceptions and attitudes. However, these tools are not always used strategically. As evidenced during the diagnosis, **actions often remain fragmented or symbolic if not anchored in a coherent narrative framework that reflects institutional commitment.**

City councils also serve as connectors between civil society and other levels of government. By supporting grassroots initiatives, funding community-driven projects, and creating inclusive consultative spaces, **cities can amplify diverse voices and co-construct alternative narratives** with those most affected by discrimination.

Importantly, building **inclusive narratives is not only about what is said, but also about who is seen and heard in the public sphere.** As one focus group participant put it: "The city tells you who belongs just by what you see on posters or who gets invited to speak. We're not always part of that picture."

6.2 Mapping key local stakeholders and existing strategies, tools and resources

This section provides a structured overview of the key actors, tools, and institutional mechanisms currently active in shaping public narratives around LGBTIQ issues in Getafe and Santa Coloma de Gramenet. It highlights both existing capacities and limitations, and identifies potential for future collaborative action.

Key local stakeholders. In both cities, a diverse array of actors is involved in the design and implementation of diversity-related policies and actions:

Stakeholder	Santa Coloma de Gramenet	Getafe	Observations / Challenges
Local government departments	Equality, Cooperation, Living Together, Youth, Citizenship Safety	Equality, Social Welfare, Education, Youth, Local Police (Diversity Unit)	Departmental involvement is broad, but coordination and continuity remain uneven.
Health and social services	Nominally inclusive, but barriers to access persist; need for specific LGBTIQ protocols	Similar situation, limited tailored protocols	Structural gaps in adapting health/social services to LGBTIQ needs.
Civil society organisations	Entenem , ⁵⁰ with support from Xarxa ⁵¹ and La CIBA ⁵² community networks	Gaytafe ⁵³ and Migrantia ⁵⁴ as main actors; stronger coordination mechanisms	CSOs are key drivers, but levels of institutional support differ between cities.
Education and youth sectors	Schools and youth centres engaged in awareness workshops (varying intensity and regularity)	Same, but implementation depends on school/youth centre leadership and political priorities	Efforts are often <i>ad hoc</i> , lacking stable programmes.
Local media	Underutilised to challenge prejudice or amplify inclusive narratives	Same	Opportunity for stronger role in shaping public opinion and visibility of inclusive actions.

Existing strategies, tools and materials

Santa Coloma de Gramenet.

While Santa Coloma de Gramenet does not currently have an independent, standalone municipal strategy exclusively dedicated to LGBTIQ inclusion, the city has a defined institutional structure, strategic commitments integrated into the Municipal Action Plan (PAM), and a growing portfolio of programmes and services. In the current mandate, there is a specific municipal LGBTIQ area composed of a technical advisor, a councillor, and a service director, under the *Area de Cultura, Promoció de la Ciutat, Esports i LGTBI*. Previously, LGBTIQ issues fell under the Equality Department. This dedicated structure has enabled the consolidation of key services, notably the SAI (Integral Support Service for Affective, Sexual, and Gender Diversity), and the articulation of transversal collaborations with other municipal areas such as Coexistence, Civic Responsibility, Civic Centres, Historical Memory, Solidarity and Cooperation. These synergies have strengthened the city's capacity to address discrimination, promote equality, and integrate youth participation in decision-making.

⁵⁰ <http://entenemsantacoloma.org/>

⁵¹ <https://www.gramenet.cat/ajuntament/arees-municipals/la-xarxa-de-valors/>

⁵² <https://laciba.gramenet.cat/>

⁵³ <https://lgbtiqaytafe.wordpress.com/>

⁵⁴ <https://migrantia.org/>

a) Policy frameworks and strategic programmes

- Municipal Plan for Sexual, Affective and Gender Diversity (2019–2021).⁵⁵ This strategic plan outlined objectives related to rights protection, awareness-raising, visibility, education, and institutional coordination. Though no longer active, it supported key services like SAI LGTBI+ (Integral Support Service for Affective, Sexual, and Gender Diversity) and gave structure to symbolic and educational actions. While the plan itself was not renewed after 2021, some of the services it helped establish - notably the SAI - remain operational. Other actions, however, were more punctual in nature and have not been sustained, which reinforces stakeholders' call for renewed institutional commitment and continuity.
- Xarxa de Valors⁵⁶. Santa Coloma de Gramenet is part of the national Anti-Rumours network, and this strategy serves as a transversal public policy to counter discrimination, prejudices, and toxic narratives. While not originally focused on SOGIESC-related issues, the methodology has strong potential for adaptation and has already influenced the city's approach to diversity and inclusion in broader terms. In practical terms, this is Santa Coloma's Anti-Rumours Strategy (ARS), though locally it is known as Xarxa de Valors because it builds on a pre-existing network and initiative in the territory, predating the formal launch of the city's own ARS.

b) Services and Local Programmes.

- SAI - Integral Support Service for Affective, Sexual, and Gender Diversity.⁵⁷ This municipal service offers free psychological and legal support to LGBTIQ individuals and their families. It also provides guidance for legal procedures (e.g., name and gender marker changes), emotional counselling, peer groups, and training for professionals. A dedicated LGBTIQ library enhances the accessibility of inclusive resources.
- School-based structures and protocols: In schools such as *Institut La Bastida*, as in other centres, there are student equality delegates (*delegats i delegades d'igualtat*) and "purple brigades" (*brigades liles*) working to promote inclusion and respond to violence. Among staff, COCOBE (Coordinators for Coeducation, Coexistence, and Emotional Well-being) are responsible for prevention, intervention, and awareness, following a specific Catalan government protocol for addressing violence and discrimination.

⁵⁵ Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. (2019, 28 de enero). *Pla local d'igualtat per a la diversitat afectiva, sexual i d'identitat de gènere (2018-2022)* [Plan local de igualdad]. Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Barcelona; Ayuntamiento de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. https://cido.diba.cat/normativa_local/8049047/&27df719784195cbb0c5bbae8aee22e9f794a91fde69e9c3c4eeccb_d3871e4fcc

⁵⁶ Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. (s. f.). *La Xarxa de Valors: Transmissió de valors i missatges positius* [Página web]. <https://www.gramenet.cat/ajuntament/arees-municipals/la-xarxa-de-valors/>

⁵⁷ Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. *Servei d'Atenció a la Diversitat Afectiva, Sexual i d'Identitat de Gènere (SAI LGTBI+)* [Página web]. <http://www.gramenet.cat/ajuntament/arees-municipals/lgtbi/sai/>

c) Youth engagement.

- **FAST LISA Project:**⁵⁸ Initially launched under an EU project co-funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV), to detect and prevent hate speech online, this project has built a sustainable youth group committed to challenging LGBTIQ-phobia and other forms of discrimination. Alumni of FAST LISA are now actively engaged in city strategies, some holding significant roles such as community organisation leaders or even elected representatives (including a current councillor). They have participated in working groups under the Municipal Action Plan (youth, social rights, cooperation) and contribute to initiatives such as the *Brigades Liles* and equality projects.
- **Youth participation platforms:** Santa Coloma de Gramenet has strengthened spaces such as *Joves Restauratius* (Restorative and Relational Culture), the *Buchenwald Project* (combining historical memory with reflection on hate speech, fascism, and discrimination), the *Consell de Joves de Solidaritat i Cooperació* (Human Rights focus), the *Taula Jove* (participation), and the Anti-Rumours Youth Summit.
- **STAND Project:** an incipient local youth group has already been created under the STAND project, building on existing youth activism and narrative-change initiatives. The project is specifically focused on the co-creation of inclusive narratives to counter hate speech and discriminatory discourses. Santa Coloma de Gramenet has actively involved young people in the diagnostic phase and will continue to work with this target group in the design and implementation of these narratives, ensuring that their perspectives shape both content and dissemination strategies.

d) Campaigns and cultural actions

- “L’Orgull al Comerç” Campaign: Developed in partnership with the Department of Commerce, this campaign increased LGBTIQ visibility in public and commercial spaces. It demonstrated how inclusion can be embedded into everyday urban life.
- “**Sport Against LGTB-Phobia**” Campaign:⁵⁹ This initiative targeted stereotypes in sports through school-based workshops, coach training, and club engagement. While currently inactive, it represents a replicable model for future efforts to make sports more inclusive.
- **Espai Àgora - Comic Workshop on LGBTIQ Narratives:**⁶⁰ A creative online initiative that used comic art and storytelling to foster empathy and address discrimination. Although it was a one-off experience, it provided an innovative model for engaging youth in narrative change.

⁵⁸ FAST LISA. *FAST LISA: Active participation of young people in the fight against hate speech* [Proyecto]. FAST LISA. <https://fastlisa.eu/>

⁵⁹ Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. *L'esport contra la LGTBIfòbia* [Pàgina web]. <https://www.gramenet.cat/ajuntament/arees-municipals/lgtbi/l-esport-contra-la-lgtbifobia/>

⁶⁰ Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet. (s. f.). *Narratives LGTBI – Taller de Còmic Online* [Pàgina web]. <https://www.gramenet.cat/ajuntament/arees-municipals/lgtbi/espai-agora-formacio/narratives-lgtbi-taller-de-comic-online/>

Getafe.

The city of Getafe has developed a relatively comprehensive framework to promote equality, coexistence, and anti-discrimination, including initiatives that address LGBTIQ rights both directly and indirectly. While it does not yet have a dedicated LGBTIQ municipal strategy, the city has established a variety of institutional mechanisms, public initiatives, and partnerships with civil society that provide a strong base for future development.

a) Policy frameworks and strategic programmes

- Municipal Coexistence Plan: This plan adopts a cross-cutting approach to promoting respect, inclusion, and the prevention of discrimination, including based on sexual orientation and gender identity. While LGBTIQ issues are not the plan's central focus, it supports a range of educational and awareness-raising actions, safe spaces, and campaigns promoting empathy and social cohesion.
- 2022 Coexistence Guide for Schools: Aimed at educators, this guide includes recommendations for inclusive language, strategies to prevent bullying, and resources to foster empathy and respect for diversity (including LGBTIQ) from an early age.
- Coexistence Ordinance for Youth (2020): This local regulation reinforces the municipality's legal commitment to inclusion and non-discrimination, although it does not explicitly address LGBTIQ issues.
- Anti-Rumours Strategy: Originally focused on combating origin-based discrimination, the Anti-Rumours approach has been adopted in both Santa Coloma de Gramenet and Getafe as a transversal, participatory tool. In both contexts, it has proven adaptable and carries strong potential to expand its scope to address SOGIESC-related discrimination, especially given its emphasis on narrative change, emotional intelligence, and intersectoral engagement.

b) Services and local programmes

- Coexistence and Cooperation Municipal Area: in charge of coordinating the ARS, the Coexistence Plan and other initiatives related with living together.
- Health Area, which implements a cooperation programme with Migrantia named PREVENTIA: an initiative focused on sexual health and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Diversity Unit of the Local Police. This specialised unit offers support to victims of hate crimes, including those based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It plays a key role in prevention, protection, and building trust between public services and LGBTIQ communities.
- Emotional Wellbeing Programme. A municipal initiative aimed at supporting the mental health of young people, including those facing discrimination or identity-related challenges.

- Youth Education and Sexual Diversity Workshops. Regularly held in collaboration with schools, youth centres, and associations, these workshops raise awareness about sexual diversity, promote respect, and offer safe spaces for dialogue and reflection.

c) Civil Society collaboration and community events

- LGBTIQ Council Table. A participatory space that brings together local actors, associations, and institutions to coordinate actions, propose new initiatives, and monitor local needs regarding LGBTIQ rights and inclusion.
- Diversity Fair and Pride Campaigns. Public events that raise visibility and celebrate diversity through cultural, educational, and community activities.
- Collaboration with LGBTIQ Associations. The municipality works with local associations such as Gaytafe and Migrantia to offer services ranging from mental health and sexual health support to community engagement, training, and advocacy.

In summary, while Getafe has not yet developed a formal and comprehensive LGBTIQ strategy, the city has built a solid and dynamic foundation. Its range of services, strategic documents, participatory bodies, and civil society partnerships offer multiple entry points to expand and consolidate future LGBTIQ inclusion efforts across municipal departments and policies.

Institutional support and formalisation. Across both cities, varying levels of institutionalisation and political engagement shape the ability to sustain LGBTIQ initiatives. In some cases, formal structures such as participatory bodies or departmental mandates help anchor inclusive policies, but coordination challenges persist, and many actions still rely on individual leadership. In other contexts, limited political ownership, fragmented support for civil society, and the absence of a defined strategy or long-term funding pose barriers to scaling and sustaining impact.

Regional contexts also influence these dynamics: a more favourable legal and policy framework is not in itself sufficient. In Santa Coloma, for instance, progress has depended not only on the regional climate but also on strong local leadership and political will. Conversely, in less supportive regional environments, municipal engagement becomes even more critical to sustaining inclusive measures.

Opportunities for collaborative action. Strategic planning processes, such as the development of Intercultural Plans, Diversity Units, or Equality Plans, were seen as potential anchors to embed this work in a long-term vision. Ensuring that existing frameworks integrate LGBTIQ narratives - not as isolated topics but as cross-cutting concerns - will be essential to build inclusive local ecosystems.

Participants in both cities expressed strong interest in exploring new approaches - particularly those grounded in emotional intelligence and community engagement. **The Anti-Rumours methodology was identified as a particularly promising entry point due to its emphasis on dialogue, empathy, and narrative transformation.**

As one participant stated: "If we want to change minds, we have to tell stories that people can connect with. Facts matter, but emotions move people."

To make this vision actionable, participants highlighted the need to involve a broader range of stakeholders across sectors. Key actors identified included:

- Health professionals (general medicine, psychiatry, gynaecology), who are crucial in ensuring safe, inclusive, and affirming care for LGBTIQ individuals. This includes professional bodies, such as the Official College of Psychologists, which could play a central role in the prevention of mental health issues and the promotion of supportive environments.
- All municipal departments, which should be engaged to ensure transversal commitment and implementation. This includes urban planning departments, with potential to address spatial inequalities and design safer, more inclusive public spaces.
- Sports schools and clubs, identified as safer and more proactive environments than some secondary schools, offering opportunities for awareness-raising and youth engagement.
- Centres for people with functional diversity, where inclusive practices can be developed and promoted to address intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Care homes and residences for older people, often overlooked in LGBTIQ policymaking, but critical for intergenerational inclusion and visibility.

This cross-sectoral approach is essential for building an ecosystem where inclusive narratives can flourish, not only through policy documents or campaigns, but also in the everyday experiences and interactions that shape local life.

07

Anti-Rumours
Strategies: an
opportunity for action
and cross-sectoral
collaboration

07. Anti-Rumours Strategies: an opportunity for action and cross-sectoral collaboration

The [Anti-Rumours Strategy](#) (ARS), developed in the context of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme of the Council of Europe, was originally designed to address prejudice and discrimination towards people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and ethnic minorities. Over time, however, the approach has evolved and been successfully applied in different contexts. In the educational field, for instance, the [Council of Europe's "Anti-Rumours Guide for the Educational Field" \(2018\)](#)⁶¹ has provided tools and orientations to support its potential application in schools, helping educators adapt the methodology to address stereotypes and foster more inclusive environments.

The ARS is grounded in several core principles:

- **Political and personal commitment:** Recognises that institutional backing and individual leadership are both necessary to achieve impact.
- **Multidimensional approach:** Combines communication, education, and structural change to tackle prejudice at its roots rather than focusing on isolated incidents.
- **Recognition that everyone has prejudices:** Starts from the understanding that biases are a shared human condition, which helps avoid a “good people vs. bad people” narrative and makes it easier for individuals to self-reflect and change.
- **Empathy-based communication:** Empathy-based communication: Prioritises emotional connection over confrontation, making it easier to challenge defensive attitudes.
- **Preventive focus:** Works proactively to create an environment where hate speech and stereotypes are less likely to take hold.
- **Use of existing resources and networks:** Builds on local strengths, avoiding duplication and enhancing sustainability.
- **Balance between creativity and rigour:** Encourages innovative actions while grounding them in evidence, research, and evaluation.
- **Participatory nature:** Engages a wide range of stakeholders (institutions, civil society, communities, and individuals) as co-producers of change.

⁶¹ Council of Europe. (2020). *An anti-rumours guide for the educational field* [PDF]. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/an-antirumours-guide-for-the-educational-field/16809f976c>

The ARS works through a set of key action lines:

- **Strengthening knowledge:** Supporting research, monitoring, and evaluation to track progress and adapt strategies.
- **Developing critical thinking skills:** Equipping communities and professionals with tools to recognise and deconstruct prejudice and misinformation.
- **Raising awareness:** Implementing campaigns, public events, and educational activities to promote diversity and equality.
- **Building alternative narratives:** Using storytelling, arts, and media to shift public perceptions.
- **Countering misinformation and negative narratives:** Producing and disseminating credible, engaging, and fact-based alternative narratives.
- **Fostering positive interaction:** Creating spaces and opportunities for meaningful contact and dialogue between groups.
- **Addressing structural causes of discrimination:** Identifying and removing institutional barriers that perpetuate inequality.
- **Building alliances:** Leverage of existing resources and alliances as well as engaging non-traditional actors (e.g., sports clubs, business associations, influencers).

This experience indicates that ARSs could serve as a useful framework to address anti-LGBTIQ narratives and contribute to more inclusive public discourse. Given that this project is still in a pilot phase, it may be premature to draw categorical conclusions. Nonetheless, the flexibility and cross-sectoral nature of the methodology make it promising for adaptation to SOGIESC issues, particularly when linked to educational settings and youth engagement.

Many of the challenges identified throughout this diagnosis (fragmented communication, limited training, lack of coordination, and reactive institutional responses) mirror those commonly addressed by ARS. This convergence creates a “win-win” scenario: on the one hand, the Anti-Rumours approach could gain depth and relevance by embracing LGBTIQ narratives; on the other, institutions and civil society actors working on SOGIESC issues could benefit from a structured, tested methodology to counter stigma, foster dialogue, and build empathy-based narratives.

As one municipal worker put it, “It’s not just about facts - what changes minds is seeing someone else’s story, or recognising a part of yourself in someone you thought was different.”

Current levels of integration and gaps

At present, LGBTIQ issues are not systematically included in ARS in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Getafe, or other municipalities surveyed. While some professionals report having integrated LGBTIQ content in training sessions or campaigns, such efforts are usually sporadic, fragmented, or tied to the personal initiative of specific individuals. Most Anti-Rumours strategies still focus primarily on diversity based on the country of origin or ethnicity.

Survey responses show a wide spectrum of engagement:

- A minority of respondents (around 20–25) stated they actively apply Anti-Rumours principles to LGBTIQ issues, though many admit this work is basic or unsupported.
- A similar number described occasional or partial integration, via one-off workshops, indirect inclusion through gender or equality programmes, or collaboration with external trainers.
- Others had heard of Anti-Rumours but did not apply it to LGBTIQ issues, often due to a lack of training or resources.
- A significant portion had no knowledge of the approach or had never considered its relevance to SOGIESC.

This uneven implementation reveals a clear **training–practice gap**, with many professionals aware of the Anti-Rumours methodology but lacking the tools or mandate to apply it beyond migration-related work. Moreover, LGBTIQ inclusion is not always perceived as a natural part of Anti-Rumours strategies, indicating a need to better communicate the intersectional potential of the approach.

Perceived potential and conditions for adaptation

Despite the current limitations, the potential for adaptation is widely recognised. Most respondents (especially those working in youth, education, or equality) expressed strong support for a tailored ARS focused on SOGIESC. Many highlighted the methodology's empathetic, narrative-based nature as particularly well-suited to LGBTIQ issues, which are often sensitive or polarising.

However, participants also emphasised the need for contextualisation and participation. A successful adaptation would need to:

- Involve LGBTIQ communities in the design and implementation process.
- Recognise internal diversity within the LGBTIQ population and avoid overly simplified or universalising narratives.
- Reflect the specific realities of each local context, including cultural, linguistic, and political dynamics.

While a few participants expressed uncertainty or scepticism - mainly due to unfamiliarity with the approach - such cases were marginal. The overwhelming majority viewed an adapted Anti-Rumours strategy as desirable and feasible, provided it is implemented thoughtfully.

From interest to implementation

There is a clear window of opportunity for incorporating LGBTIQ narratives into ARS at the local level. The diagnosis revealed a strong convergence between the needs identified by professionals and community members, and the tools offered by the Anti-Rumours approach. Many professionals already demonstrate motivation and partial engagement, even if current actions are informal or under-resourced.

To transform this interest into action, it will be essential to move beyond isolated efforts and towards a structured, collaborative strategy. **This involves not only training and capacity-building, but also institutional recognition, dedicated resources, and spaces for co-creation.** The existence of active networks such as the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Network,⁶² the national networks of Intercultural Cities in EU countries (e.g. the Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities – RECI,⁶³ the Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities – RPCI,⁶⁴ and the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities - Città del Dialogo⁶⁵), Anti-Rumours Strategies, and local LGBTIQ councils offers a promising foundation for coordinated work.

A municipal respondent in Getafe summed up the opportunity: “We’re already doing parts of this. We just need the space, recognition, and structure to connect it all.” This suggests that momentum already exists. The challenge is now to systematise these efforts and integrate them into coherent local policies that can sustainably shape inclusive narratives and reduce discrimination.

⁶² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/international-network>

⁶³ <https://www.ciudadesinterculturales.com/>

⁶⁴ <https://ciudadesinterculturais.pt/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.retecittadeldialogo.it/>

08

What the toolkit
should look like: early
proposals

08. What the toolkit should look like: early proposals

Throughout the diagnostic process, a wide range of stakeholders (including municipal staff, educators, civil society representatives, and community members) shared ideas, preferences, and reflections on what could be included in a toolkit aimed at building inclusive narratives and countering anti-LGBTIQ hate speech.

The contributions gathered here should be understood as a **broad menu of possible priorities, formats, and approaches** from which a final, more focused design can later be defined. Rather than a fixed blueprint, these proposals illustrate different ways in which the toolkit could add value (combining knowledge, practical guidance, and inspiration) while allowing for adaptation to diverse local contexts and institutional capacities.

Possible objectives and target audiences

- Support professionals and community actors in recognising, addressing, and preventing anti-LGBTIQ hate speech and discrimination.
- Provide adaptable tools for use in education, public services, community work, and communication.
- Promote inclusive narratives that resonate emotionally and foster empathy.
- Strengthen institutional coherence by linking narrative change to broader equality strategies.
- Main target audiences: frontline municipal staff (e.g., social services, education, policing), educators and youth workers, civil society organisations, and community leaders.

Preferred formats and methodologies. Respondents emphasised the need for engaging, adaptable, and inclusive learning approaches. A strong preference emerged for formats that combine accessibility with opportunities for interaction.

- **In-person formats.** Manuals, guidelines, or training modules included in the toolkit could be supported by face-to-face sessions such as workshops or talks. These were valued for creating safe spaces of trust and mutual learning. Once in place, such sessions could make use of group dynamics, debates, role-playing, or restorative practices to foster empathy and dialogue.
- **Hybrid approaches** Widely supported as a way to accommodate different learning styles and schedules. Many participants proposed combining in-person activities with complementary online and audiovisual materials, including:
 - *Audiovisual and microlearning resources*: Short videos, podcasts, infographics, and “learning pills” that simplify complex ideas and increase reach - particularly among younger people and time-constrained professionals.
 - *Self-paced online content*: Providing flexibility and broader access but considered most effective when embedded in broader learning processes and supported by interpersonal interaction.

Participants stressed that while workshops and similar activities are not part of the toolkit itself, they will likely be essential for ensuring that its content is understood and applied effectively.

In terms of **digital innovation**, participants proposed the development of an Anti-Rumours LGBTIQ app, which could include features such as: a FAQ section addressing common misconceptions and hate narratives; A directory of LGBTIQ friendly professionals and services; and tools for identifying and promoting safe spaces across neighbourhoods and institutions.

Thematic priorities, content suggestions and design considerations

Stakeholders suggested a range of possible themes and priorities that the toolkit could address. These include going beyond general awareness-raising to offer practical, adaptable and emotionally resonant tools for professionals across sectors. Suggestions emphasised the value of combining expert knowledge with lived experiences, while ensuring flexibility to adapt to different local contexts.

Core themes to address:

- Dismantling stereotypes and hate narratives, using storytelling, emotional connection, and Anti-Rumours methodologies.
- Inclusive and effective communication, including guidelines for inclusive language and scripts and framing techniques to counter hate speech and discriminatory discourse.
- Institutional protocols and practices, such as step-by-step procedures tailored to public services (education, healthcare, policing, social services).
- Intersectionality, with content that recognises how LGBTIQ discrimination intersects with other forms of oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, classism).
- Representation and visibility, through showcasing diverse LGBTIQ role models and real-life experiences that challenge dominant norms.

In this sense, the [ten criteria developed by the Council of Europe for constructing effective alternative narratives](#)⁶⁶ (see Annex 1 at the end of the document) offer an important reference point to guide the design of the toolkit's content and methodology.

Design and delivery considerations:

- Use accessible and inclusive language, with cultural and linguistic adaptation for each target community.
- Involve people with lived experience throughout the design and implementation process.
- Offer modular content that can be adapted to various professional profiles - frontline workers, educators, and policymakers.
- Ensure sustainability by including printable materials, local dissemination strategies, and integration into existing training frameworks.

⁶⁶ Council of Europe. (2019). *10 criteria for the creation of effective alternative narratives on diversity* (Policy Brief). Prepared by Daniel de Torres; English version edited by the Intercultural Cities programme. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/policy-brief-10-criteria-for-the-creation-of-effective-alternative-nar/1680998186>

Structural and strategic recommendations. Participants emphasised the need to embed the toolkit within broader institutional commitments:

- Clear and enforced anti-discrimination protocols.
- Systematic and well-funded implementation plans.
- Strengthened coordination between municipal departments.
- Dedicated LGBTIQ officers and transversal integration of diversity strategies.

There is strong and consistent support for a **comprehensive, flexible, and user-oriented toolkit**. Stakeholders expect more than just information: they are calling for a tool that supports action, institutional coherence, and narrative change. The integration of audiovisual resources, participatory formats, and context-aware content is key to maximising its impact.

“We don’t just want to be trained, we want to be equipped to transform.”

Annex 1

Ten criteria for building effective narratives

Annex 1: Ten criteria for building effective narratives

Context and purpose: The rise of negative narratives – rooted in prejudice, fear of “the other,” or simplistic populist messages – has significantly shaped social perceptions and narrowed the space for constructive, plural discourse. “Alternative narratives” are not mere reactions; they are proactive, future-oriented messages that build inclusive visions and connect emotionally with broad segments of society.

Below is a synthesis of the [ten criteria](#) that can help create more effective and sustainable narratives:

- 1. The Importance of Listening.** Understand the root causes of support for negative discourse by listening to both those who spread it and those who are affected by it. Narrative design should start from a genuine understanding of the other.
- 2. Start from a New Frame.** Do not simply dispute a negative narrative; build messages based on positive frames grounded in values such as equality, diversity, respect, and interaction.
- 3. Inclusive, Proactive, and Positive Approach.** Narratives should address society as a whole, avoid polarisation, and offer appealing proposals that unite rather than divide.
- 4. Honesty, Coherence, and Complementarity.** Messages must be backed by real institutional actions. Narratives lose credibility if they are not matched by concrete policies, resources, or projects.
- 5. Build Consensus and Collaborate.** Create spaces for dialogue among different stakeholders (NGOs, institutions, communities) to develop shared narratives and avoid fragmentation.
- 6. Define Goals and Audiences.** Each narrative should have clear objectives (e.g., raising awareness, mobilising allies, encouraging action) and be tailored to different audiences based on their attitudes and needs.
- 7. Appropriate Messages, Messengers, and Channels.** Messages should be engaging and persuasive, adapted to specific channels (social media, press, theatre, workshops), and delivered by credible and relatable messengers.
- 8. Beyond Data: Promote Empathy and Critical Thinking.** Facts alone are insufficient; narratives must appeal to emotions and human stories, fostering reflection, challenging prejudices, and making diversity visible.
- 9. Strategic Repetition.** Alternative narratives need sustained and consistent exposure across multiple channels and contexts. Familiarity helps normalise inclusive messages without losing nuance.
- 10. Evaluation and Impact.** Although measuring attitude change is complex, it is essential to establish monitoring mechanisms and proxy indicators to assess and improve narrative effectiveness.

Diagnosis

Combating anti-LGBTIQ hate speech
and promoting inclusive narratives

diversit.

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