



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TOOLKIT

PREVENTING AND TACKLING SOGIESC-BASED BULLYING
AND ANTI-RIGHTS DISCOURSE IN SCHOOLS

Tool 1

Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools

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1. Introduction



1.1. About this Tool

This framework (✿ **Tool 1**) is part of a set of three complementary tools developed by the Council of Europe Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit, in cooperation with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO), under the EU-Council of Europe Joint Project entitled “Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness-raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons.”

The tools were co-developed through two working group meetings bringing together policymakers, education professionals, and civil society representatives, with the aim of supporting more coherent, sustainable, and context-sensitive approaches to SOGIESC-inclusive education across the Council of Europe region.

The three tools are:



✿ **Tool 1: Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools**, which provides structural and institutional foundations for safe and inclusive school environments;

● **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education**, which builds resilience against disinformation, polarisation and hostile narratives;

📖 **Tool 3: Framework for the Development of a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators**, which supports the design and implementation of competence-based educator training on LGBTIQI-inclusive schools and curricula.

An introductory 📖 **Tool 0: Framework, Principles, and Guidance** also outlines how to understand and use the Inclusive Education Toolkit as a coherent whole.

Together, the three tools form a coherent package that links policy frameworks, narrative resilience, and educator competences into a systemic approach to advancing SOGIESC-inclusive education.

This tool ( **Tool 1**) focuses on policy and institutional measures to prevent and address SOGIESC-based bullying in schools, including in contexts where the inclusion of SOGIESC content may be contested or constrained.

1.2. Purpose of this Tool

This tool provides policy guidance on how to support the prevention of, and how to address, SOGIESC-based bullying in European schools. It is intended primarily for national, regional, and local education authorities, equality bodies, inspectorates, and policymakers, while also being relevant for school leaders, teacher training institutions, and civil society organisations.

The tool aims to:



Effective anti-bullying policies

Support the design, implementation, and monitoring of effective, context-sensitive anti-bullying policies.



Policy into practice

Bridge policy commitments with school-level practice through actionable guidance.



Stronger collaboration

Strengthen collaboration between policymakers, equality bodies, schools, civil society organisations (CSOs), families, and young people.



Pathways for action

Provide viable pathways for action even in politically hostile or legally restrictive environments.

Importantly, this tool does not assume that all education systems operate in enabling environments. It explicitly recognises political, legal, and social constraints, and is designed to support incremental, context-sensitive action where comprehensive inclusion is contested or restricted.

1.3. Who this Tool Serves

This tool is primarily intended for policymakers at national, regional, and local levels who are responsible for education, children's rights, equality, and non-discrimination. Policymakers play a central role in shaping the frameworks, resources, and protections that determine school environments, making them key actors in preventing, prohibiting, and responding to SOGIESC-based bullying.

While policymakers are the main audience, the guidance is also relevant for school leaders, teachers, civil society organisations, and other education stakeholders. This tool can support educators and practitioners in understanding policy priorities, implementing inclusive measures, and strengthening collaboration with authorities to create safer and more supportive learning environments for LGBTQI learners.



1.4. How to Read this Tool

This tool is designed to be used flexibly and does not need to be read cover to cover. Readers can focus on the sections most relevant to their role, context, or immediate needs.

Section 1: Introduction	This section introduces the tool, situates it within the broader toolkit package, and presents the context of SOGIESC-based bullying in schools across the Council of Europe region.
Section 2: Pedagogical Foundation and Guiding Principles	This section presents the key pedagogical foundations and guiding principles underpinning the toolkit.
Section 3: Key Policy Actions	This section focuses on the main policy priority areas for addressing SOGIESC-based bullying in schools. Each core section is structured consistently to support practical use: Why this matters: background information and framing to explain the importance of the issue. Recommendations for policymakers: guidance for designing and implementing effective measures. Divided into two parts: → Context-sensitive actions: options tailored to restrictive, neutral, and enabling environments, allowing readers to focus on the context most relevant to them. → Priority actions: clear steps for policymakers organised by short-, medium-, and long-term implementation. Good practice examples and illustrative practices: concrete examples of what inclusive, effective interventions to combat SOGIESC-based bullying in schools can look like in practice.
Section 4: Institutional Checklist	This section provides a practical checklist to support institutions and public authorities in assessing their readiness, capacity, and progress in preventing and addressing SOGIESC-based bullying in schools. It is designed as a self-assessment and reflection tool, helping institutions identify strengths, gaps, and priority areas for action.

This structure allows policymakers, educators, and civil society actors to navigate the toolkit efficiently, adapt recommendations to their local realities, and implement actionable solutions in line with their context and capacity.

1.5. Context for this Tool: Key Patterns and Risks

Education is a fundamental human right, and international and European law require states to guarantee this right without discrimination, including based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights,¹ the Revised European Social Charter,² the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,³ and the Yogyakarta Principles +10⁴ affirm states' obligation to ensure that children can learn in environments that protect their dignity, identity, and safety.

Despite these protections, LGBTQI children and young people across Europe continue to face widespread bullying, discrimination, and violence, and this is particularly true for trans, non-binary, and intersex students.⁵ The EU Fundamental Rights Agency's (FRA) 2024 LGBTIQ Survey III found that 47% of respondents aged 15–17 had experienced LGBTQI-related bullying in the previous year, with 42% of incidents occurring in schools.⁶ Cyberbullying increasingly amplifies harm and blurs the boundaries between online and offline spaces.

SOGIESC-based bullying has profound consequences. It undermines safety, belonging, mental health, educational engagement, and long-term well-being.⁷ FRA data shows that 30% of young people conceal their identity at school, 61% are selectively open, and 15% have considered leaving school because of harassment faced due to their LGBTQI identity.⁸ UNESCO research highlights that frequent bullying increases alienation,

1 Council of Europe (1950). *European Convention on Human Rights, articles 8 and 14.*

2 Council of Europe (1996). *Revised European Social Charter, articles 7 and 20.*

3 United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 2, 19 and 28.*

4 International Commission of Jurists et al. (2017). *Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics.*

5 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). *LGBTIQ Equality at Crossroads: Progress and Challenges.*

6 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). *LGBTIQ Survey III Data Explorer.*

7 UNESCO & IGLYO (2021). *Don't Look Away: No Place for Exclusion of LGBTI Students.*

8 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). *LGBTIQ Survey III Data Explorer.*

absenteeism, and school changes, affecting both individual learners and overall school climate.⁹

Discrimination does not affect all students in the same way and may be experienced on the basis of one or several personal characteristics or statuses, including, but not limited to, race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. These grounds of discrimination may also be compounded or intersecting, meaning that LGBTQI students who experience racism, xenophobia, socio-economic disadvantage, ableism, religious prejudice, or other forms of marginalisation may face heightened exposure to exclusion, discrimination, and violence. Among LGBTQI students, trans, non-binary, and intersex students often face particularly severe forms of exclusion and school bullying compared to their LGB peers.¹⁰

Protections against SOGIESC-based bullying remain uneven. Some states have explicit anti-bullying frameworks, but implementation is often limited by insufficient training, resources, and monitoring. Rising political polarisation, so-called anti-LGBTQI propaganda laws, and disinformation campaigns further discourage schools from addressing bullying or providing accurate, rights-based information.

In response, the International LGBTQI Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) and the Council of Europe SOGIESC Unit convened a multi-stakeholder working group to identify practical, rights-based measures to prevent and address SOGIESC-based bullying. Drawing on human rights standards, good practice, and the lived experiences of LGBTQI young people, this tool provides recommendations for policymakers and education authorities to ensure safe, inclusive, and non-discriminatory learning environments, while recognising political constraints and the need for system-wide, sustainable approaches.

1.6. Shared Baseline Knowledge: Explicitly Addressing Restrictive Environments

Education policies on equality and inclusion are implemented in a wide range of political, legal, and social contexts across the Council of Europe region. While some education systems have developed and implemented LGBTQI inclusive policies and

⁹ UNESCO (2024). [Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education](#).

¹⁰ UNESCO (2023). [Safe, Seen and Included: Inclusion and Diversity Within Sexuality Education](#).

practices, others operate in environments where such approaches are subject to legal limitations, differing interpretations of existing frameworks, or heightened public debate. These contextual factors can influence how schools, educators, and public authorities approach issues related to diversity, safety, and well-being.

This tool acknowledges these differing conditions and is designed to support context-sensitive implementation. It takes into account settings in which explicit references to LGBTQI issues in education may be constrained or approached with caution, and it outlines measures that may still contribute to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of safe and respectful learning environments. In these contexts, the tool highlights approaches that are grounded in broadly recognised principles, such as child protection, human rights, equality, and the prevention of violence and bullying.

The recommendations in this tool are intended to be adaptable and transferable across contexts. They draw on entry points that are commonly accepted within education systems, including socio-emotional learning, whole-school approaches, human rights education, and general anti-bullying strategies. The importance of coordination across sectors, alignment with existing education structures, and integration into established policies and practices is emphasised in order to support sustainable and effective implementation.

For clarity and ease of use, all policy recommendations in this tool are organised according to three broad types of environments. Readers are invited to focus on the category that best reflects their current context:

- Restrictive environments: contexts in which political, legal, or social conditions limit the scope for explicit reference to SOGIESC content in education policies or practices.
- Neutral environments: contexts in which explicit reference to SOGIESC content is legally permitted but not consistently or systematically implemented.
- Enabling environments: contexts in which LGBTQI inclusive policies and practices are broadly supported and more fully integrated.

This structure is intended to help policymakers and practitioners identify proportionate, feasible, and relevant actions, while supporting the overarching goal of ensuring safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments for all students.



LOVE IS LOVE

2. Pedagogical Foundations and Guiding Principles



2.1. Definition of School Bullying

School bullying is a harmful social phenomenon that undermines learners' safety, well-being, and educational outcomes. UNESCO defines school violence broadly, encompassing physical, psychological, and sexual violence, including bullying, occurring in and around schools, on the way to and from school, and online, and perpetrated by students or school staff across all education settings.¹¹

Bullying, as a distinct form of school violence, is characterised by repeated negative actions with hostile intent that exploit an imbalance of power. Both the Council of Europe¹² and UNESCO¹³ emphasise that bullying involves unwanted aggressive behaviour, whether physical, verbal, social, sexual, or psychological, which causes harm to the targeted individuals and the wider school community.

Cyberbullying has expanded the reach and impact of bullying through digital

¹¹ UNESCO (2019). Bringing it Out Into the Open: Monitoring School Violence Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Gender Expression in National and International Surveys.

¹² Council of Europe (online). Bullying.

¹³ UNESCO (online). Defining school bullying and its implications on education, teachers and learners.

technologies, including social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, mobile phones, and other online environments. In line with the European Commission's Action Plan against cyberbullying, cyberbullying can be understood as behaviour carried out through digital technologies with the primary intention or effect of repeatedly or continuously humiliating, socially excluding, abusing, harassing, or harming children and young people. It can include threats, harassment, impersonation, the spreading of rumours or harmful content, and the sharing of embarrassing or humiliating posts, making abuse more persistent, far-reaching, and difficult to escape. Digital environments can also intensify harm through anonymity, constant accessibility, rapid dissemination, and the possibility that harmful content remains online, is reshared, or goes viral.¹⁴

Research increasingly recognises bullying as a learned social behaviour shaped by power relations, social norms, and institutional contexts.¹⁵ Effective prevention and response therefore require comprehensive approaches that reflect both offline and online realities and address the broader social and cultural factors that enable bullying, in order to ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.

2.2. Guiding Principles

Preventing and responding to SOGIESC-based bullying requires a whole-school, rights-based, and evidence-informed approach. Schools do not operate in isolation and violence and discrimination in education are shaped by broader social, cultural, and institutional dynamics. Effective action therefore depends on coordinated, system-wide strategies that promote safety, inclusion, and well-being across the entire school community.

Whole-School Approach



A whole-school approach recognises that preventing bullying is a shared responsibility. Teachers, school leadership, administrative and support staff, learners, families, and governance bodies all play a role in creating inclusive learning environments. Evidence shows that multi-level interventions, addressing classroom practice, school culture, policies, and links with families and communities, are most effective in reducing bullying, including cyberbullying that extends beyond school grounds.

¹⁴ European Commission (2026). Action plan against cyberbullying «Safer online, stronger together».

¹⁵ UNESCO (2023). Defining school bullying and its implications on education, teachers and learners.

Intersectional and Learner-Centred



SOGIESC-based bullying often intersects with other forms of discrimination linked to one or several personal characteristics or statuses, including, but not limited to race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, alongside sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. These grounds of discrimination may be compounded or intersecting, meaning that learners who experience racism, xenophobia, socio-economic exclusion, ableism, discrimination based on migration status, religious prejudice, or other forms of marginalisation may face heightened exposure to bullying, exclusion, discrimination, and violence. Responses must therefore be learner-centred, equitable, and sensitive to these intersecting realities, prioritising safety, confidentiality, and a clear “do no harm” principle in all prevention and reporting mechanisms.¹⁶ (See also ● **Tool 2**, Section 2.1)

Collaborative and Participatory



Whole-school approaches are strengthened through collaboration with families, youth organisations, civil society, and relevant public authorities.

Meaningful participation of learners, particularly LGBTQI learners, is essential and must be supported in ways that respect their agency while ensuring protection and well-being.

Trauma-Informed Approach



Bullying can have lasting psychological impacts on both learners and educators.

Trauma-informed approaches help prevent re-traumatisation and ensure appropriate support for those affected, including staff who may experience vicarious trauma. This requires adequate training, time, and institutional support.¹⁷

¹⁶ UNESCO (2024). *Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Restorative and Preventive



Rather than relying solely on punitive measures, whole-school strategies should prioritise restorative justice approaches that address harm, promote accountability, and rebuild relationships.

When embedded at school level and supported by leadership and training, restorative justice practices contribute to improved school climate and learner well-being.

Context-Sensitive and System-Wide



Whole-school approaches must be adapted to local contexts, reflecting differences in capacity, resources, and social environments, while remaining aligned with core principles of equality and inclusion. Prevention should span formal and non-formal education, be integrated into curricula and teacher training, and be embedded in education policy, governance, and monitoring frameworks to ensure sustainability and accountability.

3. Key Policy Actions



3.1. Establish Clear, Inclusive Anti-Bullying Policies and Legislation

3.1.1. Why Strong Policy and Legal Frameworks Matter

The education experience of every learner is shaped by the legal and policy environment that protects or restricts their rights. Clear and inclusive anti-bullying frameworks are a foundational condition for non-discriminatory safe schools, ensuring that all learners can access education free from violence, discrimination, and fear, including on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

Effective policy and legal frameworks establish that all forms of violence and discrimination in schools are unacceptable, set minimum standards of behaviour, and clarify responsibilities across education systems. They enable sustainable approaches to prevention, response, and monitoring, including in relation to online and technology-facilitated bullying (see Section 3.2 on cyberbullying).

This tool explicitly recognises that education systems operate in very different political and legal contexts. In restrictive environments, explicit references to SOGIESC may be contested or restricted, and responsibility for protection is often shifted onto individual schools, educators, or civil society organisations. In such contexts, policy clarity, framed through child protection, well-being, or general equality obligations, is critical to reduce arbitrariness, support educators, and minimise harm.

3.1.2. Key Functions of Policy and Legislation



Ensuring accountability

Clarify rights, duties and responsibilities. Require prevention, response, protection and redress, with oversight when obligations are not met.



Catalysing systemic change

Turn equality, dignity and inclusion into everyday practice through school policies, educator training and preventive, whole-school approaches.



Providing protection and legal recourse

Support safe reporting, protect learners and staff from retaliation, and ensure access to remedies and independent oversight.

3.1.3. Policy Landscapes and Implementation Challenges

Across the Council of Europe region, approaches to preventing and addressing SOGIESC-based bullying in schools remain uneven. While some education systems have adopted explicit SOGIESC-inclusive protections, many rely on general anti-bullying or equality provisions.¹⁸

In contrast, seven countries have introduced so-called anti-LGBTQI propaganda laws that prohibit the mention of LGBTQI identities in educational settings. These laws contribute to stigma, silence victims of violence, and prevent schools from acknowledging or addressing SOGIESC-based bullying.¹⁹ They also prevent teachers and civil society organisations from providing essential support, training, or resources to learners. In some countries, restrictive legislative measures have further eroded inclusive practices, reversing progress in teacher training, name and gender recognition for students, and anti-bullying protections.

This fragmented landscape underscores the need for comprehensive, rights-based, and enforceable legal and policy frameworks that guarantee safety and inclusion for all learners.

¹⁸ IGLYO (2025). *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report, Third Edition*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.



3.1.4. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Anchor anti-bullying measures in child protection, non-discrimination, and well-being obligations.
- Use general definitions of bullying while ensuring protection for LGBTQI learners in practice.
- Rely on equality bodies and independent mechanisms for interpretation, guidance, and complaints.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Integrate SOGIESC within broader equality and anti-violence frameworks.
- Clarify responsibilities for school inspectorates and support services. Require every school to implement institutional anti-bullying policies aligned with national frameworks to ensure consistency and accountability.²⁰
- Embed intersectionality in all anti-bullying definitions, policies, and approaches, recognising that SOGIESC-based bullying may intersect with discrimination linked to other personal characteristics or statuses, including race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, socio-economic status, migration status, and other forms of marginalisation.²¹

10 UNESCO (2016). Out in the Open: Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression: Summary Report.

21 Council of Europe (2025). Third report on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to Council of Europe member States on measures to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Adopt explicit SOGIESC-inclusive protections, enforcement mechanisms, and monitoring requirements.
- Adopt national- or regional-level anti-bullying strategies, setting minimum standards for all schools.²² These anti-bullying strategies explicitly prohibit bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived SOGIESC. These policies should be developed and implemented in close cooperation with teachers, students, school administrations, and parents.



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue guidance clarifying schools' obligations to prevent and address bullying within existing frameworks.
- Support equality bodies and inspectorates with education-specific guidance on SOGIESC-related bullying.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Mandate school-level anti-bullying policies aligned with national or regional frameworks.
- Require clear reporting, investigation, and follow-up procedures

LONG-TERM

- Align education, equality, child protection, and anti-violence systems.
- Establish sustainable data collection and monitoring mechanisms, disaggregated by SOGIESC and other relevant factors (see Section 3.7 on data collection and monitoring.)

²² UNESCO (2016). Out in the Open: Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression: Summary Report.

3.1.5. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate different ways in which legal and policy commitments can be translated into institutional arrangements and school-level practice. They are not presented as models to be transferred unchanged or as a comparative assessment of the education systems concerned. Their inclusion does not imply that the wider national framework is comprehensive or without limitations. Rather, the examples demonstrate particular implementation choices that may inform policy development in other contexts.

EXAMPLE 1

LINKING EQUALITY LEGISLATION, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND SCHOOL-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

One implementation model²³ combines explicit statutory protection from discrimination with a multi-year equality strategy and dedicated guidance for educational settings. The anti-discrimination framework applies across different aspects of education, including access to education, curricula, assessment, and learner support. Professional standards for educators complement these legal obligations by requiring teachers to promote equality, respect diversity and challenge discrimination and stereotyping.

The broader equality strategy is translated into school practice through several mutually reinforcing measures. These include a national anti-bullying framework that recognises SOGIESC-based harassment; dedicated guidance on supporting trans, gender-diverse and intersex learners; age-appropriate curriculum resources; and targeted professional development for educators. The approach also involves school leadership, staff, learners, families, communities, and civil society organisations in building inclusive school environments.²⁴

Implementation is supported by a dedicated institutional structure responsible

²³ Government of Malta (2023). LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027.

²⁴ Government of Malta (2015). Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act; Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta (2015). Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy.

for coordinating action across government departments and public bodies. A time-bound implementation framework, covering education alongside other policy areas, provides a basis for monitoring progress and clarifying institutional responsibilities.

Points for consideration

The value of this example lies in the alignment between different levels of intervention: legal protection establishes the underlying rights and duties; the equality strategy sets common objectives; school-specific policies explain how these objectives apply in education; and training, coordination and monitoring support implementation. Adopting only one of these elements may have limited impact if schools do not receive the guidance, resources and institutional support needed to apply it.



EXAMPLE 2

**TRANSLATING A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
INTO SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCEDURES**

Another approach to implementation consists of using a national action plan to establish a common framework for preventing and addressing bullying, including cyberbullying and bullying linked to actual or perceived SOGIESC. The action plan is developed through broad public consultation, including structured participation by children and young people, and combines prevention, accountability and learner participation within a whole-education approach.²⁵

The framework is organised around four interconnected areas:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| ➤ school culture and environment; | ➤ curriculum, teaching and learning; | ➤ policy and planning; and | ➤ relationships and partnerships involving learners, families, school staff, and the wider community. |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|

The action plan is accompanied by procedures that schools are required to implement. These explain how bullying should be identified, reported, assessed and addressed; when an incident may also constitute a child-protection concern; and how oversight, follow-up and communication should take place. The procedures explicitly address cyberbullying and identity-based bullying, including bullying related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Child-friendly materials make the framework more accessible to learners and support a shared understanding of bullying across the school community.²⁶

Implementation is further supported through indicators for monitoring progress and through a research-informed anti-bullying and online-safety programme for primary and secondary schools. The programme provides materials for learners, educators and families, and seeks to strengthen awareness, digital literacy, safe responses, and collaboration across the school community.²⁷

25 Government of Ireland (2022). Cineálta: Action Plan on Bullying.

26 Department of Education, Ireland (2024). Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

27 Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre (online). FUSE Anti-Bullying Safety Programme.

Points for consideration

A national action plan is most effective when it is connected to mandatory or clearly defined school procedures, practical implementation resources, professional learning, and monitoring. Consultation with children and young people can improve the relevance and accessibility of the framework, but participation should be voluntary, safe, and inclusive. The resulting procedures should also be reviewed regularly to address emerging forms of bullying and technology-facilitated harm.



EXAMPLE 3**ESTABLISHING A STATUTORY DUTY TO INVESTIGATE AND RESPOND**

Another example consists of placing a direct statutory duty on education providers to investigate and respond when school staff become aware that a learner considers that they have experienced harassment, bullying, or other degrading treatment. The duty to investigate does not depend on the affected learner first proving that the reported conduct occurred. Once the school becomes aware of a concern, it must examine the circumstances and take reasonable measures to prevent the conduct from continuing.²⁸

The responsibility may also extend to online or off-site conduct where there is a sufficient connection to school life. This recognises that cyberbullying and peer harassment can affect learners' safety, participation and relationships in school even when the conduct takes place outside school premises or school hours.

The framework is reinforced by an independent mechanism specialising in the rights of children and learners in education. This mechanism can receive complaints, examine whether education providers have fulfilled their duties, and pursue remedies on behalf of affected learners. Schools remain responsible for responding to the conduct concerned, and failure to meet their statutory obligations may result in compensation or other legal consequences.²⁹

Points for consideration

This example illustrates the difference between simply prohibiting bullying and establishing a positive duty to act. Clear thresholds for investigation can help avoid situations in which learners are expected to collect evidence or establish the legal nature of the incident before receiving support. Independent oversight can strengthen accountability, but it does not replace the school's responsibility to respond promptly, protect confidentiality, and prevent retaliation.

28 Sweden, Education Act (2010:800), Chapter 6.

29 Swedish Schools Inspectorate, Child and School Student Representative (Barnoch elevombudet – BEO).

EXAMPLE 4**CONNECTING EDUCATIONAL DUTIES
WITH LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

A different model strengthens accountability for school bullying by combining provisions in education and criminal law. It recognises that harmful conduct may occur not only during lessons or on school premises, but also in connection with school or university life and, in some cases, involve education staff. This broader scope helps address gaps that can arise when bullying takes place at the margins of formal educational activity.³⁰

Alongside legal accountability, educational institutions are required to introduce preventive and responsive measures. These include arrangements for detecting and addressing bullying; guidance and information for school communities; referral of affected learners, those responsible for the behaviour, and witnesses to appropriate support services; and regular awareness-raising activities involving learners and families. Serious cases may give rise to criminal sanctions, particularly where bullying results in severe harm.

Points for consideration

Criminal and educational law can operate together to communicate the seriousness of sustained bullying and clarify institutional responsibilities. However, criminal sanctions should complement rather than replace prevention, safeguarding, learner support, and proportionate educational responses. Particular care is required when the person responsible for the behaviour is also a child, so that responses remain consistent with children's rights and the best interests of all learners concerned.

³⁰ Gouvernement de France (2022). Loi n° 2022-299 du 2 mars 2022 visant à combattre le harcèlement scolaire.

EXAMPLE 5**SUPPORTING POLICY THROUGH AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED WHOLE-SCHOOL PROGRAMME**

Legal and policy frameworks can also be supported by structured, evidence-informed programmes that translate broad obligations into repeatable school practices. One such programme was developed by a university with public funding and has subsequently been adapted for use in different education systems.³¹

The programme is organised around three connected components:

prevention, through curriculum-based lessons, classroom activities, and materials intended to influence peer norms and strengthen empathy and safe bystander responses;

intervention, through defined procedures and school-based teams responsible for responding to identified cases; and

monitoring, through regular learner surveys and feedback that allow schools to assess patterns of bullying and changes over time.

Schools receive structured lesson plans, presentation materials, guidance for staff, and resources for families. The programme combines universal activities for the whole school population with targeted responses when bullying is identified. Evaluations have found reductions in reported bullying and victimisation and improvements in relevant peer attitudes and behaviours, although outcomes vary according to age group, context and implementation quality.³²

Points for consideration

As a general anti-bullying programme, this model demonstrates how policy duties can be translated into practical routines, materials, and monitoring systems. However, general programmes should be reviewed and adapted to ensure that they recognise SOGIESC-based bullying explicitly, address its specific forms and impacts, and provide appropriate safeguards for LGBTQI learners and learners from LGBTQI families.

³¹ University of Turku, KiVa Anti-Bullying Programme.

³² Kärnä, A. et al. (2011), "A large-scale evaluation of the KiVa antibullying program: Grades 4–6", *Child Development*, 82(1), pp. 311–330.

Kärnä, A. et al. (2013), "Effectiveness of the KiVa antibullying program: Grades 1–3 and 7–9", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2), pp. 535–551.

Evidence that a programme reduces bullying overall should not automatically be treated as evidence that it adequately addresses SOGIESC-based bullying.

Taken together, these examples show that implementation can take several complementary forms: explicit rights and duties in legislation; strategic planning across government; mandatory or clearly defined school procedures; independent oversight and access to remedies; curriculum and professional learning measures; and evidence-informed programmes that support daily school practice. The most coherent approaches connect these elements rather than relying on any single policy, law or intervention.



3.2. Preventing and Addressing SOGIESC-based Cyberbullying

3.2.1. Why SOGIESC-based Cyberbullying Requires Specific Attention

Online spaces play a central role in young people's social lives and identity development. For many LGBTQI young people, digital environments provide access to information, peer-support, and affirmation that may not be available offline. At the same time, this visibility exposes them to disproportionately high levels of identity-based online harassment and abuse.

SOGIESC-based cyberbullying is particularly harmful because it can occur continuously, spread rapidly, and remain accessible over time. Its impacts rarely remain confined to digital spaces. Online abuse frequently spills over into school environments, affecting students' well-being, safety and participation in education. Despite this, many schools lack clear policies, staff training and institutional guidance to prevent and respond effectively. In restrictive or contested contexts, schools may also face uncertainty about how explicitly they can address SOGIESC-related abuse, making clear institutional responsibilities, digital literacy, safe reporting pathways, and cooperation with relevant external actors especially important.

3.2.2. Definition of Cyberbullying

In line with the European Commission's *Action Plan Against Cyberbullying*, cyberbullying can be understood as harmful behaviour carried out through digital technologies and online environments, including social media, messaging services, gaming platforms, and mobile phones, which affects children's and young people's safety, dignity, rights, and mental health. It may include harassment, threats, humiliation, exclusion, impersonation, outing, non-consensual sharing or manipulation of personal content, or other forms of repeated or targeted online harm.

Cyberbullying differs from face-to-face bullying in key ways: it can take place at any time, reach learners beyond the school environment, enable anonymity, spread rapidly across platforms, and leave a lasting digital footprint. These features can intensify harm, make incidents harder to detect and address, and create additional challenges for schools, families, and support services. Responses should therefore combine prevention, safe reporting, evidence preservation, referral to appropriate support, and coordinated action between schools, public authorities, online services, and child-support structures, as emphasised in the European Commission's Action Plan Against Cyberbullying.

3.2.3. Cyberbullying Targeting LGBTQI Young People

Available evidence shows that LGBTQI learners experience school violence and bullying at significantly higher rates than their non-LGBTQI peers. A UNESCO evidence review found that the proportion of LGBT students experiencing school violence and bullying ranged from 16% to 85%, and that prevalence was between three and five times higher among LGBT students than among their non-LGBT peers.³³ While directly comparable cross-national data on SOGIESC-based cyberbullying remain more limited, online harassment should be understood as part of this broader continuum of school-related violence and bullying, which increasingly moves between digital and physical school environments. UNESCO's European evidence also shows that 54% of LGBTI youth surveyed had experienced bullying in school and 83% had witnessed negative remarks related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or variations of sex characteristics.³⁴ FRA data further show that LGBTQI people under 25 report cyberbullying almost twice as often as older age groups. Risks are particularly acute for trans and intersex youth, LGBTQI young people with disabilities, and those from racialised or migrant backgrounds.³⁵

Cyberbullying targeting LGBTQI learners frequently originates from school peers, blurring boundaries between online and offline harm. Fear of being outed, retaliation, or lack of family support often leads to underreporting, especially where disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity feels unsafe. As a result, incidents may go undetected while their effects on mental health, school attendance and learning outcomes intensify.

3.2.4. Challenges for Schools and Educators

Schools often struggle to respond to cyberbullying because abuse may occur outside school hours or off school premises. However, where online behaviour affects learners' well-being or school participation, schools retain a duty of care.

Many educators report limited confidence in recognising identity-based cyberbullying, understanding digital platforms, or responding in ways that protect confidentiality and avoid outing learners. Without adequate institutional backing, responsibility may fall on individual teachers, counsellors, or learners themselves. Meaningful learner

33 UNESCO (2017). [School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report](#).

34 UNESCO & IGLYO (2021). [Don't Look Away: No Place for Exclusion of LGBTI Students](#).

35 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). [LGBTI Survey III](#).

participation in prevention is valuable, but this must be supported by trained staff and clear procedures.

3.2.5. Impact of SOGIESC-based Cyberbullying

SOGIESC-based cyberbullying can have severe and long-lasting consequences for learners' mental health, well-being, safety, and participation in education. The characteristics of digital environments can intensify this harm: abusive content may reach a large audience, remain accessible indefinitely, and be repeatedly shared without any further action by the original perpetrator. As a result, even a single post, image, or message may produce continuing exposure, re-victimisation, and fear that the content could resurface at any time.³⁶

For LGBTQI learners, the harm may be compounded because the abuse targets an actual or perceived aspect of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. It may involve hostile comments, rumours, threats, social exclusion, humiliation, or the disclosure of personal information. Such experiences can undermine learners' self-esteem, sense of belonging, and ability to express themselves safely. Learners who are not open about their SOGIESC may also fear being outed to peers, school staff, or family members, creating additional barriers to reporting the abuse or seeking support.³⁷ UNESCO recognises that violence linked to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is a specific form of school-related gender-based violence requiring targeted action.

Cyberbullying is associated with increased risks of anxiety, depression, loneliness, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts or behaviour. It can also contribute to shame, withdrawal, harmful coping behaviours, and reduced trust in peers and adults. These effects may weaken learners' engagement with school, increase absenteeism, negatively affect academic performance, and have longer-term consequences for their educational and professional trajectories.³⁸ UNESCO similarly notes that bullying adversely affects learners' mental health, sense of belonging, continued participation in education, and academic achievement.³⁹

36 European Commission (2026). Action Plan against Cyberbullying: "Safer Online, Stronger Together", COM(2026).

37 UNESCO (2020). "What You Need to Know about School Violence and Bullying", updated 20 April 2023.

38 European Commission (2026). Action Plan against Cyberbullying: "Safer Online, Stronger Together", COM(2026).

39 UNESCO (2019). Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying.

Online and offline harm should not be treated as separate phenomena. Digital content can move rapidly between online platforms and school spaces, while conflicts or harassment originating at school may continue through messaging services, social media, gaming platforms, and other digital environments. The European Commission describes this as a continuum of aggression between physical and online spaces. SOGIESC-based cyberbullying may also overlap with hate speech, discriminatory harassment, threats, or other forms of hate-motivated abuse.⁴⁰

When hostile SOGIESC-based content circulates without an effective response, it can contribute to the normalisation and trivialisation of prejudice, reinforce discriminatory peer norms, and create a school climate in which LGBTQI learners feel unsafe or unsupported. The Council of Europe has highlighted that hate speech can marginalise targeted individuals and groups, restrict their participation, legitimise prejudice, and, in its most serious forms, contribute to hate-motivated violence. It has also observed that hateful narratives circulating online can spread into schools and affect the well-being of children and young people.⁴¹

The impact of SOGIESC-based cyberbullying therefore extends beyond the individual incident or platform. It can affect learners' dignity, privacy, mental health, educational participation, peer relationships, and trust in the school's ability to protect them. Responses should consequently address both the immediate harm experienced by the learner and the wider school environment in which identity-based abuse may be reproduced, tolerated, or minimised.

⁴⁰ European Commission (2026). Action Plan against Cyberbullying: "Safer Online, Stronger Together", COM(2026).

⁴¹ Council of Europe (2022). Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Combating Hate Speech and Explanatory Memorandum.

3.2.6. Existing Policy Frameworks and Responsibilities

International and European frameworks highlight the shared responsibility of schools, public authorities, and online platforms in preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

- The Council of Europe Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment calls on member states to ensure that children's rights are fully upheld online, including protection from violence, harassment, and discrimination.
- The Council of Europe Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2026\)2](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls highlights the responsibilities of states, digital service providers and other stakeholders to prevent, address, and provide remedies for online forms of violence, recognising the disproportionate impact such harms can have on women, girls, and other groups facing discrimination, including LGBTIQI people.
- The [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [European Child Guarantee](#) call for closing gaps between legal standards and real-world protection.
- The [EU Digital Services Act](#) strengthens platform obligations regarding content moderation, child protection, and risk mitigation
- UNESCO and UNICEF emphasise digital literacy, whole-school prevention, and safe reporting mechanisms.⁴²

Public authorities play a key role in ensuring schools are supported with guidance, training, and referral pathways, while platforms are expected to act on harmful content and cooperate with national mechanisms.

42 OECD (2020). [Protecting Children Online: An Overview of Recent Developments in Legal Frameworks and Policies](#)

UNESCO (2021). [Tackling Cyberbullying and Other Forms of Online Violence Involving Children and Young People](#)

UNICEF (online). [Cyberbullying: What it is and How to Stop it.](#)

3.2.7. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Strengthen schools' capacity to prevent and respond to cyberbullying within existing child protection, learner safety, and digital well-being frameworks, without requiring explicit reference to identity categories.
- Prioritise educator training on recognising identity-based online harassment, safeguarding confidentiality, and preventing involuntary outing when handling cyberbullying cases.
- Provide schools with neutral, behaviour-focused procedures for reporting, documenting, and responding to online abuse, including evidence handling and referral pathways to appropriate support services.
- Ensure access to independent guidance, oversight, and complaints mechanisms where school-level responses are limited or constrained.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Integrate SOGIESC considerations within broader digital safety, equality, and anti-violence strategies, aligning education policy with relevant EU frameworks addressing online harm and hate speech.
- Clarify schools' responsibilities to respond to cyberbullying involving peers or school-related networks, including incidents occurring off-campus or outside school hours.
- Embed cyberbullying prevention, digital safety, and inclusive response practices within initial teacher education and continuous professional development.
- Require all schools to adopt clear cyberbullying policies aligned with national or regional frameworks, including defined roles and responsibilities, confidential reporting mechanisms, and follow-up procedures.

- Promote structured collaboration between schools, families, youth services, mental-health providers, and specialist organisations to support learners affected by cyberbullying.
- Integrate age-appropriate digital citizenship and media literacy education into curricula, addressing online harm, misinformation, disinformation, bystander intervention, and accountability.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Adopt explicitly inclusive measures addressing SOGIESC-based cyberbullying, supported by enforcement, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure educator training addresses indicators of cyberbullying, including identity-based harassment, the specific impacts on LGBTQI learners, appropriate responses and referral pathways, confidentiality and non-outing safeguards, and allyship and bystander engagement.
- Support student-led initiatives and peer-support models that promote respectful digital behaviour and reduce stigma.
- Guarantee access to identity-affirming support services, including counselling, safe spaces, and anonymous digital reporting tools and helplines.



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue guidance clarifying schools' responsibilities to address cyberbullying linked to school communities, including online incidents.
- Provide educators with practical tools, model procedures, and targeted training on digital environments.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Mandate school-level cyberbullying policies with confidential reporting and non-outing safeguards, aligned with national or regional frameworks.
- Fund prevention programmes and partnerships with specialised, LGBTQI-competent support services.

LONG-TERM

- Align education, child protection, equality, and digital governance frameworks to ensure coherent and sustainable responses to cyberbullying.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation systems that adapt to emerging digital risks and incorporate feedback from learners, educators, and families.

3.2.8. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate how cyberbullying prevention and response can be translated into coordinated school practices, support mechanisms, and accountability arrangements. They highlight particular implementation choices that may inform policy development in other contexts. Relevance should be considered in light of the applicable legal framework, the distribution of responsibilities within the education system, available resources, learners' ages, and the specific risks associated with SOGIESC-based cyberbullying.

EXAMPLE 1

EMBEDDING CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION IN WHOLE-SCHOOL PRACTICE

Cyberbullying policies can be supported by structured, evidence-informed programmes that translate broad online safety obligations into repeatable school practices. One such programme combines psychological, social, educational, and technical components, and can be adapted for implementation across the curriculum, school procedures, learner participation, and family engagement.⁴³

The programme brings together several mutually reinforcing elements:

- **Media education and digital literacy:** curriculum-based and extracurricular activities help learners use digital technologies safely, responsibly, and critically. Content addresses privacy settings, manipulative or harmful content, risks associated with inattentive internet use, and appropriate responses to online harassment.
- **Safe bystander intervention:** learners are supported to respond constructively when they witness cyberbullying. This includes not sharing or amplifying abusive content, offering appropriate support to the learner targeted, preserving relevant evidence, and using safe reporting channels. Strengthening bystander competence can reduce the circulation and impact of harmful material and support earlier intervention.

⁴³ European Commission (online). Better Internet for Kids, "Cyberbullying Prevention Programme IMPACT".

- **Clear school procedures:** school protocols set out the steps staff should follow when cyberbullying is reported or identified. These may include establishing the circumstances, securing relevant evidence, documenting the incident, informing the appropriate persons, assessing safeguarding risks, and applying educational, restorative, or disciplinary measures as appropriate.
- **Learner-facing education:** lessons and interactive workshops help learners recognise different forms of cyberbullying, understand their emotional and educational impact, identify possible consequences, seek support, and respond safely when they witness online harm.
- **Information and support for families:** plain-language materials provide parents and caregivers with information on cyberbullying, harmful online contact and content, reporting options, evidence preservation, and ways to support a child who discloses abuse.

These elements can be adapted to address SOGIESC-based cyberbullying more explicitly. Media and information literacy activities can help learners recognise identity-based abuse, stereotypes, dehumanising narratives, and attempts to shame or expose LGBTQI people. School procedures can address risks that are particularly relevant to LGBTQI learners, including outing, deadnaming, misgendering, image-based abuse, threats to disclose personal information, and coordinated harassment. Bystander education can also help peers understand that forwarding, reacting to, or commenting on harmful material may contribute to its amplification, even where they did not create the original content.

Points for consideration

A general cyberbullying programme should not automatically be assumed to address SOGIESC-based harm adequately. Before adopting or adapting a programme, education authorities and schools should review whether its terminology, scenarios, reporting pathways, staff training, and support arrangements recognise identity-based bullying and protect learners' privacy. Implementation should also ensure that responsibility does not fall on LGBTQI learners to explain the harm, educate their peers, or disclose personal information in order for the school to act.

EXAMPLE 2**COORDINATING PREVENTION, SCHOOL PROCEDURES, REPORTING, AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

A further implementation model uses a coordinated national programme to establish consistent expectations for preventing, identifying, reporting, and addressing bullying, including cyberbullying. The approach combines school-level planning, professional learning, curriculum-based prevention, awareness-raising, reporting mechanisms, specialist support, and collaboration across education and child-protection systems.⁴⁴

One such programme, introduced nationally in 2021, requires schools to address bullying and cyberbullying through a structured framework covering prevention, intervention, and follow-up.⁴⁵ Its implementation includes annual awareness-raising activities for learners across different school years; training for teachers, school leaders, non-teaching staff, and families; school-level anti-bullying plans; clear procedures for reporting and investigating incidents; and specialised teams responsible for supporting the response to reported cases.

The framework seeks to make institutional responses more predictable and traceable. Schools are expected to have procedures that clarify who receives reports, how concerns are assessed, how affected learners are supported, how relevant evidence is handled, and how follow-up takes place. Anonymous or confidential reporting options can reduce barriers for learners who fear retaliation, exposure, or being outed.

Implementation is reinforced through cooperation between schools, families, public authorities, civil society organisations, and digital platforms. National online safety campaigns, learner-facing activities, and public awareness initiatives complement school procedures by promoting digital citizenship and encouraging earlier reporting. A free, confidential reporting and support service, accessible through both telephone and digital channels, provides an additional route for

⁴⁴ COFACE Families Europe (2022). *WP2 SafeOnline Support Package and Guide*.

⁴⁵ Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, France (2025). *pHARe: Un dispositif de lutte contre le harcèlement à l'école*.

children, young people, families, and education professionals seeking information or assistance.

The approach is also supported by legislation establishing stronger accountability for school and university bullying, including cyberbullying.⁴⁶ By recognising that serious online harassment may have consequences beyond the school's internal disciplinary framework, the legislation reinforces the responsibility of educational institutions to prevent harm, respond promptly, and connect affected learners to appropriate support.

For SOGIESC-based cyberbullying, such a coordinated model can help ensure that schools do not treat identity-based online abuse as an isolated interpersonal dispute. National guidance can clarify that cyberbullying may overlap with discriminatory harassment, hate speech, threats, sexual harassment, image-based abuse, or other forms of technology-facilitated violence. It can also establish common expectations regarding confidentiality, evidence preservation, referral, communication with families, cooperation with platforms, and escalation to child-protection or other competent authorities where necessary.

Points for consideration

National coordination can improve consistency, but the existence of a programme or legal framework does not in itself ensure safe implementation. School staff need practical training, adequate time, specialist support, and clear referral pathways. Reporting services and response teams should be equipped to understand SOGIESC-based harm, including the risks of outing, family rejection, retaliation, and further online exposure. Legal accountability should complement, rather than replace, prevention, safeguarding, learner support, proportionate educational responses, and efforts to improve school climate. Where the person responsible for the behaviour is also a child, responses should remain consistent with children's rights and the best interests of all learners concerned.

⁴⁶ Gouvernement de France (2022). Loi n° 2022-299 du 2 mars 2022 visant à combattre le harcèlement scolaire.

Taken together, these examples show that effective responses to cyberbullying combine prevention, digital and media literacy, clear school procedures, safe reporting, learner and family support, trained staff, public awareness, and institutional accountability. Their effectiveness depends not only on the availability of individual activities or services, but on whether those elements are coordinated, adequately resourced, and adapted to recognise the specific forms and consequences of SOGIESC-based cyberbullying.

Cross References: *For guidance on designing educator training that supports the delivery of LGBTQI inclusive curricula, including learning outcomes, pedagogical methods, and implementation planning, see 📖 **Tool 3: Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators.***



3.3. Implement LGBTQI Inclusive Curricula to Combat SOGIESC-based Bullying

3.3.1. Why Inclusive Curricula Matter

Schools play a central role in shaping young people's values, social norms, and understanding of diversity. Where LGBTQI people and experiences are invisible or misrepresented in curricula, stigma and misinformation are reinforced, contributing to school climates in which SOGIESC-based bullying and discrimination persist.

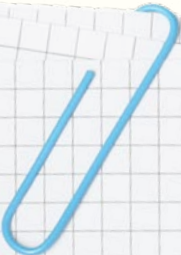
Inclusive curricula are a core component of non-discriminatory safe schools. They ensure that all learners can participate meaningfully in shared learning experiences, see themselves reflected in what they study, and develop the knowledge, empathy, and socio-emotional skills needed to prevent bullying, and hate-motivated behaviour. Inclusive curricula benefit all students by challenging rigid gender norms, promoting equality, and strengthening respectful communication.⁴⁷

Despite growing policy commitments, implementation across the Council of Europe region remains uneven. While many systems allow voluntary or partial inclusion of LGBTQI topics, comprehensive and compulsory integration remains limited.⁴⁸ According to the FRA LGBTIQ Survey III, 41% of young respondents aged 15–24 reported never receiving any information about LGBTQI issues at school, and only a small minority described the information received as consistently positive.⁴⁹ This gap between policy intent and classroom reality underscores the need for stronger curricular integration.

47 UNESCO (2021). Don't Look Away: No Place for Exclusion of LGBTI Students.

48 IGLYO (2025). LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report. Third Edition.

49 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). LGBTIQ Survey III.



✿ 3.3.2. What LGBTQI Inclusive Curricula Looks Like

LGBTQI inclusive curricula go beyond isolated lessons or optional modules. They reflect social diversity across subjects, age groups and learning environments, and contribute directly to bullying prevention.

Key principles include:

- **Cross-curricular integration:** inclusion across subjects rather than confinement to optional or extracurricular activities.
- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE):** age-appropriate content addressing sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics, alongside consent, relationships, and respect.
- **Norm-critical pedagogy:** challenging stereotypes, examining power dynamics, and promoting empathy.
- **Positive representation:** reviewing textbooks and materials to remove bias and include diverse families, identities, and experiences.
- **Whole-school alignment:** linking curricula with school policies, staff training, and student participation.



3.3.3. Challenges and Considerations

Curriculum reform can be politically sensitive. Resistance may come from parental opposition, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, educator uncertainty, or restrictive legal frameworks. In some contexts, parental opt-out provisions or non-mandatory status undermine equitable access to inclusive education.

In more restrictive environments, so-called anti-LGBTQI propaganda measures may prohibit or deter explicit discussion of SOGIESC issues. These constraints not only limit curricular content but also weaken schools' ability to respond to identity-based bullying, including cyberbullying, creating climates of fear and silence. This section therefore emphasises context-specific entry points that prioritise student safety and harm reduction.



3.3.4. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Advance protection from bullying by embedding inclusion, respect, and non-discrimination within existing child protection, human rights, and learner well-being obligations, without requiring explicit reference to LGBTQI identities where this is constrained.
- Integrate indirect prevention approaches into curricula, using scenarios, case studies, and discussions focused on empathy, respect, and safety to address identity-based bullying in legally compliant ways.
- Strengthen whole-school anti-bullying and safety frameworks to cover all forms of bias-based bullying, including online harassment, using neutral and inclusive definitions.
- Provide educators with clear guidance, reporting procedures, and referral pathways to respond to bullying and cyberbullying while safeguarding confidentiality and avoiding legal or professional risk.
- Expand access to counselling, mental-health support, and confidential helplines for learners experiencing bullying, even where classroom discussion is restricted.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Integrate SOGIESC-related content within broader anti-bullying, equality, digital safety, citizenship, and social-emotional learning frameworks to ensure consistent coverage across schools.
- Clarify curricular expectations and minimum standards to address SOGIESC-based bullying, reducing reliance on optional subjects or local discretion.
- Support educators through initial teacher education and continuous professional development focused on recognising and preventing bullying, fostering inclusive classroom climates, and responding effectively to incidents.
- Develop and disseminate adaptable teaching resources, including lesson plans, discussion prompts, and case studies, to support confident and consistent curriculum delivery.
- Monitor opt-out practices and implementation gaps to mitigate unequal access to bullying prevention and well-being education.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Make the inclusion of SOGIESC topics mandatory in national curricula at all levels of education, with explicit learning objectives addressing discrimination, harassment, and SOGIESC-based bullying. This inclusion should be age-appropriate and across subject areas (e.g. literature, history, citizenship, digital education, health education.)
- Support whole-school approaches combining curriculum reform, leadership commitment, student participation, and partnerships with families and civil society organisations.
- Encourage student-led initiatives and peer-support models that reinforce inclusive values and reduce stigma.
- Ensure curricula are aligned with human rights, democratic citizenship, and equality frameworks, supported by monitoring and accountability mechanisms.



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue guidance identifying curriculum entry points to prevent identity-based bullying across different policy environments.
- Provide educators with ready-to-use teaching materials and practical tools to address bullying, well-being, and inclusion in everyday teaching.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Strengthen teacher training and continuous professional development on bullying prevention, inclusive pedagogy, and classroom climate.
- Institutionalise consultation with LGBTQI youth, learners, and civil society organisations in curriculum design, review, and evaluation.
Allocate dedicated funding for curriculum adaptation, teacher support, and school-based anti-bullying initiatives.

LONG-TERM

- Embed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess curriculum impact on school climate, student well-being, and bullying prevalence.
- Align curriculum reform with education, child protection, equality, and digital governance frameworks to ensure sustainability and coherence.
Regularly review learning materials to counter stereotypes, respond to emerging forms of bullying, and reflect evolving social realities.

SUMMARY

Context	Entry Points
Restrictive Environments	Human rights framing; whole-school approach; teacher training; digital literacy; broader anti-bullying protections; social and emotional learning; confidential support; broad human rights language
Neutral Environments	Strengthened implementation; teacher training; cross-curricular integration
Enabling Environments	Curriculum mainstreaming; system-wide reform; monitoring; community partnerships



3.3.5. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate different ways in which LGBTQI inclusion can be embedded in curriculum frameworks, learning objectives, teacher preparation, and wider education policy. They highlight particular implementation choices that may inform curriculum development in other contexts. Their relevance should be considered in accordance to learners' ages and evolving capacities, the organisation of the curriculum, teacher competences, available resources, and the applicable legal and policy framework.

EXAMPLE 1

EMBEDDING INCLUSION THROUGH NORM-CRITICAL, CROSS-CURRICULAR CURRICULUM DESIGN

Inclusive curriculum reform can be approached by integrating equality, gender, relationships, and respect across different subjects rather than confining them to a single lesson or optional activity. One education system has adopted a norm-critical and gender-inclusive approach intended to help learners examine how social expectations, stereotypes, and assumptions shape people's experiences and opportunities.⁵⁰

In this model, sexuality and relationship education is mandatory and delivered across the curriculum. Themes related to gender, gender roles, identity, relationships, and respect are incorporated into subjects such as health, physical education, religious education, and social studies. Biological and sexual health content uses gender-inclusive language, supporting a broader and more encompassing understanding of bodies, puberty, relationships, identity, and well-being.

Curriculum reform has also sought to strengthen teachers' responsibility and competence to deliver this content. Rather than relying primarily on occasional interventions by external organisations, inclusive education is treated as part of the ordinary professional responsibilities of educators and the wider education

⁵⁰ IGLYO's Best Practice Database (online). "[Sweden's Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programme](#)".

system. Civil society organisations may continue to contribute expertise, resources, and lived-experience perspectives, but they do not replace the responsibility of public authorities and schools to provide inclusive education.

Points for consideration

A cross-curricular approach can help ensure that LGBTQI inclusion is not treated as an isolated or exceptional subject. However, distributing content across several subjects may also make implementation difficult to monitor unless learning objectives, curriculum expectations, and staff responsibilities are clearly defined. Teacher education, practical resources, and institutional support are necessary to ensure that inclusion is delivered consistently and confidently. Curriculum frameworks should also be reviewed to ensure explicit and appropriate coverage of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, rather than assuming that general references to gender or diversity will address all aspects of SOGIESC.

EXAMPLE 2

ESTABLISHING MANDATORY PROVISION WITH INSPECTION AND OVERSIGHT

Another implementation model introduces compulsory education on gender, sexuality, and relationships at a defined stage of secondary education and places responsibility for monitoring its delivery within the education inspection system.⁵¹ This establishes a common entitlement for learners and reduces the extent to which access depends on the priorities, confidence, or willingness of individual schools or educators.

Mandatory provision can serve several connected purposes. It can establish a shared baseline of age-appropriate knowledge, normalise respectful discussion of gender, sexuality, relationships, and family diversity, and support the early prevention of stereotypes and SOGIESC-based bullying. Locating the content

⁵¹ UNESCO & IGLYO (2021). Don't Look Away: No Place for Exclusion of LGBTI Students, including the example of mandatory curriculum provision in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

within the formal curriculum also signals that these issues form part of learners' education, well-being, and preparation for participation in diverse and democratic societies.

Inspection and oversight mechanisms can support accountability by examining whether schools are delivering the required content and whether provision is aligned with curriculum expectations. They can also help identify implementation gaps, variations in quality, and areas where educators require further support.

Points for consideration

Making provision mandatory is an important starting point, but it does not by itself ensure that teaching is accurate, inclusive, or pedagogically appropriate. Education authorities should define expected learning outcomes, provide suitable materials, prepare educators, and establish quality-assurance arrangements. Monitoring should consider not only whether teaching has taken place, but also whether it is age-appropriate, rights-based, SOGIESC-inclusive, and delivered in a manner that safeguards learners' dignity and privacy. The content should also form part of a progressive curriculum across different ages, rather than being limited to a single school year.

EXAMPLE 3

CONNECTING CURRICULUM MEASURES TO A BROADER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

Curriculum inclusion can also be advanced through a multi-year equality action plan that connects education measures with wider action against discrimination, hatred, and violence. One such plan brings together measures across education, health, justice, law enforcement, employment, and international policy, reflecting the understanding that the safety and inclusion of LGBTQI learners are shaped by institutions and experiences beyond the school itself.⁵²

⁵² France, Ministry responsible for Gender Equality and the Fight against Discrimination (2023). National Plan for Equality and the Fight against Anti-LGBT+ Hatred and Discrimination 2023–2026.

Within education, the plan combines several mutually reinforcing measures:

- training and support for teachers, school leaders, and other education staff;
- integration of LGBTQI-inclusive content into curricula and learning resources;
- prevention and response measures addressing bullying and discrimination;
- awareness-raising activities intended to challenge stigma, stereotypes, and misinformation; and
- cooperation with civil society organisations in the development and implementation of relevant measures.

The action plan is accompanied by dedicated funding, monitoring arrangements, and regular reporting. These mechanisms help translate broad equality commitments into defined actions, clarify responsibilities across public authorities, and provide a basis for assessing progress over time.

Points for consideration

The value of an action-plan approach lies in connecting curriculum reform to teacher preparation, anti-bullying measures, institutional coordination, public communication, and accountability. However, broad plans may have limited effect if education measures are not accompanied by clear timelines, responsible authorities, adequate resources, and measurable indicators. Consultation with LGBTQI organisations, young people, educators, families, and relevant professional bodies should be meaningful and should continue throughout implementation, monitoring, and review.

EXAMPLE 4

MAINSTREAMING LGBTQI INCLUSION THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A more comprehensive model makes LGBTQI-inclusive education part of the curriculum across the state school system, rather than limiting it to a particular subject, school year, or individual initiative.⁵³ In this approach, education on equality, diversity, human rights, and LGBTQI experiences is treated as an entitlement for all learners.

Implementation combines curriculum content with wider institutional measures, including:

- integration of LGBTQI-inclusive content across subjects and age groups;
- inclusive school policies and measures to prevent and address SOGIESC-based bullying;
- teaching materials, professional learning, and pedagogical guidance for educators;
- alignment between curriculum expectations, school leadership, and school culture; and
- cooperation with organisations possessing relevant educational and community expertise.

This systemic approach can help ensure that learners encounter LGBTQI people, histories, families, and experiences in ways that are accurate, respectful, and appropriate to their age and stage of learning. It also reduces dependence on individual educators or schools and makes inclusion part of the ordinary delivery of education rather than an optional addition.

⁵³ Scottish Government. LGBTI Inclusive Education: National Approach to Implementation, following the introduction of LGBTQI-inclusive education throughout the state school curriculum in 2021.

Points for consideration

System-wide mainstreaming requires careful sequencing, sustained political and institutional commitment, and adequate support for educators. Content should be progressively adapted to learners' ages and evolving capacities, while maintaining a consistent commitment to equality, dignity, safety, and non-discrimination. Mainstreaming should not result in SOGIESC becoming so diffuse that it is no longer explicitly addressed. Education authorities should therefore identify clear learning outcomes, responsibilities, resources, and monitoring arrangements, and should review how inclusive content is experienced by learners in practice.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that LGBTQI-inclusive curricula can be implemented through cross-curricular integration, mandatory provision, equality action plans, or comprehensive system-wide reform. Whichever entry point is selected, curriculum change is more likely to be effective when it is supported by clear learning objectives, educator preparation, age-appropriate resources, inspection or quality assurance, school-level policies, civil society participation, and sustained monitoring.



3.4. Provide Comprehensive Training and Support for Educational Staff

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on SOGIESC training for school staff and educators, refer to  **Tool 3: Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators.***

3.4.1. Key Gaps and Barriers in Educator Capacity in Preventing SOGIESC-based Bullying

Teachers, school leaders, and education staff are central to creating non-discriminatory safe schools. They are often the first to identify early signs of exclusion, distress, or bullying, and play a decisive role in setting classroom norms and preventing and responding to incidents.⁵⁴ Yet many lack the training and institutional support needed to translate inclusive policies into daily practice. Across Europe, preparation to prevent and respond to SOGIESC-based bullying remains uneven, largely voluntary, and weakly embedded in professional standards, resulting in inconsistent protection for learners.

Training is mandatory in only a few systems and often reaches already motivated staff, reinforcing inequities. Where training exists, it is frequently narrow in scope, with limited attention to intersectionality, non-physical⁵⁵ and cyberbullying, trauma-informed practice, and gender expression or variations in sex characteristics. Educators who intervene may also face opposition or harassment, while school leadership is often insufficiently prepared to manage resistance or implement whole-school approaches, leaving staff isolated and undermining effective responses.⁵⁶

3.4.2. Minimum Competence Expectations for Education Staff

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on minimum competences to be achieved through training for educational staff, refer to  **Tool 3: Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators.***

⁵⁴ European Commission (2025). Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training: Issue Paper on Countering Hate in and Through Education.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Training should be compulsory, publicly funded, and embedded in both pre-service and in-service professional development. At a minimum, all education staff should be equipped with:

Knowledge and Awareness	Understand core SOGIESC concepts and terminology; recognise how stereotypes, stigma and social norms contribute to discrimination and bullying; understand the impact of SOGIESC-based bullying, including cyberbullying and non-physical forms of harm, on learners' safety, well-being, participation, and educational outcomes; understand how SOGIESC-based bullying may overlap or intersect with discrimination linked to other personal characteristics or statuses, including but not limited to, race, colour, language, religion or belief, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, socio-economic status, migration status, and other forms of marginalisation.
Practical Skills and Response Strategies	Identify, prevent, and respond to direct, non-physical, and cyberbullying; use de-escalation and restorative approaches where appropriate; respond to misinformation, stereotypes, and hostile narratives in ways that maintain dignity and safety; support affected learners without requiring disclosure or placing responsibility on them to explain or defend their identity.
Inclusive Pedagogy and School Practice	Create respectful classroom and school climates; use inclusive language and examples; integrate LGBTQI inclusive and anti-bullying content across curricula, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities where possible; support positive peer norms, bystander intervention, and learner participation; adapt approaches to age, context, and legal or institutional constraints.
Attitudes, Values, and Reflective Practice	Demonstrate commitment to equality, non-discrimination, human dignity, and learner well-being; reflect on personal assumptions and professional practice; uphold a "do no harm" approach; recognise the importance of confidentiality, trust, and trauma-informed responses; act within one's professional role while seeking support where needed.

Professional Responsibility and Referral	Understand relevant legal, policy, and safeguarding obligations; know when and how to document, report, or escalate incidents; protect learners from outing, retaliation, or further harm; use confidential referral pathways to counselling, safeguarding leads, equality bodies, or specialist support services; understand that preventing and responding to SOGIESC-based bullying is an institutional responsibility, not an individual burden.
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3.4.3. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Prioritise training on harm prevention, duty of care, and institutional protection where explicit SOGIESC content is restricted by law or political pressure.
- Anchor educator training in child protection, learner safety, anti-bullying, safeguarding, digital well-being, and professional ethics, without requiring identity disclosure. Frame training around non-discrimination, violence prevention, and safe learning environments, using broad terminology where explicit references are restricted.
- Equip educators to recognise, prevent, and respond to identity-based bullying, including cyberbullying, through legally compliant, behaviour-focused approaches.
- Emphasise confidentiality, safeguarding, and non-outing practices in all responses to incidents or disclosures.
- Provide schools with clear, standardised procedures for reporting, documenting, evidence handling, and referral (See  **Tool 2**, Section 4.4. on Documentation and Reporting Pathways).
- Ensure access to independent oversight and complaints mechanisms (e.g. inspectorates, equality bodies, ombudspersons) where school-level action is constrained.
- Provide legal and institutional backing for educators acting in good faith, including safe reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms.

- Equip school leaders to manage parental resistance, misinformation, and organised opposition (See ● **Tool 2**, Section 4: School Playbook: Responding to Tensions and Opposition).
- Support peer networks, mentoring, and communities of practice to reduce educator isolation.
- Safeguard schools' ability to work with external expertise, including civil society, without intimidation or political interference.
- Prioritise practical response skills (de-escalation, documentation, cyberbullying response, referral pathways) through anonymised, scenario-based learning.
- Embed content within existing mandatory training (anti-bullying, social and emotional learning, digital citizenship, safeguarding, professional ethics).
- Use incremental, legally compliant approaches to reduce harm immediately while preserving space for longer-term reform.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Focus on consistency, accountability, and educator confidence where inclusion is permitted but unevenly implemented.
- Embed training on preventing SOGIESC-based bullying within mandatory pre-service and in-service professional development for all education staff.
- Ensure training is certified, institutionalised, and publicly funded to guarantee equitable access for all staff.
- Integrate SOGIESC-related content into broader frameworks on anti-bullying, social and emotional learning, child protection, and digital citizenship.
- Clarify educator and school responsibilities for non-physical bullying and cyberbullying, including incidents linked to school communities that occur online or off campus.
- Require schools to implement clear, confidential reporting and follow-up procedures aligned with national or regional frameworks.
- Promote structured collaboration between schools, families, support services, and specialist organisations to ensure coordinated responses.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Aim for systemic and sustained change where policy frameworks allow explicit LGBTQI-inclusive curricula.
- Adopt explicit competence standards on preventing and responding to SOGIESC-based bullying for teachers, school leaders, and non-teaching staff.⁵⁷
- Ensure training addresses intersectionality, trauma-informed practice, inclusive pedagogy, and evolving forms of cyberbullying.
- Support whole-school approaches that align staff training, curriculum delivery, safeguarding systems, and learner participation.
- Invest in peer-learning networks, mentoring, and communities of practice to strengthen professional confidence and resilience.
- Integrate monitoring of school climate and bullying prevention into inspection, evaluation, and accountability systems.

*Cross References: If you need more detailed guidance on reporting pathways or equipping school leaders to manage parental resistance, misinformation, and organised opposition, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue clear guidance affirming educators' duty of care to prevent and respond to bullying, including identity-based and cyberbullying, within existing legal frameworks.
- Map existing training, standards, and reporting procedures to identify immediate gaps.

- Integrate prevention of identity-based bullying into existing mandatory training on safeguarding, anti-bullying, and digital citizenship.
- Provide standardised, legally compliant procedures for reporting, confidentiality, and referral.
- Ensure access to independent advice and complaints mechanisms.
- Support low-risk, harm-reduction training approaches where explicit inclusion is restricted.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Make training on preventing SOGIESC-based bullying compulsory, publicly funded, and embedded in pre-service and in-service professional development.
- Define minimum competence expectations for all education staff, aligned with child protection and non-discrimination obligations.
- Institutionalise training through accreditation, certification, or links to professional development requirements.
- Strengthen school leadership capacity to implement whole-school approaches and manage resistance.
- Improve data collection and monitoring on bullying, including online and non-physical forms, with appropriate safeguards.
- Develop guidance addressing intersectional discrimination.

LONG-TERM

- Embed prevention of SOGIESC-based bullying in education law, national anti-bullying frameworks, and equality strategies.
- Adopt explicit professional standards on inclusive practice and learner well-being.
- Integrate school climate and bullying prevention into inspection, evaluation, and accountability systems.
- Ensure initial teacher education systematically includes inclusive pedagogy, trauma-informed practice, and digital safety.
- Invest in sustained peer-learning networks and long-term monitoring to adapt to emerging risks.

3.4.4. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate different ways in which education authorities, teacher-education institutions, and civil society organisations can strengthen educators' competence to provide SOGIESC-inclusive education and respond to discrimination, bullying, and harmful gender stereotypes. They highlight particular implementation choices that may inform the development of initial teacher education, continuing professional development, and complementary training resources in other contexts. Their relevance should be considered in relation to national qualification requirements, institutional responsibilities, educators' existing competences, available resources, and the needs of the learners and school communities concerned.

EXAMPLE 1

EMBEDDING INCLUSION AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION WITHIN TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Teacher competence on equality and inclusion can be strengthened by incorporating relevant knowledge and skills into the mandatory requirements. One education system includes substantial education-science coursework within initial teacher education, covering educators' responsibilities to prevent and address discrimination in schools.⁵⁸

This approach combines several complementary elements:

- **Integration within core teacher education:** equality, non-discrimination, and inclusive education are included within the professional knowledge expected of all teachers, rather than being treated solely as optional or specialist subjects.
- **Norm-critical pedagogical guidance:** the national education authority promotes approaches that help educators examine how social norms,

⁵⁸ Swedish National Agency for Education, requirements and guidance relating to teacher education, anti-discrimination, norm-critical education, and sexuality and relationship education. *All teachers are required to complete 60 credits in education science, including content on preventing and addressing discrimination. Since 2021, graduating teachers have also been required to demonstrate competence in sexuality and relationship education as part of the qualification process. Specialist workshops and certification are additionally provided by RFSL.*

stereotypes, and assumptions can shape teaching practices, learning materials, classroom interactions, and learners' experiences.

- **Practical teaching resources:** lesson materials and pedagogical guidance support educators in translating equality principles into classroom practice and in addressing LGBTQI inclusion through age-appropriate teaching.
- **Assessment within professional qualification:** knowledge and competence related to sexuality and relationship education form part of the assessment requirements that graduating teachers must complete before qualification.
- **Complementary specialist provision:** civil society organisations provide workshops and certification opportunities that allow educators to deepen their knowledge and develop practical skills beyond the minimum requirements of initial teacher education.

Combining mandatory qualification requirements with national guidance and complementary specialist provision can help establish a common professional baseline while still allowing educators to develop more advanced expertise. It also reinforces the principle that responsibility for inclusive education belongs to the education system and the teaching profession, rather than depending exclusively on individual commitment or external organisations.

Points for consideration

Including equality and anti-discrimination content within teacher qualifications can support consistency, but the presence of the topic in a programme or assessment does not in itself ensure practical competence. Learning outcomes should specify what educators are expected to know and be able to do, including how to recognise and address SOGIESC-based bullying, use inclusive language and materials, support learners without outing them, respond to opposition, and identify appropriate safeguarding and referral pathways. Teacher-education providers should also consider how these competences are assessed in practice, rather than relying only on theoretical knowledge.

Civil society organisations can contribute specialist expertise, community knowledge, and practical resources, but their involvement should complement, rather than replace, the responsibilities of public authorities and accredited teacher-education institutions. Certification by external providers may support professional development, but it should be connected to recognised quality standards and the wider professional learning framework.

EXAMPLE 2**COMBINING EDUCATOR TRAINING, FAMILY ENGAGEMENT, AND MULTILINGUAL RESOURCES**

Professional learning can also be developed through time-bound, multi-country initiatives that pilot training approaches, produce adaptable resources, and connect work with educators to engagement with families. One EU-funded initiative addressed gender- and sexuality-based violence in education by supporting teachers and parents to challenge harmful stereotypes, strengthen awareness, and foster safer and more inclusive school environments.⁵⁹

The initiative focused primarily on learners aged 10 to 12, with some activities adapted for older learners. It developed and piloted age-appropriate classroom materials and structured training programmes intended to help educators address gender stereotypes, gender-based bullying, violence, equality, and positive role models. The resources use interactive activities and lesson plans to support discussion of potentially sensitive issues in a structured and developmentally appropriate manner.

Training for educators was complemented by sessions for parents and caregivers, delivered in cooperation with parent associations and representative organisations. This extended the intervention beyond the classroom and recognised that messages about gender, sexuality, relationships, and equality are shaped across school, family, media, and community environments.

The materials were piloted across primary and secondary education and made freely available in several languages. Their thematic coverage includes:

- rights and equality;
- gender stereotypes, including stereotypes reproduced through media;
- gender-based bullying and violence;
- responses to bullying, discrimination, and harmful behaviour; and
- positive role models and alternative ways of understanding gender and relationships.

⁵⁹ Gender Equality Matters, Gender Equality Matters (GEM). *The project developed and piloted resources with partners in Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Italy.*

To expand access beyond the original project period and participating locations, the initiative also created a free multilingual online course for educators.⁶⁰ The course is organised around modules on rights and equality, stereotypes and media, bullying and violence, and appropriate responses. A complementary digital platform brings together lesson plans, multimedia materials, and practical resources that educators and other stakeholders can adapt to different learning environments.

Points for consideration

Project-based initiatives can provide valuable spaces for developing, testing, and refining new training approaches. Multilingual, openly accessible resources can also extend their reach and make adaptation easier. However, a project's long-term effect depends on whether its materials and learning are embedded in teacher-education programmes, continuing professional development, school improvement processes, or recognised training frameworks after external funding ends.

Training on gender equality and gender-based violence should also be reviewed to ensure that SOGIESC is addressed explicitly and accurately. General content on gender stereotypes may contribute to more inclusive environments, but it may not equip educators to recognise the particular forms and consequences of lesbophobic, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, or intersexphobic bullying. Adaptation should therefore examine whether the terminology, examples, learning activities, and support pathways adequately reflect the experiences of LGBTQI learners and learners from LGBTQI families.

⁶⁰ Gender Equality Matters, MOOC: Gender and Sexuality, available at: <https://www.genderequalitymatters.eu/toolkits/massive-open-online-course-mooc/>.

Engagement with parents and caregivers can strengthen consistency between school and home, but it should not compromise learners' privacy, safety, or access to support. Schools and training providers should avoid approaches that disclose, or create pressure to disclose, a learner's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. They should also prepare educators to respond where family involvement may expose a learner to rejection, punishment, or other harm.



3.5. Promote Positive and Inclusive School Environments, Including Online Environments

3.5.1. Why Safe and Inclusive School Environments Matter

A safe and inclusive school environment is essential to preventing SOGIESC-based bullying and ensuring that all learners can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Schools that foster belonging and respect report better mental health, lower absenteeism, stronger engagement, and improved educational outcomes. Beyond learning, education systems have a duty to uphold learners' right to dignity, well-being, and safety.

Progress across Europe remains uneven. Only a limited number of education systems provide sustained public funding or structured cooperation with civil society to advance LGBTQI-inclusive education policies, while others are marked by hostile school climates where exclusion and bullying persist. Trans, non-binary, and intersex learners are disproportionately affected.

Inclusive school environments require more than isolated anti-bullying measures. A whole-school approach is needed, embedding equality and respect across school culture, leadership, governance, disciplinary practices, student participation, and digital learning spaces.⁶¹ Governments must treat inclusion as a core element of quality education and a human rights obligation by:⁶²

- Recognising safe and inclusive school environments as a system-wide priority;
- Embedding violence prevention and response across education policies and practice;
- Providing adequate resources, monitoring, and institutional authority;
- Adapting measures to local contexts and capacities.

⁶¹ UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education.

⁶² *Ibid.*

3.5.2. Key Challenges

PERSISTENT DISCRIMINATION AND UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Many LGBTQI learners continue to face exclusion, harassment, and cyberbullying.⁶³ Trans, non-binary, and intersex students experience particularly high levels of harm, including barriers to facilities, sports participation, and school life due to rigid gender norms.⁶⁴ These conditions increase concealment, distress, and disengagement.

LACK OF RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR GENDER-DIVERSE LEARNERS

In most European contexts schools lack clear policies to respect students' self-identified names, pronouns, and access to facilities. This undermines safety and dignity, and contributes to hostile learning environments.

INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT AND REFERRAL PATHWAYS

Educators often identify bullying but lack training, guidance, or access to specialised services. Strong referral links with mental health, child protection, and LGBTQI children and youth services remain limited in many systems.⁶⁵

LIMITED ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE INFORMATION AND VISIBILITY

Restricted access to accurate, affirming information on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, both offline and online, fuels stigma, misinformation, and isolation.⁶⁶

WEAK WHOLE-SCHOOL GUIDANCE

Many schools lack clear, practical frameworks for addressing bullying, hate speech, and online harm. Unclear roles and escalation pathways lead to inconsistent and reactive responses.

⁶³ IGLYO (2025). LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report, Third Edition.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

3.5.3. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Anchor interventions in child protection, anti-bullying, and learner well-being rather than explicit SOGIESC terminology.
- Provide staff with legally compliant, behaviour-focused procedures for reporting, documentation, and referral.
- Support schools in maintaining safe spaces, inclusive classrooms, and respectful online environments using neutral language (e.g., “identity-based bullying” or “bias-motivated harassment.”)
- Protect educators and student leaders from opposition with institutional backing, safe reporting mechanisms, and guidance for managing parental or community resistance (See  **Tool 2**, Section 4 School Playbook.)
- Engage civil society safely through accreditation, guidance, or advisory support.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Integrate SOGIESC inclusion into broader equality, anti-bullying, and well-being strategies.
- Require schools to implement clear policies covering: chosen names and pronouns, access to facilities, inclusive uniforms, anti-bullying codes, and confidential reporting pathways.
- Foster whole-school approaches, ensuring student participation, leadership, and peer-support networks (e.g. gender and sexuality alliances (GSAs), visibility days.)
- Embed digital citizenship and online safety, promoting positive peer behaviour and safe reporting in online environments.
- Provide guidance and resources for staff to adapt interventions to local school and community contexts.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Adopt explicit national standards for LGBTQI inclusive school environments, including legal protection, monitoring, and accountability.
- Ensure visible, accessible, affirming resources in classrooms and online platforms, including signage, posters, and materials portraying diversity and support.
- Respect students' self-identified gender in registers, uniforms, diplomas, and spaces.
- Mandate inclusive curricula, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular spaces that reinforce respect, empathy, and positive socio-emotional climates.
- Support proactive school leadership to counter misinformation, prevent exclusion, and champion equity.
- Sustain partnerships with LGBTQI youth organisations and civil society for guidance, training, and support services.
- Enable LGBTQI staff and allies who choose to do so to serve as positive role models, while ensuring that visibility is voluntary, supported and protected by clear anti-discrimination and staff well-being measures.





PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue guidance requiring schools to respect students' self-identified names, pronouns, and access to facilities.
- Provide practical resources: classroom strategies, inclusive lesson materials, peer-support frameworks, and safe reporting mechanisms.
- Equip school leaders to manage tensions and opposition, misinformation and disinformation, and family engagement (See ● **Tool 2**, Section 4 School Playbook.)

MEDIUM-TERM

- Require all schools to implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies covering physical and online environments, including explicit protections against identity-based harassment.
- Promote student leadership and safe youth participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating inclusion initiatives.
- Integrate digital citizenship, media literacy, and online peer-support programmes addressing bias-based bullying. (See ● **Tool 2**, Section 2.5.)

LONG-TERM

- Align education, child protection, equality, and anti-violence frameworks to institutionalise inclusive school environments.
- Monitor and evaluate school climate, peer networks, and online spaces, using disaggregated data to refine policies and interventions.
- Provide sustained funding for teacher training, inclusive curricula, student-led initiatives, and partnerships with civil society.

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on protecting educators from resistance or opposition, refer to ● **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***

3.5.4. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate different ways in which education authorities and schools can translate commitments to safety, equality, and inclusion into the everyday school environment. They highlight particular implementation choices that may inform policy development in other contexts and should be considered in relation to the applicable legal framework, the organisation of the education system, learners' ages and evolving capacities, available resources, and the need to protect learners' privacy, dignity, and safety.

EXAMPLE 1

TRANSLATING GENDER RECOGNITION INTO SCHOOL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Inclusive school environments can be supported through education policies that explain how respect for learners' gender identity should be reflected in daily school life. One example of this framework requires schools to respect learners' self-identified gender, including through the use of affirmed names and pronouns, access to facilities, and the issuing of school certificates and other documentation that align with the learner's gender identity.⁶⁷

The same framework promotes inclusive and non-gendered language in school communication, for example by referring to "parents or guardians" rather than assuming particular family structures. It also requires schools to adopt anti-bullying policies that explicitly recognise SOGIESC diversity.

This approach connects legal recognition and non-discrimination obligations to practical areas of school administration and interaction. It clarifies that inclusion is not limited to classroom content or occasional awareness activities, but also concerns how learners are addressed, how records are managed, how facilities are accessed, and how families are represented in school communication.

⁶⁷ Government of Malta (2015), *Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act*; see also the related *education guidance on supporting trans, gender-diverse, and intersex learners*.

Points for consideration

School-level guidance should clearly identify which staff members are responsible for implementing these measures and how changes to names, pronouns, records, and other administrative information should be managed. Procedures should protect confidentiality and avoid disclosing a learner's gender identity without their knowledge and agreement. Staff should also receive practical guidance so that implementation does not depend on individual interpretation or goodwill.

Policies relating to facilities, documentation, and school communication should be applied consistently across the institution. Schools should also ensure that anti-bullying procedures recognise harassment linked to gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics and provide safe reporting and support pathways.

EXAMPLE 2

SUPPORTING LEARNER-LED INCLUSION NETWORKS

A further implementation model supports learner-led LGBTQI groups and wider diversity initiatives within schools. In one education system, schools are encouraged to establish and support Gender and Sexuality Alliances and similar networks that create opportunities for learners to connect, organise activities, and contribute to a more inclusive school climate.⁶⁸

These groups can provide spaces for peer support, awareness-raising, and learner participation. They can also help schools understand the concerns and priorities of LGBTQI learners and their allies, contribute to discussions about school policies and activities, and challenge isolation and stigma.

Learner-led networks may be complemented by nationally supported campaigns and visibility initiatives. One such campaign enables learners to organise school-based activities celebrating diversity and opposing homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Public support and resources can help schools participate consistently and signal that promoting inclusion is part of the wider education system's responsibilities, rather than an issue for individual learners to address alone.

⁶⁸ IGLYO's Best Practice Database (online). "[Netherlands: School Gender and Sexuality Alliances](#)".

Points for consideration

Learner participation should be voluntary, meaningful, and appropriately supported by school staff. Joining or participating in an LGBTQI group should never require learners to disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. Schools should therefore design activities in ways that allow participation by LGBTQI learners, allies, and anyone interested in equality and inclusion. Learner-led initiatives should complement, rather than replace, institutional responsibility. Schools remain responsible for addressing discrimination, adopting inclusive policies, training staff, and providing safe reporting and support mechanisms. Learners should not be expected to educate the school community, respond to hostility, or manage safeguarding concerns without appropriate adult support.

EXAMPLE 3

EMBEDDING SCHOOL CLIMATE AND WELL-BEING WITHIN A SYSTEM-WIDE FRAMEWORK

School climate can also be addressed through a wider education reform framework that places learner well-being, bullying prevention, and institutional capacity at the centre of school improvement. One such approach embeds these objectives within a structural education policy rather than treating them as separate or temporary initiatives.⁶⁹

Implementation includes a dedicated body responsible for observing and monitoring school climate and bullying. This structure supports the collection and analysis of relevant information, provides schools with tools and professional assistance, and helps identify emerging patterns, including online bullying.

The framework also offers schools tailored programmes to strengthen their own capacity to prevent and address bullying. Participating schools can receive support adapted to their particular needs, circumstances, and existing level of preparedness. The aim is to help schools develop more sustainable internal systems rather than remain dependent on isolated external interventions.

⁶⁹ Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (2019). Pacte pour un Enseignement d'excellence.

This model therefore combines system-level monitoring with school-level capacity-building. The central framework provides common objectives, expertise, and support, while individual schools develop responses suited to their context.

Points for consideration

Monitoring structures are most useful when the information collected leads to practical support, policy review, and institutional learning. Schools should understand what information is being gathered, how it will be used, and what forms of assistance are available in response to identified needs. Voluntary programmes can encourage school ownership and allow tailored implementation, but they may not reach schools where the need for support is greatest. Education authorities should therefore consider how voluntary capacity-building measures relate to minimum obligations applicable to all schools. Core protections against bullying, discrimination, and harassment should not depend solely on whether a school chooses to participate.

Taken together, these examples show that inclusive school environments can be strengthened through clear administrative policies, respect for learners' identities and family diversity, learner-led participation, public awareness initiatives, system-wide monitoring, and tailored professional support. These measures are most effective when they form part of a sustained whole-school approach and are connected to leadership, curriculum, educator training, reporting procedures, learner support, and institutional accountability.

3.6. Establish Safe and Confidential Reporting Mechanisms

3.6.1. The Importance of Safe and Confidential Reporting Mechanisms in Combating SOGIESC-based School Bullying

Safe and confidential reporting systems are essential for preventing, addressing, and monitoring SOGIESC-based bullying, harassment, and violence in schools. They allow students to speak up without fear, ensure timely interventions, and promote accountability.

Across Europe, most LGBTQI young people do not report bullying or harassment. Among those who experienced hate-motivated incidents, 88% of 15–17-year-olds and 93% of 18–24-year-olds did not report their most recent incident to the police or to any institution.⁷⁰ Many cited past experiences of discrimination and a lack of faith that reporting would lead to meaningful action. For 17% of 15–17-year-olds and 22% of 18–24-year-olds, mistrust in the police was a key reason for staying silent.⁷¹ This underreporting leaves bullying invisible, perpetuating harm and reducing learners' likelihood of seeking help.

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on documentation and reporting pathways, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***

⁷⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2024). [LGBTI Survey III](#).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*



3.6.2. Key Challenges

Fear and Mistrust: Students may avoid reporting to prevent outing, retaliation, or further harassment. Adults' minimisation or bias, particularly in restrictive contexts, reinforces this fear.

Confidentiality and Sensitivity Gaps: Existing mechanisms often require disclosure to multiple staff or fail to protect privacy. Staff may lack training in handling sensitive SOGIESC-based disclosures, risking further harm.

Fragmented or Unclear Procedures: Without clear, standardised processes, students may be unsure whom to approach, how cases are handled, or what protections exist, leading to dropped or mishandled reports.

Weak Referral Pathways: Schools often lack connections to mental-health services, LGBTQI organisations, or child protection mechanisms, limiting follow-up support. Education authorities must establish child-friendly, confidential, and inclusive reporting channels, ensure timely, sensitive responses, and link students to appropriate support services within and outside the school.

3.6.3. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Anchor reporting mechanisms in child protection, anti-bullying, and professional duty of care, avoiding reliance on explicit identity disclosure.
- Use broad language such as “identity-based bullying” or “bias-motivated harassment” where explicit LGBTQI references are restricted.
- Prioritise safe, confidential, and anonymous reporting options to protect students from retaliation or forced disclosure.
- Train staff to prevent and to respond to harm sensitively, maintain confidentiality, document incidents, and make legally compliant referrals. (See  **Tool 2**, Section 3 Classroom Strategies and Section 4.7 Referral Pathways (Template).)
- Provide institutional backing: clear guidance from authorities, safe internal reporting channels, and confidential consultation points.
- Support staff resilience through peer networks, mentoring, and protected collaboration with external expertise.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Require schools to establish multiple accessible reporting channels (online, in-person, anonymous) integrated within national child protection and anti-discrimination frameworks.
- Develop clear, transparent procedures for reporting, documentation, follow-up, and protection against retaliation.
- Designate trained focal points for managing SOGIESC-based bullying reports, with knowledge of SOGIESC dynamics, confidentiality, and referral pathways.

- Link reporting systems to internal counsellors, social workers, or psychologists, as well as external LGBTQI support services.
- Empower bystanders through awareness campaigns, peer-support programmes, and safe intervention training.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Integrate reporting mechanisms into whole-school inclusion strategies and broader prevention systems.
- Ensure student participation in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of reporting tools, respecting child-friendly and voluntary principles.
- Regularly evaluate and adapt reporting systems based on usage, trust, and feedback from LGBTQI learners.
- Maintain transparent accountability measures, ensuring harmful behaviour is addressed while protecting learners' rights and privacy.
- Protect collaborations with civil society organisations from political interference, ensuring sustainable support and expertise.





PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Issue guidance mandating child-friendly, confidential, and inclusive reporting systems in all schools.
- Provide multiple reporting options and clear, safe procedures for staff and students.
- Train designated staff to handle disclosures sensitively, maintain confidentiality, and refer students to support services.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Embed reporting systems into national child protection and anti-bullying frameworks.
- Ensure in-school counsellors, social workers, or psychologists are available to support students.
- Establish peer-support and bystander intervention programmes to strengthen school culture.
- Develop updated maps of referral pathways to LGBTQI, mental health, and child protection services.

LONG-TERM

- Monitor and evaluate reporting systems regularly, tracking accessibility, usage, and trust among learners.
- Integrate feedback from LGBTQI students into system-wide improvements.
- Sustain partnerships with civil society organisations to enhance capacity and resilience.
- Ensure institutional policies maintain accountability, safeguard staff, and prevent and respond effectively to SOGIESC-based bullying.

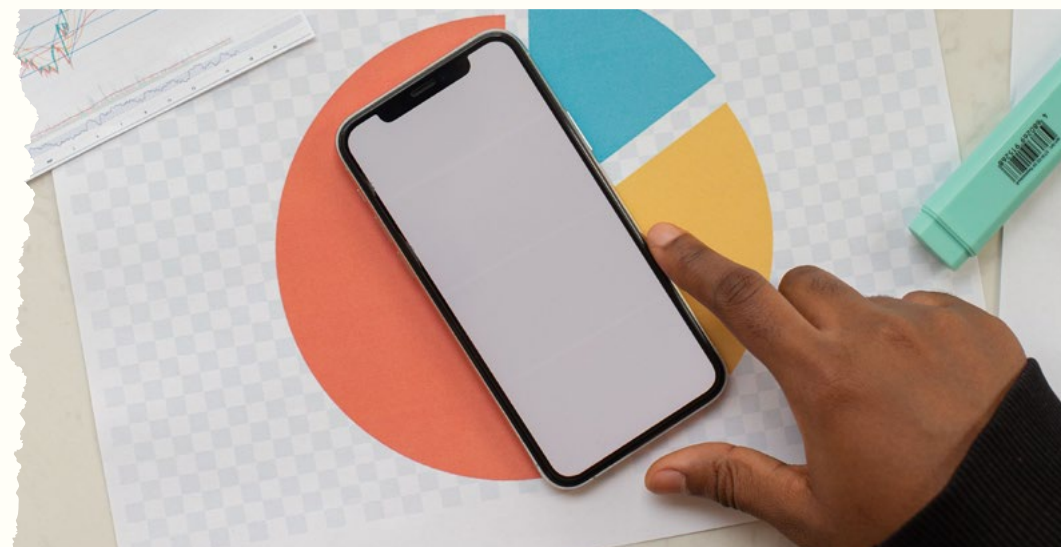
3.7. Collect Data and Monitor Progress

3.7.1. The Need for Systematic Data Collection and Monitoring of SOGIESC-based Bullying

Accurate data on SOGIESC-based bullying is essential for understanding, preventing, and responding to SOGIESC-based violence in schools. Without it, education authorities cannot design effective interventions, allocate resources, or track progress over time.⁷²

Currently, very few European countries collect official data on SOGIESC-based bullying, with most relying on ad hoc NGO or academic studies.⁷³ The absence of systematic monitoring leaves SOGIESC-based bullying largely invisible, and education ministries may avoid addressing it due to political pressure or restrictive laws, further marginalising victims. Even where monitoring exists, underreporting is common, as students fear retaliation, exposure, or stigma.

Breaking this cycle requires coordinated collection and publication of reliable, disaggregated, and ethically sound data to inform evidence-based policy and strengthen protections for learners.



⁷² UNESCO (2024). *Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education*.

⁷³ IGLYO (2025). *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report, Third Edition*.

3.7.2. Key Challenges

Lack of comparable, disaggregated, or intersectional data. Existing data often omit SOGIESC grounds, fail to differentiate bullying types, or do not capture intersecting factors like race, disability, or socio-economic status, limiting analysis and cross-country learning.

Data scarcity and political resistance. Many countries do not collect data or actively suppress it; legal restrictions on LGBTQI topics make monitoring difficult to undertake.

Underreporting and mistrust. Students often do not report incidents due to fear of outing, disbelief, or retaliation.

Ethical and safety concerns. SOGIESC-related questions involve sensitive personal data; surveys can trigger fears of persecution in restrictive contexts.⁷⁴

3.7.3. Toolbox: How to Collect Data on SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools

UNESCO has provided guidance on strengthening routine monitoring of SOGIESC-based bullying in schools, as well as the issue of underreporting, in national and international surveys, including terminology, sampling, and ethical and legal challenges.⁷⁵

UNESCO's Out in the Open report⁷⁶ outlines two main approaches to collecting data on SOGIESC-based school violence:

Approach 1: Integrate questions on learners' SOGIESC into existing school violence surveys (e.g. school climate surveys or safety surveys.)

Approach 2: Include SOGIESC as one of several factors in broader surveys that examine the drivers of school violence and discrimination.

⁷⁴ UNESCO (2021). Don't Look Away: No Place for Exclusion of LGBTI Students.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ UNESCO (2016). Out in the Open: Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression: Summary Report.

Both approaches can be adapted to national and local contexts, provided that ethical standards, confidentiality, and informed consent are prioritised.

UNESCO also highlights that, when collecting data on SOGIESC-based bullying in schools, it is crucial for education authorities to:

- Use inclusive, precise, and non-stigmatising language, tailored to age, maturity, and cultural and legal contexts.
- Guarantee confidentiality and informed consent, especially where revealing SOGIESC may pose risks.
- Train enumerators and researchers to ensure sensitivity, ethics, and child- and youth-friendly engagement.
- Collect both prevalence (how common) and experience (how it happens) data, disaggregated by SOGIESC.
- Engage LGBTQI children and youth and community experts in survey design and validation to ensure safety and relevance.
- Analyse and publish findings transparently, linking results to concrete education reforms and anti-bullying measures.

3.7.4. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Focus on indirect measures: use proxy indicators such as perceived safety, observed bullying, or student well-being rather than direct questions about SOGIESC.
- Prioritise confidentiality and safety: ensure surveys and monitoring tools guarantee anonymity, informed consent, and secure data handling to protect students from retaliation.
- Integrate monitoring into broader frameworks: embed questions on discrimination and safety within general child protection, anti-bullying, or well-being surveys.
- Partner discreetly: collaborate with trusted research institutions or inspectorates to collect and interpret data without attracting undue attention or risk.
- Incremental progress: collect small-scale, localised, or school-level data to gradually build evidence while maintaining legal compliance and student safety.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Direct data collection: include explicit SOGIESC-related questions in school surveys, reporting systems, and Education Management Integration Systems (EMIS)
- Mixed-method approaches: combine quantitative prevalence data with qualitative research to capture lived experiences and intersectional risks.
- Disaggregated data: collect data by different protected grounds, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, age, location, disability, ethnicity, appearance, and socioeconomic status to inform targeted policies.
- Build institutional capacity: train education ministry staff and school personnel to manage monitoring systems and link findings to child protection and mental health services.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education.

- Pilot longitudinal tracking: introduce recurring data collection to monitor trends, measure intervention impact, and identify high-risk groups.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Systematic, national monitoring: embed SOGIESC-inclusive data collection in EMIS and all national school surveys.
- Comprehensive intersectional analysis: capture data on multiple dimensions (e.g., SOGIESC, disability, migration status, appearance, background) to identify overlapping vulnerabilities.
- Use data for policy refinement: regularly analyse trends to improve teacher training, curriculum design, reporting systems, and whole-school inclusion strategies.
- Transparency and public accountability: publish anonymised findings to build trust, foster community engagement, and drive national and regional benchmarking.
- Regional and international collaboration: share data and good practices to set common standards and improve monitoring frameworks across jurisdictions.





PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SHORT-TERM

- Integrate questions on bullying, harassment, and SOGIESC-based violence into existing school surveys and reporting tools.
- Ensure all surveys and data collection methods prioritise confidentiality, anonymity, and student informed consent.
- Train staff in ethical child- and youth-friendly approaches to collecting sensitive data.
- Establish clear referral pathways from reported incidents to child protection, mental-health, and LGBTQI support services (See **Tool 2**, Section 4.7 Referral Pathways (Template).)
- Provide guidance for schools on using proxy indicators (e.g., perceived safety, observed bullying) in restrictive contexts.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Develop mixed-method monitoring frameworks combining quantitative and qualitative data to capture prevalence, root causes, and intersectional risks (e.g., disability, migration status, socioeconomic background).
- Disaggregate all data by SOGIESC, age, gender, location, and other relevant variables to inform targeted interventions.
- Build institutional capacity within education ministries for systematic, sustainable monitoring, including training dedicated staff and partnering with research institutions.
- Use monitoring data to evaluate existing policies, adjust interventions, and identify resource gaps.
- Promote safe and child-friendly reporting channels linked to monitoring systems to improve trust and accessibility.

LONG-TERM

- Embed SOGIESC-inclusive monitoring in national Education Management Integration Systems (EMIS) and broader child protection frameworks to allow longitudinal tracking and cross-country comparability.⁷⁸
- Regularly publish findings to ensure transparency, foster accountability, and inform policy development at national and European levels.
- Establish regional cooperation and data-sharing mechanisms to develop common benchmarks, good practices, and standards for inclusive education.
- Integrate monitoring insights into teacher training, curriculum development, whole-school inclusion strategies, and targeted support for trans and non-binary students.
- Maintain continuous evaluation loops to adapt and improve systems based on emerging trends, ensuring sustained protection for all learners.

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on referral pathways, refer to*

● **Tool 2:** *Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.*

78 UNESCO (2016). Out in the Open: Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression: Summary Report.

3.8. Build Partnerships and Mobilise Families and Communities to Combat SOGIESC-based Bullying

3.8.1. The Importance of Partnership and Mobilisation in Combating SOGIESC-based School Bullying

Preventing and addressing SOGIESC-based bullying requires action beyond the classroom. Schools alone cannot dismantle the stereotypes, misinformation and disinformation, and discriminatory norms that drive SOGIESC-based bullying. Effective responses must extend into families, communities, and broader society, where harmful gender norms are reinforced.⁷⁹

Violence in and around schools is rooted in intersecting social norms and gaps in protection and support systems. SOGIESC-based bullying is driven by stigma, exclusion, restrictive gender expectations, and hostile public discourse. Addressing these drivers requires multi-sectoral collaboration linking schools with families, civil society, youth organisations, health and social services, and child protection mechanisms. These actors provide expertise, resources, and social influence to strengthen prevention, support affected learners, and reinforce inclusive norms.

A whole-community approach builds resilience against hate speech, supports early identification of bullying, reinforces inclusive messages at home, and embeds LGBTQI safety into broader societal norms. Families and caregivers can validate young people's identities and advocate for safer schools, while LGBTQI organisations provide expert guidance, targeted support, and culturally sensitive interventions.

However, civil society and youth-led organisations are often underfunded, under-recognised, and excluded from national education initiatives. Restrictive legislation, anti-propaganda laws, and opposition restrict partnerships with LGBTQI NGOs or limit discussion of LGBTQI topics, making community mobilisation essential both to protect learners and preserve support infrastructures.⁸⁰

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on alliances beyond the classroom, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***

⁷⁹ UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education.

⁸⁰ IGLYO (2025). LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report, Third Edition.



3.8.2. Key Challenges

Restrictive legal or social environments. Anti-LGBTQI laws and SOGIESC-based discrimination limit NGO-school collaboration, forcing organisations to deliver support discreetly rather than systemically. Sustaining activist capacity and safety is critical until environments improve.

Resistance to NGO participation in schools. Approval restrictions and political pushback can prevent LGBTQI organisations contributing to the delivery of certified trainings or inclusion programmes.

Limited resources. Civil society organisations, schools and education institutions may face constraints in staff time, funding, training provision, secure spaces, and institutional support. In some settings, SOGIESC-related training or partnership work may also not be prioritised, limiting the ability to address SOGIESC-based bullying consistently.

Fragmented multi-sectoral coordination. Schools often operate in isolation from mental health services, child protection, and community groups, limiting holistic responses.

Family and community resistance. Opposition to or misunderstandings about the inclusion of SOGIESC content can undermine school efforts and reinforce bullying.

3.8.3. Recommendations for Policymakers



CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

In these settings, a context-sensitive and harm-reduction approach is essential to protect learners, educators, and civil society actors while preserving the foundations for future re-engagement. A harm-reduction and context-sensitive strategy focuses on safety, resilience, and long-term sustainability, recognising that visibility or institutional engagement may not always be possible. Instead of attempting to implement school-wide reforms, partnerships prioritise discreet support, community preservation, and risk-aware mobilisation. Context-sensitive actions include:

- Prioritise individual support: enable discreet, confidential assistance for students and staff experiencing SOGIESC-based bullying, including counselling, helplines, peer-support, and safety planning.
- Invest in local LGBTQI groups: provide financial and technical support to sustain peer networks, safe spaces, and community-based expertise, even if formal school engagement is restricted.
- Promote coalition-building: encourage partnerships with child-rights, anti-violence, disability rights, and anti-racism organisations to mainstream anti-bullying initiatives.
- Adapt NGO engagement: reframe training and guidance around universal anti-bullying, child protection, and safe learning environments, embedding implicit protections for LGBTQI learners.
- Support youth empowerment: facilitate safe online networks, peer-led initiatives, and youth advisory mechanisms to build solidarity, document bullying, and support advocacy.
- Strengthen independent institutions: bolster equality bodies and human rights institutions to monitor discrimination, provide guidance, and support victims where education ministries are constrained.

NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Build partnerships between schools, local and public authorities, equality bodies, civil society, youth organisations, families, and community leaders to embed SOGIESC-based bullying prevention into school and community practices.
- Encourage meaningful student participation in school policies and initiatives, including student-led groups such as GSAs.
- Integrate school-based programmes with mental health services, child protection, and youth support to provide holistic care for those targeted.
- Engage teacher unions and professional associations to deliver or endorse LGBTQI inclusive training and support for staff facing opposition.⁸¹ (See ● **Tool 2**, Section 2 and 4.)

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

- Develop broad, multi-sectoral coalitions that unify government, schools, civil society, families, and children and youth in preventing SOGIESC-based bullying and promoting inclusion.
- Embed family and caregiver engagement systematically through workshops, peer networks, and awareness campaigns.⁸²
- Ensure sustainable, long-term investment in civil society organisations and youth-led groups to co-design interventions, provide specialised guidance, and monitor school inclusion initiatives.⁸³
- Leverage national human rights and equality bodies to institutionalise anti-bullying practices, monitor compliance, and provide technical support.

81 UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education.

82 UNESCO (2023). Addressing Hate Speech Through Education: A Guide for Policymakers.

83 UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and Through Education.

3.8.4. Examples of Implementation

The examples below illustrate different ways in which public authorities, schools, civil society organisations, and learner-led groups can share responsibility for preventing and addressing SOGIESC-based bullying. They highlight particular partnership arrangements that may inform implementation in other contexts.

EXAMPLE 1

SUSTAINING COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH PUBLIC SUPPORT

Partnerships with civil society organisations can provide schools with specialist knowledge, practical resources, and community-informed support that may not be available within the education system alone. One implementation model combines cooperation between schools and LGBTQI civil society organisations with public funding for training and related school-inclusion activities.⁸⁴

Within this approach, civil society organisations work with schools to strengthen educators' understanding of SOGIESC-based bullying and develop their capacity to prevent, recognise, and respond to it. Their contribution may include professional learning, practical guidance, age-appropriate resources, and advice on the particular forms and consequences of bullying experienced by LGBTQI learners and learners from LGBTQI families.

Public funding helps move this cooperation beyond isolated or short-term interventions. It can support broader geographical reach, continuity over time, and more consistent access for schools. It also recognises that specialist organisations contribute professional expertise and should not be expected to provide training, consultation, or support without adequate resources.

Such partnerships can also create a channel through which education authorities and schools receive feedback about implementation gaps and emerging concerns. Civil society organisations may contribute knowledge of learners' lived realities, barriers to reporting, gaps in staff competence, and risks that are not always visible through general school-climate monitoring.

⁸⁴ See, for example, the cooperation between schools, public authorities, and civil society organisations described in IGLYO (2025), *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report, Third Edition*, in relation to Malta.

Points for consideration

Civil society participation should complement, rather than replace, the responsibilities of public authorities, schools, and teacher-education institutions. Education authorities remain responsible for establishing policy, ensuring staff competence, providing learner support, and monitoring implementation. Funding arrangements should be sufficiently stable to support continuity and should clarify the respective roles of public authorities, schools, and civil society partners. Cooperation should also be based on appropriate safeguarding, confidentiality, data-protection, and quality-assurance standards. Where organisations engage directly with learners, referral pathways and responsibilities for responding to disclosures or safeguarding concerns should be agreed in advance.

EXAMPLE 2

CONNECTING LEARNER-LED NETWORKS WITH SCHOOLS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A further implementation model supports learner-led LGBTQI groups and Gender and Sexuality Alliances through coordinated partnerships involving schools, civil society organisations, and local public authorities.⁸⁵ This arrangement combines learner participation with institutional and community support, enabling student-led initiatives to contribute to a wider approach to inclusion and bullying prevention.

Learner-led networks can create spaces for peer connection, mutual support, awareness-raising, and participation in school life. They may organise activities, contribute to discussions about school climate, identify barriers experienced by LGBTQI learners, and help challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. Their presence can also reduce isolation and make support more visible within the school community.

Civil society organisations can strengthen these networks by providing guidance, facilitator support, educational materials, and connections with wider youth and equality initiatives. Local authorities can contribute through funding, coordination,

⁸⁵ See, for example, the school-based Gender and Sexuality Alliance networks and related cooperation between schools, civil society organisations, and local authorities described in IGLYO (2025), *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report*, Third Edition, in relation to the Netherlands.

access to local services, and links between schools and relevant community structures. Schools provide the institutional environment in which groups can meet safely and contribute to school-level work.

Bringing these actors together can help connect learner-led activity to wider anti-bullying policies, staff training, awareness initiatives, and support services. It can also create opportunities for learning across schools, enabling groups and education professionals to exchange experiences and develop shared responses to recurring challenges.

Points for consideration

Participation in learner-led groups should always be voluntary and should not require learners to disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. Groups should be open to LGBTQI learners, allies, and others committed to equality, without making assumptions about participants' identities. Learner-led activity should be meaningfully supported, but it should not transfer institutional responsibility to young people. Learners should not be expected to educate staff, manage incidents of bullying, respond publicly to hostile opposition, or provide support beyond their competence.

Taken together, these examples show that effective community engagement can be built through publicly supported civil society partnerships and coordinated learner-led networks. These arrangements are most effective when roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, participation is adequately resourced, learners are protected from harm, and partnership activities are connected to the school's wider policies, support systems, and accountability structures.

Section 4.

Institutional

Checklist



This checklist brings together the key policy and institutional measures discussed throughout the tool and translates them into practical self-assessment questions. It is intended to help education authorities, school leaders, inspectorates, equality bodies, and other relevant stakeholders to review existing policies and practices, identify gaps, and prioritise next steps for preventing and addressing SOGIESC-based bullying.

The checklist can be used flexibly. It may be used as a summary of the main recommendations, as a diagnostic tool during policy review, as a basis for institutional planning, or as a reflection aid in dialogue with schools, civil society organisations, learners, families, and other partners. It is not intended as a compliance audit. Instead, it should be adapted to the legal, institutional, and social context in which it is used.



4.1. Anti-Bullying Policies and Legislation

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS	Yes	No
Explicit protection: Do anti-bullying laws explicitly protect students based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics?	☐	☐
Alignment with wider frameworks: Are anti-bullying measures aligned with child protection, human rights, anti-violence, equality frameworks, and professional ethics?	☐	☐
Restrictive legal or policy barriers: Have legal, policy, or administrative restrictions that limit the discussion of SOGIESC in education been reviewed, challenged, or removed where possible?	☐	☐
Context-sensitive entry points: In restrictive or constrained contexts, are schools still supported to address SOGIESC-based bullying through child protection, learner safety, anti-bullying, well-being, equality, or human rights mandates?	☐	☐
Comprehensive definitions: Do laws, policies, or guidance define SOGIESC-based bullying comprehensively, including verbal, physical, social, psychological, and cyberbullying, as well as recognise intersectional forms of discrimination?	☐	☐
Alignment with international standards: Are national laws and policies aligned with relevant EU policies, Council of Europe Standards, and international frameworks on learner safety, equality, non-discrimination, and protection from violence, both online and offline?	☐	☐

NATIONAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL POLICIES	Yes	No
National strategy: Is there a national or regional anti-bullying strategy that establishes minimum standards for all schools in the country?	☐	☐
School-level implementation: Are schools required to adopt anti-bullying policies that reflect national frameworks and address SOGIESC-based bullying?	☐	☐
Reporting and response procedures: Do school policies include clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and responding to bullying incidents, including restorative and accountability-based approaches?	☐	☐
INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT	Yes	No
Leadership: Are equality, diversity, and inclusion responsibilities clearly assigned at national and regional levels, with effective coordination between ministries?	☐	☐
Dedicated resources: Is dedicated funding allocated to prevention, training, monitoring, and victim support, including through discreet or online channels where needed?	☐	☐
Evidence-informed policymaking: Are disaggregated data and diagnostics used to guide policy development, while safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of students?	☐	☐
AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION	Yes	No
Communication of policies: Are anti-bullying definitions, policies, and procedures communicated clearly to staff, students, and families?	☐	☐
Consistent messaging: Do all schools use consistent messaging that promotes learner safety, respect, and inclusion, including in restrictive contexts, where inclusion can be introduced through broader child protection and anti-bullying norms?	☐	☐

4.2. Safe and Inclusive School Environment

PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL SAFETY	Yes	No
Inclusive facilities: Are school facilities, including bathrooms, changing facilities, classrooms, playgrounds, sports spaces, and transport accessible, safe, and inclusive for all learners?	☐	☐
Inclusive school environment and materials: Do schools maintain inclusive signage, materials, and digital platforms that reflect diversity and promote belonging, including through the use of discreet symbols or codes if visibility poses risks?	☐	☐
Digital safety measures: Are digital citizenship, online safety and anti-cyberbullying programmes in place that address anti-LGBTQI discrimination, harassment, and cyberbullying in schools?	☐	☐
INCLUSIVE CULTURE	Yes	No
Institutional commitment: Is LGBTQI equality and anti-discrimination included as a core education objective of the school?	☐	☐
Recognition of identity: Are learners' self-identified names, pronouns, and gender identity respected in everyday interactions, school records, diplomas, uniforms, and facilities?	☐	☐
Freedom from stereotypes and exclusion: Are steps taken to eliminate stereotypes, segregation, and exclusion across classrooms, activities, and extra-curricular programmes?	☐	☐
Inclusive language: Is inclusive language that acknowledges the diversity of family forms and gender identities used consistently in school policies, communications, and administrative processes?	☐	☐

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	Yes	No
Student-led initiatives: Are student-led initiatives (GSAs, visibility days, peer networks) supported in schools, with discreet or online participation where needed?	☐	☐
Peer-support and intervention: Are students equipped with skills for bystander intervention, peer-support, and digital safety?	☐	☐
Student participation: Are young people directly involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of school inclusion measures?	☐	☐
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Yes	No
Family engagement: Are families engaged constructively in efforts to promote safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments, and is parental resistance managed safely?	☐	☐
Communication during incidents: Are schools and teachers provided with clear guidance for communicating with families when bullying incidents occur?	☐	☐
Community support networks: Are family, parent, and community networks mobilised to help reinforce positive school climates, with the use of discreet channels if direct engagement is unsafe?	☐	☐
LEADERSHIP AND WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH	Yes	No
Leadership capacity: Are school leaders equipped to respond to misinformation, disinformation, resistance, and backlash, and to foster inclusive cultures? (See  Tool 2 , Section 4 School Playbook.)	☐	☐
Whole-school implementation: Do school policies account for administrative, counselling, and security staff, not just teaching staff?	☐	☐
External partnerships: Do schools collaborate and partner with LGBTQI organisations, civil society groups, and other relevant stakeholders to support safe and inclusive learning environments, using discreet or coalition approaches in restrictive contexts?	☐	☐

*Cross References: If you need more detailed guidance on managing opposition, misinformation and disinformation, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***

4.3. Reporting, Support, and Response

SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING MECHANISMS	Yes	No
Child-friendly reporting: Are reporting mechanisms in place that are confidential, child-friendly and aligned with child protection frameworks?	☐	☐
Multiple reporting channels: Are multiple reporting channels available (e.g. online, helplines, anonymous options) and accessible to all learners, including discreet channels in restrictive environments?	☐	☐
Clear procedures: Are reporting mechanisms communicated clearly to students, including steps, timelines, and follow-up processes?	☐	☐
Protection against retaliation: Are safeguards in place to protect students from retaliation and to maintain students’ confidentiality and privacy?	☐	☐
DESIGNATED STAFF AND TRAINING	Yes	No
Trained focal points: Does every school have a trained focal point or designated staff responsible for responding to SOGIESC-based bullying incidents?	☐	☐
Staff training: Are all school staff trained on SOGIESC-based bullying dynamics, confidentiality, documentation, referrals and support strategies?	☐	☐
Institutional support for staff: Are staff who address bullying incidents supported and protected by institutional policies and leadership?	☐	☐

INTEGRATION WITH SUPPORT SERVICES	Yes	No
Linked support systems: Are reporting mechanisms linked with child protection, mental health and LGBTQI-specific services where available?	☐	☐
Access to professional support: Do learners have access to counsellors, social workers, psychologists, or trained youth workers through the school or referral systems?	☐	☐
Bystander and peer-support: Are staff and students equipped with skills for bystander intervention and peer-support?	☐	☐
MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT	Yes	No
Evaluation of reporting systems: Are reporting mechanisms regularly evaluated for accessibility, trust, responsiveness, and effectiveness?	☐	☐
Stakeholder feedback: Is feedback from learners, educators, and families used to improve reporting and support systems?	☐	☐

*Cross References: If you need more detailed guidance on documenting and reporting, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***

4.4. LGBTQI Inclusive Curriculum and Digital Safety

CURRICULUM DESIGN	Yes	No
Age-appropriate SOGIESC content: Is age-appropriate SOGIESC content mandatory in the curriculum at all levels?	☐	☐
Integration across subjects: Are SOGIESC-based anti-bullying themes integrated across subjects, with clear examples and learning objectives?	☐	☐
Teaching resources: Are educators provided with adaptable teaching resources, such as lesson plans, discussion prompts, templates, and activities?	☐	☐
Preventing bullying and cyberbullying: Does the school curriculum include education on SOGIESC-based bullying, digital citizenship, and online safety?	☐	☐
ADAPTATION IN RESTRICTIVE CONTEXTS	Yes	No
Context-sensitive framing: In restrictive contexts, is LGBTQI equality teaching addressed through human rights, learner safety, or anti-bullying frameworks?	☐	☐
Indirect educational approaches: Are indirect approaches such as scenarios, empathy exercises, respect-based discussions, or anonymised case studies used where direct approaches are constrained?	☐	☐
STUDENT EMPOWERMENT	Yes	No
Student participation: Are student councils, peer-led initiatives, and other forms of student participation fostered through the curriculum and structural support?	☐	☐
Digital citizenship and media literacy: Are students taught digital citizenship, media literacy, and safe online behaviour?	☐	☐

MONITORING AND SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No
Review of learning materials: Are learning materials reviewed regularly to remove stereotypes and ensure positive, accurate, and respectful representation?	☐	☐
Evidence-based curriculum improvement: Are curricula and interventions adjusted based on school climate data and other evidence?	☐	☐

Cross References: If you need more detailed guidance on digital citizenship, refer to
● **Tool 2:** *Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.*

4.5. Training and Capacity Building

MANDATORY AND INSTITUTIONALISED TRAINING	Yes	No
Mandatory teacher training: Is certified and publicly funded LGBTQI inclusive training mandatory for all education personnel (pre-service and in-service)?	☐	☐
Integration within existing frameworks: Is training embedded within anti-bullying, socio-emotional learning, human rights, and child protection frameworks?	☐	☐
CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY	Yes	No
Human rights, SOGIESC diversity, and bullying prevention: Are student teachers taught about human rights obligations, legal and policy frameworks, prevalence of SOGIESC-based bullying, SOGIESC diversity, intersectionality, stigma, evidence-based bullying responses, and trauma-informed approaches?	☐	☐
Practical skills and response mechanisms: Are student teachers provided with practical tools and learning opportunities such as referral pathways, incident response protocols, classroom-based prevention activities, and strategies for responding to and preventing bullying and discrimination?	☐	☐
STUDENT EMPOWERMENT	Yes	No
Student participation and leadership: Does the school support student councils, peer-led initiatives, and student participation in curriculum development?	☐	☐
Digital citizenship and media literacy: Are students taught digital citizenship, media literacy, and safe online behaviour? (See  Tool 2 , Section 2.5.)	☐	☐

EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF	Yes	No
Confidence and capacity to respond to incidents: Are staff supported and trained to build the confidence and skills to intervene in bullying incidents and to facilitate respectful discussions on diversity and inclusion?	☐	☐
Well-being, mentoring, and institutional support: Are staff provided with safe spaces, mentoring opportunities, peer-support networks, and legal or institutional backing?	☐	☐
WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH	Yes	No
Whole-school participation: Are school leaders, leadership teams, educators, counsellors, administrative staff, and security personnel included in bullying prevention and inclusion efforts?	☐	☐
Leadership capacity and community engagement: Are school leaders trained to manage parental engagement, to communicate effectively about inclusion initiatives, and to respond to concerns, tensions, and opposition? (See  Tool 2 , Section 3, Classroom Strategies, and Section 4, School Playbook: Responding to Tensions and Opposition.)	☐	☐
Partnerships and external expertise: Does the school collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, where safe and appropriate to support training delivery?	☐	☐
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Yes	No
Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of training: Is training regularly evaluated for effectiveness, and is content updated based on participant feedback, emerging challenges, and evolving school and learner needs?	☐	☐

*Cross References: If you need more detailed guidance on teacher training on anti-bullying and SOGIESC inclusion, refer to  **Tool 3: Framework for a Training Module in SOGIESC for Educators.***

4.6. Data Collection and Monitoring

POLICY AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS	Yes	No
SOGIESC-inclusive data collection: Do national and school policies mandate the collection of data on bullying and discrimination, including SOGIESC-related experiences, where safe?	☐	☐
Legal compliance and safeguarding: Are data collection, reporting, and response mechanisms compliant with child protection, anti-bullying, and privacy laws?	☐	☐
Safe and context-appropriate implementation: Are data collection and monitoring approaches designed to be safe, discreet, and context-sensitive, including through mainstreamed approaches in restrictive environments?	☐	☐
SURVEY DESIGN AND ETHICS	Yes	No
Inclusive data collection: Do school climate, safety, and violence surveys include SOGIESC-related questions, using both quantitative and qualitative methods?	☐	☐
Ethical and safe data collection: Are confidentiality, informed consent, privacy, and trauma-informed approaches used throughout the data collection process?	☐	☐
Context-appropriate indicators: Are proxy indicators, such as perceived safety, sense of belonging, and observed bullying or discrimination, used where direct questions on SOGIESC may not be safe or feasible?	☐	☐

DATA MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING	Yes	No
Disaggregated data collection: Is data disaggregated by several grounds, such as (but not limited to) SOGIESC, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, appearance, and socioeconomic status?	☐	☐
Integration into monitoring systems: Is data collection embedded within Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) or school reporting systems?	☐	☐
Transparency and accountability: Are findings reported transparently, published, and used to establish measurable targets and benchmarks for reducing SOGIESC-based bullying and improving school safety and inclusion?	☐	☐
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Yes	No
Review and integration of data collection tools: Are survey tools, indicators, and data collection strategies regularly reviewed and updated, based on evidence, changing contexts, and stakeholder feedback?	☐	☐

4.7. Partnerships and Community Engagement

POLICY AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS

Yes No

Enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships: Do policies explicitly enable and support partnerships with civil society, youth organisations, and community actors in designing and implementing inclusive education and anti-bullying measures?

☐ ☐

Legal safeguards for inclusion work: Do policies clearly define and communicate legal protections and safeguards for staff and learners engaging in LGBTQI inclusive initiatives, particularly in restrictive contexts?

☐ ☐

MULTI-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS

Yes No

Coalition building for inclusive education: Are coalitions established between schools, LGBTQI organisations, teacher unions, mental health and social services, equality bodies, public authorities, and child protection agencies to support inclusive education and anti-bullying efforts? (See  **Tool 2**, Section 2.4)

☐ ☐

Formalised partnerships: Are partnerships formalised with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and communication channels, in order to ensure coordinated implementation and accountability?

☐ ☐

FAMILY AND CARER ENGAGEMENT

Yes No

Accessible and inclusive information: Are families and carers provided with accessible, non-stigmatising information on LGBTQI identities and bullying prevention in schools?

☐ ☐

Engagement, support, and capacity building: Are workshops, peer-support opportunities, and structured engagement activities offered to families and carers to support understanding and inclusion?

☐ ☐

Proactive dialogue and conflict management: Are strategies in place to proactively and constructively address parental concerns, questions, and resistance in ways that support dialogue and reduce polarisation?

☐ ☐

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Yes	No
Ongoing review and adaption: Are survey tools, indicators, and data collection strategies regularly updated based on emerging evidence, implementation experience, and feedback from learners, staff, and other stakeholders?	☐	☐

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT	Yes	No
Meaningful youth participation: Are LGBTQI young people actively and meaningfully involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programmes?	☐	☐
Protection and support for student leaders: Are safeguards, guidance, support mechanisms, and protections in place for student leaders, especially in restrictive and high-risk contexts?	☐	☐

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION AND SUPPORT	Yes	No
Building inclusive community norms: Are local networks actively engaged to promote and embed inclusive norms that support safe and respectful school environments?	☐	☐
Alignment with community practices: Are school anti-bullying and inclusion initiatives aligned with broader community priorities to strengthen their relevance and long-term sustainability?	☐	☐

SUPPORT IN RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**Yes No**

Safe and discreet reporting mechanisms: Is support for students and staff accessible in a safe manner that prioritises confidentiality and protection?

☐ ☐

Strengthening local capacity and sustainability: Are local LGBTQI groups and youth organisations supported to strengthen their capacity, safety, and sustainability?

☐ ☐

Framing of interventions: Are NGO and programme interventions reframed around universal approaches such as anti-bullying, child protection, and safe school climates when openly LGBTQI content is restricted?

☐ ☐

Coalition-based risk mitigation: Are there coalitions with broader diversity, equality, and inclusion actors, child rights organisations, and anti-violence stakeholders to dilute political risk and strengthen collective impact?

☐ ☐

Youth empowerment through alternative channels: Are youth empowered through online networks and peer-led initiatives when institutional or school-based engagement is limited or blocked?

☐ ☐

Monitoring by equality and human rights bodies: Are national human rights and equality bodies engaged to monitor and document SOGIESC-based bullying?

☐ ☐

Referral pathways and service linkages: Are clear referral pathways in place linking schools with mental health, social, child protection, and LGBTQI support services? (See  **Tool 2**, Section 4.7.)

☐ ☐

Holistic student support: Is holistic support provided, that addresses both immediate safety needs and long-term well-being?

☐ ☐

Mapping of support services: Is there an up-to-date mapping of relevant community resources and contact points for learners, educators, and families?

☐ ☐

CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Yes No

Financial and technical support: Is financial and technical support provided to youth groups and civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to deliver inclusive education and anti-bullying work?

☐☐

Partnership resilience and sustainability: Are partnerships regularly monitored and supported to ensure resilience and sustainability, particularly in restrictive environments?

☐☐

Cross References: *If you need more detailed guidance on alliances beyond the classroom, refer to  **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education.***



**Don't forget
to read the other tools!**

Schools and education authorities play a central role in safeguarding young people's rights, safety, and well-being. Yet across Europe, bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC-based bullying) —including cyberbullying— remains widespread and deeply harmful. Tool 1 supports ministries of education, policymakers, inspectorates, school leaders, and school communities to prevent, prohibit, and respond to SOGIESC-based bullying through clear, rights-based policy guidance and practical implementation support. It helps translate human-rights obligations into concrete measures: reporting and response protocols, leadership actions, whole-school prevention steps, and checklists that can be adapted to both supportive and more restrictive contexts.

Tool 1 is part of the Inclusive Education Toolkit for Preventing and Tackling SOGIESC-based Bullying and Anti-Rights Discourse in Schools, developed within 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.”