



Tool 2

Executive Summary

Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education



What is this tool?

Developed by the Council of Europe SOGIESC Unit in partnership with IGLYO, this tool is part of a three-part toolkit supporting LGBTQI-inclusive education in schools. **Tool 2 – Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education** sits alongside:

- **Tool 1 – Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools**, which provides structural and institutional foundations for safe and inclusive school environments;
- **Tool 3 – Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators**, which supports the design and implementation of competence-based teacher training on LGBTQI-inclusive schools and curricula.

Together, the three tools form a coherent package that connects **policy frameworks**, **narrative resilience** and **educators’ competences** into a systemic approach to advancing LGBTQI-inclusive education.

Who can use this tool?

Tool 2 is designed as a modular resource for a wide range of practitioners. While it is primarily aimed at **schools** and their **leadership teams**, individual **educators**, **school leaders**, **counsellors** and other school-based staff can use the sections most relevant to their roles and contexts. It can also support **NGOs**, **equality bodies** and **civil society organisations** working on inclusive and democratic education, and inform the work of **ministries**, **inspectionates** and other **policymakers** seeking practical guidance for implementation across different settings.

Why is this tool necessary?

Across Europe, all children and young people have a right to **inclusive curricula** in which they feel seen and represented, and to **safe learning environments** that enable learning. Yet educators and school leaders working to build classrooms grounded in human rights, equality and democratic citizenship are increasingly challenged. Anti-rights narratives, politicised disinformation and organised backlash are showing up in classrooms, parent meetings, school boards and local media. Teachers and school leaders are often expected to respond in real time, with limited training and unclear institutional backing.

Tool 2 responds to this gap. It offers an evidence-based, practice-oriented framework to help schools:

- **protect students’ safety and dignity;**

- **support and protect educators;**
- **uphold democratic, inclusive education** in the face of organised backlash.

At the same time, existing national and European frameworks on disinformation, hate speech and democratic citizenship often remain too abstract for practitioners. They rarely address the concrete situations schools face—for example, when social media amplify hostile narratives about LGBTQI inclusion or comprehensive sexuality education, when misinformation circulates among staff or parents, or when a teacher is targeted online for using inclusive materials. Tool 2 is designed to bridge this implementation gap: it translates high-level principles into realistic routines, decision-making tools and alliance-building strategies that can be adapted to both supportive and restrictive contexts, without placing the burden solely on individual educators.

What does this tool do?

The tool brings together European and international evidence from the Council of Europe, the European Commission, UNESCO, the OECD, teachers' unions, and academic research. It translates this into:

- **Classroom routines** that build critical thinking and respectful dialogue;
- **Institutional protocols** for handling backlash, complaints and misinformation;
- **Alliance-building guidance** to work with parents, NGOs and equality bodies;
- **Reflection tools** to follow progress without overloading staff.

Core Insight: Resilience Is Systemic

The central conclusion of the review is simple: schools cannot counter anti-rights discourse through one-off lessons or teacher improvisation. Sustainable resilience depends on four interlocking conditions:

1. **Democratic / critical pedagogy:** Classrooms where students learn to question claims, disagree respectfully and engage with complexity, rather than avoid controversial topics. This means legitimising uncertainty, inviting students to examine how power and norms operate in everyday life, and giving them structured tools to navigate disagreement without targeting or excluding peers.
2. **Critical media and information literacy:** Short, repeated routines – for example *Name the claim → Trace the source → Test the evidence* – that help students recognise manipulation, bias and missing voices. It normalises “slow thinking” about online and offline content, encouraging learners to ask who is speaking, whose experiences are erased, and how emotions are being triggered to mobilise fear, anger or moral panic.

3. **Institutional protection for educators:** Clear incident pathways, documentation, leadership responsibility, union liaison and safeguarding support so that no teacher is left alone to “handle” controversy.
4. **Alliances beyond the classroom:** Collaboration with parents and caregivers, NGOs and youth groups, local authorities, equality bodies and ombudspersons, sharing responsibility and reducing isolation. These alliances provide external expertise, legal and policy backing, and practical support in moments of tension or backlash, and they help reframe inclusion as a shared community project rather than a personal stance of individual educators.

Resilience emerges when these elements are embedded together in a whole-school approach that connects pedagogy, governance and community relationships.

What will you find inside?

The tool is organised into seven sections, moving from context and pedagogical foundations to classroom strategies, leadership responses, alliances, case vignettes and policy-practice alignment.

Section 1 – Introduction

Frames anti-rights discourse as a systemic challenge for schools and positions the tool within the wider project alongside Tools 1 and 3.

Section 2 – Pedagogical foundations

Sets out five pillars that anchor the whole resource:

- democratic and critical pedagogy;
- teacher autonomy and agency;
- intersectional inclusion;
- media and information literacy;
- a governance perspective (schools as microcosms of democratic culture).

This section links key European frameworks (CoE [Digital Citizenship Education](#), EC [disinformation guidelines](#), [UNESCO safety work](#), [OECD TALIS findings](#)) to concrete implications for school practice..

Section 3 – Classroom strategies

Translates the foundations into adaptable, low-preparation tools for educators, including:

- a Critical Questioning Routine (CQR) for analysing claims and sources;
- dialogical and restorative routines to support safe discussion of sensitive topics;
- a short activities bank addressing stereotypes, bias and rights;
- staffroom Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and reflection prompts that strengthen peer learning and confidence.

These strategies are subject-agnostic and designed to fit within realistic workload constraints.

Section 4 – Backlash Playbook

Designed mainly for **school leaders**, this section operationalises institutional responsibility. It offers:

- quick decision guides (“If X happens, do Y”);
- de-escalation strategies that keep learners safe without shutting down discussion;
- documentation templates and incident logs;
- referral pathways for parent complaints, online harassment and mis/disinformation campaigns;
- staff care and protection checklists.

The key message: protecting educators is a systemic obligation, not an individual coping skill.

Section 5 – Alliances beyond the classroom

Explores how schools can build alliances that make inclusion sustainable, including:

- working with parents and caregivers through shared values, plain language and transparent communication;
- partnering with NGOs and youth organisations as co-educators, not one-off “guest experts”;
- collaborating with local authorities, equality bodies and ombudspersons to secure legal clarity and policy alignment.

The section draws on intercultural education, trauma-informed practice and research on school–family–community partnerships to frame relationships as core infrastructure, not an add-on.

Section 6 – Case vignettes

Presents four practice-based scenarios that show the tool in action:

- a rural or small-town school navigating community rumours;
- a faith-based school responding to parent concerns;
- a school supporting a trans or intersex student amid contested narratives;
- a politically polarised context facing community-level backlash.

Each vignette includes educator and leadership moves, plus a brief “What travels / what needs adaptation” reflection to support transfer across different systems.

Section 7 – Policy and practice alignment

Synthesises how the tool connects with national and European commitments on equality, digital citizenship and democratic education. It introduces light-touch reflection prompts to help schools and partners track change over time without adding new reporting burdens.

Closing perspective

This tool is a whole-school resilience framework that weaves together pedagogy, media literacy, governance and community alliances.

It starts from the premise that educators cannot and should not face anti-rights campaigns alone. When schools are backed by clear policies, strong leadership, union and safeguarding support, and meaningful relationships with families and communities, they are far better positioned to:

- protect students' safety, dignity and participation;
- uphold educators' professional integrity and autonomy;
- cultivate democratic, inclusive learning environments where all children and young people can thrive.

In this sense, resilience is relational rather than individual, and inclusion is a shared, systemic responsibility rather than an optional extra.



Inclusive, democratic education depends on classrooms where every learner is safe, respected and represented. However, schools across Europe are increasingly affected by polarisation, disinformation and organised backlash targeting LGBTQI inclusion, inclusive curricula and comprehensive sexuality education. **Tool 2 is designed for teachers, school leaders, education authorities and partners who must navigate these pressures in real time—often with limited guidance and support.** It provides an evidence-based, practice-oriented framework to strengthen schools' capacity to respond to hostile narratives, protect staff and students, and uphold democratic, rights-respecting education through realistic routines, decision-making tools and alliance-building strategies with parents, civil society and equality bodies.

Tool 2 is part of the **Inclusive Education Toolkit for Preventing and Tackling SOGIESC-based bullying and anti-rights discourse in schools and classrooms**, 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.](#)"

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