

Safety and rights for lesbians in Europe

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On International Lesbian Day, we highlight the recent report by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, emphasising the need for targeted policies to protect lesbians from violence and discrimination across Europe

Lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women face profound challenges rooted in discrimination, violence, and systemic inequality. The recent [resolution and report](#) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 03 October highlights the urgent need for comprehensive policies that address these issues. Intersectional discrimination, where sexual orientation and gender intersect for LBQ women and the marginalisation that stems from that intersection, complicates the landscape of human rights that LBQ women should have access to, requiring specific actions to ensure their protection.

The report outlines that LBQ women, including trans and intersex LBQ women, experience multiple forms of violence and harassment, which can manifest in both public and private spheres. Violence ranges from physical assaults and psychological abuse to online harassment, often targeting women who do not conform to traditional gender roles. For instance, [a survey](#) by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency highlighted that 33% of lesbian women in Europe have avoided public spaces out of fear of violence or harassment, demonstrating the pervasive atmosphere of insecurity they face.

This violence is intensified for racialised LBQ women, who navigate an additional layer of discrimination. The report notes that racial stereotypes can subject them to heightened prejudice, affecting their access to healthcare, housing, and employment. Many racialised LBQ women report feeling pressure to conform to heterosexual norms, further marginalising their identities and experiences.

The effect of anti-gender movements

The increasing influence of anti-gender movements across Europe worsens these issues, aiming to silence and delegitimise the rights of LGBTI people, particularly LBQ women. The report emphasises the need for legislative frameworks that protect human rights, asserting that all women should have equal access to the protection and support guaranteed by international conventions, such as the Istanbul Convention. The resolution calls for Member States to enact anti-discrimination laws that address not only sexual orientation but also gender identity and expression and sex characteristics, creating an inclusive environment for all.

Education challenges prejudice

Furthermore, the resolution highlights the importance of inclusive education programmes as a means of challenging prejudice. Educational institutions must serve as spaces for progress, promoting understanding of diverse identities while dismantling harmful stereotypes. By co-creating a culture of respect and inclusivity, we can work towards reducing the stigma and violence faced by LBQ women.

Comprehensive policies

To move beyond mere visibility and call for actionable change, the resolution notes that governments must adopt comprehensive policies that protect the rights of LBQ women, ensuring that their voices are heard in legislative processes. This includes but is not limited to recognising the parental rights of same-sex couples, ensuring equitable access to healthcare, and supporting emergency shelters that cater specifically to the needs of LBQ women.

By adopting the recommendations presented in the resolution, we can create a safer and more inclusive Europe where every lesbian can live authentically and with less fear of violence or discrimination. It is crucial to transform visibility into meaningful action, ensuring that no one is overlooked in the continuous fight for equality.