

Submission by Scottish Lesbians to the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for 2026-2030

This initiative is based on an initialism, LGBTIQ. The initiative appears to assume that 'LGBTIQ' refers to one cohesive group of people, when in fact it is made up of several different and distinct groups, each with its own needs and priorities. These include some points of conflict, which the initiative does not acknowledge. Scottish Lesbians is an organisation and not for profit company formed to address the needs and raise the voices of lesbians in Scotland, and our response is given from a lesbian perspective, the L in your initialism.

We believe that an initiative which groups together different and distinct communities in this way does not actually meet the needs of anyone. We recently intervened in the UK Supreme Court in the case of *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers*, a case concerning the definition of 'woman' for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. The intervention, submitted jointly with The Lesbian Project and LGB Alliance, can be downloaded from our website here: <https://scottishlesbians.org.uk/resources>

The purpose behind our intervention in the Supreme Court case was to clarify that 'sex' must refer to biological sex; without this, same-sex attraction loses its meaning and we lose our protection as lesbians. We were relieved and pleased that the Supreme Court judges found in favour of *For Women Scotland* and, by extension, in favour of the right of lesbians to retain our protections on the grounds of sexual orientation.

In your 'call for evidence' document, you state that 'hate' is 'fuelled by the rise of anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ narratives'. You include the term 'gender ideology' as an example of this 'hate'. By this definition, lesbians (and indeed gay men) are likely to fall foul of your definition of hate, simply by arguing for our own protection on the grounds of our sex and our sexual orientation, and by rejecting gender ideology. There is an unresolvable conflict between gender ideology (an ideology which asserts that men can become lesbians) and our rights as lesbian women. It is not possible to protect lesbians or gay men under the grouping LGBTIQ.

We would like to draw your attention to these issues in relation to lesbians and the impact of gender ideology:

- Young lesbians are over-represented in gender clinics
- Conversion practice bans run the risk that young lesbians and gay men will not be able to access the support necessary to allow them to explore issues around their sexual orientation
- There are now very few exclusively lesbian spaces, and young lesbians in particular need to be able to find and connect with other lesbians
- Lesbians who speak up about our sex-based rights are often ostracised, abused, or barred from services
- It is impossible to gather accurate data or to conduct research into the lives and needs of lesbians unless we have an accurate definition of 'lesbian'.

- Lesbian dating apps and websites now often have a high proportion of men stating that they are lesbians. Lesbians who object to this have been banned from using the services.
- Lesbians who speak critically about gender ideology run the risk of being reported for hate speech
- Groups and services which are funded to be LGBTQ+ typically offer no services which address the needs of lesbians

Some of the above points arose as themes in our original qualitative research study, which you can download from our website here: <https://scottishlesbians.org.uk/resources>

We do not think that your initiative, based on the uncritical grouping together of LGBTIQ, will be effective, and nor will it represent the interests of lesbians or gay men. We would suggest that there is a crucial choice to be made at the outset of this initiative: either treat lesbians and lesbian groups as stakeholders, consult with us and interrogate the issues properly, or amend the initiative to make it clear that it is a TQ initiative only, for adherents of gender identity theory and of no benefit to lesbians.