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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

on the European citizens' initiative (ECI) 'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union'

(C/2026/2991)

1. INTRODUCTION: THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union' ([1]) is the 13th European citizens' initiative ('ECI') submitted to the Commission for examination after reaching the thresholds ([2]) required by the Treaty on European Union ('TEU') and Regulation (EU) 2019/788 ([3]) ('the ECI Regulation').

The organisers describe their objectives as follows:

> *We call on the European Commission to propose a binding legal ban on conversion practices targeting LGBTQ+ citizens in the European Union:*
>
> *Conversion Practices are interventions aimed at changing, repressing or suppressing the sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression of LGBTQ+ persons.*
>
> *Such practices, due to their discriminatory, degrading, harmful and fraudulent nature have been qualified as torture by the United Nations, and are currently being banned in a growing number of States.*
>
> *The EU plays a key role in the protection of fundamental rights and should take actions to fight against all inhuman practices. The Commission should propose a directive adding conversion practices to the list of euro-crimes and/or amend the ongoing directive on equality (2008) to include a ban on these practices.*
>
> *Furthermore, to fight against the legislative moratorium, the Commission should also enforce a non-binding resolution calling for a widespread ban of conversion practices in the EU.*
>
> *Finally, we call on the Commission to amend the Victims' Rights Directive to establishes [sic] minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of conversion practices.*
>
> *All member states should introduce a ban on conversion practices or review their current ones.*

Following the organisers' request on 27 November 2023, the Commission registered the initiative on 24 January 2024 ([4]). An annex submitted with the request for registration of the ECI provides further details of the subject matter, objectives and background of the initiative. In particular, the organisers list recommendations for a ban on conversion practices from the report 'Conversion Practices on LGBT+ People' ([5]), requested by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament in 2023.

The organisers collected the required 'statements of support' (signatures) between 17 May 2024 and 17 May 2025. On 17 November 2025, after Member State authorities had verified the statements of support, the organisers submitted the initiative to the Commission. On the same date, the Commission published the notice confirming the validity of the initiative in the ECI register.

([1]) Ban on conversion practices in the European Union.

([2]) On the grounds of Article 3 of the ECI Regulation, an initiative is valid if: (a) it has received the support of at least one million citizens of the Union in accordance with Article 2(1) ('signatories') from at least one quarter of the Member States; and (b) in at least one quarter of the Member States, the number of signatories is at least equal to the minimum number set out in Annex I, corresponding to the number of the Members of the European Parliament elected in each Member State, multiplied by the total number of Members of the European Parliament, at the time of registration of the initiative.

([3]) Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative (OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 55).

([4]) Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/442 of 24 January 2024 on the request for registration, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of the European citizens' initiative entitled Ban on conversion practices in the European Union.

([5]) European Parliament, 'Conversion Practices on LGBT+ People', 2023.

The organisers presented the objectives of the initiative in a meeting with the Commission on 12 December 2025 ([6]) and during a public hearing organised by the European Parliament on 2 March 2026. During the public hearing, organisers specified that they would welcome it if the European Commission adopts a recommendation encouraging Member States to take measures to end conversion practices within their national contexts ([7]).

Subsequently, on 25 March 2026, Parliament held a plenary debate on the 'Ban on conversion practices' initiative ([8]).

This communication sets out the Commission's legal and political conclusions on the initiative, the action it intends to take, its reasons for doing so and the envisaged timeline, in accordance with Article 15(2) of the ECI Regulation.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 The issue at stake

Conversion practices 'are deeply harmful interventions that rely on the medically false idea that LGBT[IQ+] people are sick, inflicting severe pain and suffering, and resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage' ([9]). These practices, which can include verbal abuse, coercion, isolation, forced medication, electric shocks, physical and sexual abuse ([10]), have in fact no therapeutic value, since there is nothing to 'cure' or 'suppress'.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stopped classifying 'homosexuality' as a mental disorder in 1990, by removing it from the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10). In 2019 the WHO also removed 'gender identity disorder' from the 'Mental and behavioural disorders' chapter of the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11) ([11]).

In addition, major European and international bodies have publicly opposed conversion practices, including the World Medical Association in 2013 ([12]), the World Psychiatric Association in 2016 ([13]) and the European Psychiatric Association in 2022 ([14]).

According to the 2023 LGBTIQ survey carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ([15]), one in four (24%) LGBTIQ+ people have experienced conversion practices, including physical and sexual violence, verbal abuse and humiliation. This figure almost doubles, to 47%, for trans women and 48% for trans men.

Furthermore, the UN report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity indicates that the phenomenon of conversion practices is global and disproportionately affects young LGBTIQ+ people ([16]).

2.2 European policy context

Everyone in the European Union should feel safe and free to be their authentic self. Equality and non-discrimination are founding values and fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

([6]) Meeting of the organisers of the 'Ban on conversion practices in the EU', from the European citizens' initiative, with the European Commission.
([7]) European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs ordinary meeting, public hearing: Ban on conversion practices in the European Union of 2 March 2026.
([8]) European Parliament, plenary debate of 25 March 2026.
([9]) United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Practices of so-called 'conversion therapy', 1 May 2020.
([10]) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Resolution 2534 (2026): Protecting LGBTI persons from 'conversion practices', adopted on 29 January 2026.
([11]) Replacing it with 'gender incongruence' in the new 'Conditions related to sexual health' chapter of the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11).
([12]) World Medical Association statement on natural variations of human sexuality, adopted by the 64th World Medical Association General Assembly, October 2013.
([13]) World Psychiatric Association position statement on gender identity and same-sex orientation, attraction and behaviours, September 2016.
([14]) European Psychiatric Association statement on conversion 'therapies' and LGBTQ patients, January 2022.
([15]) EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads – Progress and challenges, 2024.
([16]) United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Practices of so-called 'conversion therapy', 1 May 2020.

President Ursula von der Leyen mandated Commissioner Hadja Lahbib, in her mission letter ([17]), to 'propose a renewed LGBTIQ Equality Strategy for post-2025. This should notably focus on the continued and persisting hate-motivated harassment and violence, including online, and banning the practice of conversion therapy.'

The LGBTIQ+ equality strategy 2026-2030 ([18]), adopted on 8 October 2025, announced that 'the Commission will take appropriate action to combat conversion practices, with a particular focus on supporting Member States, who play a critical role in this area. … In developing its approach to combating conversion practices, the Commission will, in particular, take into account the recent European citizens' initiative, "Ban on conversion practices in the European Union"'.

Protecting LGBTIQ+ people from abuse, harmful practices and hatred, is a priority for the Commission and a key pillar of this strategy. Preventing and combating all forms of violence and dismantling hateful narratives is essential in order to uphold the common EU values of equality, human dignity and respect of fundamental rights for all.

The European Parliament, in its resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union adopted on 29 April 2026 ([19]), 'condemns conversion practices, such as practices aimed at changing, repressing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, as violations of fundamental rights, and … further urges, in this regard, the Commission to present a proposal for a legal act establishing an EU ban on conversion practices in all Member States as a follow-up action to the "Ban on conversion practices in the European Union" European Citizens' Initiative'. A similar call was made in its resolution on the Commission's 2025 Rule of Law report of 29 April 2026 ([20]) and on the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, adopted on 8 February 2024 ([21]).

The Council Presidency conclusions on the safety of LGBTI persons in the European Union ([22]), adopted on 9 June 2023 with the support of 25 Member States, invite Member States, within their national competences, to 'protect LGBTI persons, both online and offline, from … harmful practices, including being subjected to "conversion practices"'.

In addition, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted an opinion on 29 April 2026 in support of the ECI, recommending that the Commission 'introduce a proposal for a legally binding EU ban on conversion practices. The proposed ban should prohibit all activities and the advertisement of such activities that aim to change, suppress or erase the sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression of a person' ([23]).

Moreover, on 29 January 2026 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution ([24]) calling on its Member States to prohibit conversion practices that aim to change, repress or suppress or eliminate a person's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, providing for criminal sanctions. The resolution states that action to prevent and counter the harm caused by conversion practices is a public health imperative and a matter of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, reaffirming the importance of personal autonomy, as protected under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It also proposes a set of measures concerning victim support and protection, training and public awareness.

([17]) President Ursula von der Leyen, mission letter to Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, European Commission, 1 December 2024.
([18]) European Commission, Union of Equality: LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030, COM(2025) 725 final.
([19]) European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2026 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2024 and 2025 (P10_TA(2026)0146).
([20]) European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2026 on the Commission's Rule of Law report (P10_TA(2026)0147).
([21]) European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2024 on the implementation of the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (P9_TA(2024)0076).
([22]) Council of the European Union, Presidency conclusions on the safety of LGBTI persons in the European Union, 9 June 2023.
([23]) European Economic and Social Committee, Opinion 'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union', adopted on 29 April 2026 (SOC/854-EESC-2025).
([24]) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Resolution 2534 (2026): Protecting LGBTI persons from 'conversion practices', adopted on 29 January 2026.

2.3 **National legal framework**

So far eight Member States have adopted laws banning conversion practices ([25]). The scope of these laws varies, and they generally criminalise or prohibit attempts to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, and in most cases also gender expression, under administrative law. Most of these national laws include aggravated penalties for offences committed against minors or vulnerable adults. Sanctions include fines in all of them and imprisonment in most of them. Advertising conversion practices is also prohibited by all these national laws.

3. **RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE**

The ECI calls on the Commission to: (i) 'propose a directive adding conversion practices to the list of euro-crimes and/or amend the ongoing directive on equality (2008) to include a ban on these practices'; (ii) 'amend the Victims' Rights Directive to establishes [*sic*] minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of conversion practices'; (iii) 'enforce a non-binding resolution calling for a widespread ban of conversion practices' in the EU'.

Ultimately, the ECI is clear in indicating that 'all Member States should introduce a ban on conversion practices'.

To respond to the initiative, the Commission underlines that:

(a) The Commission intends to adopt a Commission recommendation in 2027, with the purpose of calling on Member States to put a ban of conversion practices in place within their legal framework.

(b) By contrast, the Commission considers that it would not be effective, for the reasons set out below, to make a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purposes of Article 11(4) TEU.

3.1 **Adopting a Commission recommendation to achieve the ECI's objective**

The Commission intends to adopt a recommendation, a legal act based on Article 292 TFEU, protecting LGBTIQ+ people, particularly the most vulnerable, and combating conversion practices aimed at changing, repressing or suppressing their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. A Commission recommendation is expected to meet the substantive objectives of the ECI.

Acting by a recommendation, the Commission will recognise the critical role that Member States play in this area and focus on supporting them in banning conversion practices, encouraging national action to extend the legal ban across the EU.

It is intended that the recommendation will build on good practices from existing bans on conversion practices in Member States, calling on all of them to have a ban in place. The Commission will also consider including, in the recommendation, recommendations for other complementary measures, such as actions to facilitate access to justice and compensations for victims and survivors building on legal obligations stemming from the Victims' Rights Directive when such practices are criminalised; training courses for mental health and other relevant medical practitioners.

The Commission intends to invite Member States to provide information on how the recommendation will be implemented in their national context, allowing assessment of how, in practice, the recommendation is implemented on the ground.

The preparation of the recommendation will be underpinned by a structured dialogue on the topic that the Commission intends to promote through the expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality, which brings together Member States, the Commission and stakeholders to enhance LGBTIQ+ equality under the high-level group on non-discrimination, equality and diversity.

Moreover, as announced in the LGBTIQ+ equality strategy, the Commission will set up an LGBTIQ+ policy forum with LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations: the first edition of this forum will take place before the end of 2026 in Brussels and will focus on conversion practices.

([25]) Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal.

Finally, as also announced in the LGBTIQ+ equality strategy, the Commission has launched a study on conversion practices, which will provide the basis for the Commission recommendation by considering aspects such as the level of coercion and pressure involved in such practices.

3.2 **Reasons for not making a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purposes of Article 11(4) TEU**

The Commission explains in its registration decision that 'it cannot be excluded that the Commission could propose the addition of certain forced conversion practices to the **list of EU crimes on the basis of Article 83(1) TFEU**, provided that the requirements of this provision be duly justified and in particular that such conversion practices could be considered to amount to a "particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension resulting from the nature or impact of such offences or from a special need to combat them on a common basis".'

A new legislative proposal under this provision would require, as a first step, a new legal basis to be established through a unanimous Council decision extending the list of euro-crimes. The crimes listed under Article 83(1) TFEU concern areas of particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension. Only if the Council were to extend the list of euro-crimes would the Commission be able to propose, as a second step, a directive under this new legal basis.

The Commission considers that launching such an initiative to extend the list of crimes under Article 83(1) TFEU would not effectively combat the phenomenon of conversion practices. Although it cannot be excluded that certain forced conversion practices fulfil the criterion of relating to areas of particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension, only a small proportion of such practices are likely to do so.

The 2008 Commission **proposal for an Equal Treatment Directive** ([26]) aims to extend protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation to areas outside employment. Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, the proposal is based on Article 19 TFEU, so unanimity in the Council is required, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

Although the proposal has been under discussion in Council for almost 18 years, and the vast majority of Member States support adoption of the compromise text tabled by the Belgian Presidency of the Council in the first half of 2024 ([27]), it has not yet been possible to reach an agreement.

Any new amendments to the current compromise text would not form part of the Commission's response to the ECI, as the Council is responsible for making such amendments. In addition, the imposition of a ban on conversion practices would not fit in within the cross-cutting focus and scope of this proposal.

The Commission reiterates that a **new proposal for legislative measures on the basis of Article 19 TFEU** could be made if conversion practices constituted discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation within the meaning of that article. Although it is likely that a number of those practices would meet that condition, the Commission does not consider a new proposal under Article 19 TFEU to be the most effective way of addressing the objectives of the ECI, given, in particular, the difficulties associated with unanimous adoption by Council.

Furthermore, the registration decision explains that 'As regards the establishment of minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of conversion practices, the Commission could propose **amendments to Directive 2012/29/EU on victims' rights on the basis of Article 82(2) TFEU**.'

([26]) Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008) 0426 final).

([27]) Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment (Article 19) - Progress Report (10817/24).

The Commission does not consider it warranted to propose new amendments to the Victims' Rights Directive ([28]). Following the Commission proposal for a revision of the Victims' Rights Directive in July 2023 ([29]) the co-legislators provisionally agreed on a revised Victims' Rights Directive in December 2025 ([30]). The new rules will reinforce the rights of all victims, for instance through better access to information and support, facilitated crime reporting, better protection of victims' personal data, strengthened individual assessment of victims' needs, facilitated access to compensation from the offender and better coordination and cooperation among the people who contact victims. Victims of sexual violence will benefit from targeted and integrated support services that include access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Insofar as conversion practices are criminalised under national law, the provisions of the Directive as transposed in national law will apply to victims of such crimes.

The Directive underlines that special attention should be paid to victims with specific needs in order to protect them from secondary and repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation. Victims must receive an individual assessment to identify specific protection, needs and to determine whether, and to what extent, they would benefit from special measures. In Member States where conversion practices are criminalised, victims of such practices should therefore benefit from the protection and support framework provided by the Directive, including individual assessment and access to appropriate support services.

Finally, the Commission considers that **adopting a proposal for a Council recommendation** would not allow the objectives of the ECI to be addressed in a comprehensive and efficient manner. As regards proposing a Council recommendation on the basis of Article 83(1) TFEU in conjunction with Article 292 TFEU, it is not at present possible to tell whether certain conversion practices could fall under an area of 'particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension' within the meaning of Article 83(1) TFEU. As regards proposing a Council recommendation on the basis of Article 19 TFEU in conjunction with Article 292 TFEU, the challenges outlined above for legislative action based on Article 19 TFEU would also affect such a recommendation.

4. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In reply to the European citizens' initiative 'Ban on conversion practices in the EU', the Commission intends to adopt a recommendation, which is expected to achieve the substantive objectives of the ECI, in 2027.

It is intended that the recommendation will build on good practices from existing bans on conversion practices in Member States. It will be based on a process of comprehensive consultation, including through the expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality and the new LGBTIQ+ policy forum. Findings from a study launched by the Commission on the subject will also underpin the recommendation.

The Commission recommendation is envisaged to:

— recommend that Member States ban conversion practices in their national legal order;

— protect LGBTIQ+ people and combat conversion practices targeting their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression;

— supplement the recommended ban on conversion practices with recommendations for other measures providing, e.g., training for practitioners;

— invite Member States to provide information on how the recommendation is implemented in their national context, as a basis for assessing such implementation.

([28]) Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

([29]) Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA (COM/2023/424 final).

([30]) Council press release: the EU strengthens the protection and support of victims of crime, 10 December 2025.