

Pride in the time of COVID-19

[Blog](#), [Civil Rights and Freedom](#), [Community Organising](#), [Covid-19](#), [Pride](#)

As 300 Pride events, and counting, have been called off across Europe, President of the [European Pride Organisers Association](#), Kristine Garina talks about what this will mean for the LGBTI community, and how we can come together to rise to this critical challenge.

By last weekend the number of LGBTI Pride events impacted by COVID-19 reached 300. In every region of the world, the hard-working and dedicated volunteers who lead these events have had to make the devastating decision to cancel or postpone their 2020 Pride, and in Europe more than 150 have been affected already, including [EuroPride in Thessaloniki](#), [Tbilisi Pride](#) in Georgia, and [Baltic Pride](#) in Estonia.

I imagine that everyone reading this blog has been to a Pride march or at least knows of their importance. **Every Pride changes lives**, and for some people will be the first time in their lives that they have felt loved, included, valued, cherished, and part of a community. And it's that impact, that opportunity to create love and solidarity, which will sustain the Pride movement through this year and beyond COVID-19.

The challenge ahead

But it is going to be a challenge. Like most civil society organisations in our sector, the vast majority of Prides are poorly-funded and only just manage to raise the funds they need each year to deliver their events. COVID-19 is adding to costs, because some Prides are having to pay suppliers for cancelled contracts, and others are not getting money from funders and sponsors. The impact may be that some Pride organisations become insolvent and close down.

As a consequence, the European Pride Organisers Association (EPOA) has been urging its members to think about financial resilience: **how can Pride organisations adapt their plans for 2020 to ensure the organisation can be sustained beyond COVID-19?** This might involve frank and honest discussions with funders, municipalities, sponsors and partners. Suppliers might be asked to move contract dates rather than to cancel and incur costs. And for some — perhaps not now, but in the future — it might include asking the community to give financial support. It can also mean considering whether their 2020 event is *cancelled* or *postponed* — and being frank in communications with their community. Many Prides are considering online events as an alternative, enabling their LGBTI community to participate, albeit at a reduced level.

At EPOA, we've also been signposting our members to the [resources from ILGA-Europe](#), [ILGA World](#) and other partner organisations. There are some great resources being developed for civil society organisations, many of them relevant and useful to Pride organisers.

The needs of our communities

It's become clear that the needs resulting from COVID-19 are not just practical and financial but also emotional, as the impact takes a very personal toll on people. We've been organising a weekly online 'meetup' for our members to come together, chat and socialise, simply providing a place for friends and colleagues to come together. Checking in on each other is really critical at this time.

At a global level we've been working with our partner InterPride — the worldwide Pride network — to coordinate our movement's international response to COVID-19. We have a team with representatives from Pride networks all over the world meeting weekly to discuss the impact in each region, and what resources and support is needed. We are delivering a series of webinars on various topics including crisis communications and mental health and wellbeing.

We're also now developing *Global Pride*, which will take place on Saturday 27 June. Over 24 hours, from the far east to the far west, Pride organisations will deliver speeches, human rights activism and advocacy, musical performances and entertainment via a live stream, accessible by anyone with a smartphone, tablet or television anywhere in the world. Every Pride will be included and in the coming weeks we'll be asking LGBTI organisations to submit suggestions for content they can provide, and we look forward to collaborating with ILGA Europe and its members. **Global Pride has the potential to reach millions of people and bring our community together in these unprecedented and challenging times.**