

What Pride Reminds: How anti-gender forces and blocks to progress on HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia are intertwined

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

In moments like these, where even our former allies are using us to advance their own political goals, pride and its value become ever clearer.

Pride is protest and a celebration of our diversity. This June has brought a complex moment into focus — with a pride march returning to Warsaw just days after Hungary passed an “anti-propaganda” law banning the teaching of anything LGBTI-related in schools, as one governing party in Spain re-took control of the legal gender recognition law reform process from a politician who blocked the process for months and herself holds so-called “gender critical” views and a storm of online hate rocks LGBTI activists in Albania, and as the grip of the pandemic loosens in some parts of the region while others are still struggling to control the pandemic — a battle in which access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment, alongside vital care for trans and intersex people, were too frequently deprioritised.

In the context of COVID-19, [LGBTI organisations across the region reported breakdowns in healthcare for trans and intersex people](#), as life-saving transition-related healthcare was cancelled or postponed, and as travel to a trusted doctor became difficult or impossible. For example, intersex people are frequently subjected to medical trauma, and often seek healthcare from only trusted providers, who may be far from home, even requiring cross-border travel. Due to national lockdowns and restrictions, life-saving transition-related healthcare was cancelled or postponed, and travel to a trusted doctor became difficult or impossible. Similarly, [breakdowns in HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services were reported around the region](#). As the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Europe and Central Asia [dramatically impacts gay and bisexual men and trans people](#), homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia remain all too prevalent, pushing LGBTI people into the closet and keeping them from seeking effective HIV interventions for fear of stigma, discrimination, and ostracisation.

This double-edged decrease in services exposed LGBTI people — as well as all people living with HIV, people with disabilities, migrants, racialised people, and systemically marginalised people — to a crisis in resources that has yet to be resolved. LGBTI organisations, as well as some HIV/AIDS response organisations, redirected resources to purely humanitarian means, dropping their vital advocacy and policy work to ensure that community members survive the COVID-19 crisis. This redirection created a chasm in the political space, which is especially dangerous — policy is moving forward, and too many of our demands fail to make it to the table.

In moments like these, where even our former allies are using us to advance their own political goals, pride and its value become ever clearer. Pride started as a protest, a riot against repression from a state determined to erase us — and most specifically those of us who are trans women, who are sex workers, who are migrants, who are Black and people of colour, those who are HIV positive. Those efforts from states remain, and we are left scrambling to meet our basic needs, let alone to advance protections of our human rights. But pride is our moment — one where we come together to heal, to regroup, to celebrate the beauty and brilliance of LGBTI people, and remains, at its core, a reminder to ourselves that we must continue to fight.

And when we fight, we win.