Europe must lead: TGEU calls for urgent response to global health crisis impacting trans lives

article, fundraising, health & depathologisation

TGEU — Trans Europe and Central Asia — calls on European leaders to take immediate action in response to a worsening global health and human rights crisis disproportionately impacting trans people and other marginalised communities.

A sudden and reckless decision by the US government in January 2025 to defund key global health programs has triggered a public health and human rights emergency that demands urgent action, specifically the exclusion of trans healthcare and gender-related services from emergency aid packages has cut off vital resources for some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Without swift intervention, lifesaving care for trans people, including HIV prevention and treatment, will be severely disrupted across Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. While a partial waiver was issued by the US Administration on 29 January 2025, it explicitly excludes funding for trans-specific healthcare, gender-related programs, and services for key populations particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

This is not just a policy decision—it is a calculated act of cruelty that condemns trans people to suffering and death. It is a decision that has been made in complete disregard of public health principles and the US government's own commitments under the international human rights framework, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The ripple effects of rising anti-trans hostility are already being felt across Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Legislative attacks on trans rights – including proposals to enshrine gender binarity into the laws of Albania, Latvia, and Slovakia, as well as rising anti-LGBT rhetoric in Kazakhstan – mirror global trends of political scapegoating and the erosion of democratic rights.

This comes on top of announcements that the Netherlands will slash its foreign aid, a key resource for initiatives globally working to advance sexual health and reproductive rights, LGBTIQ rights, and gender equality.

This is the occasion for Europe to stand to its values, support those defending our shared values of dignity, equality, and human rights for all, and mitigate the severe impact on marginalised communities, such as trans people.

Reckless US decision shows severe impact in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus

Immediate service disruptions

Trans communities already face extreme barriers to healthcare—this deliberate exclusion from emergency health aid has further isolated trans people from lifesaving treatments, as confirmed by our members. In Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, lifesaving antiretroviral therapy (ART), PrEP, and mental health support are now at risk of being cut off completely – and they are already facing huge barriers to accessing those life-saving initiatives. Trans-led health initiatives that have successfully reduced HIV transmission are now being forced to shut

down, placing entire communities in jeopardy.

The collapse of trans community organisations

This decision to withdraw US donor support including but not limited to stop work orders on USAID, the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), grants from local US embassies and AJWS have left trans organisations facing bankruptcy and closure, and has devastated trans communities in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, where movements have fought tirelessly for survival amid rising anti-trans hostility.

Loss of support for trans organisations at the regional and international level

Regional and intermediary organisations, like TGEU, are equally forced to halt vital programmes in the EECCA region and are now facing forced financial instability, with a reduction in the scope of our work and potential costs cutting, limiting our ability to support trans communities in highly vulnerable regions.

Boost to opposition against the human rights of trans people

Essential advocacy and resistance by trans organisations against anti-trans instrumentalisation in the region and the recent proliferation of anti-trans legislations (Kyrgyzstan, Georgia) are forcibly halted. This will provide a boost to authoritarian actors, increase aggression and crackdowns against trans people in the region. It goes to the heart of social cohesion, **democracy, fundamental freedoms, stability, and the rule of law** in these countries.

Europe must lead and rise to the occasion

This is not just about a policy decision – it is a test of Europe's commitment to its core values of human dignity, equality, and justice. Will European leaders stand by as trans people are pushed further to the margins? Or will they rise to the occasion and reaffirm the EU's position as a global human rights leader?

Global actors must step up their support for human rights, global health, and the human rights of trans people. Governments need to reinforce their commitment to international human rights by making concrete pledges for uninterrupted global health and human rights work. We need political leaders to stand up to the bullying and erasure tactics, and publicly condemn these harmful decisions that threaten marginalised communities, especially trans people that are driven by transphobia and political opportunism.

European governments must act now to safeguard fundamental rights, EU institutions must reinforce their leadership in global health and human rights, and pharmaceutical companies must ensure continued access to critical medicines, regardless of political shifts.

We specifically ask the following:

To European governments & EU institutions:

- Reinforce Europe's leadership by ensuring uninterrupted global health and human rights work.
- Provide immediate emergency aid to protect trans communities.
- Provide emergency and long-term funding support
- Secure long-term commitments to essential health programs.
- Immediately reinstate PEPFAR funding without exclusions

To multilateral agencies and philanthropic organisations:

- Step in where others have failed – prevent the collapse of trans-led movements in Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.
- Ensure continuity of essential healthcare services for trans people

To pharmaceutical companies:

- Ensure affordable ART and PrEP access for trans people, regardless of shifting donor policies.

To civil societies and allies:

- Mobilise against the rollback of human rights and push for strong, public condemnations of harmful policies that isolate trans people from essential services.

Trans lives are not expendable.

TGEU's Executive Director, Ymania Brown said: **"*The time for hesitation is over. European leaders must decide – will they defend democracy, equality, and human rights? Or will they stand by as trans lives are erased? This is Europe's moment to lead. Step up now.*"**

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