

# As often well-funded right-wing forces rise, one in three LGBTI organisations operate on less than 55 euro a day

[Blog](#), [Funding](#)

ILGA-Europe's latest report shows that one in three LGBTI organisations in Europe and Central Asia are working with a budget under 20,000 euro per year – that's just under 55 euro a day — all the while facing and responding to the rise of often well-funded anti-LGBTI forces and their effect on people's daily lives. And that's just a small part of the bigger picture.

In 2020, apart from their usual (not so) ordinary job of improving lives and securing human rights for LGBTI people, LGBTI organisations had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As reports confirmed, LGBTI people were disproportionately [impacted](#) by the health crisis. In many contexts, civil society organisations took over the role of the state in supporting impacted individuals. They had to attend to the urgent needs of the most marginalised members of their communities as inequalities kept deepening and right-wing rhetoric, fake news and hate kept growing.

We put a survey out asking about financial resources LGBTI organisations have for the work they are doing. At the heart of the resulting report about the availability and accessibility of resources for LGBTI organisations in the region lies the voices of LGBTI activists who are at the front lines of responding to changing realities in their local contexts. With the data from our [report](#), ILGA-Europe will advocate for more and better resources for LGBTI activism in Europe and Central Asia.

We asked organisations about their budgets in 2020: how much paid staff they were able to afford; how much external funding they had; and how much of it was available to be spent freely rather than tied to a specific project. We asked whether they have been able to build savings; what are the sources of their funding; and what are the key barriers to accessing it. We wanted to know more about the nature of work LGBTI organisations are doing in reality — what are the burning priorities for them and whether they have money to do the work they need to do.

We paid attention to other resources as well — time, energy and emotional toll of their work — because burnout is often a result of this kind of work. We looked closely too at the sources of burnout in different regions.

Almost 300 organisations across Europe and Central Asia responded to our survey. Here are ten key things we learned about how LGBTI organisations are operating from their answers.

- **Access to external funding has improved** since our last funding needs assessment in 2017, but LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia continue to work with very little resources. More than half have budgets under 50,000 euro (under 140 euro per day).
- **In 2020, one third had less than 20,000 euro of external funding (less than 55 euro per day).** And if an organisation works with specific groups in the LGBTI population (let's say with trans and non-binary people, LGBTI older people, lesbians) it is more likely to be operating with a lower budget (under 20,000 euro) and less likely to have paid staff, compared to an organisation that focuses on LGBTI people in general. In 2020, almost every sixth LGBTI organisation had zero budget or budgets below 5,000 euro

(which means working for free or having maximum of 416 euro per month).

- **Every fourth organisation had no external funding whatsoever**, and if you are in Central and Western Asia and Southern Europe, your organisation is more likely to have no external budget, compared to your counterparts in other regions.
- LGBTI organisations are increasingly **keen to do more intersectional work but lack the necessary funding** to do so — for example, about half of LGBTI organisations would do work with and for trans and gender non-conforming people, LGBTI young people and LGBTI people with disabilities if they had more funding.
- Across the board, LGBTI organisations prioritise **community building, communication, building partnerships, and the provision of health and social services**. And yet three quarters of LGBTI organisations reported that they lack funding for the activities they prioritise. They do it without funding at all, or without dedicating funding (relying on their core funding).
- **Nearly all efforts related to health and social services** were carried out by LGBTI organisations without any dedicated funding, relying instead on core funding or no funding at all. This is while every second organisation is engaged in some form of social and health service provision. Also, one in two organisations reported that this work has increased since the pandemic and the same number reported their inability to meet community needs as a source of stress.
- **Almost 85% LGBTI organisations experience burnout**, with main reasons being not being able to meet needs of their communities who come for help; responding to the pandemic, and responding to right-wing, anti-LGBTI and anti-gender threats and attacks. If you are a trans/gender non-conforming organisation, you experience more sources of burnout comparing to other LGBTI organisations.
- **If you are an LGBTI organisation in Eastern Europe you have specific sources of burnout**. These invariably are negative attention towards your staff and volunteers; members of your community experiencing threats; and you as an organisation having to respond to anti-LGBTI, anti-gender and anti-right groups and individuals.
- **Irrespective of their geopolitical location, LGBTI organisations face common barriers in accessing the funding**. Almost three quarters of all LGBTI organisations in the survey shared that funding opportunities do not support the types of activities that are most important to them; funders do not focus on the specific and primary population(s) the organisation serves; and funders require spending money in ways that prevent building up savings or reserves.
- **For organisations working in Eastern Europe**, there is an added challenge of national laws limiting the capacity to receive funding from outside the country or limiting their operations. This barrier is much higher than for organisations in any other region.

Behind this complex picture, there is a powerful story of the persistence, dedication, and resilience of LGBTI activists who amidst growing opposition, rising oppression and an unfolding pandemic have continued work relentlessly for and with their communities. This story needs to be heard and the price of this work needs to be acknowledged.

More than this, proper alignment between funders and LGBTI movements is imperative. Anyone who can and wants to start supporting, or who wants to step-up their commitment to support LGBTI organisations, must do it now in ways that can realistically bring about positive change.