Remarkable and resilient Prides across Europe

Blog, Civil Rights and Freedom, Anti-racism, France, Intersectionality, Pride, Romania, Trans, Turkey, Ukraine

> Amid political turmoil, war, social issues and cultural changes, Pride celebrations in Europe continue to demonstrate the resilience and determination of LGBTI communities

Today, on the eve of EuroPride in Thessaloniki, we are highlighting a number of significant Pride events on the continent, and one clear message shines through: LGBTI people are persisting in asserting their right to assemble and freely express themselves, thereby firmly establishing their presence in society. Pride events not only celebrate identity and diversity but also serve as critical platforms for political engagement. They amplify the voices of LGBTI people across Europe, who continue to push boundaries and demand their rightful place in society. Here are just a few of the thousands that have and will happen across Europe this year, in places where challenges are acute.

Kyiv Pride, Ukraine

Kyiv Pride 2024, on June 16, took place amidst challenging circumstances, reflecting the determination of Ukraine's LGBTI community. Despite facing a cap on participation and heightened security measures, over 500 people marched through the streets of the capital to advocate for partnership recognition and protections against hate crimes. The event occurred against a backdrop of ongoing war, underscoring the urgent need for legislative reforms to safeguard LGBTI rights in Ukraine. Despite tensions and counter-protests, Kyiv Pride 2024 stood as a powerful assertion of the community's right to freedom of assembly and expression.

"We took only a few steps, we made this painful compromise for the sake of safety and in order to revive the tradition and make a powerful and open Kyiv Pride March next year." – Anna Sharygina, lead organiser of KyivPride.

La Pride des Banlieues (The Pride of the Suburbs), La Courneuve, France

La Pride des Banlieues happened in La Courneuve on June 22, representing LGBTI people from French working-class areas, many of whom are racialised. The group has been organising the Pride for several years in Saint-Denis. This year, however, the municipalities denied permission to march in Saint-Denis because of preparations for the Olympic Games in the city. Due to a last-minute relocation from its original venue and losing support from a municipality that had previously been an ally of past La Pride des Banlieues marches, the event took place in another suburb of Paris with less resources for security and less time to figure out new support infrastructure.

It was important that La Pride des Banlieues took place this year as the far-right opposition has been gaining more traction in France, getting more intense in their actions against LGBTI communities, with racialised LGBTI communities particularly facing multiple situations of discrimination and harassment. In their political message at La Pride des Banlieues, the organisers and their constituents condemned rising hate speech, discriminatory immigration policies, and institutional racism, aiming to resist far-right co-optation and mobilise solidarity against oppression of ethnic minorities and LGBTI communities in the suburbs.

"The fight against the far-right cannot be reduced to a universal fight, we must recognise the multiple and interconnected realities of oppression." – La Pride des Banlieues organisers.

Trans Pride Istanbul, Turkey

Trans Pride Istanbul on Sunday June 23 was marked by decentralised actions across the city. Under the theme "Perpetrator State," participants asserted trans visibility and existence, refusing to be silenced despite bans and oppression. Rather than a centralised march, activists mounted a number of smaller, unannounced activities like hanging trans flags, projecting messages across city landmarks and reading of a statement in front of Pride attendees. The event unfolded amidst stringent security measures, including metro station closures and a heavy police presence. Two people were detained and released after. This year's Trans Pride Istanbul not only showcased solidarity and determination among Turkey's trans community but also highlighted ongoing issues of discrimination and the fight for visibility and rights, echoing their message that the state is accountable for perpetuating violence and systemic injustices against trans people.

"We are trans people who are made the targets of violent and discriminatory policies at any chance given just because of our trans identities." – Trans Pride Istanbul organisers

Looking Ahead

As we approach the end of June, two more significant events lie ahead this weekend.

Bucharest Pride, Romania

More than 25,000 people are expected to take to the streets of Bucharest on Saturday, June 29 to celebrate diversity and claim the rights of the LGBTI community at a crucial moment in Romania. Both presidential and general elections are approaching, and 20% of Romanian MEPs elected to the European Parliament were from the far right, with two of them using anti-LGBTI hate speech. Additionally, a new referendum regarding the definition of families is being pushed by the government opposition.

Pride in Bucharest will address the urgent need for legal recognition and protection of all same-sex families, continuing the push for the immediate implementation of the 2018 Coman case. In the case, the European Court of Justice affirmed residency rights in EU countries (that do not recognise same-sex unions) for the spouse of an EU citizen exercising their right to freedom of movement. Romania has yet to implement the verdict by granting Andrew Coman's husband a residence permit, and a draft law has been adopted that would stop Romania from implementing it.

ILGA-Europe will be in Bucharest this coming October for their Annual Conference, working with local hosts ACCEPT and MozaiQ, recognizing this as a crucial moment for LGBTI human rights in Romania.

Istanbul Pride, Turkey

Istanbul Pride will take place on Sunday, June 30. Given the government and police response to Pride in the country over the past years, we will be closely monitoring what is happening. One thing we do know is that the LGBTI community in Istanbul and their allies will assert their human right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression by attending Pride, with pride, resilience and courage. We will be reporting on Istanbul in this year's instalment of our Turkey Pride monitoring blog over the coming weeks, as we learn from activists and organisers how officials are responding to Prides across the country. You can read our Turkey Pride monitoring blog from 2023 here.