200 trans activists gather in Ljubljana amid growing political backlash against trans rights

article, intersectionality, tgeu governance, trans activists

Around 200 trans activists from across Europe and Central Asia will gather in Ljubljana this week for the 10th TGEU European and Central Asian Trans Council, taking place from 11–13 September.

Against a backdrop of increasing political attacks on trans rights, democratic backsliding and growing pressure on civil society across the region, the Council will bring together activists to exchange strategies, strengthen cross-border solidarity and shape the future direction of the trans movement in Europe and Central Asia.

"This year's Council theme, Transphoria, joins resistance and celebration. We resist so that we can live, and we live to celebrate. It is not by accident that our communities are the pillars of the fight for human rights. What at first seems disruptive, how we challenge scarcity, borders and limits, soon becomes undeniable. We keep insisting on what is vital: housing, food, healthcare, work, accessibility, citizenship, and freedom of movement, which are not privileges but preconditions for life of any kind. There is always a tension between wanting to walk away from what hurts us and choosing, again, to stay. And gathering in this capacity says: "We are here to stay."

– Isa Nico Borrelli (they/them), Chair of the Board, TGEU

The Council will place trans rights firmly within wider European political debates, including through a session on combating anti-trans legislation and policy featuring Yanna Parnin of the Council of Europe's SOGIESC Unit and Susanne Knöfel of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST).

A key discussion, *EU's neighbourhood as the new battleground: Trans people on the frontlines of the movement for democracy and European integration,* will bring together perspectives from Montenegro, Ukraine and Türkiye, alongside a Slovenian political perspective.

"Trans rights are increasingly being used as a political battleground across our region. The same forces attacking the human rights of trans people are challenging the rights of all marginalised people, as well as democratic institutions, civil society and the principle that everyone should be able to live with dignity and respect. Governments, institutions and national policymakers have a responsibility to respond to this growing backlash and to ensure that fundamental rights are protected in practice, not only on paper. Bringing trans activists together from across Europe and Central Asia is essential to building the political strategies, alliances and solidarity we need, not only to respond to today's challenges but to defend and advance trans rights across the region in the years ahead."

– Juliane Rosin (she/her), Executive Director, TGEU

Participants will also examine strategic litigation before European and international courts, the implementation of the Common European Asylum System and the experiences of trans asylum seekers and refugees, as well as digital rights, online hate and the impact of emerging technologies.

The Council is being hosted in Ljubljana by TGEU member organisations TransAkcija and Legebitra, bringing the

European and Central Asian trans movement together in Slovenia at a time of significant political change across the region.

"We are seeing a growing effort to turn trans people into a political wedge – in Slovenia, across Europe and far beyond. Against that, more than just good policy is necessary. What we need is organised communities, shared knowledge and solidarity across borders. Bringing the TGEU Council to Ljubljana is a chance to strengthen the movement by rooting it in the lived realities of trans people in Slovenia and the wider region."

– Nuka Horvat (they), Director of TransAkcija Institute

Alongside its political and strategic discussions, the Council will create space for community connection, creativity and celebration. Participants will explore the future of the movement through sessions on non-binary communities, trans sex workers and community-led resistance.

"Hosting TGEU's Council in Ljubljana is particularly significant at a time when trans communities across Europe are confronting a growing wave of anti-trans politics, institutional hostility, and attempts to roll back our freedoms. Coming together to connect, learn from one another, and reaffirm our claim to a future is an act of collective resilience. And resilience, as queer history has shown at pivotal moments of change, can only be built through community care, radical hope, and generous love."

– Neo Nova (they), President of Legebitra

Held every two years, the TGEU Council is a major gathering for the trans rights movement and provides a space for trans activists from across the region to collectively assess political developments, share experiences and develop strategies for change. This year's theme, *'Transphoria: collectively resist and celebrate again and again',* reflects both the urgency of the current political moment and the resilience of trans communities, many of whom are living under increasingly hostile conditions.

Your support makes change possible

We work across Europe and Central Asia to advance trans rights, build strong communities, and drive change through research, advocacy, and community-building.

Your donation helps us continue this vital work — defending trans lives, amplifying trans voices, and advocating for justice every day.

donate now