

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001190/25
to the Commission
Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle (Renew)
(20 March 2025)**

Subject: Immediate impact of US funding cuts on civil society and LGBTI+ rights in the Western Balkans and Türkiye

Recently, the US has stopped funding LGBTI+ civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. This withdrawal has forced several organisations to shut down and has put activists at direct risk of persecution as local governments intensify their crackdowns on civil society. Anti-LGBTI+ and nationalist groups are already exploiting this crisis to further discredit and attack these organisations. Without an immediate European response, the region's efforts to promote democracy and human rights will be severely undermined ⁽¹⁾.

1. Does the Commission agree that the work of LGBTI+ organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye is crucial, particularly in the context of their EU accession process and duty to comply with the fundamental values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union?
2. How will the Commission ensure that LGBTI+ organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye are sufficiently funded to prevent closures and lay-offs, and will the Commission consider expanding eligibility criteria for EU funding to ensure that LGBTI+ organisations can get better access to financial recourses? If not, why not?
3. What other measures will the Commission take to counter the growing anti-LGBTI+ rhetoric that is being used to undermine CSOs in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, which embodies discriminatory policies and further stigmatises human rights defenders, creating a chilling effect on activism and advocacy efforts?

Submitted: 20.3.2025

**Answer given by Ms Kos on behalf of the European Commission
(26 May 2025)**

The work of civil society organisations (CSOs), including those defending the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer (LGBTIQ) rights, provide an important contribution to partner countries' reform efforts, including in view of their accession to the EU.

Respect for human rights is an essential value upon which the EU is founded (Article 2 of the Treaty on EU). Also, judiciary and fundamental rights are at the heart of the EU accession negotiations ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission thus expects candidate countries to uphold these values, adopt and implement legislative reforms to that end. This notably includes ensuring that institutions promoting and protecting human rights and non-discrimination, such as equality bodies, are given the means to operate effectively.

The Commission supports civil society and media freedom in the Western Balkans and Türkiye through the Instrument for Pre-accession, which for 2021-2027 earmarked circa EUR 470 million through dedicated programmes, namely the Civil Society Facility ⁽²⁾ and the Media Programme.

CSOs in the region can also benefit from funding under the Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy ⁽³⁾ under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument — Global Europe.

These programmes provide essential support and contribute to countering the rhetoric in the region against human rights, democratic values, rule of law and free independent media.

The Commission is actively monitoring the impact of the United States (U.S.) Agency for International Development's withdrawal and broader international U.S. support, to identify critical needs in the region. The global scale of the challenge requires a collective response beyond the Commission.

The Commission will continue to support the LGBTIQ community and human rights defenders, while reinforcing its political dialogue with enlargement partners.

¹ ERA — LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey: Impacts of U.S. funding cuts on LGBTI+ rights organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BcOtAM49adb5MJZQP_v--BLAZXD8K5oK/view.

⁽¹⁾ Revised enlargement methodology.

⁽²⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/policy-highlights/civil-society_en.

⁽³⁾ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/peace-and-governance/human-rights_en.

The Commission will renew its efforts to advance LGBTIQ equality, through the adoption of a new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026-2030.
