



LESBIANGENIUS.ORG

# 2024 OBSERVATORY ON LESBOPHOBIC VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LESBIANS



EUROCENTRALASIAN  
LESBIAN\*COMMUNITY



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The EuroCentralAsian Lesbian\* Community – EL\*C is a lesbian feminist and intersectional network. We publish our own research focused on lesbians and we are present at an institutional level with our advocacy to ensure that lesbian needs are visible, heard and considered when creating policies and laws. For more information, please visit our website: [www.lesbiangenius.org](http://www.lesbiangenius.org)

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## ABOUT EL\*C

The EL\*C - EuroCentralAsian Lesbian\* Community - started out of a self-organised space in 2017, recognising the multitude of needs surrounding the rights, the visibility, and the well-being of lesbians throughout Europe and Central Asia.

EL\*C use the term “lesbian” as inclusive of cis, trans and intersex women, and non-binary persons who self-identify as lesbian, bisexual and queer. For this reason, in the following report, unless otherwise specified, the term “lesbian” includes all non-heterosexual LGBTIQ women. We will also refer to “lesbian organisations” to include all groups focused on and led by LGBTIQ women.

For us, using the word “lesbian” is part of the political struggle for visibility, empowerment, and representation, keeping in mind that the word “lesbian” is one of the most stigmatised and marginalised words. It has long been connected with shame and disgust, as well as sexual objectification and porn; historically hijacked and warped to distortion by the male gaze. It is time to shake off the stigma.

# INTRODUCTION

EL\*C Observatory on Lesbophobia was launched in 2022 with a first report collecting cases from 2019 to 2022 that was published in 2023.<sup>1</sup> A second annual report, containing the data from 2023, was published in 2024.<sup>2</sup> The need for an Observatory stemmed from the work of EL\*C members in combating gender-based violence and hate crime against lesbians.

Lesbophobia is also often misunderstood in policy making concerning hate crime, hate speech and gender-based violence or not at all considered because it is believed to be the same as homophobia. While lesbophobia and homophobia have many aspects in common, the term lesbophobia conceptualises the misogynistic and sexist expression of violence against people that identify or are perceived as non-heterosexual women.

## Definition of lesbophobia

Lesbophobia is a specific form of bias that encompasses misogyny and the stigma of non-conforming sexual orientation and gender expression. In particular, hate against lesbians is structured around three entrenched social norms: 1) lesbians, with their sexual orientation and gender expression, refute the social expectations and stereotypes concerning 'male' and 'female' gender roles, 2) lesbians disrupt the expectations that women are at the 'disposal' of men, especially because women's sexuality is widely objectified, and 3) they compel society to confront widespread taboos related to female sexuality and to non-heterosexual sexual orientations. These biases and the resulting violence have an impact not only on the victims but also on society as a whole.

This edition focuses on two specific trends that were identified this year and that we consider particularly indicative of the current socio-political environment, and especially the broader attacks against women's rights and LGBTI rights. Such focuses are the increased attacks against inclusive education and gender studies, in conjunction with the approval of so-called "anti-LGBTI propaganda" legislations, and the issue of violence and discrimination in sports, following the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. The report also contains all the cases collected this year via the Observatory as well as a set of Recommendations for policymakers and public authorities at a national, regional and international level, to take action in addressing lesbophobia, gender-based violence and hate crime against lesbians.

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<sup>1</sup> EL\*C (2023) Observatory on Lesbophobia 2019-2022 <https://lesbiangenius.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Observatory-Lesbophobia-2019-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> EL\*C (2024): Annual report of the Observatory on lesbophobic violence and discrimination against lesbians – 2023 <https://lesbiangenius.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-Report-on-lesbophobia.pdf>

# METHODOLOGY

Building upon the methodology developed in the past two years, in 2024 the activities of the Observatory focused on collecting cases of violence from the EL\*C network. In order to avoid duplication of work and survey “fatigue”, cases were collected partially within the work related to the comprehensive review of Recommendation (2010)5 of the Council of Europe (CoE) on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, a call for submissions was published in September 2024 and 7 additional reports from EL\*C members outside of the EU were received. Overall, the data collection for this report included a questionnaire as well as qualitative interviews with members of the EL\*C network, in order to examine specific issues and countries.

In April 2024, a focus group was organised in Brussels with 29 activists from lesbian organisations all over the EU, with different backgrounds and expertise.<sup>4</sup> During the focus group, participants were divided into different thematic working groups and shared their insights, cases, and recommendations. As a result of this meeting, we chose to focus this year’s report on anti-LGBTI propaganda laws and the issue of violence in sports.

Specific data on the focus themes was collected in the autumn of 2024 via desk research and further in-depth interviews with members. Data recording was improved to also include the year in which the case took place, or when the data was collected (in cases of national data). This has allowed us to take into consideration cases that were reported to EL\*C in 2024 but took place in the last 5 years. In November 2024, during the Lesbian Movement Committee, members, representatives from EL\*C members discussed the results of the observatory. An interactive map including all the cases of lesbophobia collected by the Observatory was prepared and will be published in 2025. The annual report was compiled in December 2024 and will be published in 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> See methodological note of the EL\*C shadow report – comprehensive review of the implementation of the recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity <https://lesbiangenius.org/wp-content/uploads/Comprehensive-review-ELC-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The focus group was composed of representatives of EL\*C member organisations in: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain.



# 1. LESBOPHOBIA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In 2024, EL\*C was able to collect cases of lesbophobic violence and discrimination from 12 countries, including countries that had never reported cases in previous years (Armenia, Croatia, Moldova, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom). While the number of cases reported for 2024 is similar to the data collected in 2023, it is important to mention that 7 additional cases were reported in 2024 but took place between 2019 and 2023.

Similarly to last year, attacks against lesbian public figures, politicians and activists represent most of the cases reported to EL\*C. It is worth mentioning that, in several instances, such cases coincided with major events and more general trends, including the rise of attacks against LGBTI activists that occurred around the approval of anti-LGBTI propaganda legislations as well as attacks against public figures during moments of heightened visibility (e.g. the opening of the Olympic Games).

## The underreporting of domestic violence

Another interesting piece of data collected this year concerns the domestic violence. This data supports the findings of the EL\*C 2021 report on Lesbophobia as an intersectional form of violence, stating that domestic spaces were “still identified as powerful sites of violence against lesbians<sup>5</sup>”. Appropriate data collection is especially important because it allows for the illustration of societal trends and relevant comparison. For example, according to national statistical data from the United Kingdom, lesbian couples show the lowest rates of intimate partner violence (IPV), while rates of domestic abuse are especially high for bisexual women (who are especially subject to IPV) and trans people (especially subject to violence by family members).<sup>6</sup>

However, official data and statistics are insufficient. Especially when it comes to IPV or domestic violence, public authorities are often not the ones that receive the report and therefore the violence is often not registered in official statistics. According to the FRA 2024 LGBTI Survey III, 17% of lesbians declared to have reported the hate-motivated violence they suffered, with only 10% of respondents reporting to the police.<sup>7</sup> While this data applies generally to all forms of hate-motivated violence, it can be expected that reporting rates concerning domestic violence would be even lower.

Additionally, personal characteristics such as race or ethnicity might further influence reporting rates as lesbians belonging to racial or ethnic minorities might avoid all together reporting it to the

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<sup>5</sup> EL\*C (2021), Lesbophobia, an intersectional form of violence. <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Lesbophobia-3.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> National statistical data on domestic violence for England and Wales is available here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

<sup>7</sup> Data available in the FRA data explorer: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/2024/eu-lgbtiq-survey-iii>

police due to fears of being revictimised, judged, not being believed, or facing mistreatment. For this reason, data collected by NGOs is especially important. The 2024 report from SOS Homophobie shows that 16% of lesbophobic incidents that they collected took place in the family,<sup>8</sup> and EL\*C has conducted research in 2024 on the lived experiences of racialised lesbians, of which the results will be published in 2025.

## The specificities of corrective practices against lesbians

The data collected by an EL\*C member in Armenia paints an interesting picture regarding the specificities of violence against lesbians in the family and so-called “corrective” practices. In 2023 and the first half of 2024, they recorded 37 cases of lesbophobic violence and discrimination in the country against LBQ women and persons. It appears that violence in the family is often motivated by the willingness to punish or “correct” the sexual orientation of the daughter. Cases collected include physical and sexual violence, domestic abuse by parents and other relatives, as well as corrective practices (including by relocating the persons outside of cities to rural areas or to other countries), which is consistent with similar cases collected by the EL\*C Observatory in previous years in other countries, including France and Italy.

For this reason, an analysis of corrective practices in Europe cannot ignore the specific gender dimensions surrounding the more limited freedom and autonomy granted to girls and persons socialised as girls; also in term of sexuality, the misconception that sexual relationships with persons of different genders can correct one’s sexual orientation and the fact that the incidence of sexual violence appears to be especially prominent against lesbian youth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> SOS Homophobie (2024), Rapport sur les LGBTIphobies [https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports\\_annuels/Rapport\\_LGBTIphobies\\_2024.pdf](https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports_annuels/Rapport_LGBTIphobies_2024.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> C. Hamel (2021) Violences intrafamiliales : les filles et les jeunes LGBT plus touchés, available at this link: [https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etude-resultats\\_violencesintrafamnum-24-04-20.pdf](https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etude-resultats_violencesintrafamnum-24-04-20.pdf)



## 2. SPECIAL FOCUS: LESBOPHOBIA IN EDUCATION & SO-CALLED “LGBTI PROPAGANDA”

The 2024 FRA Survey shows that trust among LGBTI people in their government’s ability to effectively combat prejudice and intolerance is declining (dropping from 30% in 2019 to 25% in 2023). This decline is particularly noticeable among trans people and lesbian women who participated in the survey, compared to gay men (33% of gay men believe that their government effectively combats prejudice and intolerance against LGBTIQ people, versus 19% of trans individuals and 22% of lesbian women).<sup>10</sup>

This data is not surprising as negative rhetoric towards LGBTI individuals and against women’s self-determination has been on the rise for several years and is being driven by so-called anti-gender movements, linked with ultra-conservative, nationalist and far right political forces. Because of the growing influence of the far-right across Europe, this rhetoric has become a mainstream institutional discourse now incorporated into policies, legislation and administrative practices and is connected with pro-family and nationalist agendas, with serious and direct consequences for lesbians’ everyday lives.

There is a clear link between the so-called “anti-LGBT” propaganda laws, opposition to gender-sensitive education, and attacks on academic freedom and the credibility of gender and LGBTIQ+ studies. This section will explore this connection and analyse how lesbians, concerned both by LGBTI rights and gender equality, are especially affected by this transnational phenomenon.

### Constructing tomorrow’s societies via anti-LGBTI propaganda laws

Regulation trying to limit freedom of expression of feminist and LGBTIQ+ topics are spreading all over Europe. All these legislation, despite being framed as protecting children and youth (see the section on Education), have the goal of denying LGBTI individuals and groups any political agency within the public sphere and, therefore, hinder their safety.

The first prominent example of anti-LGBT legislation was Russia’s 2013 law, officially introduced to “protect children” from content promoting “non-traditional” family values. This law set a precedent for other countries with similar socio-political positions. As already reported in previous edition of the Observatory,<sup>11</sup> Hungary passed Act LXXIX, which restricts content that is perceived as deviating from “traditional” gender identities or sexual orientations from being accessed by minors. The law

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<sup>10</sup> Data available in the FRA data explorer: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/2024/eu-lgbtqi-survey-iii>

<sup>11</sup> EL\*C (2023): Observatory on Lesbophobia 2019-2022 <https://lesbiangenius.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Observatory-Lesbophobia-2019-2022.pdf>

limits representation of LGBTQ identities in the media, the selling of such material near schools, religious sites and visible storefronts and strictly regulates which organisations are permitted to provide sex education in schools.

In 2024, we have seen more countries adopting such legislation. In Georgia, a country experiencing intense political turmoil and where the result of the political election held in October 2024 is contested, a series of laws targeting civil society organisations and the LGBTQ community were approved. The ruling party, Georgian Dream, promoted a constitutional amendment to prohibit "LGBT propaganda" and a "foreign agent" law.<sup>12</sup> In October 2024, the LGBT propaganda law was definitively adopted.<sup>13</sup> This legislation not only prohibits public expressions of LGBTQ identity but also severely limits freedom of speech, restricts media and educational content, and bans legal gender recognition and gender-affirming healthcare.

The case of Georgia is particularly relevant because violence against activists and NGOs followed these legislative initiatives. As denounced by EL\*C member Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG), following the mass protests against the government, unidentified aggressive groups put up posters at the entrances of the offices and apartments of NGO directors, as well as stencilling humiliating content. Such attacks appear to be coordinated and organised and happened with total impunity. Activists and representatives of organisations also received a series of threatening phone calls from numbers registered abroad and key staff members of WISG were personally targeted during this period.

In August 2024, Bulgaria approved a controversial law banning the discussion or promotion of "non-traditional" sexual orientations in schools, while several attempts have been made to pass a "foreign agents" law. The "LGBTI propaganda" legislation explicitly prohibits the "promotion, incitement, or propaganda" of LGBTQ+ topics within the education system. This law is closely aligned with others discussed earlier, which restricts LGBTQ+ representation under the pretence of safeguarding traditional values and primarily targets the education sector.<sup>14</sup>

In September 2024, the Italian Parliament passed a resolution opposing what it refers to as "gender ideology" in schools, from an initiative of the Lega Nord Deputy Rossano Sasso.<sup>15</sup> The document, misleadingly titled "Adoption of Guidelines to Promote Respect for Differences in the School System", criticises schools as sites of indoctrination on notions such as the "gender spectrum" and affirms the need for educational freedom and neutrality. The resolution calls on the government to create guidelines on sexuality and relationship education that would explicitly ban so-called "gender ideology" in schools, framing this as a defence of educational impartiality and parental rights and authority in shaping children's values. This initiative, even if not yet legally binding, is accompanied by actions at local and regional level as part of a national strategy from the anti-choice and anti-gender movements. In fact, political representatives linked with those movements have been

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/georgian-parliamentary-speaker-signs-foreign-agents-bill-into-law-2024-06-03/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/09/17/georgian-parliament-approves-anti-lgbtq-law-in-lockstep-with-russia>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-anti-lgbtq-law-ban-propaganda-school-ruman-rudev/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://documenti.camera.it/leg19/resoconti/commissioni/bollettini/html/2024/09/11/07/allegato.htm#>

presenting draft local legislation on “educational freedom” against “gender ideology/theory” in the public education system. One such legislation was presented in the Province of Trento and was aimed at establishing the superiority of family values in public schools, creating a pervasive control mechanism over any initiative related to gender equality, gender stereotypes and LGBT issues in the schools.<sup>16</sup>

A similar legislation to the ones discussed above was considered in Romania by the Romanian Constitutional Court in December 2020,<sup>17</sup> ruling it unconstitutional because the law would have disproportionately impacted transgender, non-binary, and intersex people by denying them access to vital information and support related to gender identity.<sup>18</sup>

The agenda behind such legislative initiatives is connected to the enforcement of traditional patriarchal values in family and society, deeply rooted in a rigid understanding of gender roles, with dangerous effects not only for LGBTI community members but also for women and gender equality in general. As shown by the cases of violence against activists collected in this year’s Observatory, lesbians often find themselves at the forefront of resistance against these regressive agendas and, therefore, are one of the first targets.

## Maintaining education as an unsafe space for LGBTI youth and girls

The “LGBTI propaganda” law are the tip of the iceberg of a specific political agenda that, by denying to LGBTI youth and girls the possibility to embrace their true authentic self, create a hostile environment for them to grow and ultimately stop the whole process of social change surrounding LGBTI issues. The main objective is to maintain a situation where prejudice, negative attitudes and stereotypes against LGBTI people are commonplace in education, through teaching practices and curricula, school policies and regulation.<sup>19</sup>

In 2023, EL\*C and IGLYO conducted a survey among LGBTI youth showing that respondents have experience discrimination, violence, and bullying at school at alarming rates.<sup>20</sup> It has been observed that one of the main reasons for bullying resides in the perception of the “otherness” of the victims.<sup>21</sup> Young lesbians (especially if considered “too masculine”), transmasculine and

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<sup>16</sup> See here for the legislation presented in Trentino: <https://www.ladige.it/cronaca/2023/02/11/la-destra-trentina-tira-dritto-e-avanza-la-legge-a-scuola-no-all-indottrinamento-gender-1.3423370>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ccr.ro/en/press-release-16-december-2020/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/17/romanian-court-slams-law-banning-discussion-gender-education#:~:text=Romanian%20Court%20Slams%20Law%20Banning%20Discussion%20of%20Gender%20in%20Education,-Law%20Curtailed%20Rights&text=Romania's%20Constitutional%20Court%20this%20week,or%20opinion%E2%80%9D%20in%20educational%20settings.>

<sup>19</sup> S.T. Russell, M.D. Bishop, V.C. Saba, I. James, S. Ioverno Promoting School Safety for LGBTQ and All Students. Policy Insights Behav Brain Sci. 2021 Oct;8(2):160-166

<sup>20</sup> Around one in two participants in the survey has either witnessed or been a victim of bullying in schools (55.2% and 52.7%) EL\*C & IGLYO (2023): The lived experiences of LBTQI Youth: main findings of EL\*C and IGLYO research.

<sup>21</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO (2023), LGBTI youth: bullying and violence at school, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387193>

transfeminine people, and non-binary people are therefore more likely to experience bullying, due to their gender expression and their attitude to dismantling gender norms. According to the survey by EL\*C and IGLYO, when asked about the reasons behind the school bullying they experienced, up to 60.9% of respondents said that they were bullied based on their gender, 55% on their gender expression, and 49.9% on their sexual orientation. Gender and gender expression are the main reasons behind negative remarks and comments from different actors, such as peers and teachers, in the context of schools. This negative practice is very widespread, as highlighted by the fact that 82% of the participants reported being on the receiving end of such remarks.<sup>22</sup>

On this point, for example, it is important to observe how the actual sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the person is not relevant: it is the perception of it, and the perception of the disruption of the social norms on sexual orientation and gender that generates violence. For example, in June 2021 in Turin, Italy, two girls were followed and then attacked after school by a group of peers because they were carrying a rainbow shopping bag.<sup>23</sup> The girls were surrounded, insulted with words such as “sluts” or “Lesbian, piece of rubbish, burn alive”, spat on, and beaten, with one of the girls' noses being broken. In 2022 however, the case was dismissed,<sup>24</sup> showing how the seriousness of lesbophobic bullying is often also overlooked by judicial authorities and dismissed as “kids’ stuff”.

## Attacks against inclusive education and freedom of teaching

Even though schools are often the site of violence, bullying, and microaggressions, they play a crucial role in modern constitutional democracies. Because of their key role in equipping individuals with critical thinking skills and promoting values such as equality and social justice,<sup>25</sup> such spaces are often targets of regressive policies. In this sense, education becomes a battlefield, a place where the future is shaped and societies are imagined and contested, and for this reason schools are the target of policies aimed at limiting inclusive education and freedom of teaching. By cultivating a climate of shame and exclusion from a young age, such policies actively discourage the formation of empowered, politically active individuals and communities that could otherwise advocate for their rights and visibility. Ultimately, this approach seeks to prevent marginalised groups from developing a unified political voice, thereby undermining their ability to influence social policies and participate fully in public discourse.

In a 2023 survey carried out by EL\*C and IGLYO, the results shows that schools do not provide information on sexual orientation (65% of respondents answered that they never received such information), sexual characteristics (69% of respondents) gender identity and gender expression (77.1% of respondents).<sup>26</sup> This data is in line with the general lack of inclusive curricula and teacher

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<sup>22</sup> EL\*C & IGLYO (2023): The lived experiences of LBTQI Youth: main findings of EL\*C and IGLYO research.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2021/06/11/torino-tredicenni-aggredite-e-picchiate-alluscita-di-scuola-per-la-borsa-arcobaleno-siete-delle-lesbiche-schifose/6227296/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.lastampa.it/torino/2022/06/15/news/il-pugno-delle-baby-bulle-lesbica-brucia-viva-il-giudice-archivia-la-denuncia-troppo-piccole-per-la-condanna-1.41512579/>

<sup>25</sup> Bricker-Jenkins, M., & Hooyman, N. (1986). Feminist Pedagogy in Education for Social Change. *Feminist Teacher*, 2(2), 36–42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40545509>

<sup>26</sup> EL\*C & IGLYO (2023): The lived experiences of LBTQI Youth: main findings of EL\*C and IGLYO research

training on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, already highlighted by IGLYO in earlier research.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, only a few countries have adopted laws to establish specific curricula aimed at preventing and combatting any form of gender-based violence. A notable exception is the Spanish Ley Organica 3/2020 on Education which aims at eradicating gender discrimination in educational institutions, by promoting a non-sexist and stereotype-free education,<sup>28</sup> and, by mandating sexual education based on sexual diversity and on the prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, include LGBTI issues and allowing space to address intersectional experiences.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, these systemic approaches to gender education are quite rare and attempts to bring them forward are bitterly contested, as was made clear by several EL\*C members based in Italy, Bulgaria, and Romania. In all of these countries it is up to feminist movements, educators' organisations, civil society, and LGBTIQ+ activists to organise such activities. All these actors are forming alliances and actively creating and sharing good practice: for example, the Coalition for Gender Equality in Romania created a handbook on gender equality and intersectionality for secondary school teachers, available for free online, which was then translated into English.<sup>30</sup> In Italy, "Educare alle differenze", a network of associations, NGOs, informal collectives, teachers and educators organises a yearly two-day conference to exchange good practices and develop common strategies.<sup>31</sup>

In all the countries mentioned above, the issue of gender and inclusive education is highly politicised and controversial. Anti-gender campaigns and actions frame education for the prevention of discrimination and bullying as "propaganda" and these initiatives are described as being in contrast with family education and religious freedom. For this reason, activists, educators and teachers engaging in forms of inclusive education are often on the receiving end of threats, attacks and hate speech.

In Bulgaria, EL\*C member Lespectra reported that after the anti-LGBTI propaganda law was passed, teachers and schools who expressed concerns about it became the targeted of hostile groups, including political ones. For example, a group of teachers who signed an online petition against the law, reported that they were targeted both online (Facebook) and offline by the local branch of the far-right Revival party in Varna. One post from this account, linked to the Varna branch, mentioned

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<sup>27</sup> IGLYO (2022). LGBTIQ Inclusive Education Report.

<sup>28</sup> Álvarez, María Álvarez-Rementería, Leire Darretxe Urrutxi, and Zuriñe Gaintza Jauregi. "Historia legislativa de la respuesta educativa a la diversidad en el estado español desde la Ley Moyano hasta la LOMLOE." *Foro educacional* 38 (2022): 155-183.

<sup>29</sup> Here a list of material provided by the Spanish government on gender education with an LGBTIQ+ perspective: <https://www.educacionpydeportes.gob.es/biblioteca-central/blog/2024/marzo/diversidad-sexual-y-de-genero-en-las-aulas.html>

<sup>30</sup> The handbook was created by a team of experts and researchers made up of Alexandra Columban, Irina Ilisei, Dana Marțiș, Laura Grünberg, Georgiana Lincan and Andreea Voina, within the EGALIS project: gender equality through social change and education and has been translated in English in 2023 thanks to the efforts of ACTEDO Association. It can be downloaded at this link: <https://ongen.ro/2023/09/01/handbook-in-english-for-teachers-integrating-gender-equality-in-the-classroom/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.educarealldifferenze.it/>

a "blacklist" of local teachers who signed the petition, calling them "parasites".<sup>32</sup> The Party leader Kostadin Kostadinov later publicly accused these teachers of promoting "homosexual propaganda" and stated that he would report them to the Prosecutor's Office, describing them as criminals.

1. EL\*C member Associazione Te@ reported a similar case which occurred in Italy. Despite a lack of a unified national approach to gender equality in education in Italy, the province of Trento adopted a systemic approach to inclusive education in 2008. Thanks to the collaboration of different institutional actors, a program on gender equality and on the prevention and combatting of gender-based violence was offered in secondary schools for a decade. In 2018, the newly formed right-wing provincial government (Lega Nord party) cancelled these courses one month before their effective start date. The decision was based on an alleged need to further verify their actual contents and its conformity with the provincial government's political values: serious suspicions were raised of the possibility that the lessons were spreading so called "gender ideology".<sup>33</sup> Local elected representatives, in collaboration with a right-wing newspaper, publicly targeted the educators involved in the courses. The personal data of the teachers was published online, together with screenshots of some of their Facebook posts (related to *Ius soli*, Pride month, etc). The teachers reported to EL\*C that the smearing campaign attacked their professionalism, portraying them as dangerous "political activists" unfit to teach in schools. It resulted in a violent wave of sexist, misogynistic and lesbophobic online hate speech against the teachers, who reported it to the relevant authorities.

## Attacking freedom of research and disrupting the dissemination of marginalised knowledge

In addition to attacks against inclusive education and the creation of unsafe spaces in educational settings, the anti-gender movement have engaged in the systematic undermining and defunding of gender studies and LGBTIQ+/queer studies. EL\*C was able to collect various incidents unfolding in countries such as Hungary, Poland, Russia, Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, France and Sweden.

Over the past 30-40 years, gender studies, LGBT and queer studies have shown how what were once considered natural and immutable social conditions are in fact the result of historical and cultural processes of oppression. This is what makes feminist and LGBTQ studies undesirable to ultra-conservative movements, the far-right. For this reason, gender researchers, who are mostly women (many of whom non-heterosexual) and non-binary persons, in many countries face online harassment, email threats, and exposure on websites that seek to discredit them. Mainstream media has often played a role in this by denouncing and even blacklisting scholars, portraying their work as a danger to society. Academic events are frequently disrupted by protests, with some activist groups pressuring universities to cancel gender-focused gatherings. In 2018, for example, a

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/anti-lgbt-law-bulgaria-/33089991.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/01/04/trentino-lega-sospende-corsi-nelle-scuole-sulla-relazione-di-genere-vogliamo-evitare-discorsi-su-sessualita-dei-bambini/4874312/>



bomb threat targeted the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research.<sup>34</sup> These pressures have led to a climate of self-censorship: academic institutions or scholars may alter program content, syllabi, seminars, or publications to avoid further attacks.<sup>35</sup>

It is even more worrying that institutional actors, in collaboration with the anti-gender movement, has taken concrete action to contrast and discredit LGBTI and feminist scholars and curricula. As denounced by EL\*C member Labrizs, in 2018 in Hungary the government officially removed master's and PhD degrees in gender studies from the country's list of accredited academic programmes. A governmental decree revoked accreditation and public funding for gender studies programmes at Eötvös Loránd University and the Central European University (CEU), citing ideological concerns and prioritising other fields. Prime Minister Orbán's government argued that gender studies lacked scientific basis.<sup>36</sup> In 2019, due to restrictive laws targeting foreign-funded universities, CEU relocated to Austria, becoming the EU's first university in exile since WWII, to protect its academic freedom and independence.<sup>37</sup>

In 2022, a case in Turkey highlighted the interference of political power in academic freedom, similar to Hungary's actions against gender studies. The incident involved Kadir Has University (KHAS) and its "Centre for Gender and Women Studies". After the release of a report on the employment conditions of LGBT individuals, the centre faced backlash from the Council on Higher Education (CoHE) which controls universities in the country. Despite the fact that KHAS's Centre had published similar reports in previous years, the CoHE took that moment to act and demanded that the University either rename the Centre to "Women and Family Studies" or close altogether. As a result of the decision to rename the Centre, many faculty members previously affiliated with it withdrew their support in protest.

In Italy in 2024, the University of Sassari faced criticism from the member of parliament Rossano Sasso. The University was accused of promoting "gender ideology" funded by public money for organising a course on gender equality. Sasso went further, controversially linking the course content to paedophilia. This attack reflects broader tensions in Italy regarding the teaching of gender and LGBT issues in academia, with critics arguing that such programmes were ideologically motivated and not academically rigorous.<sup>38</sup> The second case involved a course at the University of Roma Tre in 2024. The University's Department of Education Science launched a laboratory exploring gender identity and expression for children aged 5 to 14, focusing on *trans* and *gender creative* minors. The initiative faced intense criticism from conservative groups, particularly from politicians from Fratelli d'Italia (the main government party), who accused it of promoting "gender

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/swedish-model-dismantled-premature-closure-of-gender-equality/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.aaup.org/article/gender-studies-and-dismantling-critical-knowledge-europe>

<sup>36</sup> <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/jlg/2019/01/the-hungarian-ban-on-gender-studies-and-its-implications-for-democratic-freedom/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/72237/ssoar-gendersoc-2020-peto-Academic-Freedom-and-Gender-Studies.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-gendersoc-2020-peto-Academic-Freedom-and-Gender-Studies.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.editorialedomani.it/fatti/la-lega-contro-luniversita-di-sassari-chiuda-il-corso-di-teorie-di-genere-e-queer-di-zappino-qh6dfhuf>

ideology" to children.<sup>39</sup> The Ministry of Education responded by launching an investigation to ensure the course met the criteria for public funding under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The scrutiny focused on whether the course adhered to guidelines for academic research involving minors and public resources.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.editorialedomani.it/idee/commenti/il-laboratorio-per-giovani-trans-di-roma-tre-e-lintimidazione-dei-pro-vita-alla-ricerca-r033rqbm>

### 3.SPECIAL FOCUS: DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTI ATHLETES

Sport is both a symbolic and practical field of action, encompassing issues of both equality and inequality. While it holds immense potential to be a platform for upholding human rights, the world of sports is currently permeated by a culture that is often misogynistic, sexist, lesbophobic, transphobic, and intersexphobic. For this reason, we have decided to extend this focus to all LGBTI women as attacks linked to gender identity and sex characteristics share the same root and similarly harm women's sport and the athletes engaging in it.

As a highly gendered domain—rooted in binary divisions—sport has particular significance for those, such as lesbians and other individuals, who defy traditional gender roles, expressions and identities. Historically, it has been shaped and dominated by white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men;<sup>40</sup> women were only permitted to participate in elite sports with the advent of the modern Olympics in the early 20th century. Even then, their involvement was restricted to events deemed "appropriate" for their gender.

In this context, female athletes often struggle to define their identities, as they are commonly compared to the dominant model of male sports performance. As a social institution, sport actively contributes to the construction and reinforcement of gender as a "natural" binary category, shaped by cis-heteronormative and racial biases.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, sport is a field where the intersection of oppression based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, and non-heteronormative sexual orientation becomes starkly evident, especially for lesbians.

Along with the rest of women athletes, they face systemic challenges including underfunding, lack of infrastructure, pressure to participate in traditionally "feminine" sports, and wage disparities. In addition, lesbophobic harassment, bullying, isolation, physical violence, and pressure to stay closeted and harmful practices are also widespread.

Despite a growing number of elite athletes coming out, a "culture of silence" persists, rooted in lesbophobia and often pressuring LBQ athletes to hide their identities. A 2021 report highlights how LBQ athletes frequently feel compelled to remain invisible to protect the reputation of their sport and to avoid reinforcing gender-based and lesbophobic stereotypes, which label certain sports as "inappropriate" for women.<sup>42</sup> Given the significant role of sports in producing and perpetuating inequalities and its relevance to human rights discourses, it seemed especially pertinent to dedicate a focus within the Observatory to this topic. This decision is further underscored by the 2024 Olympic Games held in Europe, which provides a timely and critical context to examine these

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<sup>40</sup> Messner, M.A. (1988), Sports and Male Domination, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, n.5, pp. 197-211.

<sup>41</sup> McDonald, Mary G. "Mapping intersectionality and whiteness: troubling gender and sexuality in sport studies." *Routledge handbook of sport, gender and sexuality*. Routledge, 2014. 151-158.

<sup>42</sup> ILGA-Europe, EL\*C, TGEU, OII Europe, EGLSF (2021), *LGBTI women in sport: violence, discrimination, and lived experiences*

intersections. The following sections will explore some of the most critical issues LBQ athletes encounter, focusing on visibility, professional recognition, different forms of violence, and media representation. The final section will highlight these challenges in the context of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

## Online hate speech, media and institutional violence against athletes

Although visibility remains one of the main challenges for lesbian athletes, an unprecedented number of LGBTIQ+ athletes have come out publicly in recent years.<sup>43</sup> However, this visibility is often accompanied by exacerbated forms of discrimination and violence.

For instance, the 2023 Women's Football World Cup was a landmark event in showcasing women's sports and LBQ athletes. Yet, many athletes who came out faced heightened lesbophobic backlash, ranging from hate speech to objectification. In Spain, for example, two First Division players, Teresa Abelleira and Patricia Curbelo, received a wave of online hate after revealing their relationship.<sup>44</sup> In Italy, Juventus Women players Lisa Boattin (from Italy) and Linda Sembrant (from Sweden) faced similar treatment. After coming out as a couple, they were the subject of a fabricated story in *Corriere dello Sport*, Italy's leading sports newspaper, which published a sensationalist article about an alleged "sweet kiss" between them before a World Cup match involving the two national teams. Boattin responded on social media, denouncing the article as false and calling for the media to respect them as professional athletes.<sup>45</sup>

Women's sports already receive minimal media coverage — according to UNESCO only 4% on television and 12% in newspapers<sup>46</sup> — and reducing athletes' visibility to their same-gender relationships rather than their athletic achievements is a form of objectification and violence. When athletes are in same-gender relationships, heteronormative societies often frame these stories as "scandals", aiming for online engagement rather than respecting the athletes' dignity.

As already reported in the EL\*C Observatory in 2023, in June of that year, prominent lesbian Spanish football player Jenni Hermoso posted vacation photos with fellow player Misa Rodríguez on Instagram. The pair then became targets of hate speech, including sexist, misogynistic, and lesbophobic comments, with statements like "Take the scissors out of the locker room" and calls to "shut down" the Women's National Team.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In the Tokyo 2020 Olympics according to OUTSPORTS, 186 athletes declared themselves as LGBTIQ+, three times more than at the Rio 2016 Olympics. In the Paris 2024 Olympics, the number of LGBTIQ athletes who are out is thought to be 199, according to OUTSPORTS: <https://www.outsports.com/2024/7/28/24098536/2024-summer-olympics-paris-record-lgbtq-out-athletes/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20191016/471022779922/homofobia-deportivo-coruna.html>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.juventusnews24.com/boattin-bacio-sembrant-mondiale-italia-svezia-femminile/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://webarchive.unesco.org/web/20230104165710/https://en.unesco.org/themes/gender-equality-sports-media#:~:text=Coverage%20of%20Women's%20Competitions%20and%20Practice&text=Yet%20outside%20the%20period%20of,are%20often%20objectified%20or%20demeaned.>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/C8rApRINUJ3/?igsh=Z2EzcXo2aWdkYTRx>

The violence against LBQ athletes is also perpetuated by state figures and institutions, showing that even outstanding athletic achievements offer no protection. As reported by last year's Observatory, Turkish volleyball star Ebrar Karakurt, for example, faced hate speech from religious leaders and high-level politicians who labelled her a "national shame".<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Italian volleyball player Paola Egonu, a Black and openly non-heterosexual athlete, has faced intense public criticism and racism. Mario Adinolfi, leader of the Italian anti-gender party Il Popolo della Famiglia, downplayed her achievements, suggesting she was chosen to represent Italy at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics simply as a "cliché".<sup>49</sup>

Even in countries that have legislation punishing hate speech based on sexual orientation, these protections often lack detail when applied to sports. Public authorities and sports organisations are generally ill-equipped to address these issues due to legislative gaps and, more critically, a lack of training on gender and LGBTIQ+ issues in sports. Such training is essential to preventing violence and promoting respect and inclusion for lesbian athletes.

## Sexual violence, abuses, harassment in the world of sport

Harassment and sexual violence are pervasive in the field of sport, with a significant impact on women and AFAB (assigned female at birth) individuals, as highlighted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its resolution, "The Fight for a Level Playing Field – Ending Discrimination Against Women in the World of Sport."<sup>50</sup> In recent years, awareness of violence in sport has grown considerably, driven by courageous athletes who have come forward to share their experiences of abuse and harassment. This #MeToo movement in sports began in the United States in 2016 and has since spread worldwide, including notable movements in Europe, such as those led by Greek sailing champion Sofia Bekatorou,<sup>51</sup> and the gymnastics movement in Italy.<sup>52</sup>

While United Nations and UNESCO data reveal that 21% of female athletes experience violence at least once as children in sport,<sup>53</sup> there is a critical lack of data on the specific experiences of LBQ women. The intersection of gender discrimination, stigma around gender nonconformity, and heteronormativity increases their vulnerability to such incidents.<sup>54</sup>

One high-profile example, which was widely reported at the time, occurred during the 2023 Women's World Cup award ceremony in Sydney, where former Spanish Football Federation president Luis Rubiales kissed Spanish team member Jenni Hermoso without her consent. Following

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.duvarenglish.com/pro-govt-newspaper-calls-volleyball-player-karakurt-our-national-shame-over-her-sexual-identity-news-62752>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.gay.it/gli-insulti-omofobi-a-paola-egonu-sono-la-gallery-che-non-volevi-vedere/7>

<sup>50</sup> PACE Resolution (2022), The fight for a level playing field – ending discrimination against women in the world of sport, <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/30258>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/2/15/in-greece-an-olympian-leads-the-me-too-movement>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.open.online/2022/11/10/caso-ginnastica-artistica-schiaffi-insulti-pane/>

<sup>53</sup> UNESCO, UN WOMEN (2023), Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport A Handbook for Policy Makers and Sports Practitioners, [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343\\_unwomen\\_unesco\\_vawg\\_handbook\\_6a\\_singlepage.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343_unwomen_unesco_vawg_handbook_6a_singlepage.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> ILGA-Europe, EL\*C, TGEU, OII Europe, EGLSF (2021), LGBTI women in sport: violence, discrimination, and lived experiences

Hermoso's denunciation of the act, Rubiales faced disciplinary action from FIFA, resigned from his position, and is set to stand trial for sexual assault and coercion under Spanish law in 2025.<sup>55</sup>

Some countries, including Spain, the UK, and France, have enacted specific legislation to address violence in women's sport, however they often lack an intersectional approach. Promising legislation has been approved in Italy, even if concerns remain on its effective application.<sup>56</sup>

## Discrimination against trans and intersex women

As mentioned above, the discrimination and violence faced by transgender and intersex women in sport is also especially concerning, particularly at an elite level, due to debates surrounding "fair play" and the "protection of women's sports". These athletes frequently endure severe human rights violations. Although transgender and intersex women have distinct experiences, both groups challenge the rigid norms of femininity upheld in sport and encounter similar discriminatory treatment.

The public debate over their participation in women's sport categories often centres on perceived physical advantages attributed to their characteristics. Although the International Olympic Committee (IOC) recently issued a framework supporting self-determination and non-discrimination based on gender identity and sexual characteristics,<sup>57</sup> numerous sports federations have enacted restrictive age, puberty and hormone-based regulations. These include regulations from World Aquatics,<sup>58</sup> the International Cycling Union,<sup>59</sup> World Athletics (all citing "fair play"),<sup>60</sup> and World Rugby (citing "safety concerns").<sup>61</sup> In 2019, the UN Human Rights Council called World Athletics' regulations a threat to human rights, urging sports federations to avoid imposing unnecessary, degrading, or harmful medical requirements on women competitors.<sup>62</sup>

These regulations, which apply exclusively to women's sport categories, are rooted in sexist, transmisogynistic, lesbophobic, intersexphobic, and often racial biases. They are based on outdated stereotypes about how women should perform, behave, or look in sports. Sex testing, which began soon after women entered elite sports, has evolved but remains a tool that can be employed on

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/02/spanish-forward-jenni-hermoso-gives-evidence-in-court-luis-rubiales-kiss>

<sup>56</sup> The Italian legislative decree No. 39/2021 mandates that sports organisations at all levels must develop guidelines and models to protect minors and prevent harassment, gender-based violence, and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, disability, age, or sexual orientation. However, some concerns remain in the Italian context because of the lack of training and expertise within sport organisations, which is key in enacting this model effectively.

<sup>57</sup> <https://olympics.com/ioc/human-rights/fairness-inclusion-nondiscrimination#>

<sup>58</sup> <https://resources.fina.org/fina/document/2023/03/27/dbc3381c-91e9-4ea4-a743-84c8b06debef/Policy-on-Eligibility-for-the-Men-s-and-Women-s-Competiition-Categories-Version-on-2023.03.24.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> [https://usacycling.org/about-us/governance/transgender-athletes-policy#:~:text=They%20must%20provide%20a%20written,12%20\(whichever%20comes%20first\)%3B](https://usacycling.org/about-us/governance/transgender-athletes-policy#:~:text=They%20must%20provide%20a%20written,12%20(whichever%20comes%20first)%3B)

<sup>60</sup> <https://worldathletics.org/download/download?filename=c50f2178-3759-4d1c-8fbc-370f6aef4370.pdf&urlslug=C3.5A%20-%20Eligibility%20Regulations%20Transgender%20Athletes%20-%20effective%2031%20March%202023>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/player-welfare/guidelines/transgender>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/elimination-discrimination-against-women-and-girls-sport-resolution-405>



suspicion of “gender fraud.” While intended to ensure fair play and protect women’s sport, this testing disproportionately targets women from marginalised backgrounds, forcing them to undergo invasive procedures or abandon their careers. These regulations reinforce prejudiced hierarchies, designating some women as “authentic” and others as needing to be “contained” or “disciplined”.<sup>63</sup> In a recent high-profile case, US transgender swimmer Lia Thomas was barred from competing in the 2024 Paris Olympics under FINA’s rule, which prohibits trans women who have undergone puberty past Tanner Stage 2 (roughly age 12).<sup>64</sup> Thomas appealed against this rule in front of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Switzerland, which dismissed her case on procedural grounds in June 2024, thereby excluding her from the Olympics.<sup>65</sup> This exclusion is in stark contrast to the event’s promise of inclusivity for LGBTIQ+ athletes.

This is not the first instance of such regulations being contested. In 2015, Indian sprinter Dutee Chand challenged the IAAF’s hyperandrogenism policy,<sup>66</sup> and in 2018, South African sprinter Caster Semenya followed with her own legal challenge, which eventually reached the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Caster Semenya’s case is a landmark saga in the intersection of human rights and sports regulation. Her battle began in 2009, when the IAAF had no formal rules on intersex or trans athletes, and it has since spanned multiple legal venues, including the CAS, Switzerland’s Federal Supreme Court, and the ECtHR.

In July 2023, the ECtHR ruled in Semenya’s favour, citing violations of Articles 14, 8, and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>67</sup> The court emphasised that intersex athletes face “impossible choices” between preserving bodily autonomy and integrity and pursuing a career.<sup>68</sup> Article 13 violations further highlight the need for transparent and rights-based mechanisms in sports governance, underscoring that sports bodies cannot exempt themselves from international human rights standards.

While the ECtHR recognised the gender-based discrimination in Semenya’s case, it fell short in addressing intersecting factors like racism and lesbophobia. Semenya’s ordeal exemplifies how sexism, racism, and lesbophobia shape regulations for women’s elite sport. Her athletic eligibility was questioned based on biased assumptions about appearance, with critics alleging she appeared “too masculine” for women’s competitions. Initial investigations into her eligibility included invasive scrutiny of her private life, of her same-sex relationships, physical characteristics, and body type, reflecting unprecedented media and institutional hostility.

This type of surveillance reflects a “scientific gaze” on Black women’s bodies, with a long history in sport. The ECtHR declined to find a violation of Article 3 (protection from inhuman or degrading

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<sup>63</sup> C.M. Reale, A. Tuselli, (Un)ruly Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Race Inter-Actions in the Sport Field, in *AboutGender*. International Journal of Gender Studies, 2022

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sports/olympics/transgender-swimmer-lia-thomas-loses-cas-case-overturn-world-aquatics-ban-2024-06-12/>

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/10000\\_Arbitral\\_Award\\_for\\_publ\\_.pdf](https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user_upload/10000_Arbitral_Award_for_publ_.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.espn.in/athletics/story/\\_/id/38213290/dutee-chand-banned-four-years-set-appeal-decision-nada](https://www.espn.in/athletics/story/_/id/38213290/dutee-chand-banned-four-years-set-appeal-decision-nada)

<sup>67</sup> <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22002-14151%22%5D%7D>

<sup>68</sup> C.M. Reale, “Only the beginning”? L’impatto della sentenza della Corte Edu Semenya v. Switzerland sui diritti umani in prospettiva di genere nella governance sportiva, in *Genlus*, 2023, 2

treatment), as this issue predates the 2018 IAAF regulations. Although the court acknowledged that Semenya's right to privacy was compromised because she was deemed "insufficiently feminine" for women's competitions, it missed an opportunity to address how this scrutiny relates to both her sexual characteristics and her gender expression. This case is now being revised by the Grand Chambre as a consequence of Switzerland's appeal against it.

## Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

The Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics saw a groundbreaking number of openly LGBTQ+ athletes participating, marking an increase in representation and visibility. There were 199 openly LGBTQ+ athletes at the Olympics,<sup>69</sup> and at least 42 in the Paralympics.<sup>70</sup> This is also the first Olympics to feature fully equal participation between women and men, while in the Paralympics women represented 47% of the participants. Notably, many lesbians were part of this record number, competing in various events and contributing significantly to the overall visibility of LGBTQ+ and female athletes at these Games.

Despite this, a study examining French newspapers' media coverage of the Paris Games by EL\*C member Les Dégommeuses revealed persistent inequalities. According to the study, female Olympians were the focus of only 28% of news coverage in France, and the disparity worsened in the Paralympics, where female athletes were featured in just 18% of the news.<sup>71</sup> This highlights how intersectional discrimination significantly contributes to the further marginalisation and invisibility of these athletes' struggles and achievements in the Paralympic arena.

Lesbian athletes face additional challenges in media representation due to the pervasive heteronormativity that shapes narrative choices. Media coverage often reinforces social codes aligned with the heterosexual norm. As highlighted by Les Dégommeuses's report, storylines typically focus on traditional family structures, heterosexual couples, marriage, motherhood, and the mother-child relationship, while sidelining diverse identities and experiences.<sup>72</sup>

Ahead of 2024 Paris Olympics, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) updated its framework for a fair representation of athletes from a gendered perspective.<sup>73</sup> The document considers both the discrimination faced by women and LGBTIQ+ athletes, with a specific focus on trans and intersex issues, but fails in explicitly acknowledging the specific position of lesbians and non-heterosexual women, for which we observe a general lack of data. Despite the IOC recognising that women are not a homogeneous group and that the media needs to consider different intersecting identities, there is no mention of LBQ sportswomen, that experience - according to the European Gay and

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.outsports.com/2024/8/13/24098536/2024-summer-olympics-paris-record-lgbtq-out-athletes/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.outsports.com/2024/8/27/24100599/paris-paralympics-out-lgbtq-athletes-outsports/>

<sup>71</sup> Les Dégommeuses (2024), La représentation des athlètes femmes\* dans la presse écrite durant les jeux olympiques et paralympiques [https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024\\_D%C3%A9gos-x-ECL\\_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti\\_compressed.pdf](https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024_D%C3%A9gos-x-ECL_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti_compressed.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Les Dégommeuses (2024), La représentation des athlètes femmes\* dans la presse écrite durant les jeux olympiques et paralympiques

<sup>73</sup> <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Beyond-the-Games/Gender-Equality-in-Sport/IOC-Portrayal-Guidelines.pdf>

Lesbian Sport Federation - a peculiar form of marginalisation even withing the LGBTIQ sporting community.<sup>74</sup>

The opening ceremony specifically addressed LGBTIQ+ issues, featuring scenes with drag artists and representations of queer culture. However, the event drew criticism from conservative groups and some religious communities, who objected to what they perceived as disrespect toward religious symbols.<sup>75</sup> The most exposed person in this backlash against the ceremony was lesbian DJ Barbara Butch, who faced a wave of online abuse, including lesbophobic comments, hate speech, and even death threats. Butch subsequently filed a legal complaint with French authorities to investigate these threats and instances of hate speech targeting her and other performers.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, this was not the only instance in which conservative groups sought to leverage the Olympics to advance their political agenda. An illustrative example of this dynamic was the media controversy surrounding Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, stirred by prominent Italian politicians on social media before her scheduled match against Italian boxer Angela Carini.<sup>77</sup> Initially, misinformation falsely claimed Khelif was a transgender athlete, inciting a wave of transmisogynistic online comments. Later, it became clear that Khelif was, in fact, a cisgender woman. The debate then shifted, targeting her biological characteristics—whether chromosomal or hormonal—in an effort to discredit her achievements.

The controversy generated such intense pressure that Carini withdrew from the match against Khelif after only 46 seconds, with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni tweeting in solidarity with Carini, denouncing the competition as unfair.<sup>78</sup> What happened is closely tied to the ongoing debate about the participation of trans and intersex women in sport and reflects how women's bodies and gender nonconformity, together with racism, remain central targets in conservative agendas.<sup>79</sup> This incident also highlights what some have called 'transnational patriarchal populism' at work.<sup>80</sup> As events unfolded, it became clear that the controversy surrounding Khelif was about more than fair play; it was a matter of international politics.<sup>81</sup> The International Boxing Association (IBA) made a public

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<sup>74</sup> ILGA-Europe, EL\*C, TGEU, OII Europe, EGLSF (2021), LGBTI women in sport: violence, discrimination, and lived experiences

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/07/29/queer-olympic-opening-ceremony-director-breaks-silence-over-anti-lgbtq-backlash/>

<sup>76</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/lgbtq/article/2024/07/30/paris-2024-french-police-investigating-abuse-targeting-olympic-opening-ceremony-dj\\_6705439\\_211.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/lgbtq/article/2024/07/30/paris-2024-french-police-investigating-abuse-targeting-olympic-opening-ceremony-dj_6705439_211.html)

<sup>77</sup> Matteo Salvini, the Italian Minister of Infrastructure and Transport started the debate:

<https://x.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1818317332164248025>;

<sup>78</sup>

[https://x.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1819069773948358713?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1819069773948358713%7Ctwgr%5E843b0900535908958152790e0c1e39579d9455cf%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ultimouomo.com%2Fimane-khelif-carini-boxe-parigi24-corpo-donna](https://x.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1819069773948358713?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1819069773948358713%7Ctwgr%5E843b0900535908958152790e0c1e39579d9455cf%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ultimouomo.com%2Fimane-khelif-carini-boxe-parigi24-corpo-donna)

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.ultimouomo.com/imane-khelif-carini-boxe-parigi24-corpo-donna>

<sup>80</sup> It was defined as “a virulent and increasingly dominant variant of contemporary right-wing populism that uses blatantly sexist and regressive tropes to mobilise mass support and undermine women's and LGBTQ equality, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights”. See: Rebecca Sanders and Laura Dudley Jenkins, “Patriarchal Populism: The Conservative Political Action Coalition (CPAC) and the Transnational Politics of Authoritarian Anti-Feminism”, in *The International Spectator*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (September 2023), p. 1-19 at p. 2

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.ultimouomo.com/imane-khelif-carini-boxe-parigi24-corpo-donna>

statement revealing that Khelif and another athlete were excluded from the 2023 World Championship for allegedly not meeting female eligibility criteria, immediately following denunciations by Italian politicians. However, IBA's disqualification of Khelif raised concerns, as it occurred mid-competition and lacked clear, transparent criteria.<sup>82</sup> The IBA, under the leadership of its president, Umar Kremlev, who has close ties with the Russian government, has faced significant scrutiny internationally. This connection has raised doubts about the IBA's political neutrality. Due to these concerns, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) no longer collaborates with the IBA for Olympic boxing events. Instead, for Paris 2024, the Paris Boxing Union based its eligibility criteria on Tokyo 2020's rules, under which Khelif was deemed eligible to compete. In this context, Khelif filed a complaint with a special unit within the Paris Prosecutor's Office dedicated to combating online hate speech, accusing individuals of 'aggravated cyber-harassment' due to the misogynistic, racist, and sexist campaign directed at her, which undermined her human dignity.<sup>83</sup>

Another example of exclusion involves French Muslim athletes, who were prohibited from competing while wearing the hijab—a form of discrimination that intertwines gender bias with Islamophobic attitudes, justified under the guise of neutrality and secularism in public spaces. Soukembé Sylla was not allowed to wear her veil, even during the opening ceremony: she was forced to wear a "cap adorned with a headband as a substitute".<sup>84</sup>

Despite this, the Olympics also provided a crucial platform for creating counter-narratives that centres the lived experiences and truths of LBQ athletes in their intersectionality, challenging the sexist, transmisogynistic, and racist forces at play. Amongst the many stories, we will highlight a few key examples. For instance, US shot putter Raven Saunders has made waves both for their athletic prowess and activism. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Saunders made a powerful anti-racist gesture when they raised their arms in an 'X' shape on the podium, symbolising the intersection of race and injustice. During the 2024 Paris Olympics, Saunders continued to use their platform to advocate for mental health awareness,<sup>85</sup> aiming to be a role model for future generations, especially women, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. In a powerful tweet, they expressed pride in their identity as a "big, Black, gay and a woman",<sup>86</sup> emphasising the struggles they have faced with mental abuse and oppression. Another key case is the one of Valentina Petrillo, Italy's first openly transgender Paralympic athlete. Petrillo has been a vocal advocate for equality, using her platform to challenge barriers for transgender women in sports. While her participation in the

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<sup>82</sup> [https://www.iba.sport/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BoD-meeting-minutes\\_New-Delhi\\_FV-approved.pdf](https://www.iba.sport/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BoD-meeting-minutes_New-Delhi_FV-approved.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> [https://www.nbcnews.com/sports/olympics/mane-khelief-files-petition-paris-police-rcna166148?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.nbcnews.com/sports/olympics/mane-khelief-files-petition-paris-police-rcna166148?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>84</sup> Les Degommeuses (2024), La représentation des athlètes femmes\* dans la presse écrite durant les jeux olympiques et paralympiques, [https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024\\_D%C3%A9goss-x-ECL\\_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti\\_compressed.pdf](https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024_D%C3%A9goss-x-ECL_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti_compressed.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.skysports.com/olympics/news/29175/12542549/lgbt-history-month-olympic-silver-medallist-raven-saunders-wants-to-create-a-safe-space-for-next-generation-to-come-out>

<sup>86</sup>

[https://x.com/GiveMe1Shot/status/1457861507652493313?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1457861507652493313%7Ctwgr%5Ed0aa56a83188dab246c8fa4eae74706e8b7738e%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.skysports.com%2Folympics%2Fnews%2F29175%2F12542549%2Flgbt-history-month-olympic-silver-medallist-raven-saunders-wants-to-create-a-safe-space-for-next-generation-to-come-out](https://x.com/GiveMe1Shot/status/1457861507652493313?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1457861507652493313%7Ctwgr%5Ed0aa56a83188dab246c8fa4eae74706e8b7738e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.skysports.com%2Folympics%2Fnews%2F29175%2F12542549%2Flgbt-history-month-olympic-silver-medallist-raven-saunders-wants-to-create-a-safe-space-for-next-generation-to-come-out)

2024 Paris Paralympics has sparked some controversy,<sup>87</sup> Petrillo has consistently emphasised the importance of creating a level playing field for all athletes, regardless of gender identity. Petrillo has also stressed that sport should be a space where everyone, particularly women and LGBTQ+ individuals, can feel free to express themselves, reinforcing her commitment to breaking down the barriers that prevent marginalised communities from fully participating in sport. Marie Patouillet, an openly lesbian and Paralympic cyclist, has made a point that her participation in the Games is a way to increase visibility on the issue of lesbophobia and misogyny in the sport and to give visibility to “paralympic women and lesbians, which makes quite a few discriminations in a sentence”.<sup>88</sup> She won silver in Paris which allowed her to dedicate the first medal for France at the Paralympic Games to her wife.<sup>89</sup>

More broadly, the Paralympics have represented an opportunity to reflect on disability politics, both in France and on a broader scale. As reported to EL\*C by the feminist disability organisation, Les Dévalideuses, the Paralympic Games are a crucial platform for disability representation but also risk reinforcing "inspiration porn"—a narrative that frames disabled athletes as objects of either ableist pity or exceptional heroes for "overcoming" their disabilities. This "super-crip" idea values disabled individuals only when they achieve extraordinary feats, rather than affirming their inherent worth as people. Unfortunately, this type of representation remained prevalent in the media narratives surrounding the Paris Paralympic Games.<sup>90</sup>

This framing is particularly harmful to women Paralympians, who face compounded discrimination and erasure due to both gender and disability. Lesbians in the Paralympics experience added complexity in this regard: limited media visibility and financial resources increase the social pressure they face to conform. If disabled people are generally denied sexual and gender agency, as denounced by Marie Patouillet, it becomes even harder for lesbian Paralympians to express identities outside of a cis-heteronormative framework, intensifying the challenges they encounter.<sup>91</sup> Despite this, several lesbian, bisexual and queer Paralympics athletes decided to publicly come out.<sup>92</sup>

While the Paris 2024 events were marketed as widely inclusive, EL\*C members such as Les Dévalideuses and Les Dégommeuses pointed out the lack of broader accessibility measures, such as

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<sup>87</sup> <https://www.fanpage.it/sport/altri-sport/ci-ha-tolto-il-posto-le-accuse-spagnole-allitaliana-valentina-petrillo-prima-trans-alle-paralimpiadi/>; <https://www.wired.it/article/valentina-petrillo-paralimpiadi-2024-accuse-jk-rowling/>

<sup>88</sup> Marie Patouillet's acceptance speech at the award ceremony of the LGBTI magazine Tetu for the award of sport personality of the year 2023 <https://tetu.com/2023/09/06/ceremonie-tetu-annee-2023-olympia-palmares-prix-eddy-de-pretto-nicky-doll-aloise-sauvage/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://tetu.com/2024/08/29/jeux-paralympiques-paris-2024-cycliste-lesbienne-marie-patouillet-premiere-medaille-france/>

<sup>90</sup> For some examples from the French media see: Les Dégommeuses (2024), La représentation des athlètes femmes\* dans la presse écrite durant les jeux olympiques et paralympiques, [https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024\\_D%C3%A9gos-x-ECL\\_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti\\_compressed.pdf](https://lesdegommeuses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pr%C3%A9sentation-%C3%89tude-JOP-Paris-2024_D%C3%A9gos-x-ECL_M%C3%A9lina-Boetti_compressed.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/sport/article/2024/09/07/marie-patouillet-championne-paralympique-on-a-fait-rever-trop-de-personnes-pour-que-l-effet-retombe\\_6306605\\_3242.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/sport/article/2024/09/07/marie-patouillet-championne-paralympique-on-a-fait-rever-trop-de-personnes-pour-que-l-effet-retombe_6306605_3242.html)

<sup>92</sup> <https://glaad.org/17-out-lgbtq-paralympians-to-watch-at-the-paris-2024-paralympic-games/>

inadequate public transportation and inaccessible event websites in the 2024 Paris events. These issues highlight the disconnect between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality that many disabled people still face significant barriers in participating fully in public life and cultural events. However, Paralympic events have been strategically used by movements like Les Dévalideuses and the Dégommeuses, who have used the visibility of these Games to advocate for the feminist disability movement.<sup>93</sup> Through this platform, critical issues surrounding the intersection of gender, disability, sexual orientation and social justice are brought to the forefront, calling for more comprehensive and genuine transformation in sports and society.

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<sup>93</sup> <http://lesdevalideuses.org/journee-paralympique/>



## 4.OBSERVATORY ON LESBOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

### Cases of lesbophobic violence collected by the EL\*C Observatory and EL\*C members

Year	Cases/Data	Country	Type of violence
<b>2024</b>	In 2023 and the first half of 2024, EL*C member Pink Armenia recorded 37 cases of lesbophobic violence and discrimination in the country against LBQ women and persons. Cases included physical and sexual violence, domestic abuse by parents and other relatives, corrective practices (including by relocating the persons outside of cities, in rural areas or to the Russian Federation) and lesbophobic bullying in schools and other education facilities. <sup>94</sup>	Armenia	National data  Violence by family members  Lesbophobic bullying
<b>2024</b>	In Bulgaria, EL*C member Lespectra reported that after the passage of a law on SOGIESC issues in schools, teachers opposing it were targeted by hostile groups, including the Revival party in Varna. Teachers who signed an online petition against the law faced online and offline harassment, with posts labelling them "parasites" and listing their names in a "blacklist".	Bulgaria	Online violence
<b>2024 (ongoing since 2022)</b>	NGO "Be Manly" organise regular prayers on the main squares in 13 cities in Croatia (the number has been increasing constantly since 2022). People meet, kneel, and pray "for men - to become spiritual authorities in the family who will bravely testify and transmit the Catholic faith", as mentioned on their website. Under the guise of prayer, the initiative promotes homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, misogyny in	Croatia	Violence in the public space

<sup>94</sup> Submission by EL\*C Member Pink Armenia

	society, and advocates for the abolition of rights of LGBTI persons and women. <sup>95</sup>		
<b>2024</b>	During the 2024 Paris Olympic Games opening ceremony, which featured LGBTIQ+ themes and queer cultural representations, lesbian DJ Barbara Butch faced significant backlash from conservative and religious groups. Criticised for allegedly disrespecting religious symbols, Butch was targeted with lesbophobic hate speech, including death threats. In response, she filed a legal complaint with French authorities to address the harassment and threats directed at her and other performers.	France	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  Online violence
<b>2024</b>	The 2024 report from SOS Homophobie recorded 268 cases of lesbophobia collected in 2023. 16% of the cases concerned violence in the family while 14% concerned violence the street. As mentioned in the report “sexualisation always accompanies lesbophobic harassment”. <sup>96</sup>	France	National data
<b>2024</b>	A lesbian refugee from the Ivory Coast has been harassed online as the target of an anti-LGBT campaign in her country of origin. As a result, her picture has been exposed, she and her son have received death threats, and her home door was vandalised. <sup>97</sup>	France	Online violence
<b>2024</b>	The EL*C member 6rang documents cases of violence against Iranian lesbians domestically and abroad. In addition to state-sponsored lesbophobia (including condemning lesbians to lashes or executions) and forced marriages, they report on cases of online violence within the diaspora, especially in Germany. Such cases are more frequent when LGBTI issues are visible in the media. Shadi Amin (6rang spokesperson) is especially targeted by this type of violence that includes hate speech,	Germany	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  Online violence

<sup>95</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member LORI

<sup>96</sup> [https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports\\_annuels/Rapport\\_LGBTIphobies\\_2024.pdf](https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports_annuels/Rapport_LGBTIphobies_2024.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member Les Degommeuses

	misgendering, death and rape threats and insults. <sup>98</sup>		
<b>2024</b>	Following mass protests against Georgia's anti-LGBTQ+ propaganda law, EL*C member WISG (Women's Initiatives Supporting Group) reported organised attacks targeting activists. These included humiliating posters, stencilled messages on NGO offices, threatening phone calls from foreign numbers, and personal targeting of key staff members. The incidents occurred with total impunity. <sup>99</sup>	Georgia	State-sponsored lesbophobia  Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2024</b>	The police detained members of a feminist organisation who participated in public action in the centre of Almaty in May 2024. The public authorities refused to authorise a march because lesbian activists were involved in the organisation. The activists detained were given summons for illegally organising peaceful assemblies. <sup>100</sup>	Kazakhstan	State-sponsored lesbophobia  Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2024</b>	A lesbian conference organised by the lesbian organisation Feminita faced substantial challenges including: last-minute cancellation of the venues, power shortages and interruption by anti-gender actors. The owner of one of the venues declared that they were obliged to cancel the event booking by the Almaty City Council. The police, summoned after anti-gender activists tried to break in the place where the conference was held, did not intervene to protect the space. <sup>101</sup>	Kazakhstan	Lesbophobic discrimination  State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2024</b>	Alisa, a transgender bisexual woman from Russia, applied for asylum in Moldova in November 2022, citing persecution due to her sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite reporting Russia's anti-LGBT laws and lack of recognition for transgender people, Moldovan authorities denied her asylum in May 2024. The decision misrepresented her identity, describing her as a homosexual man, and dismissed the	Moldova	State-sponsored lesbophobia

<sup>98</sup> Submission by EL\*C member Grang

<sup>99</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member WISG

<sup>100</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member Feminita

<sup>101</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member Feminita

	risks she faced in Russia. Alisa has appealed the decision. <sup>102</sup>		
<b>2024</b>	A night club in Belgrade, Serbia doubled the entrance prices for women (compared to men). When asked about the reason for this change, the owner of the club declared "Well, women are making problems, mostly lesbians and in order to get rid of them we needed to do so". EL*C member Labrisz reported the case to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality. The Commissioner confirmed that the discrimination was obvious and issued a recommendation to stop such practices. <sup>103</sup>	Serbia	Lesbophobic discrimination
<b>2024</b>	Lucia Plaváková, an openly lesbian MP from Slovakia was expelled by the deputy speaker from a session of the Slovak Parliament for refusing to remove an LGBTI sticker from her computer. MP Rudolf Huliak publicly insulted Plaváková because "she does not respect the fundamental questions of life given to the human race by God" and stated that he "does not consider Plaváková to be a woman". He refused to apologise to her throughout the day and was not sanctioned for his statements. <sup>104</sup>	Slovakia	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  State sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2024</b>	In 2024, the EL*C member LOS has documented 142 cases of lesbophobic, biphobic, panphobic and/or queerphobic attacks against women and non-binary people in 2023. 55 of the victims specifically chose the label "lesbian" when reporting a hate crime. <sup>105</sup>	Switzerland	National data
<b>2024 (with data from 2022)</b>	An EL*C member analysed the national data on hate crime and domestic abuse collected in Wales and England in the past 2 years. The results show heightened rates of violence for LGT individuals, even if crimes targeting sexual orientation are generally lowering. Lesbian couples show	United Kingdom	National data  Violence by family members

<sup>102</sup> The case was reported to EL\*C directly by Alisa

<sup>103</sup> Case reported by EL\*C Member Labrisz

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/slovak-mp-ousted-from-parliament-over-lgbti-sticker-insulted-by-ruling-party-mp/>

<sup>105</sup> Data from the Swiss LGBTI Helpline has been disaggregated by gender and sexual orientation by EL\*C member LOS. Their analysis is accessible here : <https://www.los.ch/hate-crimes-hassverbrechen/>

	the lowest rates of intimate partner violence (IPV), while rates of domestic abuse are especially high for bisexual women (that are especially subject to IPV) and trans people (especially subject to violence by family members). <sup>106</sup>		
<b>2019 – 2023 data (the asterisks indicates that the case has been reported in 2024 to EL*C)</b>			
<b>2023</b>	An exhibition in the European Parliament by lesbian artist Elisabeth Ohlson attracted criticism from far-right politicians and a wave of social media hatred against the artist. <sup>107</sup>	Belgium	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  Online violence
<b>2023</b>	A lesbian couple exchanging a kiss on public transport were subject to lesbophobic insults and death threats. <sup>108</sup>	France	Violence in public space
<b>2023*</b>	In France in 2023, Bonjour Madame, a queer feminist bar in Paris, saw the intervention of around 22 police officers with bulletproof vests to carry out an anti-fraud check. As a result of this inspection, the bar was closed for two weeks because of irregularities in a license, however the intervention was deemed disproportionate by the managers and customers, who saw it as a form of intimidation by police forces. <sup>109</sup>	France	Violence in public space  Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2023</b>	The National Library refused to issue ISBN codes for a booklet published by EL*C member Lesbians on the Verge. After repeated contact from the publishing house, it appeared that the reason for the refusal was the word “lesbian” in the title. <sup>110</sup>	Greece	Lesbophobic discrimination
<b>2023*</b>	Lisa Boattin and Linda Sembrant faced media sensationalism after coming out as a couple. <i>Corriere dello Sport</i> fabricated a	Italy	Online violence

<sup>106</sup> Data analysed by DIVA magazine from the national statistics for England and Wales on hate crime:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023> and on domestic violence:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/world/art-european-parliament-shows-jesus-gay-sadomasochistic-slaves-sparking-outrage-disgusting>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.leprogres.fr/faits-divers-justice/2023/04/26/agression-homophobe-a-lyon-il-menace-de-mort-un-couple-de-jeunes-femmes-dans-le-metro>

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20230526.OBS73825/que-s-est-il-passe-au-bonjour-madame-bar-queer-et-feministe-a-paris-ferme-apres-un-controle-de-police.html#>

<sup>110</sup> Case reported by EL\*C member Lesbians on the Verge

	story about a “sweet kiss” between the two before a World Cup match. Boattin refuted the claim on social media, urging the media to respect their professionalism as athletes. <sup>111</sup>		
<b>2023</b>	In June 2023, prosecutors in several cities in Italy asked for the removal of the non-biological mother from already registered birth certificate of children born in lesbian families. In Padua, 33 mothers were affected by prosecutors’ cancellation requests. <sup>112</sup> Judicial cases are pending, and the Italian Constitutional Court is expected to decide on these cases. <sup>113</sup> In general, EL*C has received reports concerning difficulties and discrimination suffered by lesbian couples with children in Italy. <sup>114</sup>	Italy	State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2023</b>	Since 2021, Medus3, an observatory on homophobic violence launched by a coalition of lesbian organisations, collects cases of homophobic violence. 20 cases were reported by Italian media in 2022. The observatory also collected data via an online tool that allows people to denounce cases of lesbophobia. In 2023, 238 cases were registered, <sup>115</sup> almost double the cases collected in the previous year (158).	Italy	National data
<b>2023 (ongoing)</b>	Elly Schlein, the leader of the main opposition party in Italy, is routinely subjected to hate speech for being bisexual and being in a relationship with another woman, whose identity was revealed by the press without her consent. <sup>116</sup> Attacks often come from elected representatives from the government coalition’s parties. <sup>117</sup>	Italy	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.fanpage.it/sport/calcio/lisa-boattin-delusa-per-le-notizie-con-linda-sembrant-ecco-la-verita-sul-nostro-dolce-bacio/>

<sup>112</sup> [https://27esimaora.corriere.it/23\\_giugno\\_20/mamme-cancellate-padova-cosa-succede-adesso-perche-non-c-entra-niente-la-maternita-surrogata-faad5092-0f84-11ee-a963-f99c88e1a594.shtml](https://27esimaora.corriere.it/23_giugno_20/mamme-cancellate-padova-cosa-succede-adesso-perche-non-c-entra-niente-la-maternita-surrogata-faad5092-0f84-11ee-a963-f99c88e1a594.shtml)

<sup>113</sup> [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2023/11/14/news/mamme\\_arcobaleno\\_padova\\_corte\\_costituzionale-420355427/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2023/11/14/news/mamme_arcobaleno_padova_corte_costituzionale-420355427/)

<sup>114</sup> A 2024 case reported to EL\*C by EL\*C member Associazione Te@, concerns a lesbian couple being unable to have their birth certificate recognised by public authorities (especially nurseries) in Rovereto, Italy. As a result, one of the two mothers was forced to stop working in order to take care of their child.

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.retemeduse.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/report-lesbofobia-2023.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> <https://lespresso.it/c/attualita/2023/4/6/i-media-non-capiscono-che-louting-alla-compagna-di-elly-schlein-e-una-violenza/2880>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.gay.it/elly-schlein-post-omofobo-e-sessista-da-parte-di-un-consigliere-di-castiglione-dorcia>



<b>2023</b>	A 17 years-old boy was condemned for attacking a lesbian couple. He approached the pair after seeing them cuddle at a bus shelter. He initially used lesbophobic slurs against them and then repeatedly punched them. He has been sentenced to community service. <sup>118</sup>	Ireland	Violence in the public space
<b>2023</b>	A print shop in Bucharest refused to print a leaflet containing information on lesbophobic violence and data from EL*C's Lesbophobia Observatory. When asked the reason for the refusal, the owner of the shop claimed that he had a right to refuse to print "pornographic material" and material promoting a "lifestyle" he disagreed with. <sup>119</sup>	Romania	Lesbophobic discrimination
<b>2023</b>	Several lesbian activists that attended Europride in Belgrade were violently attacked after the march, which took place in a very tense context fuelled by the decision of the national government to ban the march and then allow it only few hours before the planned start of the demonstration. <sup>120</sup>	Serbia	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2023*</b>	A lesbian woman in Slovenia faced discrimination when a doctor refused to provide her with aftercare following IVF treatment she had undergone in Austria. The doctor cited a claim of conscientious objection, specifically refusing services to same-sex patients who pursued IVF abroad. The Ombudsperson declared that this act constituted discrimination. The Slovenian Medical Association also rejected the doctor's justification, stating that the refusal was discriminatory and violated the principle of equality. <sup>121</sup>	Slovenia	Lesbophobic discrimination
<b>2023</b>	Two football players in the Women's Spanish Primera Division denounced being subjected to waves of lesbophobic insults	Spain	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists

<sup>118</sup> <https://gcn.ie/community-service-attack-dublin-lesbian-couple/>

<sup>119</sup> <https://lesbiangenius.org/elc-statement-on-lesbophobic-case-in-romania/>

<sup>120</sup> [https://twitter.com/Xheni\\_Karaj/status/1571404954153148416](https://twitter.com/Xheni_Karaj/status/1571404954153148416)

<sup>121</sup> [https://zagovornik.si/ginekologinja-diskriminirala-pacientko-zaradi-spolne-usmerjenosti/?fbclid=IwAR3htPe8xpSXc1FNH3jXrNUbkfXCe\\_6sGOaFg0Z6NNHaiyaKxWhRP\\_-ZO](https://zagovornik.si/ginekologinja-diskriminirala-pacientko-zaradi-spolne-usmerjenosti/?fbclid=IwAR3htPe8xpSXc1FNH3jXrNUbkfXCe_6sGOaFg0Z6NNHaiyaKxWhRP_-ZO)

	and hate speech after publicly revealing their relationship. <sup>122</sup>		
<b>2023</b>	During the 2023 Women's World Cup ceremony in Sydney, former Spanish Football Federation president Luis Rubiales kissed Spanish player Jenni Hermoso, a lesbian athlete, without her consent. After Hermoso's denunciation, Rubiales faced FIFA disciplinary action, resigned, and is set to stand trial for sexual assault and coercion under Spanish law in 2025.	Spain	Violence in the public space
<b>2023</b>	A journalist was subjected to repeated lesbophobic hate speech from Alain Soral, a well-known French far-right influencer. Soral was sentenced to three months in jail. <sup>123</sup>	Switzerland	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2023</b>	Ebrar Karakurt, a prominent volleyball player, was subjected to hate speech by high-ranking politicians and religious leaders since she started posting photos of her and her girlfriend. Ahead of a European final, members of the ruling party demanded that she had to be kicked out of the national team. <sup>124</sup>	Turkey	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2022</b>	Rainbow Hub community centre was attacked by far-right groups and the presidential candidate for the nationalist party punched one lesbian activist from Bilitis Foundation <sup>125</sup>	Bulgaria	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2022</b>	A transgender man died in Münster after being violently beaten up during the local pride for responding to lesbophobic hatred. The assailants insulted several women at the festival, calling them "lesbian whores" and telling them to "piss off." He intervened in their defence, and he was subjected to a vicious attack that tragically resulted in his death. <sup>126</sup>	Germany	Violence against activists/politicians/journalists

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.mirales.es/dos-futbolistas-lesbianas-de-primera-division-reciben-cientos-de-insultos-por-hacer-publica-su>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.radiolac.ch/justice/accuse-dhomophobie-alain-soral-est-juge-en-appel-a-lausanne/>

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/lgbtq-volleyball-karakurt-champion-backlash-turkey-erdogan-culture-war/>

<sup>125</sup> <https://bilitis.org/en/2022/04/05/attack-on-rainbow-hub-community-centre/>

<sup>126</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-25-year-old-transgender-man-dies-after-pride-event-attack/a-63003413>

<b>2022</b>	Two doctors volunteering at a HIV centre in Naples were threatened and insulted with lesbophobic slurs. <sup>127</sup>	Italy	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2022</b>	Two famous lesbian women were subject to waves of lesbophobic violence online after announcing the dates of their civil union. <sup>128</sup>	Italy	Online violence
<b>2022</b>	Several episodes of lesbophobia were registered in the streets of Dublin, from stares and insults to negative reactions when lesbian couples kissed in public. <sup>129</sup>	Ireland	Lesbophobia in the public space
<b>2022</b>	A woman was attacked and insulted by her Uber driver because during the journey back from an LGBTI party, she kissed her girlfriend in the backseat of the car. <sup>130</sup>	Netherlands	Violence in a public space
<b>2022</b>	A woman was verbally and physically attacked in a Bucharest's metro station. The attackers insulted her gender expression and perceived sexual orientation, asked whether she was a man or a woman and said that they were coming for "the likes of you". <sup>131</sup>	Romania	Violence in a public space
<b>2022</b>	Four lesbian and bisexual women were punched and insulted by a group of men using lesbophobic slurs. <sup>132</sup>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<b>2022</b>	Olena Shevchenko, a well-known lesbian activist and a leader of the LGBTI movement in Ukraine, was attacked with pepper spray in April 2022 in Lviv, while unloading a truck containing humanitarian aid destined for shelters organised by the lesbian organisation Insight NGO. <sup>133</sup>	Ukraine	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2021</b>	A lesbian woman was violently attacked at a night club after having refused a man's advances and disclosing that she was a lesbian. <sup>134</sup>	Croatia	Violence in a public space

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.fanpage.it/napoli/insulti-omofobi-a-due-dottoresse-a-napoli-stavano-eseguendo-test-hiv-gratis/>

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.arcigaynapoli.org/2022/07/01/solidarieta-a-paola-turci-e-francesca-pascale-per-lattacco-lesbofobico-di-cui-sono-vittime/>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22140499/>

<sup>130</sup> <https://nltimes.nl/2022/08/09/demonstration-anti-lgbtqia-violence-amsterdam-uber-assault>

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/v7vya9/victima-abuz-metrou-bucuresti>

<sup>132</sup> [https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/denuncian-agresion-homofoba-cuatro-mujeres-fiestas-badalona\\_1\\_8991449.html](https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/denuncian-agresion-homofoba-cuatro-mujeres-fiestas-badalona_1_8991449.html)

<sup>133</sup> <https://twitter.com/MarshZhinok/status/1514533189234135040>

<sup>134</sup> ECHR, Sabalić v. Croatia, application number 50231/13, Judgement 14 January 2021

<b>2021</b>	A young lesbian woman was raped with the explicit motive of 'correcting' and punishing her sexual orientation. <sup>135</sup>	France	Lesbophobic rape
<b>2021</b>	A study of the French Institute for Demographic Studies and focusing on violence inside the family found that lesbian and bisexual girls were the two groups most affected by all types of intra-family violence (psychological, physical and sexual violence) compared to heterosexual girls and homosexual and bisexual boys. <sup>136</sup>	France	Violence by family members
<b>2021</b>	An event hosting Alice Coffin in June 2021, Board Member of the EL*C and well-known lesbian politician and activist, was interrupted in Rouen, France, by a group of men describing themselves as "The Normals" by bursting on the stage and holding a sign that read "Don't you like men, madame Coffin?" <sup>137</sup>	France	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2021</b>	A young lesbian committed suicide after having been subjected to continuous bullying and harassment because of her ethnic origin and her sexual orientation. <sup>138</sup>	France	Suicide as consequence of lesbophobic bullying/harassment
<b>2021</b>	A lesbian woman was violently attacked by two men while walking in the street with her partner. The attackers insulted her gender expression and attacked her while claiming that "she looked like a man and should fight like a man". <sup>139</sup>	France	Violence in a public space
<b>2021*</b>	In June 2021, in Turin, Italy, two girls were attacked outside a lower secondary school for carrying a rainbow shopping bag. A group of peers followed, insulted, spat on, and beat them, with one girl's nose being broken. They were called derogatory slurs like "sluts" and "lesbian, piece of rubbish, burn alive".	Italy	Violence in a public space Lesbophobic discrimination

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.nouvelobs.com/droits-desfemmes/20210528.OBS44614/une-premiere-historique-un-viol-reconnu-comme-lesbophobe-auxassises.htm>

<sup>136</sup> C. Hamel (2021) Violences intrafamiliales : les filles et les jeunes LGBT plus touchés, available at this link: [https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etude-resultats\\_violencesintrafamnum-24-04-20.pdf](https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/etude-resultats_violencesintrafamnum-24-04-20.pdf)

<sup>137</sup> [https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/slogans-et-banderoles-que-sest-il-passe-lors-de-lintervention-a-rouen-de-la-militante-alice-coffin-20210617\\_MAVVMQNZMNCFRFHGXGNVXCJX5B4/](https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/slogans-et-banderoles-que-sest-il-passe-lors-de-lintervention-a-rouen-de-la-militante-alice-coffin-20210617_MAVVMQNZMNCFRFHGXGNVXCJX5B4/)

<sup>138</sup> <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/haut-rhin/mulhouse/affaire-dinah-deux-mois-apres-le-suicide-de-l-adolescente-la-procureure-fait-le-point-2371360.html>

<sup>139</sup> <https://imazpress.com/actus-reunion/le-tampon-une-jeune-femme-victime-dune-violente-agression-homophobe>

<b>2021*</b>	In 2021 Mario Adinolfi, leader of the Italian anti-gender party Il Popolo della Famiglia, downplayed Paola Egonu's achievements, suggesting she was chosen to represent Italy at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics simply as a "cliché" because she is a Black and openly non-heterosexual athlete.	Italy	State sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2021</b>	In Kazakhstan, Gulzada Serzhan and Zhanar Sekerbayeva, were violently attacked by a group of around 30 men at a feminist gathering they had organised with Feminita NGO, during which gender equality was discussed. They filmed and harassed participants, chanted religious calls and homophobic slurs, beat Zhanar and attacked Gulzada, destroying her possessions. The police present at the scene did not protect the activists and instead illegally detained them. <sup>140</sup>	Kazakhstan	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2021</b>	A lesbian couple was insulted, pushed and punched. One of the women suffered various injuries and required medical assistance. Both filed a complaint with the police. <sup>141</sup>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<b>2020</b>	A group of 14-15-year-old students from Plovdiv organised and carried out a violent attack on young girls because of their perceived homosexual orientation. The boys' goal was to "clean up the city garden" in Plovdiv of boys and girls with the 'wrong' sexual orientation. Several girls were viciously harassed, insulted, had eggs thrown at them, spat on, and finally beaten because of their appearance. <sup>142</sup>	Bulgaria	Violence in a public space
<b>2020</b>	Lesbians frequently receive threatening messages from young men online. They ranged from "you're abnormal" to "it's shooting season, get ready!" <sup>143</sup>	Bulgaria	Online violence
<b>2020</b>	The lesbian activist who organised Sofia Pride march received a photo with a rifle and a gun and the words "see you	Bulgaria	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists

<sup>140</sup> <https://lgbti-ep.eu/2021/07/02/lesbophobic-violence-meps-address-questions-to-four-commissioners-for-clarification-on-follow-up-actions/>

<sup>141</sup> <https://www.diariodemallorca.es/sucesos/2021/08/30/pareja-lesbianas-denuncia-agresion-homofoba-56696663.html>

<sup>142</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/02/plovdiv-attacks-highlight-bulgarias-unsolved-homophobia-problem>

<sup>143</sup> Reported by EL\*C Member Bilitis Foundation

	tomorrow” on the night before the pride march. <sup>144</sup>		
<b>2020*</b>	Hope, a lesbian from Uganda, had her asylum claim rejected in Germany in 2018 because her sexual orientation was deemed "not explicit enough" to warrant protection. Despite enduring forced marriage, marital rape, domestic violence, and sex trafficking, authorities doubted her 10-year secret relationship with a woman in Uganda and questioned her lack of sexual relationships in Germany. <sup>145</sup>	Germany	State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2020</b>	The lesbian NGO Labrys published an educational book for children “Fairyland is for everyone” containing fairy tales aimed at explaining the existence of different kinds of families. A politician from the far-right fringe party, Our Homeland, tore the book apart and shredded it at a press conference, referring to it as “homosexual propaganda” while bookshops selling the book were subjected to attacks and violence. Following the attacks of the far-right groups and politicians, the government forced the publisher to add a warning that its stories contained ‘behaviour inconsistent with traditional gender roles’. <sup>146</sup>	Hungary	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists  State-sponsored lesbophobia
<b>2020</b>	A young woman was killed in a road accident caused by her brother. Just after the accident, the partner of the victim (present during the accident and who is a trans man) was assaulted by the brother. The latter declared that he did not want to kill his sister but needed to teach her a lesson because she had been “infected” by her trans partner. <sup>147</sup>	Italy	Violence by family members  Lesbophobic and transphobic murder
<b>2020</b>	A lesbian couple was attacked in an asylum centre in Amsterdam. The attackers	Netherlands	Violence in a public space

<sup>144</sup> Reported by EL\*C Member Bilitis Foundation

<sup>145</sup> [https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/policybristol/briefings-and-reports-pdfs/2020-briefings-and-reports-pdfs/Lesbian%20asylum%20seekers\\_EN\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/policybristol/briefings-and-reports-pdfs/2020-briefings-and-reports-pdfs/Lesbian%20asylum%20seekers_EN_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>146</sup> The case has been analysed in detail by Rédai, D. (2023). Lesbian resistance through fairytales. The story of a children’s book clashing with an authoritarian anti-gender regime in Hungary. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 28(3), 443–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2023.2255044>

<sup>147</sup> [https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/13/news/sperona\\_e\\_uccide\\_la\\_sorella\\_nel\\_napoletano\\_ferito\\_il\\_compagno\\_trans-267102124/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I0-C12-P2-S1.8-T1](https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/13/news/sperona_e_uccide_la_sorella_nel_napoletano_ferito_il_compagno_trans-267102124/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I0-C12-P2-S1.8-T1)

	insulted them and threw boiling water at them. <sup>148</sup>		
<b>2020</b>	The lesbian journalist Irantzu Varela and the magazine office for which she worked was attacked. The journalist was violently attacked multiple times, after having been called a "fucking lesbian" and a "whore". The magazine office was vandalised twice by members of a far-right political party on the same day. <sup>149</sup>	Spain	Violence against lesbian activists/politicians/journalists
<b>2020</b>	Journalist Irantzu Varela suffers a lesbophobic attack. Her neighbour punched her four times in the face while calling her a "fucking lesbian" and a "tomboy". <sup>150</sup>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<b>2019</b>	The French group Les Dégommeuses has reported multiple cases of corrective rape used against lesbians with a migrant background and masculine gender expression (which makes them easily identifiable in public as lesbians). <sup>151</sup>	France	Lesbophobic rape
<b>2019*</b>	In 2019, in Italy, EL*C member Associazione Te@ reported that educators accused of spreading "gender ideology" faced a smear campaign. Local officials and a right-wing newspaper published their personal data and social media posts, labelling them as "political activists unfit to teach in schools". This sparked widespread online lesbophobic, sexist, and misogynistic hate, which was reported to authorities.	Italy	Online violence
<b>2019</b>	A young lesbian was attacked and brutally murdered by a man after she refused to start a relationship with him. <sup>152</sup>	Italy	Lesbophobic murder
<b>2019</b>	A 15-year-old lesbian was violently attacked in Turin by a man because she was wearing clothes judged to be too 'masculine'. <sup>153</sup>	Italy	Violence in a public space

<sup>148</sup> <https://nltimes.nl/2020/08/11/lesbian-couple-attacked-boiling-water-asylum-center>

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.publico.es/mujer/lgtbfobia-agresion-lesbofoba-periodista-irantzu-varela-lesbiana-mierda-has-contagiado.html>

<sup>150</sup> <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2020/12/la-periodista-irantzu-varela-sufre-una-agresion-lesbofoba/>

<sup>151</sup> Reported by EL\*C Member Les Dégommeuses

<sup>152</sup> [https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20\\_agosto\\_24/elisa-pomarelli-oggi-funerali-ragazza-lesbica-uccisa-2019-il-suo-omicidio-non-verra-giudicato-come-femminicidio-768c9726-e56d-11ea-b5c1-ffe7ca7d9551.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_agosto_24/elisa-pomarelli-oggi-funerali-ragazza-lesbica-uccisa-2019-il-suo-omicidio-non-verra-giudicato-come-femminicidio-768c9726-e56d-11ea-b5c1-ffe7ca7d9551.shtml)

<sup>153</sup> <https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/11/04/news/ io aggredita perche lesbica la denuncia di un a quindicenne a torino-240222603/>



<b>2019</b>	A young lesbian was subjected to years of abuse after the parents discovered her sexual orientation, including physical and sexual violence perpetrated by her father. <sup>154</sup>	Italy	Violence by family members  Lesbophobic rape
<b>2019</b>	A lesbian couple was assaulted while leaving Amsterdam Pride after refusing to kiss in front of a group of men. <sup>155</sup>	Netherlands	Violence in a public space
<b>2019</b>	Clube Safo reported a rise in online hate speech and harassment in Portugal. <sup>156</sup>	Portugal	Online violence
<b>2019</b>	Queer Women of North Caucasus and other lesbian groups from the same area report that the situation for LBT women is particularly difficult, resulting in exposure to violence, rapes, threats, and forced marriage when they are outed to their family. This violence is often perpetrated with impunity, and often even with the assistance of law enforcement. <sup>157</sup>	Russian Federation	National data
<b>2019</b>	A lesbian couple was attacked in a Red Cross reception facility for asylum seekers by other residents because of their sexual orientation. The employee to which the couple reported the incident failed to address the problem directly and instead suggested that the couple should have avoided coming out to the other residents. <sup>158</sup>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<b>2019</b>	A lesbian trans woman was violently assaulted in the street of Bilbao. <sup>159</sup>	Spain	Violence in a public space

<sup>154</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/03/07/meglio-una-figlia-morta-che-lesbicail-padre-la-stupra-per-punirla-la-famiglia-la-perseguita-per-anni\\_a\\_23686577/](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/03/07/meglio-una-figlia-morta-che-lesbicail-padre-la-stupra-per-punirla-la-famiglia-la-perseguita-per-anni_a_23686577/)

<sup>155</sup> <https://nltimes.nl/2019/08/06/lesbian-couple-attacked-pride-amsterdam>

<sup>156</sup> Reported by EL\*C Member Clube Safo

<sup>157</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights, & Moscow Community Centre for LGBT+ Initiatives (2020), Russian Federation's Compliance with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Suggested List of Issues Relating to Discrimination Based on Sexual orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression. Available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCO%2fRUS%2f4\\_2841&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCO%2fRUS%2f4_2841&Lang=en)

<sup>158</sup> Reported by EL\*C Member Grupo Lesbico Feminista Artemisa, Refugiada y Migrante

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2019/06/agresion-sexual-transfoba-y-lesbofoba-a-una-medea/>

## 5.RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Explicitly identify lesbophobia as violence at the intersection of homophobia and misogyny and recognise that it is a type of violence with its own roots, patterns, modes, and consequences formed by this intersectional experience.
2. Use human rights instruments and international law to ensure that the rights of lesbians are not violated by direct actions from state actors and public authorities.
3. Ensure that hate bias based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are considered as aggravating circumstances in legislation aimed at criminalising gender-based violence, hate crime and hate speech.
4. Design and implement measures to combat violence, including online violence, against visible and well-known women including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity and ensure that existing measures are effectively implemented.
5. Consider, in legislation concerning sexual violence, the increased risk for lesbians and include a specific clause to sexual harassment, rape and physical violence aimed at punishing or 'correcting' lesbians and women perceived as non-heterosexual.
6. Address, in legislation concerning participation to democratic processes, freedom of the press and protection of human rights defenders, the specific experiences of violence faced by lesbian politicians, journalists, high-level athletes, artists and human rights defenders.
7. Include, in the training of relevant professionals, notably law enforcement, judges and prosecutors, sensitization on the specific needs and challenges faced by lesbians that are victims of hate crime, gender-based violence, domestic violence and harmful practices.

8. Design and implement measures to protect the rights of victims of violence without discrimination on the basis, among others, of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
9. Adapt the psychological support and training of healthcare professionals and structures to the realities and difficulties experienced by lesbians and facilitate the reporting process of structures and health professionals who have demonstrated lesbophobic behaviour.
10. Ensure that all incidents of gender-based violence and domestic violence against lesbians are properly and effectively recorded, that disaggregated statistics on hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination are collected, analysed, and disseminated, and that specific studies and research on this phenomenon are funded.
11. Organise public campaigns, in collaboration with lesbian organisations, designed to counter violence experienced by lesbians in public spaces, in the family, in sport and online, and to encourage them to report such incidents to law enforcement and/or dedicated associations.
12. Encourage the private sector, especially online platforms, to ensure that the word 'lesbian' is not automatically associated with derogatory or hypersexualised and harmful content, especially in the design of measures intended to reduce illegal and harmful gender-related online content.
13. Encourage the media to review its approach to lesbophobic gender-based violence and hate crime, ensuring that lesbian identities of the victims are not erased when relevant to the motive of the crime and pay particular attention to the vocabulary used, the treatment of information and limit the sensationalism.
14. Ensure adequate, accessible, and reliable funding for projects and activities implemented by organisations focused on and led by lesbians, including smaller structures, and that are designed to counter lesbophobic rhetoric and narratives, to provide training to law enforcement and judicial authorities, as well as to ensure assistance and support for the victims of this violence.



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