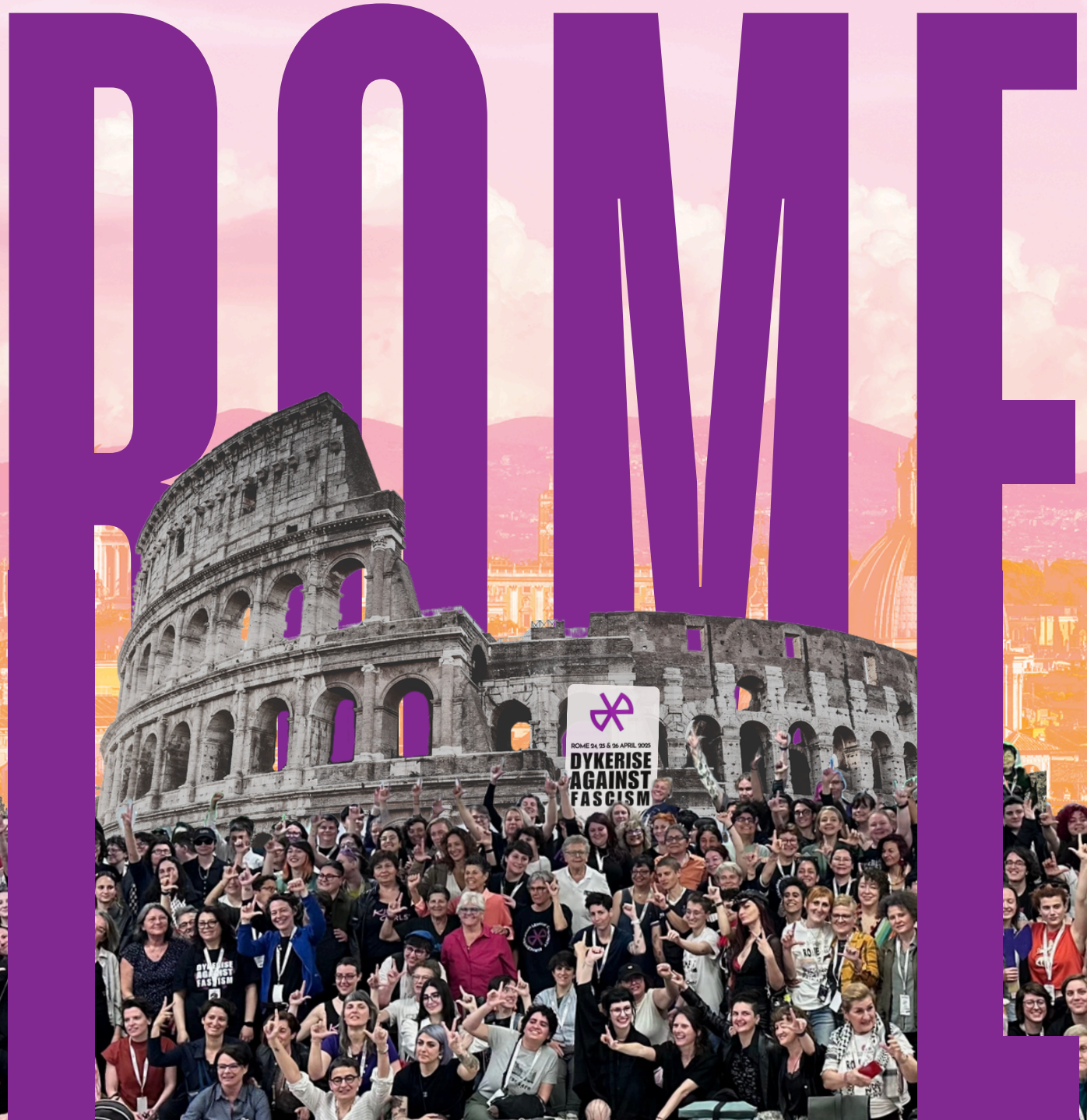




**EUROCENTRALASIAN
LESBIAN*COMMUNITY**

23 to 26 April 2025



CONFERENCE



**EUROCENTRALASIAN
LESBIAN*COMMUNITY**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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1.ABOUT THE EL*C

Our conferences are our lighthouses. In 2017, we organized our first conference entitled “Lesbians in Europe: Act, Reflect, Transform, Connect” in Vienna (Austria), and, in 2019, we held our second international conference entitled “Let’s Bring Lesbian Genius to the World!” in Kyiv (Ukraine). The third conference, “Lesbian Resistance”, took place in Budapest, in 2022. Overall, our conferences have served as key moments to measure the pulse of the lesbian movement, to support and celebrate the lesbian community, to foster or strengthen new projects and connections, to serve as a base to develop strategies for growth and sustainability, and to gather visibility and media attention around lesbian struggles and achievements.

1.1 HERSTORY



The starting Point of the EL*C was in Nicosia, 2016, thanks to the participants of the ILGA Europe workshop, “Lesbian organising in Europe: where is the state of play for the lesbian movements?”

Vienna, 2017, the very first edition of the EL*C Conference, with over 450 participants and the beginning of a great adventure.



Kyiv, 2019, the second edition of the EL*C Conference. There were some difficult moments, because the conference was attacked by far right and bigots but we were resilient, as always.

Budapest, 2022, the third edition of the EL*C Conference. We went to Eastern Europe again and “dyke-marched” on the streets of Budapest against Orban and in solidarity with all activists that face oppressive governments.



2. QUOTES FROM THE SPEAKERS

The EL*C Rome Conference brought together the voices of lesbian activists, scholars, policymakers and community leaders from across Europe and Central Asia. Their words resonate beyond the conference halls, as powerful affirmations of resistance, visibility and collective struggle. In a world where lesbian realities are too often erased or sidelined, these voices reclaim space and resilience, assert presence, and demand systemic change.

The impact of these interventions was not only symbolic: following the conference, Moldovan activists Elvira Drangoi and Steliana Rudco of Femei pentru Femei returned home with a vision: to create the first support service for lesbian survivors of gender-based violence in their country. That vision [is now a reality](#). This is the power of lesbian feminist organising across borders: collective inspiration that sparks action, builds infrastructures of care, and proves that our movement is, indeed, unstoppable.

2.1 PLENARY JUNE 24: LESBIAN LEGENDS - WHEN THEY GO LOW, WE GO HIGH

“A lesbian kiss is a Revolution, so feel free to practice Revolution!”
— **Gulzada Serzhan**, EL*C Co-Chair

“Liberation is not just for some of us, it should be for all of us. We cannot ignore the route of so much pain, but also of so much power. Racism is not my problem to fix. When we see any one of us is in pain, we should be in pain too. It’s not enough not to be racist, we must be anti-racists. Our lives matter, not just in death. If feminism is not intersectional, then it’s not feminism.”
— **Phyll Opoku**, UK Black Pride

“Even as lesbians, within our intersectionality, we must deconstruct our white colonialist privileges.”
— **Elena Biagini**, Lesbian movement historian

“The fight for freedom doesn’t end when we gain one right while losing another. It is a constant, exhausting, courageous push against a world that was never built for us. Lesbians are the front liners.”

— **Melissa Camara**, MEP, European Parliament

“We know the truth: the real danger was never our dissident bodies. The real danger is the system that insists on controlling our desires, our choices, our lives. Learning to love in a world that wants us destroyed is how we build a new future. The world is in crisis, yes. But we are not the problem. We are the answer. The revolution has already begun. And it has the eyes of a lesbian woman.”

— **Monica Benicio**, Rio de Janeiro City Council

2.2 PLENARY JUNE 25: LESBIAN ROOTS, RAGE, AND JUSTICE

“We are prevented from speaking out as lesbians and feminists in my country. They really don’t like lesbians who speak up. We are bold because we have nothing to lose and nothing to fear. Every day, we face challenges. In jail, I was able to read interesting books, and I had the chance to connect and discuss with other lesbians. The fight never ends, no matter where you are.”

— **Zhanar Sekerbayeva**, Strong ecofeminist

“Erased from heterosexual spaces. Our bodies are urgent. Our lives are urgent. When I say lesbian, I don’t mean one kind of being. Being a lesbian means anyone living outside of normativity. Taking care of ourselves is a form of activism. When we begin to reclaim our spaces, we begin to heal. Let’s fight for ourselves, not just to survive, but to enjoy our lives.”

— **Aida Marukyan**, Queer Sista Platform

“During our research on the leaved realities of Black, racialized, Roma and migrant lesbians, we learned that access to employment is a challenging experience due to racism and sexism. Only 16% of Roma lesbians have paid employment. For Black and

Racialized People, harassment when trying to access employment is common. For lesbian migrants, a major issue is obtaining legal access to work, which in turn affects access to healthcare and housing. All participants reported experiencing medical racism in all healthcare settings.”

— **Aldessa Georgiana Lincan, Alba Hernandez, and Dr. Nat Arias**, EL*C Data Panel

“I consider myself a granddaughter of Sappho. Communicating with each other within the feminism may not be easy. But if we want to build a better world, we must find a way. We are feminists, we are lesbians, we are Palestinians, we are non-national lesbians. As Monique Wittig said 66 years ago: ‘Lesbians are escapees from patriarchy.’”

— **Lepa Mladjenovic**, Pro-peace activist

2.3 PLENARY JUNE 25: LESBIAN FURY VS. FASCIST FEAR

“We must pick our battles and control our narrative; they will light fires everywhere to distract and exhaust us, but we shall not let them dictate our focus or our priorities. We need to resist inside institutions too, so that bargaining with our lives and compromising our freedoms and dignity will not happen anymore.”

— **Evgenia Giakoumopoulou**, Head of SOGIESC Unit, Council of Europe

“Dear non-disabled lesbians, listen to us. Stop looking away. We exist. Our lives matter. As Bell Hooks said: ‘True political solidarity is fighting against oppression that we do not experience ourselves.’”

— **Lydie Raer**, Feminist, Queer, Crip activist

“All over the world, we are linking transgression of gender and sexual norms and binaries with transgression of national and racist borders and ideologies. We are linking our liberation as sexual and gender dissidents with liberation from white supremacy, colonialism, occupation and apartheid. And today, we must also speak of genocide that

is happening in Gaza.”

— **Inna Michaeli**, Executive Director of AWID

“Heterosexuality is an oppressive norm. Lesbian identities stand farthest from heterosexuality, and this diversity is an extraordinary political revolution.”

— **Eva Sassi Croce**, ARTivist, Non Una di Meno

“It’s important to recognize what we are doing: surviving and creating spaces where we can act, resist, and strategize together. Whatever brings you queer joy, please do it, and let’s take care of each other.”

— **Kath Browne**, Researcher & Organiser, Lesbian Lives Conference

“We shouldn’t forget, when they ban our expression, they will soon ban our existence. Our thoughts and our feelings are our resistance. With them, and with the lesbian collective dream, we survive and remain resilient.”

— **Shadi Amin**, Iranian writer and activist

“With authoritarianism on the rise, simply existing loud and proud is a form of resistance. Especially as lesbians. Because we break heteronormativity on a daily basis. And even better, we break heteronormative brains on a daily basis. Be it in the way we love, live, look, talk, or explain how we look at the world.”

— **Kim Van Sparrentak**, Chair, LGBTI Intergroup, European Parliament

2.4 PLENARY JUNE 26: MARCHING THE STORM TOWARD A LESBIAN FUTURE

“The question before us is not whether we can afford to act, but whether we can afford not to. I believe in your courage. I believe in our collective power. And I believe that together, we will see a Free Palestine.”

— **Palestinian Queer Activist**, works at the intersection of queer rights and Palestinian liberation

“We fight Because we are madly in love. We fight Because we are deeply in love. With each other. With our communities. With the lives we are building. We are burning with lesbian desire. Let’s enjoy this fight. Because I know, if we could choose, we would choose it every fucking time.”

— **Mari Kurtadnize**, Lesbian Resistance, Georgia

“I’m here today because I chose visibility, even when it was terrifying. Visibility comes at a cost but so does invisibility. And the cost of hiding is far too high. Invisibility makes you believe you don’t exist. Or worse, that you shouldn’t. Every time I speak on national television, I carry with me the stories of those who can’t. My visibility is not about me, it’s about protecting what they try to erase.”

— **Xheni Karaj**, Lesbian badass

“Whether they like it or not, athletes are political. When I kissed my wife after winning the gold medal, I chose the political message of my victory, because lesbian visibility is never neutral. Sport is political, and as athletes, we must ask ourselves how to use our image not just to win, but to fight. Visibility is power, and choosing to be visible is already a form of resistance.”

— **Marie Patouillet**, Gold medal 2024 Olympics



EUROCENTRALASIAN LESBIAN*COMMUNITY



3.INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, the EL*C has grown into a vibrant, intersectional, and fearless network, uniting lesbian-led organizations and lesbian activists, researchers, politicians, artists and more, across Europe and Central Asia. EL*C conferences are more than just events. They are declarations of presence, resistance, and joy, a space where we affirm our identities, amplify our voices, and organize for justice. Each conference is a living legacy to our collective power, resilience, and refusal to be erased.

So, why Rome? Why now?

We gather in Rome as an intentional, radical act of solidarity. In a country where lesbian rights have been under direct attack, including the appalling removal of lesbian mothers from their children's birth certificates in 2023, our presence here is both a protest and a promise. We are here to stand with our Italian sisters and siblings, to say: Rome is not just a backdrop, it is a battleground. And by being here, we are part of a wider resistance against misogyny, lesbophobia, transphobia, racism, ableism and all systems of oppression threatening our communities.

This year's conference is a powerhouse of ideas and activism, from themes like lesbians in politics and decision making, decolonial lesbian ecofeminism, lesbians in war and protest movements, to AI and queer futures, deeply personal narratives on motherhood, health, sport, and elderly lesbians. This is more than a program, it's a blueprint for liberation.

And to top it all off, this year, we joined forces for the very first Dyke March in Italy, on the International Day of Lesbian Visibility, April 26, taking the streets not just as individuals, but as a movement, fierce, intersectional, antifascist, anti-racist, transfeminist, and climate-just.

To our Italian hosts and organizers, we offer our deepest thoughts. Your courage and commitment have lit the spark for this historic march. We are honoured to stand beside you and continue fighting with you the backlash on human rights unleashed by the Italian government and its allies in Europe and beyond.

On behalf of the EL*C board, thanks to all the amazing speakers, participants and supporters!! In the meantime, be bold, be loud, be proud, and most of all, join us for the next edition, in June 2027, for the 5th unforgettable EL*C conference in Lesbos, Greece.

Eva & Gulzada
Co-chairs of EL*C

4. RETURNING TO RESIST RESISTING TO RETURN

As mentioned by our co-chairs at the beginning of this document, in the months leading up to the conference, we were often asked why we had chosen Italy as the location for our fourth EL*C Conference. Our response is rooted in the political reflections that followed the cancellation of our conference in Kazakhstan.

Almaty, Kazakhstan was our first choice for the 2024 conference, recognizing the challenges faced by local lesbian activists amid foreign, colonial, and political pressures. Despite the resilience of these groups, international institutions, funders, and diplomatic missions gradually withdrew support - culminating in a final blow when the UN office in Almaty revoked its long-confirmed venue at the last minute. In Almaty, our comrades still held the first amazing Lesbian Quryltai on the same dates, and if you wish, we encourage all lesbians to get in touch with the fierce activists from all Central Asia, in Almaty, Astana, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Ashgabat, Tashkent and many other cities in the region.

When we began searching for a new city to host EL*C's fourth edition, our attention turned quickly to Italy: a country governed by the far right, marked by the repression of lesbian mothers, systemic lesbophobia, and an urgent need to stand together against racism and transphobia. But in preparing the event, we didn't fully realize that two members of our team, who alongside our European and Central Asian colleagues helped create EL*C and shape this edition, are lesbians with Italian citizenship who left Italy in different moments but both in their twenties and now live in other countries.

Since its inception, the EL*C project has prioritized European-level work grounded in local realities. Therefore, there was something special about organising a conference in a country that some of us had left. In communities that have faced diasporas over the span of several centuries, like Southern Italy and the Islands, there are words to say the feeling of uprooting and the unfulfillable desire of belonging both in the culture of departure and arrival.

These perspectives, though deeply significant on a personal level, are inseparable from the reality that being a lesbian means living in a state of constant geographical, physical, mental, and political displacement that we carry throughout our lives. Our relationship with lesbophobic societies and the decisions to leave them (or not) is part of our struggles. Our conferences are the result of the work of some of us who chose to remain in their countries despite wars, or oppressions. Others, like our Russian and Central Asian comrades, were forced to flee, targeted by governments eager to scapegoat them to distract public opinion.

These experiences of displacement (forced or voluntary), with their wounds, but also their liberating force and the longing to rebuild - were some of the invisible engines behind this conference. We worked from a margin as envisioned by bell hooks: a space from which to see more clearly, both within and beyond the societies we left and those we entered. This Italian edition with its over 700 participants from across Europe and beyond was a space where we heard lesbian voices working on urgent, interconnected struggles:

ecofeminism, antiracism, disability justice, the right to self-determination, including the liberation of the Palestinian people.

The conference also gave us space to share reflections shaped over our combined experience of displacement and migration. We brought with us the many forms of lesbian activism we've encountered around the world to affirm that the battles of our time, even those not strictly lesbian, can only be truly fought with lesbians at the forefront.

In short, organizing the conference in Italy - and perhaps EL*C itself - was, and is, as the Sardinian emigrant's slogan ("gherrare pro torrare, torrare pro gherrare"): our way of resisting in order to return and returning to resist.

5. FIGURES FROM THE BIGGEST* EUROPEAN LESBIAN CONFERENCE TO DATE

* If you have any information about a lesbian conference during all times, biggest that this one, taking place in Europe, please let us know at info@lesbiangeni.us.org

The EL*C Conference in Rome marked a **historic milestone for lesbian communities**, standing out as one of the largest, if not the largest, European LGBTI gatherings in recent years. With an impressive audience of **750 attendees from 52 countries**, the event brought together a vibrant and diverse spectrum of voices, experiences, and activism from across Europe and Central Asia. The scale of the conference underscored the urgent need for spaces dedicated to lesbian, bisexual, trans women, and non-binary individuals, and affirmed EL*C's role as a leading platform for connection, empowerment, and visibility.

5.1 PARTICIPANTS

As for the previous EL*C events and gatherings, the conference was designed to be as affordable as possible, with a symbolic **3-days entrance fee** ranging from just **10 to 30 EUR**. This made it one of the most financially accessible LGBTI events of its kind, ensuring that financial barriers did not prevent grassroots activists, young leaders, or community members from attending. Our commitment was also reflected in our scholarship programme, through which we supported **187 scholars**, a vital effort to amplify voices that are often underrepresented or silenced.

The success of the conference would not have been possible without the collective effort of our dedicated team and community. A group of **30 passionate volunteers** played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth operation of the event, welcoming participants, facilitating sessions, and embodying the spirit of solidarity that defines EL*C. Their contributions, alongside the overwhelming engagement from attendees, made the Rome conference a powerful and unforgettable gathering, one that will continue to shape our movement for years to come.

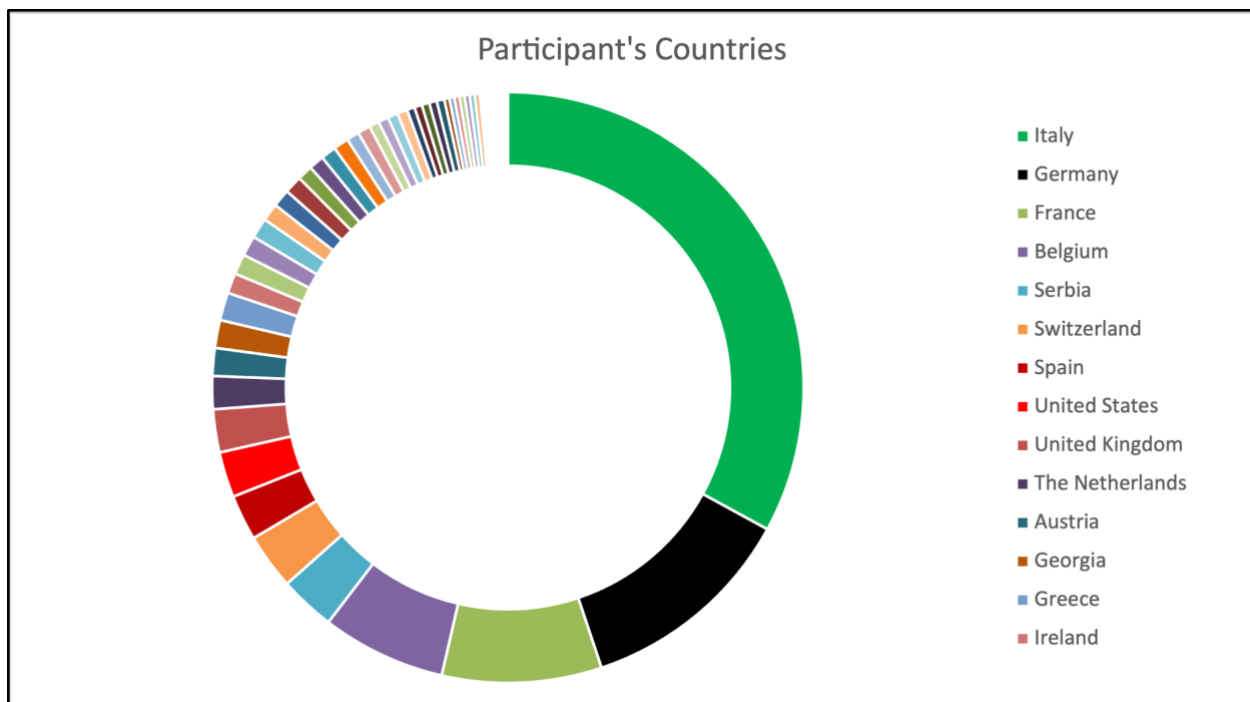


Image 1. Participant's countries

5.2 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Organizing the EL*C Conference in Rome was not only a powerful community achievement but also a significant financial undertaking. The **total expenditure** reached **255,278.08 EUR**, reflecting the scale, ambition, and inclusivity of the event. Each euro invested helped create a space that was accessible, dynamic, and truly representative of the diversity within our LGBTQI+ communities. From accommodation and transportation to interpretation and accessibility services, every detail was carefully considered to ensure a meaningful experience for all participants.

Among the major cost components, **accommodation for 170 participants** accounted for the largest share at **97,198.50 EUR**, followed by transportation costs, including flights, trains, and buses, at 48,331.08 EUR. Food and refreshments amounted to 46,121.36 EUR, while venue rental and logistics, including the Dyke March, required 25,715.14 EUR. We prioritized accessibility investing in translation and interpretation, assistance for participants with reduced mobility and visa support (13,475.14 EUR). We also focus on communication, branding and promotional materials (4,172.20 EUR) as well as additional costs, including consultants and services, (20,484.80 EUR).

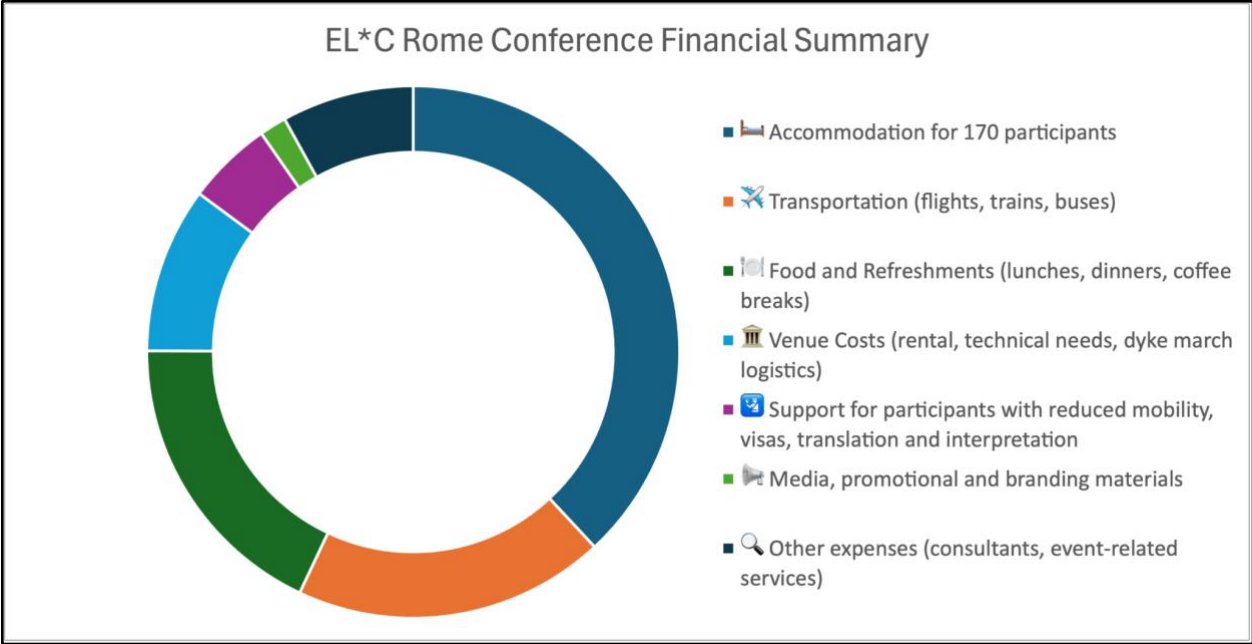


Image 2. Financial Summary

To help offset the costs, ticket sales generated 21,500.00 EUR in revenue, making the event financially accessible without compromising on quality. However, the conference would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners and allies. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, Mama Cash, RFSL, Mélissa Camara, and The Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament.

5.3 SOCIAL MEDIA & PRESS COVERAGE

The EL*C work, from its beginnings, has always given a major place to visibility via reaching media coverage of our actions, to amplify advocacy, fundraising and community organizing for lesbians. Between April 1 and June 1, 2025, the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C) implemented a multi-channel communication campaign centred on the EL*C Rome Conference (April 23–26, 2025). This period marked a high level of digital visibility and engagement recorded across EL*C's platforms, positioning the conference as a political milestone and as a high-impact media event.

Here after a selection of the articles published about the conference. Please note that during the conference week, the media landscape was fully occupied by the Pope Francis funerals.

Day	Media	Country	Title
March/April Edition	L.Mag - Das Magazin für Lesben	Germany	Lesbische Pilgereise

01/03/2025	DIVA	UK	Trailblazing lesbian activists detained after protest in Kazakhstan
01/03/2025	Radio Onda Rossa	Italy	Kazakistan: attiviste lesbiche e femministe arrestate
01/03/2025	Luce - La Nazionale	Italy	La prima Dyke March italiana a Roma: cos'è e perché è importante
01/04/2025	Alessandra Maiorino	Italy	IV Conferenza Europea Lesbica EL*C e Dyke March
01/04/2025	GAY.IT	Italy	Presentata in Senato la prima Dyke March italiana e la IV Conferenza Europea Lesbica
01/04/2025	Radio Onda Rossa	Italy	Roma: Conferenza Lesbica Eurocentroasiatica e Dyke March
April Edition	SIEGESSÄULE Magazine	Germany	Kika's Article: From fear to rage
23/04/2025	Radio Onda Rossa	Italy	26 aprile dyke march a Roma
23/04/2025	Radio Roma	Italy	Diritti Lgbt+: da oggi a Roma la IV Conferenza Internazionale delle Lesbiche Europee
23/04/2025	Agem Parl	Italy	GRASSADONIA (DIRITTILGBT): da oggi a Roma la IV Conferenza Internazionale delle Lesbiche Europee
24/04/2025	Dinamo Press	Italy	A Roma la quarta Conferenza dell'EL*C
27/04/2025	Il Manifesto	Italy	Dyke march a Roma. Migliaia di persone per l'orgoglio lesbico
28/04/2025	GAY.IT	Italy	A Roma la disobbedienza lesbica: cronaca della Dyke March italiana del 26 aprile
28/04/2025	La Falla	Italy	A Roma la prima Dyke March Italiana
28/04/2025	Público	Spain	También estuvimos en Roma... pero en la gran Cumbre Lesbiana
29/04/2025	Vlog - Claudia Fauzia - Youtube	Italy	EL*C 2025: La Conferenza che sfida la lesbofobia in Italia
30/04/2025	Lesbian Global	USA	Reflections on ELC Conference Rome 2025 by LesbianGlobal's Selisse Berry
02/05/2025	Giulia Giornaliste	Italy	A Roma la prima marcia dell'orgoglio lesbico transfemminista, migliaia da tutta Europa e dall'Asia centrale
03/05/2025	L-Mag Magazine	Germany	EL*C-Konferenz: Hunderte Lesben pilgern nach Rome
05/05/2025	MIA - Media Indipendenti Autodeterminat3	Italy	Un granello di sabbia nell'ingranaggio patriarcale
02/06/2025	Público	Spain	Cómo es ser madre lesbiana en un país donde gobierna la ultraderecha

Table 1. Media coverage

Instagram served as the primary engine for real-time political communication, visual narration, and community mobilization. All key indicators confirm its centrality in the Rome campaign:

Metric	Value	% Change vs. Previous Period	Remarks
Follower Count	22,160	+182.77%	Strong community expansion during and after the conference
Accounts Reached	672,670	+72.98%	High visibility driven by Reels and strategic storytelling
Total Engagements	21,630	+36.09% (general) / +4127.36% (interactions)*	Includes likes, comments, shares, saves, DMs, story replies
Posts Published	94	+224.14%	Highest content output period in EL*C history

Table 2. Instagram key indicators

*The reported +4127.36% increase refers exclusively to measurable post-level interactions (likes, shares, saves, and comments).

These elements explain the exponential growth in followers, engagement, and reach, and demonstrate EL*C’s capacity to use Instagram both as a content channel and a political mobilization platform. The data confirms EL*C’s positioning as a key voice in lesbian feminist digital activism during this period. Facebook, as we will now examine, complemented this success by targeting broader, older, and more institutional audiences.





Image 3. Instagram outreach during the conference

6.CONFERENCE CONTENT

6.1 OPENING AND FIRST DAY: LESBIAN LEGENDS

According to the legend, Rome was founded over 3,000 years ago. But according to our own sources, lesbians have existed far longer, and we were twinning long before Romulus and Remus ever did. Rome is called the Eternal City, and during the first day of our EL*C conference, we decided to explain why we think that lesbians are eternal too! A legend is a story, a tale meant to be shared. We founded EL*C because we knew: if we don't tell our stories, no one else will. And if we don't celebrate our legends, they risk being forgotten.

The powerful men of our time, Trump, Meloni, Orbán, Putin, Netanyahu, will all be swept away by history, while we will still be here. Incidentally, the Pope caused us more than a few logistical headaches during the conference week, but we'll forgive him, since he chose to be buried on Saturday, April 26th: International Lesbian Visibility Day. What a tribute to our people.

Our commitment to work for the future while remembering our legendary ancestors is the reason why we insisted in opening the conference in a place, like La Casa, that had an herstoric role in the creation of the Italian feminist movement, to honour and celebrate all the activists (such as **Maria Silvia Spolato** - the first out homosexual person in Italy) that fought for our rights and freedoms and on whose shoulders we stand.

This conference remains also true to the purpose we've pursued since EL*C's founding nearly a decade ago: to bring lesbians out of invisibility, which has always been a form of political oppression. During the opening of the conference, Lucia Caponera, Debora di Cave e Raky Doumbia, representing all local activists that participated in organising the first-ever Italian Dyke March, reaffirmed the importance of our visibility, the strength of our intersectional feminism and the power of lesbians as the grain of sand in the patriarchy's machinery. To echo the Dyke March's political manifesto: our conference takes a proud stand: antifascist, anticlerical and no-VAT, antiracist and anti-colonialist, antimilitarist, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, committed to climate justice, anti-speciesist, and anti-ableist.

We are deeply grateful to the legendary speakers of the first conference day, and who have made this moment possible. To **Elena Biagini**, who reminded us so powerfully that even if Giorgia Meloni doesn't want it, lesbians and feminists are still here, in the heart of Rome. To **Phill Opuku**, who has joined us from the UK and has been part of EL*C since our very first conference in Vienna in 2017. It is especially meaningful to welcome a British comrade now, when that country has plunged into disgraceful transphobia. To **Melissa Camara**, Member of the European Parliament, who has been a strong supporter of this conference and offers us a glimmer of hope in the otherwise bleak landscape of European politics. Our thanks also go to the public and private institutions that made this gathering possible. To **Olena Sevchenko**, who hosted us in Kyiv in 2019 under the banner "Let's Bring Lesbian Genius to the World." We want to reaffirm once again that we stand in fierce solidarity with all our Ukrainian comrades. And to **Monica Benicio**, who, just weeks

after the assassination of her partner Marielle Franco, delivered a speech many of us still carry in our hearts. That murder serves as a brutal reminder of what far-right regimes, like Bolsonaro's at the time, intend for lesbians and all who dare to resist.

At this fourth edition, we proudly gave space to performing artists—powerful advocates who express lesbian realities through words, humour, and music. **Joelle Sambi Nzeba** closed the conference with a moving performance on lesbian justice. Two brilliant comedians, **D E N A** (Belgium/Iran) and **Frad_ramma** (Rome), filled the room with laughter and connection. Music set the tone from the start, with a vibrant opening concert by **Nancy Tungsten**.

We also thank the courageous lesbian activists and elected representatives who joined us and supported the conference despite escalating repression in their home countries, especially **Marilena Grassadonia** (Head of the LGBTI Office of the City of Rome), **Dorottya Rédei** (Labrisz, Hungary) and **Lucia Plavakova** (Slovak MP, Human Rights Committee, Council of Europe).

During our all conference, but, most importantly, all along the EL*C work, we have always encouraged everybody to flood the media with our lesbian photos, videos, and reflections, because the media is a crucial front in the battle against the far right.

The motto of this conference is ***Dyke Rise Against Fascism***. We opened the gathering by joining our Italian comrades in singing the powerful chant “Siamo tutte antifasciste!” (We are all Antifascists) a rallying cry that, in many ways, echoes the spirit of *Bella Ciao* for the 21st century.

6.2 SECOND DAY: LESBIAN FURY VS. FASCIST FEAR

During the second day, we talked about the strength and unity of the lesbian community across Europe.

The 25 April 2025 was the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Italy from the fascist regime and the nazi occupation and served as a strong reminder that freedom and equality are always interconnected, hard to won and must be actively upheld and defended, especially in today's challenging context.

First plenary - Lesbian Roots, Rage, and Justice

During the first plenary, we focused on the growing threats posed by extremist and far-right actors, who increasingly target women and people from minority groups. LBTIQ women, positioned at the intersection of both, are particularly vulnerable. In response to these threats, **Ana Gallego Torres**, Director General of the DG Justice at the European Commission reaffirmed the importance of inclusive policy making and highlighted their commitment to support civil society organisations, in particularly European network such as the EL*C. The role of civil society organisations was recognised as essential in shaping effective and grounded policies. Over the years, collaboration between the EU and groups like EL*C has delivered meaningful progress, from legal protections to social inclusion.

The speech concluded with a strong message of solidarity and a shared commitment to build a future where all LBTIQ women can live freely, safely, and authentically.

Justice was also addressed from the lived realities of activists facing repression and conflict. **Zhanar Sekerbayeva**, a pioneering figure from Kazakhstan and co-founder of Feminita, shared her recent experience of imprisonment for organizing feminist protests, a stark reminder of the risks LBT activists face in authoritarian contexts.

From Armenia, **Aida Marukyan** brought attention to how queerness is manipulated as a political tool and “Western threat,” especially amid ongoing geopolitical instability and the displacement of Armenian populations from Artsakh. She emphasized how LGBTQ+ and feminist communities are being scapegoated by nationalist forces to divert attention from structural and political failures.

Continuing EL*C’s commitment to intersectionality, this year’s plenary also presented groundbreaking research focused on racialised lesbians, an area long overlooked in European LGBTQ+ data collection. The presentation by **Aida Yancy, Aldessa Linca, Alba Hernandez and Nat Arias** marked a continuation of EL*C’s agenda to elevate the needs and lived experiences of underrepresented and invisible parts of our community, which in previous years addressed ageism and will soon turn to lesbians with disabilities. With anti-racism as one of the main themes of the conference, three dedicated workshops were announced, co-developed with activists, particularly from Italy, to ensure the presence and leadership of persons of colour.

The plenary closed with the powerful voice of **Lepa Mladenović**, a pioneer lesbian activist from the Western Balkans, whose decades of experience, including supporting survivors of war rape, served as a potent reminder of the strength, endurance, and political legacy of the lesbian movement, especially in times of conflict and crisis.

Second Plenary - Lesbian Fury vs Fascist Fear

The second plenary of the European Lesbian* Conference focused on resistance, reaffirming a core principle of EL*C’s political approach: the battles of our times need, and have always had, lesbians at the forefront. In a context of growing authoritarianism, anti-gender ideology, and democratic erosion, lesbian resistance is not symbolic, it is strategic, necessary, and deeply political.

The plenary offered space to reflect on how we carry out these struggles. **Evgenia Giakoumopoulou** reflected on how to lesbianise institutional space and talked about the key institutional win of the Council of Europe’s first-ever resolution on LBQ women approved in 2024 while MEP **Kim Van Sparrentak** focused on the critical role of alliances within power structures like the European Parliament, especially now that backlash is always more present and the conservative movements have a stronger hold in the EU Institutions.

We kept a focus on grassroots mobilisation with **Lydie Raer** that connected feminist struggles with lesbian rights and the fight for disability justice in France as well as the mobilisation of the need for global feminist solidarity with the Iranian activist **Shadi Amin**.

Inna Michaeli from the global feminist network AWID reminded us of the importance of the key role that lesbians have in feminist and LGBTQI+ struggles, in political education, and organizing by and for migrants, as well as for Palestine liberation and solidarity. This moment was also used to collectively analyse the broader political landscape, drawing on data from the RESIST project presented by professor **Kate Brown** - that focuses on the impact of the anti-gender movement in Europe - and from the experiences of trans-lesbian solidarity in Italy brought forward by transfeminist ARTivist **Eva de Adamo** who focused on deliberate tactics to fracture our movement and legitimise exclusionary policies.

But our resistance is organised and transnational, linking grassroots action, institutional engagement, and global feminist solidarity, from Palestine to Iran. They require all of us: grassroots activists, lesbians in the institutions and international feminist civil society. This plenary made it clear: lesbian voices are not optional, they are central to any credible fight for democracy, human rights, and gender justice in Europe. In a time when institutions are wavering, lesbians are holding the line and shaping the future.

6.3 LAST DAY: TOWARD A LESBIAN FUTURE

We closed our conference on 26 April, International Lesbian Visibility Day, with one final plenary before heading to the first-ever Dyke March in Italy. Centred on lesbian actions, the session showcased how lesbians resist, survive, and thrive in hostile, lesbophobic, and oppressive contexts.

The powerful intervention of **Mari Kurtanidze** reflected on the love, care and strength of the lesbians and queer that are participating in the grassroots mobilisation in Georgia against the pro-Russian regime. **Xheni Karaj** from Albania reflected on the role of media strategies, strong political messaging and the need for creative and innovative narratives in the face of rising hate and crimes against our existence. **Marie Patoiu** talked about the fight for representation in elite sport and the power of her lesbian kiss in front of a global press after her gold medal at the Paris Paralympic Games. The plenary affirmed that lesbian actions are political, rooted in solidarity, resilience, and a shared vision of a future where we are not only included, but empowered to lead.

A defining moment came with the speech of a **Palestinian dyke activist**, delivered under strict security due to the risks posed by the Israeli government's oppression. She denounced the pinkwashing of genocide, the destruction of queer infrastructure in Gaza, and the erasure of Palestinian lesbian voices. Her intervention was a call to action: to speak, protest, boycott, fund, and build global networks of queer and lesbian solidarity grounded in justice and liberation. The plenary made clear the call for a Free Palestine and that lesbian resistance is inseparable from broader decolonial and anti-oppression struggles, and that silence is not an option.

The final panel also gave the opportunity to remember that this conference, and the movement behind it, is the result of eight years of relentless organising against invisibility, neglect, and lesbophobia. Born out of fury and necessity, EL*C is now the most resourced lesbian organisation in history, boldly reclaiming space, funding movements, and lesbianising policies, institutions, and futures. This movement was never handed

anything, it built power from the ground up, and it will continue to demand more: more rights, more resources, more visibility, more justice. As we marched into the streets with thousands of others, the message could not have been clearer: this is not a storm we are waiting for. It is one we are marching through, together, toward a lesbian future that leaves no one behind.

7.POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO DISABILITY JUSTICE

Accessibility was one of our core political commitments at the 4th EL*C Conference in Rome. The reasons are rooted in lesbian feminist values of care, interdependence, and the right to fully participate in community and political life. But they depend also on the specific commitment of the Italian lesbian and progressive movements. Historically, the anti-psychiatry movement and the movement to overcome barriers hindering the full participation of people with disabilities in society, have played an important role in shaping political consciousness in the country. As a result, Italian civil society tends to show a stronger awareness of disability rights than in many other European countries. For this conference, our common goal was to create a space where all participants could be present, heard, and celebrated, emotionally, physically, and politically.

This commitment, however, collided with the harsh realities of structural underfunding. Following the abrupt withdrawal of funding by the US State Department in January 2025, we had to reduce some of our accessibility features, and we were unable, for example, to ensure a Live Closed Captioning System. Despite these constraints, we prioritised access wherever possible. We took extensive measures, adopted a flexible, person-centred approach, and communicated accessibility features in advance. But this experience made it painfully clear that accessibility is a process that requires recognition and adequate funding, it cannot remain an optional add-on, and marginalised communities must be given the resources and autonomy to design truly accessible spaces on their own terms.

Even if, generally, the measures taken made this conference the most accessible that we ever organised, we still made few mistakes or encountered issues where we had to ask our participants to take additional strains to ensure their participation., There was also a more serious failure: the Closing Party, confirmed by the venue owners as wheelchair accessible, turned out not to be. This was discovered only on the day of the event. The venue had provided inaccurate information, and EL*C, together with local organisers, failed to verify accessibility in person or request photographic evidence. The local organisers did their best to adapt the space in a limited time, but their efforts were not sufficient, and the venue remained inaccessible.

In response and following a call from wheelchair-using participants read during the Dyke March, EL*C and the broader community collectively chose not to attend the party. Instead, participants gathered in front of the venue to raise awareness and protest the exclusion caused by inaccessible spaces. There, we reaffirmed a core political principle that was central in the 3 days of the conference: there is no joy, no pride, and no community without accessibility. What could have been a moment of exclusion became a moment of political clarity, collective care, resistance, and refusal to accept injustice and exclusion within our own spaces.

We share this not only to take responsibility and be accountable. We do so as part of a vital and revolutionary path, one that is essential for everyone, and more than ever for

institutions, governments, public health and education systems, sport federations, and all spheres of society. Accessibility is not a checklist, it is a political practice that requires groundbreaking investment, ongoing reflection, constant vigilance, and humility. It calls for a radical rethinking of our practices and spaces, centring the lived experiences of people with disabilities, engaging specific expertise, and committing to collective self-education within our movements and organisations.

With our limited resources, there is much more that we can do, by improving our work, collaborating even more closely with local disability justice groups for our future events, and put accessibility at the core of all our organising. We understand accessibility not as a favour or adjustment, but as a fundamental political right. In a world where too many feminists and LGBTIQ spaces remain inaccessible, we must do better, not only by including people with disabilities, but by co-creating spaces where difference is not accommodated, but actively valued and built into the core of our movements.

8. BEHIND THE SCENES: THE POLITICAL WEIGHT OF LOGISTICS

There is a common assumption that political work happens only in plenaries, panels, and public statements. But anyone who has ever organized a movement-building space knows: politics also unfolds in spreadsheets, in email at 2 a.m., in last-minute bus arrangements, and in the emotional labour of managing both bodies and expectations. Our recent conference was no exception.

The logistical backbone of the event, flights, accommodation, meals, transportation, accessible spaces, coordination of volunteers, putting together the information for the program and 50 pages of the participant's pack, wasn't simply a technical operation. It was political work. And that work was largely invisible, exhausting, and deeply meaningful.

In preparing this conference, we faced the full spectrum of challenges that come with organizing a transnational lesbian gathering: coordinating travel for hundreds of participants, many of whom face economic or visa barriers; ensuring accessible transport and spaces for disabled participants; and doing all this within tight budgets, tighter timelines, and with too few people. The often-overlooked truth: logistical work is political. Not just because of what it enables, a safer, more inclusive, more accessible space, but because of how it is done, and by whom.

In our organizing, we tried to resist the norm of hyper-efficiency, of isolating logistics as a "neutral" function separate from vision or values. Instead, we approached it relationally, as part of care work, as part of community building, as part of our feminist and lesbian politics. But this isn't easy. When the tasks pile up and the hours stretch long, when crying becomes a form of release, when the people managing registration and access can't attend sessions themselves, a contradiction emerges. A sense of disconnection. A feeling that being behind the scenes also means being apart from the movement's heart.

This experience also reminded us of the broader systemic dynamics that shape labour in activist spaces. Too often, logistical work is seen as secondary, something done in the background, often by people who are expected to remain invisible. Yet this work is just as vital as what happens on stage or in policy discussions. It raises important questions: Who takes on operational tasks? Who is recognized and credited? Who can move between strategic and logistical roles, and who is confined to the less visible, repetitive labour?

At EL*C, we don't see these as mere organizational challenges. They are feminist concerns. The way we divide labour within our movements reflects power, value, and recognition. While some task specialization is practical, we believe in making space for everyone, including those focused on logistics, to be part of political reflection and collective meaning-making. What would it look like if more people experienced both the operational and political dimensions of our work? If logistical roles were not only

acknowledged but also given room for expression and impact? What if we challenged the artificial divide between “the back” and “the front” of the stage?

The conference reminded us: every plane ticket booked, every email answered, every last-minute room change, all of it matters. All of it is what made the space possible. All of it was done with care and commitment to our community. And all of it is political.

Let's continue making that visible.

9. THE FIRST DYKE MARCH IN ITALY

On 26 April 2025, the closing day of our conference and Lesbian Visibility Day, two thousand lesbians took to the streets of Rome in what became the first-ever Dyke March in Italy. This “Herstoric” moment was even more remarkable as it unfolded amidst the funeral of the Pope. In a country where secularism remains fragile, we marched in defiance of draconian security restrictions, five days of national mourning, media erasure, and accusations of disrespect. And yet, we claimed our space, visibly and unapologetically.

Such an achievement, like the city that hosted it, Rome, was not built in a day.

Lesbian activism in Italy is rich and extraordinarily diverse. There are visible lesbian activists in leadership roles within feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements, political elected representative, lesbian or FLINTA+ trucks at Prides, intellectuals, academics, and researchers who bring a lesbian perspective into their work and institutions, a permanent Observatory on Lesbophobia, initiatives addressing violence in lesbian relationships, projects for cultural and political visibility and resistance, as well as long-standing cultural and social initiatives that have constituted a true bastion of lesbian resistance for decades. The call for a Dyke March had to start from a real recognition of this richness. Those that responded and chose to take part in that process did so with the strength and confidence that came from these rich experiences and engaged in it with an open mind but without giving up their own autonomy.

The march was supported by EL*C and strongly connected to the conference but was organised by the local and national activists who considered it an opportunity to increase lesbian visibility in Italy, fight the current backlash and exchange solidarity with lesbians all over the world. It took nine months of meetings with more than 50 lesbians from very different backgrounds and political trajectories, and it resulted in a strong political manifesto, built in an horizontal way and that had the need for visibility at the forefront.

Our collective path of activism, from the Suffragette to the Lesbian Avengers, from Greenpeace to Black Lives Matter, has taught us a simple, enduring truth: to confront injustice, one must first make it visible. In this spirit, the Dykemarch call to take to the streets was not only a matter of collective healing and joy, but also a way of impacting the outside world with our presence and existence. We made a deliberate political choice as Italian lesbians, alongside Hungarian whose Pride is under threat from Orbán’s regime, Georgian lesbians resisting Russian influence, Iranian lesbians defying tyranny, Palestinian lesbians enduring genocide, and many others.

The situation for the rights of lesbians, women, and LGBTIQ+ people in Italy, Europe, and around the world is very serious. But what gives us hope are the sisters and siblings we are marching with, whether they’ve been with us for years or just for a few months.

10. CONCLUSION

As the 4th European Lesbian Conference has ended on the Lesbian Visibility Day, we look back with pride and power at what we've achieved together. Co-hosted with the Italian lesbian movement, this conference was not only a joyful reunion but a clear political statement: we are ready to fight back against fascism, oppression, and invisibility. In this critical socio-political moment, we gathered to remind ourselves and the world that lesbians are resilient, united, and determined. We are not only surviving, but we are also thriving.

EL*C's journey over the past eight years is a testament to that determination. Born out of frustration with erasure and neglect, EL*C stepped forward to rebuild and reclaim a vibrant lesbian movement. From a time when the word "lesbian" was considered irrelevant or problematic, we have transformed into the most resourced lesbian organization in history, with over 200 member organizations across Europe and Central Asia. We've given, via re-granting, nearly €3 million euros to national lesbian organizations, produced groundbreaking research, and lesbianized the media, policies and institutions, all while staying unapologetically true to who we are.

The conference affirmed our strategy and our vision: we will defend our rights fiercely, demand stronger policies against lesbophobia, and secure the resources our movement deserves. But we will also innovate, supporting lesbian entrepreneurship, building economic autonomy, and shaping a future where lesbians lead not only in activism, but in business, policymaking, and culture. As always, we will take our place in the wider struggle for democracy, justice, and liberation, because when the stakes are high, lesbians rise to the challenge.

Looking ahead, we are already preparing for our next historic gathering in June 2027, when we will celebrate ten years of EL*C in the symbolic and poetic birthplace of Sappho, the city of Eressos, on the island of Lesbos. Until then, we continue to build, fight, dance, and love, on the streets, in the institutions, and in our communities. This conference was a celebration, a strategy session, and a call to action. Thank you to everyone who made it unforgettable. We are not done yet: lesbians, as usual, will save the world!



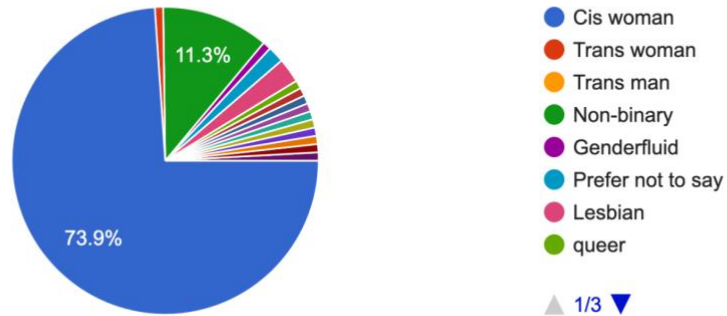
EUROCENTRALASIAN LESBIAN*COMMUNITY



11. ANNEX – CONFERENCE EVALUATION SURVEY

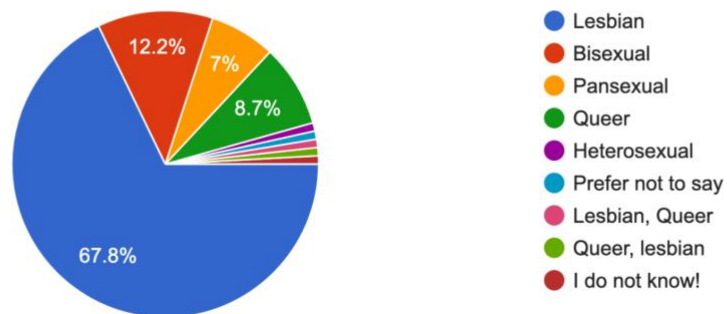
How do you identify in terms of gender?

115 responses



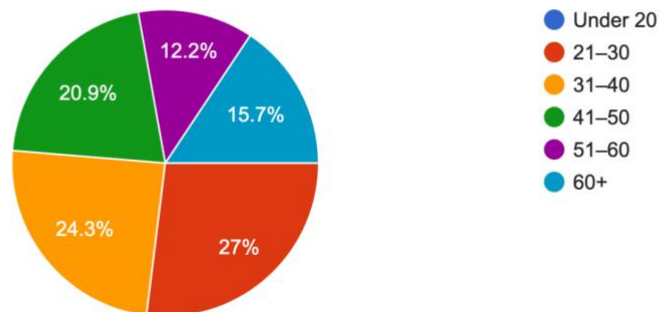
What is your sexual orientation?

115 responses



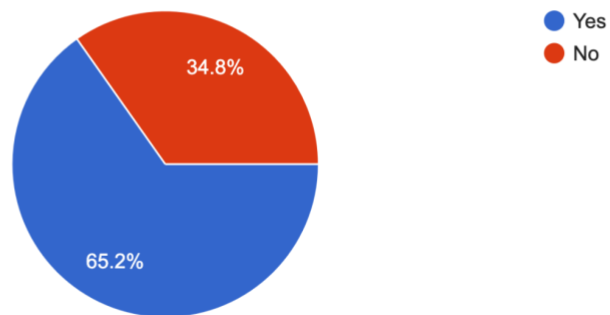
Your age group:

115 responses



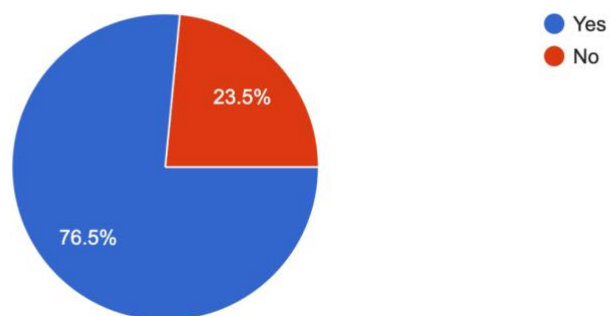
Did you come to the conference as a representative of an organisation?

115 responses



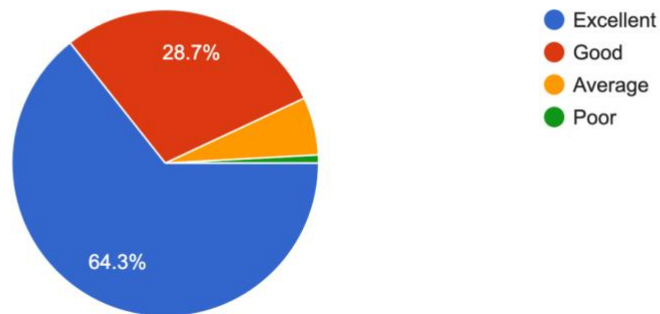
Is this your first EL*C conference?

115 responses

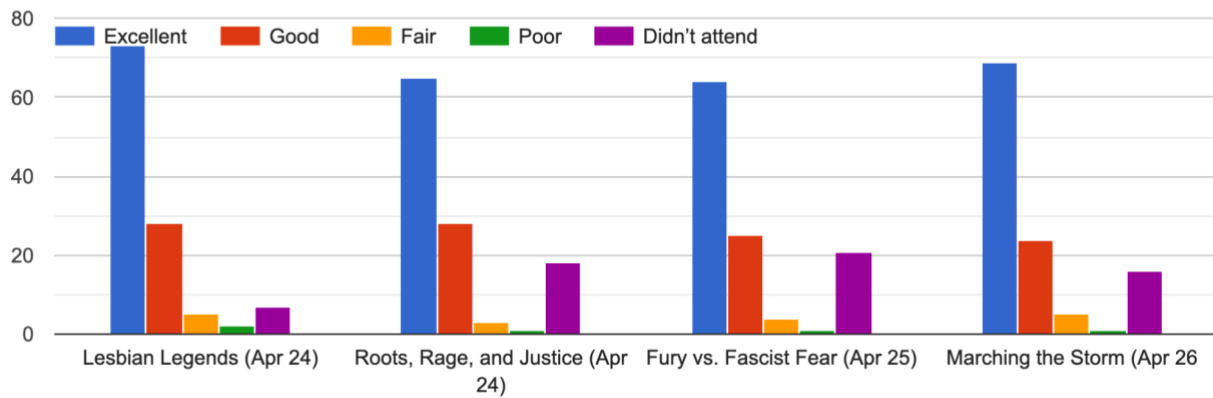


How would you rate the overall content of the conference?

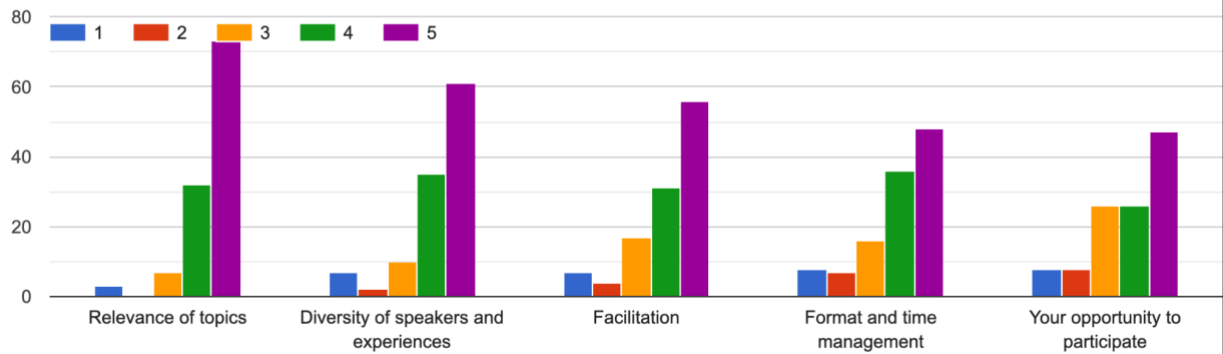
115 responses



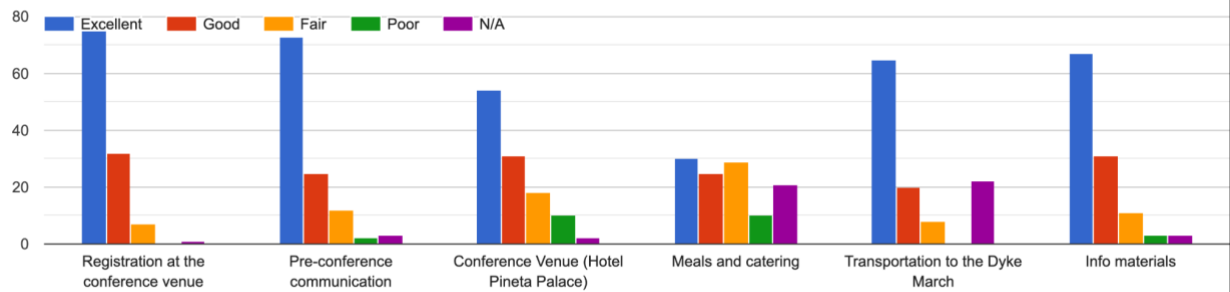
Please rate the plenary sessions you attended:



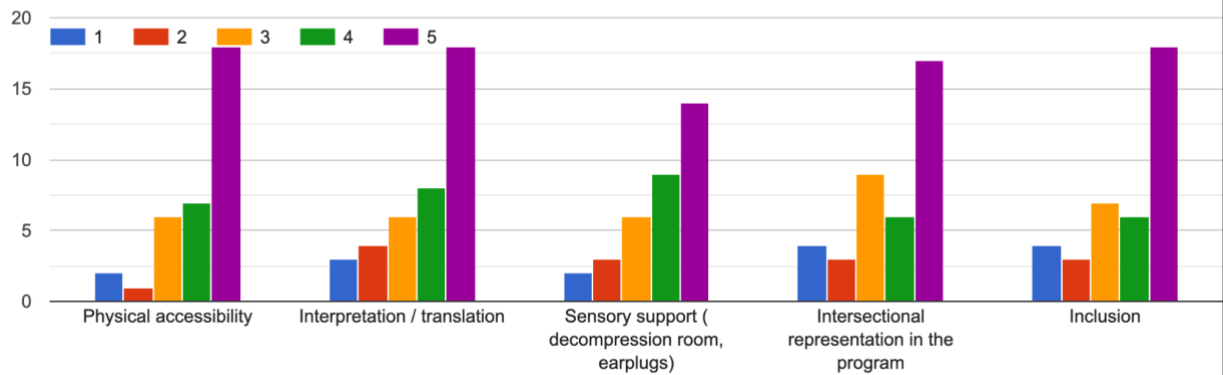
How would you rate the parallel sessions you attended? (1 – Not satisfied, 5 – Very satisfied)



How would you rate the following logistical aspects?

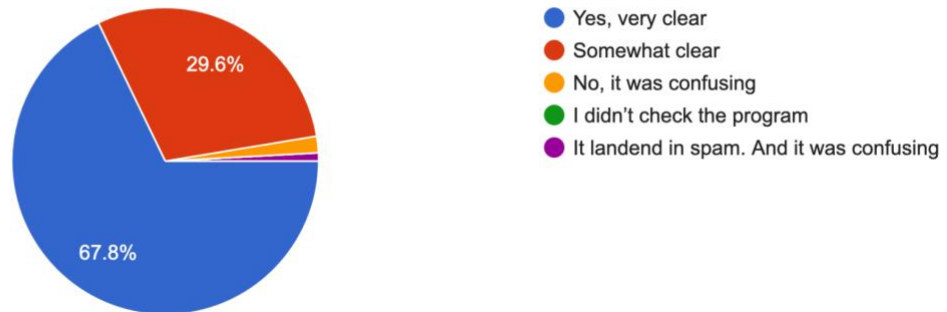


If yes, how accessible and inclusive was the event for you? (1 – Not at all to 5 – Fully accessible)



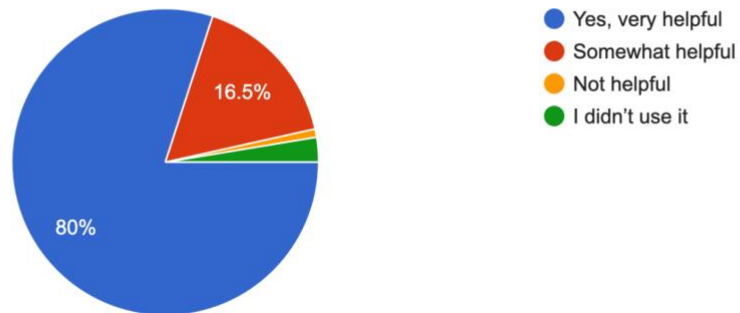
Was it easy to find the conference program and understand the schedule?

115 responses



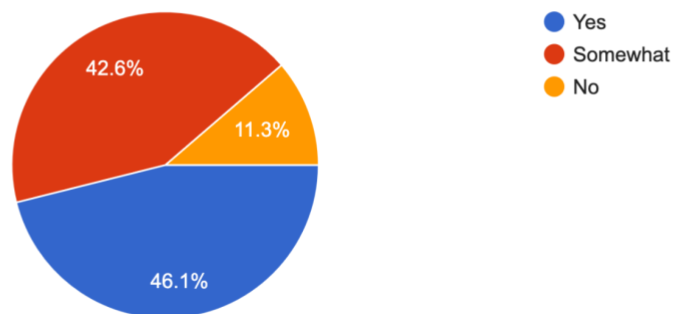
Was the Participant Info Pack useful for you?

115 responses



Do you feel more equipped to organize or advocate after the conference?

115 responses



12. ANNEX – DETAILED PROGRAM

12.1 PROGRAM OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE - 23 APRIL

Opening at Palazzo Valentini:

Speakers:

- **Gulzada Serzhan and Eva Perez** – EL*C Co-Chairs.
- **Marilena Grassadonia** – Head of LGBTI Rights at the Municipality of Rome.
- **Tiziana Biolghini** – Councilwoman and Head of Equality in the Metropolitan City of Rome.
- **Raky Doumbia, Lucia Caponera, Deborah di Cave** – Organizing Committee of the Rome Dyke March.
- **Daniela Ghiotto** – Famiglie Arcobaleno.
- **Dorottya Rédei** – Expert in gender and education; Executive Director of Labrisz Lesbian Association Hungary
- **Monica Benicio** – Activist and Councilwoman in the City of Rio de Janeiro.
- **Lucia Plavakova** – Lawyer, human rights activist and progressive politician. Since 2023 member of Slovak Parliament, chairperson of the Human Rights Committee and member of the Slovak delegation in Council of Europe.

Big Lesbian Opening at Casa Internazionale delle Donne: Under Roman skies, Big Lesbian Energy is coming! Kick off the conference and celebrate our grand opening with icons, laughs, music, and radical herstory at Casa Internazionale delle Donne.

Speakers:

- **Maura Cossutta** – Doctor, politician, feminist, and Chair of the Casa Internazionale delle Donne.
- **Nora Delvecchio** – Feminist researcher; Capacity Building & Networking at Semia - Fondo delle Donne.
- **Silvia Casalino** – EL*C Co-Dykerector.
- **Elena Biagini** – Author of The Unforeseen Emergence: The Italian Lesbian Movement during the '70s and '80s.
- **Giovanna Olivieri** – Coordinator of Archivia, Women's Archives, Libraries, and Documentation Center in Rome.
- **Frad** – Comedian, cartoonist, and tattoo artist.
- **Nancy Tungsten** – Solo music project of Eli Nancy Natali, Italian singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist.

12.2 PROGRAM FIRST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE - 24 APRIL

Plenary I: Lesbian Legends – When They Go Low, We Go High

Speakers:

- **Silvia Casalino and Gulzada Serzhan** – EL*C Executive Co-Dykerector and EL*C Chair

- **Phyll Opoku** – Co-Founder and Chief Executive of UK Black Pride.
- **Elena Biagini** – Author of *The Unforeseen Emergence: The Italian Lesbian Movement During the '70s and '80s*.
- **Olena Shevchenko** – Co-Founder and Director of Ukrainian NGO “Insight”, named Woman of the Year in 2023 by *The Times*.
- **Melissa Camara** – French politician, Member of the European Parliament, Co-Chair of the Anti-racism Intergroup
- **Monica Benicio** – Activist and Councilwoman in the City of Rio de Janeiro.

Parallel Sessions - From the Streets to the Seats: Lesbians in Politics: What does it take for lesbians to move from activism to elected power? This panel explores the challenges and opportunities of lesbian engagement in formal politics, from navigating party structures to running campaigns, building alliances, and shaping political majorities. We've been talking about political lesbianism for several decades. Join us now for a conversation on how lesbians are taking power and contributing to a progressive, feminist, and anti-racist victory.

Facilitator: Silvia Casalino

Speakers:

- **Melissa Camara** – French politician, Member of the European Parliament, Co-Chair of the Anti-racism Intergroup
- **Lucia Plaváková** – Lawyer, human rights activist and progressive politician. Member of Slovak Parliament, chairperson of the Human Rights Committee and member of the Slovak delegation in Council of Europe.
- **Alice Coffin** – French journalist, feminist, lesbian activist, Paris city councilor since 2020, and author of *Le Génie Lesbien*
- **Zhanar Sekerbaeva** – Kazakh human rights activist, politician, poet, and journalist
- **Sihame Haddioui** – Belgian politician, artist, and activist; former alderwoman for Culture and Equal Opportunities in Schaerbeek, Brussels
- **Natascia Maesi** – Italian journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist; first woman elected as national president of Arcigay, Italy's largest LGBTQIA+ organization
- **Malin Björk** – Swedish politician and Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the Left Party from 2014 to 2024
- **Lydie Raër** – Activist with *Les Dévalideuses*, a collective fighting for the rights of disabled women; elected Councilwoman in Ivry-sur-Seine, France

Parallel Sessions - Fundraising for a Lesbian Future: The lesbian movement has long been systematically underfunded, and despite years of advocacy, the trend isn't improving. In fact, it's getting worse. According to the latest Global Philanthropy Project report, a mere 2% of all global LGBTIQ funding is directed to LBQ women's organizations and initiatives. This staggering gap is deepened by widespread funding cuts targeting LGBTIQ and women's rights organizations, from both public and private sources. Europe and Central Asia continue to be chronically de-prioritized in most donors' strategies and geographic scopes. This session created space for a strategic, action-oriented conversation on the urgent need to resource the lesbian movement, not just to survive, but to thrive. Grounded in the leadership and experience of lesbian activists, the

discussion will tackle the impact of current funding trends and explore potential solutions across short-, mid-, and long-term horizons. The session included an open exchange with funders such as LesbianGlobal, Mama Cash, RFSL, Samia Fund, and Filia, creating space for shared accountability, radical transparency, and bold reimagining of what resourcing justice can look like.

Facilitator: Dragana Todorović, Executive Co-Director, EL*C

Parallel Sessions - Trans Lesbians: This session explored the experiences of trans and nonbinary lesbians within the Lesbian* communities, including barriers to inclusion, legal challenges across Europe and Central Asia, and the rise of anti-gender movements fueling trans- and lesbophobia. The session includes five presentations followed by a Fishbowl discussion.

Speakers:

- **Maud Royer** – French feminist translesbian activist and author of *Le lobby transphobe*. Co-founder and former president of Toutes des Femmes, a transfeminist group advocating through strategic litigation, media engagement, and a national campaign for legal gender recognition.
- **Neo** – Trans nonbinary lesbian and director of TransAkcija Institute in Slovenia. With a background in journalism and gender studies, they work on advocacy, education, and strategic communications.
- **Andre Rădulescu** – Nonbinary activist and founder of Identity.Education (Romania), focusing on storytelling, education, and community services. Their activism integrates inclusion policy and civil rights advocacy.
- **Anita Yeoh** – Transgender lesbian and mother based in Moscow. Community manager at Trans*Coalition and translator at Center T. Also a techno music producer and weightlifter.
- **Tanja von Knorring** – Human rights expert and Executive Director of Transfeminist (Finland). She played a key role in reforming Finland's trans law and has held leadership roles at SETA and TGEU.
- **Eva Sassi Croce** – Radical transfeminist ARTivist, member of Non Una di Meno Modena.

Parallel Sessions - Lesbian festivals: sparkles of strength and social force - What impact do lesbian festivals have on our community, our position in society, and on queer and feminist culture? Can a festival be both a celebration and a site of resistance, especially in these challenging times when we feel the need to nurture togetherness? This workshop created space for lesbian and feminist activists to share experiences and insights. Reflect on these questions and get inspired!

Facilitators: EL*C board members and activists **Ruth Borgfjord** and **Antonija Stojanović Almesberger**.

Speakers:

- **Manny de Guerre** – Founder and organizer of the Side by Side LGBTQ+ Film Festival (formerly based in Russia).
- **Gulzada Serzhan** – One of the organizers of the First Central Asian Lesbian Quryltai in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
- **Lucia Leonardi** – Transfeminist lesbian activist, formerly part of Agape Lesbian Camp.

- **Elisa Coco** – One of the organizers of the Some Prefer Cake Festival (Italy).
- **Dorottya Rédei** – Labrisz Lesbian Association (Hungary).
- **Selma Hadžihalilović** – Feminist activist from the CURE Foundation (Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- **Jelena Vasiljević** – Executive Director of Rainbow Ignite (Serbia).
- **Charlotte Orsenne** – Initiator and co-founder of a Berlin-based lesbian* collective; a lesbian mother shaped by both French and German identities.

Parallel Sessions - GBV Grantees Closed Project Meeting: This closed session is for the 21 EL*C grantees working on gender-based violence against lesbians. The meeting will bring together project partners to exchange ideas, strategize, and reflect on their work carried out through the EL*C regranting program: Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence Against Lesbians.

Parallel Sessions - Lesbiche in Italia...facciamo rete! - Networking and strategy building for lesbians in Italy. This space is designed for lesbian activists and organizations active in the Italian context. It will be dedicated to analyzing the current situation in Italy: Who are we? How are we? How are we living and responding to the political landscape of recent years? We aim to reconnect in order to get to know and support one another, share knowledge and practices, and co-create initiatives of lesbian resistance, struggle, and joy. Given the specific focus of this session, and to facilitate interaction, the discussion will take place in Italian only.

Parallel Sessions - Healing the Earth, Healing Ourselves: Decolonial Lesbian Ecofeminism: This workshop explores the intersection of environmental justice, colonialism, feminism, and queer activism. Speakers will address key struggles such as state repression of eco-activists in Kazakhstan, tensions between queer and environmental movements in Georgia, and the ongoing effects of colonial exploitation in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The session also introduces the idea of reparations through a lesbian feminist lens, highlighting the need for systemic change and decolonial resistance.

Facilitator: Gulzada Serzhan (she/her) – Co-chair of the EL*C board and co-founder of the Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative 'Feminita'. She is a prominent lesbian feminist activist and has played a key role in organizing the First Lesbian Quryltai dedicated to Ecology in 2024.

Speakers:

- **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** (she/her) – Co-founder of 'Feminita', a lesbian feminist, poet, and powerlifter. Zhanar led the organizing efforts of the First Lesbian Quryltai on Ecology in Kazakhstan and is a strong voice against state repression and environmental destruction.
- **Pierrette Pyram Ambrosio** (she/her) – Founder and president of DiivinesLGBTQIA+, an organization advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights in the French Caribbean and France. She brings a vital perspective on environmental racism and the legacy of chlordecone contamination in Guadeloupe and Martinique.
- **Audrey Angele** (she/her) – Honorary member of DiivinesLGBTQIA+, engaged in feminist and environmental activism in the French Caribbean. She works alongside Pierrette on raising awareness about the impact of colonialism on health and ecosystems.

- **Tamar Jakeli** (she/her) – Queer feminist and environmental activist from Tbilisi, Georgia, with a master's in Human Ecology from Lund University. She has worked to bridge queer and environmental movements and previously attempted to establish a Green Party in Georgia.
- **Alice Coffin** (she/her) – French journalist, feminist activist, and Green Party politician. Co-founder of the Association of LGBT Journalists in France and a long-time advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, environmental justice, and anti-colonial struggles. She collaborates with DiivinesLGBTQIA+ on pushing for chlordecone contamination testing in France and promoting reparations through a lesbian feminist lens.

Parallel Sessions - Lesbians Feminist, Queer, Crips: Bring together an amazing group of activists from across Europe to talk about disability justice within the lesbian movement and to share their experiences of building community at the intersection of queerness and disability. Creating space for lesbian, bi, and queer (LBQ) people with disabilities to share thoughts, needs, priorities, and ideas for collective strategies. This is about shaping our movement together. Not disabled but passionate about disability justice? No worries! There will be a parallel session for allies and experts to engage, reflect, and contribute as well.

Facilitator: Carla Maria Reale (she/they) – Postdoctoral researcher, transfeminist activist, and cultural organizer. Their interdisciplinary research explores how law addresses material bodies, complex identities, and equality. Board member of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Trento.

Speakers:

- **Lydie Raër** – Activist with *Les Dévalideuses*, a collective fighting for the rights of disabled women; elected Councilwoman in Ivry-sur-Seine, France.
- **Ilaria Crippi** – Disabled lesbian activist from Italy, collaborating with various organizations to promote the rights of people with disabilities. She is trained as a disability manager and social planner, with expertise in disability studies.

Parallel Sessions - Lesbian Fairytales: Building Dyke Narratives - Lesbian authors share their work and reflect on why it's vital for us to write our own fairytales, myths, and personal histories. Together, we'll explore how storytelling shapes identities, challenges norms, and creates space for lesbian* imagination.

Speakers:

- **Nino Kharchilava** – Georgian queer activist, gender studies scholar, and trainer in integrated security. She works on creating safe spaces for queer and feminist women and is currently Research and Education Coordinator at WISG.
- **Dorottya Rédei** – Expert in gender and education; Executive Director of Labrisz Lesbian Association Hungary
- **Ruth Borgfjord** – Organiser of the first Romanian Lesbian Conference, author of Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Queer Women and Non-Binary People in Romania, and organiser of women's marches and Pride marches.
- **Irene Villa** – Associate researcher at the PoliTeSse research center at the University of Verona.

Parallel Sessions - Wisdom and Wits – There Is Life After 60 :) With an optimistic perspective, this session explores the experiences of older lesbians, celebrating the joys of aging, the strength of lifelong activism, and the new freedoms that come with time. We will reflect on saying goodbye, embracing change, and building supportive, intergenerational communities. The session highlights the inspiring work of local and international lesbian groups making space for joy, resistance, and care. We will hear how LGBTQ+ people aged 50+ in Athens are organizing events, raising public awareness, and creating visible, inclusive spaces. In Germany, lesbian advocacy groups promote the rights and participation of older lesbians through lobbying, social events, and community programs. Some initiatives include integrating 60+ lesbians into community centers and training social workers on the specific needs of older lesbians. In Hungary, different approaches exist, such as the creation of the documentary *Secret Years*, and programs that foster intergenerational dialogue and care.

Facilitator: Evien Tjabbes – Co-founder of ILIS and Herstory Avengers, co-organizer of the first-ever lesbian conference in Amsterdam, a former intercultural trainer, and longtime activist involved in ILGA and ILIS for over 20 years. She currently serves as a board member of EL*C.

Speakers:

- **Anna Borgos** – Psychologist and women's historian; founding member of Labrisz Lesbian Association (Hungary)
- **Dimitra Kyrillou** – Vice President of Proud Seniors Greece; civil engineer living and working in Athens
- **Dorottya Rédei** – Expert in gender and education; Executive Director of Labrisz Lesbian Association
- **Cornelia Sperling** – Lesbian activist with the NGO FliP – Frauenliebe im Pott (Germany) and the Yogyakarta-Alliance
- **Reingard Wagner** – Former adult education teacher; board member of *Lesben und Alter*, and actively involved in several initiatives inside and outside the LGBTI* community promoting full participation of older lesbians
- **Hilke Bleeken** – Co-founder and manager of *Älterwerden unterm Regenbogen* (Hamburg). A longtime lesbian feminist activist, she has blended activism with her professional life, from running a women's bookshop in the 1990s to organizing lesbian programs in community centers in the 2000s

Parallel Sessions - Naming Lesbophobia: understanding it to fight it - Lesbians are facing rising hate, online, in the streets, and within institutions. This powerful session brings together new research from EL*C, data from the European Observatory on Lesbophobia, and insights from the Italian network Rete Medus3, exposing the scale and patterns of lesbophobia across Europe. Activists from France, Moldova, and Italy will join a bold conversation on resistance strategies and collective action. The workshop will also feature an open discussion with participants and a presentation of the upcoming EL*C reganting opportunity focused on violence against LBTIQ women, an initiative to support and fund grassroots work against gender-based violence.

Speakers:

- **Yuna Miralles** – Member of Nous Toutes France, feminist activist, and unionist committed to advancing LGBTI rights, gender equality, and comprehensive sexuality education.
- **Sara Azzarelli** – Operator at a shelter for GBV survivors, transfeminist and LBTIA+ activist based in Bologna. Member of the executive board of Lesbiche Bologna, and for the past three years, actively supporting LBTIA+ people experiencing intimate partner violence through Linea Lesbica Antiviolenza. Also a yoga teacher and performer using body movement as a form of activism.
- **Carla Maria Reale** (she/they) – Postdoctoral researcher, transfeminist activist, and cultural organizer. Their interdisciplinary research explores how law addresses material bodies, complex identities, and equality. Board member of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Trento.
- **Lorelei Grigorița** – Community organizer, cultural curator, and social media strategist based in Moldova. Manager of Queer Café, a vibrant space for LGBTQIA+ visibility and creativity. Actively engaged in feminist movements and advocacy for survivors of gender-based and digital violence.
- **Angelica Polmonari** (she/her) – Italian, transfeminist, lesbian, Arcigay's local, national and international LGBTQIA+ rights activist. Member of the first-ever Italian grassroots observatory on lesbophobia, "Rete Medus3", established in 2020.
- **Emi Michael** – Intersectional feminist and ethno-racial justice advocate with deep expertise in global health equity, gender justice, and the social determinants of health. She has led and supported major research, policy, and programming efforts across global institutions, including the UK Department of Health and Social Care, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization, with a consistent focus on centering marginalized voices and dismantling structural inequities.

Parallel Sessions - Anti-Gender Mobilizations, Affects and Resistances: In this space, we will explore the relevance of the RESIST research findings for those who attend. In particular, we will outline how 'anti-gender' movements are mobilizing across Europe, the effects they have, and how resistances are taking shape. We will ask attendees to consider how these findings relate to their experiences and the steps we might take to counter the anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQIA+, and anti-rights agendas that are increasingly defining our worlds.

Parallel Sessions - Office Hours with Mama Cash and RFSL: Looking to connect with funders? Join our partners Mama Cash and RFSL for informal office hours. This is an opportunity for LBQ+ groups to meet Mama Cash and RFSL representatives, ask questions, and learn more about funding opportunities and support.

Film Screening - Beyond the Frontlines, by Alexandra Dols: Documentary, 2017 – 113 min – Language of the movie is English, French and Arabic with English subtitles. A journey across Palestine alongside Palestinian psychiatrist Dr. Samah Jabr to discover the resistance and resilience of people affected by the invisible wounds of war and occupation. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the Director and a Palestinian queer activist who works at the intersection of queer rights and Palestinian liberation. Their work emphasizes the inseparability of personal and political liberation. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director.

12.3 PROGRAM SECOND DAY OF THE CONFERENCE - 25 APRIL

Plenary I: Lesbian Roots, Rage, and Justice

Speakers:

- **MC: Dena:** If you've already seen her, then Dena is your favorite queer Iranian stand-up comedian. If not, then she will be. Dena is a gaycon, a warrior princess, but above all a top-tier act in the Belgian stand-up scene.
- **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** – **Kazakh** human rights activist, politician, poet, and journalist.
- **Aida Marukyan** – Armenian feminist activist; co-founder of *Girls Talk*, a young feminist initiative.
- **Lepa Mladenović** – Co-founder of Women in Black Belgrade and the Counseling SOS Line for Lesbians.
- **Ana Gallego Torres** – Representative of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission.
- **LBQ People of Color's Lived Realities in Europe** – Presentation of EL*C data with: **Aldessa Georgiana Lincan** (Director of the Romnja Feminist Library; intersectional feminist with over a decade of grassroots activism for Roma women's rights), **Alba Hernandez**, and **Dr. Nat Arias** (Black queer and trans activist-researcher focused on action research supporting racialized queer and immigrant women in Europe).

Plenary III: Lesbian Fury vs. Fascist Fear

Speakers:

- **MC: Dena:** If you've already seen her, then Dena is your favorite queer Iranian stand-up comedian. If not, then she will be. Dena is a gaycon, a warrior princess, but above all a top-tier act in the Belgian stand-up scene.
- **Evgenia Giakoumopoulou** – Head of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit, Council of Europe
- **Lydie Raër** – Activist with Les Dévalideuses, a collective fighting for the rights of disabled women; elected Councilwoman in Ivry-sur-Seine, France
- **Inna Michaeli** – Feminist lesbian queer activist and sociologist with many years of deep involvement in feminist and LGBTQI+ struggles, political education, and organizing by and for migrant women, as well as Palestine liberation and solidarity. Her latest adventure: co-parenting baby revolutionaries in a queer family constellation. Executive Director of AWID
- **Kath Browne** – Professor of Social and Cultural Geographies at University College Dublin; co-founder of the Lesbian Lives Conference
- **Eva Sassi Croce** – Radical transfeminist ARTivist, member of Non Una di Meno Modena
- **Ilaria Todde** – EL*C Advocacy Dykector
- **Shadi Amin** (she/they) is a pioneering Iranian lesbian feminist and coordinator of the Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network (6Rang). A leading writer and researcher, she has authored key works on LGBTI rights in Iran, including *Gender X* and *Crime and Impunity*.
- **Kim Van Sparrentak** – Dutch politician, Member of the European Parliament, and Co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup

Parallel session - Bisexuals in the Lesbian Movement: This session invited bisexual exchange, networking, and open dialogue on bisexuality as both a site of discrimination and a source of activist potential. Through interactive discussion, participants explored definitions, lived realities, and the broader context of bisexuality within the lesbian movement.

Facilitator: Rhonda D’Vine is co-founder of Queer Polyamory Meetup Vienna, founding member of visiBi*lity Austria. She is a trans-feminine activist and a Board member of EL*C.

Parallel session - Bringing Lesbians to the Table: A Workshop on Advocacy with the EU Institutions: This session is all about building stronger links between activists and institutions working on human rights, gender equality, and LGBTI rights. You'll hear directly from representatives of the European Commission, the LGBTI Intergroup of the European Parliament, the SOGIESC Unit of the Council of Europe, and the Office of the European Commissioner for Human Rights. We will present the work we've done, and continue to do, to ensure that lesbian rights are protected in Europe. Then we'll open the floor for questions, discussion, and shared experiences. A great chance to better understand how these institutions work and how we can collaborate with them. Whether you're new to advocacy or have years of experience, come join the conversation and help us lesbianise the European institutions!

Speakers:

- **Margherita Lo Grillo** – Policy Officer in the Non-Discrimination Unit of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers at the European Commission, currently coordinating the preparation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy post-2025
- **Petra Kurtovic** – Secretary of the Intergroup for LGBTIQ Rights in the European Parliament
- **Tara Beattie** – Adviser in the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe
- **Evgenia Giakoumopoulou** – Head of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit, Council of Europe
- **Franziska Rauchut**: Head of the Knowledge, Counselling, Innovation division of the Federal Foundation for Gender Equality in Germany

Parallel session - Antiracism 101 for the Fierce Lesbian* Warrior: We all know racism is bad, but what is racism exactly? What is race? Where do we start to ensure a truly antiracist lesbian movement? What can I do? This workshop/one-lesbian show will offer some answers. Glittery slides provided and exciting conversations guaranteed!

Facilitator: Aïda Yancy (she/her) – Black feminist lesbian activist and former EL*C advocacy officer. Based in Belgium, she's an expert on antiracism, intersectionality, “safer spaces,” and LGBTIQ+ issues.

Parallel session - Lesbian Resistance Against the Far Right: In the face of growing authoritarianism and anti-gender movements, how are lesbians* resisting far-right politics across Europe and beyond? This session brings together activists, researchers, and policymakers to share insights from the frontlines, highlighting strategies of resistance, community organizing, and intersectional advocacy. From Kazakhstan to Brussels, from grassroots mobilization to institutional engagement, we explore how lesbian* voices are fighting back and building power.

Facilitator: **Sara Garbagnoli** – Sociologist and lesbian feminist, researcher and activist specializing in anti-gender campaigns and feminist theory. She is affiliated with the research centres LEGS (Université Paris 8) and PoliTeSsE (University of Verona). In 2023, she was awarded the Emma Goldman Award for her contributions to feminist scholarship.

Speakers:

- **Kim Van Sparrentak** – Member of the European Parliament (The Greens), Co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup. A proud lesbian working for humane digitalization and LGBTIQ+ rights at the EU level.
- **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** – Co-founder of Feminita (Kazakhstan), EL*C board member. A lesbian feminist, poet, and activist organizing under repressive conditions, including the first Lesbian Quryltai in Central Asia.
- **Anna Carastathis** – Co-founder and co-director of the Feminist Autonomous Centre for Research (Greece), political philosopher and co-investigator on the RESIST project, focused on countering anti-gender politics.
- **Jerca Frelih** – Content Creation Lead at the Institute of 8th March, involved in the *My Voice, My Choice* European Citizens' Initiative, advocating for abortion rights as a resistance to the far right.

Parallel session - Hands Off Lesbian Wallets! Defeating Poverty, Economic Hardship and Chronic Social Exclusion in Times of Global Crises and Gender Backlash (Part 1): Patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, and lesbophobia are not abstract forces, they are daily realities that actively oppress and marginalize lesbians across the globe. These intersecting systems of violence push many lesbians to the fringes of the economy, locking them out of fair employment, equal pay, and dignified working conditions. From higher rates of joblessness to rampant workplace discrimination and harassment, the economic exclusion lesbians face is systematic and deliberate. This session is the first of a two-part conversation that will centre these realities. Grounded in data and the lived experiences of lesbians, it will delineate the principal obstacles faced by lesbians in economic life and expose how economic injustice is further compounded by ongoing financial crises and the relentless shrinking of civic space. Together, we'll name the problems, confront the structures that sustain them, and begin to build collective clarity. This is just the beginning, the second session, held the next day, will focus on identifying actionable solutions, forward-looking strategies, and examples of successful interventions led by and for lesbians. Our economic future is ours to shape!

Facilitator: **Dragana Todorović**, Executive Co-Dyke-rector, EL*C

Speakers:

- **Isabelle Le Galo Flores** – Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the official consultative body of the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission, bridging together employers, trade unionists, and representatives of social, occupational, economic, and cultural organizations.
- **Elena Petrovska** – One of the most prominent lesbian activists from North Macedonia. Currently serving as a project coordinator at ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, she leads the regional ERA Women Loving Women Caucus. In cooperation with the World Bank, ERA has been involved in pioneering data-gathering efforts on the position of LGBTI people in the labor market and the economic and fiscal costs of their exclusion.
- **Helena Vuković** – Leading lesbian activist from Serbia and founder of the unique organization “L-Communio,” which addresses the needs and interests of trans lesbians. Previously a senior military officer in the Serbian Army, she was dismissed due to her gender identity and has since faced numerous challenges in the labor market.
- **Reingard Wagner** – Lesbian activist from Germany working with *Lesben und Alter*, one of the few organizations globally focused exclusively on older lesbians and improving their socio-economic position. The group addresses issues such as the gender pension gap, access to healthcare, housing insecurity, isolation, and lack of family or social support, all of which place older lesbians at high risk of poverty.
- **Elvira Drangoi** – Moldovan human rights advocate and community organizer, known for her intersectional work supporting Roma, LGBTQ+, and youth communities. She is currently the Program Coordinator at *Femei pentru Femei*, a feminist organization where she also mentors the next generation of women activists in Moldova.

Parallel session - Dykestory: Preserving Our Future: This workshop explores how lesbians* across Europe are reclaiming and preserving their (her)stories through exhibitions, digital archives, podcasts, and books. From stories of love and resistance during WWII in French-speaking regions to a multimedia archive of Polish lesbian culture, participants will discover creative strategies of remembrance and activism. Projects include a podcast on ILIS, the first international lesbian network, and a future digital archive based on Romania's first lesbian history book. The Romnja Feminist Library preserves and promotes the knowledge of queer Roma women, while in Italy, the story of the lesbian movement of the 70s and 80s is brought to light in a groundbreaking publication.

Speakers:

- **Isabelle Sentis** – French lesbian art activist, performer, co-founder of Queer Code, and health advocate sharing the history of lesbian mobilization.
- **Agnieszka Małgowska** – Polish lesbian art activist, performer, archivist, co-founder of the Women's Creative Tandem and the Lesbian* Virtual Archive (L*AW).
- **Virginie Jortay** – Theatre and music director, podcast and radio documentary creator, author of *Ces enfants-là* and *Ruptures* (Those kids).
- **Alex Zorilă** – Lesbian activist and cultural producer from Romania; author of *Spații Aparte* (Separate Spaces) and founder of Vulgar Association, supporting sapphic communities.
- **Aldessa Georgiana Lincan** – Director of the Romnja Feminist Library; intersectional feminist with over a decade of grassroots activism for Roma women's rights.

- **Elena Biagini** – Independent researcher and author of *L'emersione imprevista* (The unexpected emergence), documenting the Italian lesbian movement of the 70s and 80s.
- **Evien Tjabbes** – Co-founder of ILIS and Herstory Avengers, EL*C board member, and former intercultural trainer.

Parallel session - Lesbians* on the Frontlines: War, Protest, and Resistance: In contexts of war, occupation, authoritarianism, and mass protest, lesbian* voices are often erased. Yet across regions, lesbians* have long resisted militarism, built care networks, and challenged dominant narratives of both war and peace. This session brings together lesbian* activists from Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Italy to speak from the frontlines of repression, survival, and resistance. We will ask:

Where are lesbians* in moments of crisis? What forms of solidarity, subversion, and survival do we create, locally and across borders? Through personal stories and political reflections, this dialogue highlights the power and urgency of lesbian* presence in global struggles for justice and freedom.

Facilitator: Mari Kurtanidze (they/she) – Queer feminist activist, human rights lawyer, and co-founder of the grassroots movement Lesbian Resistance* and Georgia's first queer techno series, HOROOM Nights.

Speakers:

- **Nino Kharchilava** – Georgian queer activist, gender studies scholar, and trainer in integrated security. She works on creating safe spaces for queer and feminist women and is currently Research and Education Coordinator at WISG.
- **Taisiia Gerasymova** – Head of the Project Office at Insight NGO (Ukraine), digital journalist, cybersecurity trainer, and co-author of *How to Write About LGBT?*.
- **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** – Co-founder of Femitita (Kazakhstan), a lesbian feminist, poet, and powerlifter. Organized the First Lesbian Quryltai in Central Asia and holds a PhD from the University of Tsukuba, Japan.
- **Shadi Amin** (she/they) – Pioneering Iranian lesbian feminist and coordinator of the Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network (6Rang). A leading writer and researcher, she has authored key works on LGBTI rights in Iran, including *Gender X* and *Crime and Impunity*. Shadi is known for her advocacy against forced sex change practices and her work with UN mechanisms to defend LGBTI rights under the Islamic Republic regime.

Parallel session - Antiracist Community Space for Racialized Lesbians*: Do you experience racism? Are you looking for other Roma, Black, and/or otherwise racialized lesbians* to gather, discuss, strategize, or create new alliances? We are closing the doors and creating a bubble. Who knows what could emerge? The possibilities are endless. (To ensure a conducive environment, this space is held in “non-mixité” and reserved for those who personally experience racism in “white contexts.” If you have questions or need assistance, do not hesitate to contact the info desk.)

Parallel session - Sport Is Not Political. Or Is It? This workshop explores the intersection of sport and politics, highlighting how sport can serve both as a platform for political expression and a reflection of socio-political climates, especially for lesbians, trans women, and non-binary people. It offers a deeper understanding of how sports can

influence, and be influenced by, political agendas and examines the implications of these dynamics on both individual and collective levels.

Speakers:

- **Sara Towdsen** – Sarah Townsend is former co-president of the European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation and a vice chair of ENGSO's Equality Within Sport Committee. She also served on the European Commission's High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport and co-founded Activ'Elles04 to promote women's sport in rural areas.
- **Charl Galloway** – Member of the organising committee for EuroGames 2027; Chairperson of Cardiff Dragons FC, Wales' first LGBTQ+ football club; founder of the Her Game Too football training centre.
- **Agathe Duclos** – *Debrief du Vestiaire*.
- **Marine Gaillard** – Manager of a les.bi.an and queer bar in Brussels, Marine spends part of her free time playing football. She is part of Broussailles, a lesbian and queer football collective that fights for greater equality and creates space for connection, expression, and lightness.
- **Marie Patouillet** – Paralympic athlete, gold medallist at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, and activist.

Parallel session - Antiracist Self-Exploratory Space for White Lesbians* This session is an intimate conversation, a moment of self-exploration and collective reflection on our role in dismantling white supremacy as people who are “perceived as white.” Grounded in antiracist practice and theory and based on Layla F. Saad's book *Me and White Supremacy*, this workshop offers the opportunity for deep, brave, and transformative reflection and exchange. Participants are encouraged to attend the previous Antiracism 101 for the Fierce Lesbian* Warrior. To ensure a conducive environment, this space is held in “non-mixité” and reserved for people who are perceived as white, including those with a history of migration or who are “white-passing.” If you have questions or need further assistance, do not hesitate to contact the info desk.

Parallel session - KinkyGirls performances and screening: A talk and bondage performance by Prouvence Baelish (performer, kink advisor and activist). This session will also include screening of the first-ever preview of the documentary on the KinkyGirls collective.

Film Screening - “Lesvia” by Tzeli Hadjidimitriou - Documentary, 2024 – 1h 18 min – Main language is English with English subtitles. Since the 1970s, lesbians from around the world have been drawn to the island of Lesbos, birthplace of the ancient Greek poet Sappho. When they find paradise in a local village and build their own lesbian community, tensions begin to rise with local residents. The screening was followed by a Q&A with the director.

Film Screening - “Io non sono nessuno” by Geraldine Ottier - Fiction Film, 2024 - 1h 23min – in Italian with English subtitles. A powerful portrait of the life and courage of activist and journalist Mariasilvia Spolato, the first woman in Italy to publicly come out as homosexual. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director.

12.4 PROGRAM THIRD DAY OF THE CONFERENCE - 26 APRIL

Parallel session - Are the Kids Alright?! This interactive workshop opens a collective conversation on lesbian* motherhood. Using the fishbowl format, speakers will spark dialogue on lesbian* families in diverse contexts and the activism behind securing recognition of parental and family rights. From strategic litigation to community organizing, join us, and don't hesitate to dive in!

Speakers:

- **Tania Irias** (she/her) – Lesbian feminist and mother from Nicaragua, now living in Spain as a refugee. Active with Artemisa Migrantes y Refugiadas, she brings insight into the realities of queer migrant families.
- **Aleksandra Gavrilović** (she/her) – Education Program Coordinator at Labris (Serbia) and mother of three.
- **Sofia Burini** (she/her) – Trainee lawyer in Italy, specialized in labor law and legal scholar focusing on LGBTQ+ parenthood.
- **Xheni Karaj** (she/her) – Executive Director of Aleanca LGBT (Albania), advocating for legal recognition of same-sex unions and parenting. Currently engaged in strategic litigation with her partner.
- **Mariyam** (she/her) – Feminist journalist and researcher from Tajikistan, based in Kazakhstan. Her work focuses on Islam and queer women's experiences, especially in refugee contexts.
- **Eva Perez** (she/her) – Spanish lawyer and lesbian mother, Co-chair of EL*C. She brings perspective from a country with legal protections for LGBTQ+ families.
- **Aïda Yancy** (she/her) – Black feminist lesbian activist and former EL*C advocacy officer. Based in Belgium, she shares her experience as a mother of three and expert on antiracism and advocacy.
- **Angelica Polmonari** (she/her) – Italian transfeminist lesbian, Co-Secretary of EL*C. Active in both the Italian lesbian movement and EL*C's response to discrimination against lesbian mothers in Italy.
- **Pre-recorded Speech: Laura-Rose Thorogood** (she/her) – Lesbian mother of four, LGBTQ+, maternity and fertility activist, and CEO & Founder of the global organization LGBT Mummies.

Parallel session - Hands On Lesbian Wallets! Harnessing Resources and Collaboration Towards an Economic Dykerise (Part 2): This second part of the discussion is all about action, how we build economic systems that work for lesbians, not against us. After confronting the intersecting forces of patriarchy, lesbophobia, and economic exclusion in the first session, this conversation spotlighted the tools, strategies, and community power needed to create change. We explored economic empowerment opportunities and the possibility of setting up an economic networking platform that would connect and support LBQ women globally with business, finance and entrepreneurship. We will also investigate the use of AI in helping us gather the missing data about our economic realities, and how we can use that knowledge to drive and finance our economic empowerment plans. At this session, we also heard about examples and experiences of existing economic empowerment programs and businesses, as well as what is in the plans for the future. This session isn't just about economic inclusion, it's about reclaiming

space, creating opportunity, and reshaping the economy in ways that reflect our lives, needs, and visions. Come ready to connect, strategize, and move from insight to impact.

Facilitator: Dragana Todorović, Executive Co-Dyke-rector, EL*C

Speakers:

- **Lee Badgett** – Economist, author, and one of the most well-known academics focusing on the economic effects of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people. She develops ideas and knowledge on how LGBTI people can gain economic power and lead better lives. Lee is a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a co-founder of Koppa – The LGBTI+ Economic Power Lab, with a mission to unleash global LGBTI+ economic power through knowledge, financing, and connection.
- **Naomi Fine & Kathy Levinson** – Founders of LesbianGlobal (USA), an organization connecting lesbian philanthropists to bridge critical funding gaps and leverage data to raise awareness about the systemic discrimination and invisibility faced by LBQ women globally, with a focus on economic empowerment. Over the past year, they have worked intensively with lesbian groups around the world to use artificial intelligence to generate data on the economic realities of LBQ women and turn it into action and funding opportunities.
- **Marine, Agathe & Cécile** – Lesbian activists from Belgium running *Crazy Circle*, an iconic lesbian-bi-trans bar in Brussels. The bar has become a key, sustainable pillar of the lesbian movement in Brussels, created by and for lesbians.
- **Dužanka Tomašević** is a queer activist from Serbia working for Labris, one of the oldest lesbian organizations in the Balkans. Throughout its existence, Labris has been centering the socio-economic wellbeing of lesbians, particularly through different educational programs aimed at improving the position of the lesbian community in the labor market through skills and knowledge development, information sharing, as well as by working with businesses and national authorities.
- **Mari Kurtanidze** – Queer feminist activist involved in various queer feminist initiatives in Georgia and internationally for over 12 years. Co-founder of Georgia's first queer techno night series *HOROOM Nights* and of the grassroots, non-formal, non-hierarchical group *Lesbian Resistance**.

Parallel session - Banners-Making for Dyke March - Get creative and make your voice seen! Join us for a hands-on banner-making workshop in preparation for the Dyke March happening the next day. Whether you come with a clear message or just the urge to express yourself, this is the space to craft bold, powerful, and visible statements of resistance, pride, and solidarity. All materials will be provided – just bring your ideas, your energy, and your rage or joy (or both)! Let's make sure our messages are impossible to ignore!

Facilitator: Isabel Sophie (she/her) – Women's and lesbian rights activist from Germany who recently moved to Slovenia for love. She is currently active in and around Slovenia and Austria. In 2021, she founded the *Dyke March Ruhr**, an organisation advocating for the rights and visibility of lesbian and queer women, as well as FLINTA+ persons. In addition to organising Dyke* Marches, the organisation aims to bring public attention to broader issues of feminism and equal rights, while also working to connect and empower marginalized communities.

Parallel session - Creating a Common Strategy for Trans and Lesbian Healthcare:

In the face of growing repression, this workshop invites participants into a dialogue on the current challenges and shared realities of trans and lesbian healthcare. Expanding beyond cisgender lesbian healthcare, we will focus on the diverse experiences and needs of transgender lesbians and nonbinary people across borders. Together, we will explore often-overlooked issues such as the intersections of race, migration, queerness, neurodivergence, and eating disorders, as well as the political impact on access to healthcare for trans and lesbian communities. We'll also discuss how to strengthen support strategies rooted in community care, resistance, and collective action.

Facilitator: Elisa Ellis Manici (they/she) – Journalist, writer, independent researcher on fatness and neurodivergence, and activist. Author of *Grass* (2021).

Speakers:

- **Isa Borrelli** (he/they) – Author and political communication strategist. Independent researcher on trans politics and member of the Centre for Research on Politics and Theories of Sexuality (Politesse).
- **Dr. Nat Arias** (they/them) – Black queer and trans activist, researcher, and educator based in the UK. Specializes in postcolonial gender studies and racialized queer women's experiences, and works with Black and racialized transfeminist communities across Europe.
- **Tanja von Knorring** – Transgender rights expert. A key figure in the reform of Finland's trans law. Currently Executive Director of Transfeminiinit, Vice-Chair of the Federation of LGBTI Organisations in Finland (SETA), and former Co-Chair of TGEU – Transgender Europe and Central Asia.
- **Rhonda D'Vine** (she/her, per/pers) – Intersectional activist based in Vienna, Austria. Active in numerous organizations; her group Venib developed a handout for medical professionals to better support TIN* individuals.

Parallel session - Lesbianizing AI: What does it mean to tear AI away from the grip of patriarchy and heteronormativity? In this hands-on workshop, artist and researcher Anđela Tomić exposes the mechanics of machine learning, how models are trained, whose stories are fed in, and whose are silenced. Together, we'll hack the system, reimagine datasets, and explore how to embed lesbian presence, language, and resistance into the heart of AI. This is not just about queering tech, it's about reclaiming it.

Facilitator: Anđela Tomić: "Being a teenager in the '80s, when the first 8-bit personal computers were illuminating our homes, was great luck. Opening devices and learning what was inside was just part of the game. For me, hacking came naturally, because as a lesbian, I also had to hack identities and roles from a very young age, to find my way to myself, to be who I am, to be free. Hacking means freedom."

Plenary IV: Marching the Storm Toward a Lesbian Future

Speakers:

- **Palestinian queer activist** – Works at the intersection of queer rights and Palestinian liberation, emphasizing the inseparability of personal and political freedom.
- **Mari Kurtanidze** – Queer feminist activist, human rights lawyer, and SOGIESC researcher from Georgia.
- **Xheni Karaj** – Albanian LGBT rights activist; co-founder and current executive director of Aleanca LGBT.
- **Carolina Morace** – Member of the European Parliament, former footballer, head coach, and journalist.
- **Marie Patouillet** – Paralympic athlete, gold medalist at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, and activist.
- **Joëlle Sambi Nzeba** – Author, poet, spoken word artist (slammer), and filmmaker.
- **Dragana Todorovic and Eva Perez** - EL*C Executive Co-Dyke-rector and EL*C Chair

Dyke March The first Dyke March in Italy is organized by a collective of Italian lesbian activists in conjunction with EL*C Conference, this historic event aims to celebrate lesbian visibility and solidarity.

DYKES RISE - Dyke March After-PARTY 2025 at ALIBI Club Roma, Via di Monte Testaccio, Roma - After a weekend of powerful conversations, community, and resistance, join us for the closing party! Hosted by the Safffo collective, this is a night to celebrate, dance, and connect.

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