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LESBIAN GENIUS

ACTIVITY
REPORT



PREPARED BY: 

The Eurocentralasian Lesbian* Community

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*“Look closely at the present you are constructing:
it should look like the future you are dreaming.”*

— Alice Walker

1. Introduction

EL*C was founded in 2016 and officially registered in 2017 with the aim of strengthening lesbians rights in Europe and Central Asia. During the first years of our activity we worked exclusively on a voluntary basis and were able to organize two international conferences, the first one in Vienna in 2017 and the second one in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2019, as well as a multitude of events all over Europe, meetings, lesbian marches, presentations, etc. During this same period we were also successful in building strong links for EL*C institutional advocacy work and creating the foundations for our internal governance mechanisms.

From February 2020 onwards we managed to hire 3 full time staff and afford various consultants. Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic we have continued to work hard to support lesbians, a particularly vulnerable community, forced into a series of confinements endangering their lives, threatening their physical and mental health and increasing their economic precariousness.

In November 2020 we officially created the EL*C Lesbian Network, a community of individuals and organizations aimed at together advancing lesbian rights.

The year 2022 started positively: the EL*C signed a “Partnership Framework Agreement” with the European Commission which will ensure, for the first time in history, a large international lesbian network to receive substantial funding over 4 years. We were also able to hire and the EL*C team is now composed by 6 full time staff persons. Unfortunately, our joy was short-lived: the Russian invasion of Ukraine not only endangered our colleagues, comrades, families, and in general all the population on the country, but also caused the displacement of millions of people. Despite not being a humanitarian organization, we tried to help by putting in place the Lesbians For Refugees action plan.

The following document outlines the main activities of our association in the year 2022. As we write it our thoughts are with those who are still fighting today in Ukraine, after 1 year of war, to help the more vulnerable, women and the LGBTI community.

2. Growing and supporting the lesbian Network

After two consecutive years of Covid-19 pandemic, 2022 was, if possible, even harsher for lesbian individuals and communities in the different European and Central Asian countries. Our 2022 Action Plan included several projects with the aim of getting to know the situation of the lesbian organizations on the ground, measuring their capacities, achievements and needs, and then offering them training to strengthen their structures and activities.

However, the war declared by Russia on Ukraine at the end of February partially changed these plans. In the following chapter we will see how EL*C has set up a large-scale project to support our colleagues in Ukraine and to provide assistance to lesbian refugees and their families fleeing occupied territories by the Russian army and war zones.

The second part of this chapter summarises the activities that have been carried out in accordance with the 2022 Action Plan objective 1 which aims to develop the EL*C Network capacities and outreach.

The last part of this chapter provides more specific informations about the internal organisation of the EL*C with the 2022 Report of the Board.

2.1. Lesbians in times of crisis - Ukraine

From the very first day, still stunned by the horrific news of Putin's war on Ukraine, EL*C wasted no time in taking immediate and concrete action to come to the help of our community. Without hesitation, we did what lesbians* do best – get sh*t done - and jumped in our cars to drive to the Ukrainian borders, while the rest of our team mobilized our pan-European Lesbian Hosting Network.

On March 2nd, we started operating a 24/7 hotline and set up a reception system and shelters at the borders. Within 24 hours, the members of the EL*C team on the ground were picking up the first rainbow families, with their children, dogs and bikes, and bringing them to safety, to rest in one of our safe houses.

EL*C has been operating 4 safe houses at the borders with Ukraine providing emergency support and housing, supplying essential goods and services, but also ensuring long-term solutions for refugees through our Lesbian* Hosting Network, as well as organising humanitarian aid for our community in Ukraine, in coordination with our partner NGOs in Ukraine and beyond.

Since the beginning of our action, we have received numerous requests for help or information, have hosted over 200 lesbians*, their family members and pets in our safe houses at the borders, and have coordinated the safe transportation and housing of over 300 lesbians* refugees through our Lesbian Hosting Network that currently has around 700 lesbian households across the EU.

In addition to the above, we worked intensively on procuring and delivering humanitarian aid to two LGBTI shelters in Ukraine, in Lviv and Chernivtsi, that are managed by our member organisation Insight. So far we have transported many shipments of different goods to Ukraine, including sleeping bags, inflatable beds, blankets, pillows, food, pet carriers, hygiene products and medicine.

We have been doing our utmost to react swiftly and provide adapted solutions to each situation - the lesbian* couples, the families with toddlers, the families with grand-parents, folks with their cats, dogs or rodents, and everybody else that comes to us. We were sparing no efforts to provide what is needed, including solutions for particular individual circumstances or medical conditions.



Summary of what we have been doing for Ukrainian refugees in 2022:

1. Emergency support at the borders of Ukraine in all neighbouring countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, and Romania)
 - **Operating a 24/7 emergency helpline**
 - **Organising pick-ups at the borders and transportation to the safe houses**
 - **Managing emergency safe housing**
 - **Provision of essential goods** (food, medicine, hygiene products, clothes, etc)
 - Coordination with NGO partners in neighbouring countries and in Ukraine
2. **Relocation to countries across Europe**, through our Lesbian Hosting Network
3. **Provision of information and services, including psychological, medical and legal support**, help in obtaining other needed services and accessing rights
4. **Procuring and organising delivery of humanitarian aid in Ukraine**
5. **Providing financial assistance to lesbian* organisations in the neighbouring countries or inside Ukraine.**

2.2. The EL*C Network in numbers

The EL*C membership has grown in 2022 for both individual and NGO full members. Today the EL*C network is composed of 72 NGOs from 33 European and Central Asian countries (19 of which in the EU) and more than 400 individual members.

425 Individual members	72 NGO and groups	33 Countries (19 in EU)
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2.3. Dyke Field visits

To increase EL*C's reach, influence and engagement, as well as to mobilise and support the local civil society groups and increase the visibility of issues, the EL*C organised field visits to several EU countries. For the main outcomes of each one of them, see table below.

The objectives of those field visit were, are and will be: a) to increase EL*C's reach, influence and engagement on the level of EU member states b) to mobilise and support the local civil society groups 3) to increase the visibility of issues related to LGBTI women and non-binary persons rights.

All the trips were prepared in advance via online meetings with the EL*C member organisation representative and different shareholders on the ground that facilitated contacts with local activists and community members. A community meeting was organised in each location, in various venues, institutional buildings, NGO facilities or public spaces. Local activists focusing on visibility of LGBTI women and non-binary persons in society as well as in the arts and local culture attended.

- **Romania** 7 to 12 March 2022

Thanks to Accept Romania, a non-governmental organization that advocates for the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, founded in 1996 and one of Accept staff persons, the EL*C organized a lesbian dedicated meeting with: Cutra - Queer and feminist magazine; Fileret Death by Coconut - a collective of lesbian and queer event's organizers; Queer sisterhood Cluj a lesbian NGO already member of the EL*C network; Corp, an individual lesbian DJ working for LGBTI events.

All the local activists present are working on visibility of LGBTI women and non-binary person in society as well as in the arts and local culture attended. The discussions focused on the opportunities to join EL*C network and on the support that EL*C can ensure to local initiative, e.g. by providing contacts and information and creating synergies with similar projects being implemented in other EU member states, via the upcoming EL*C conference.

From their point of view, the lesbian scene in Romania is very small. There is a huge necessity of giving visibility to lesbian issues. Alex from Accept is working to create a lesbian archive.



Interestingly, the history of Mariana Cetiner, possibly the last person imprisoned in Europe for her sexual orientation, is not well known by the public.

We also met lesbian activist, author and former journalist Oana Dorobantu who for the past 6 years has been dedicated to human rights communication in the NGO field. They later became a permanent member of the EL*C staff as our Media Manager. In

conclusion, a big investment is necessary to strengthen the lesbian movement in Romania.

- **Bulgaria 12 to 17 March 2022**

The meeting in Bulgaria were organized with the great help of Bilitis Foundation that facilitated contacts with local activists and community members. Bilitis current actions main are: To create shelters for victims of domestic violence; to establish a Humanitarian fund; to prepare a joint Hate crime report platform connecting different organisations: jewish organisations, human rights organisations, and supported by OSE. This platform is currently moving to another internet host, stophate.bg, and evolving after an internal structural reorganization.



The lesbian community meeting was attended by members of Bilitis Foundation, Sappho Bulgaria and Bulgarian Fund for Women. The discussions focused on the policy landscape for LGBTI rights in Bulgaria, recent violent attacks against a member of Bilitis Foundation and on the consequences of the failed ratification of the Istanbul convention in terms of political backlash on LGBTI rights and women rights.

Bilitis also described last year (2021) as the year of hate crimes. The prides were attacked, Bilitis offices were attacked. The far right even started attacking feminist events. On 25 November a leftist big protest was attacked by a group of the nationalist party.

Current projects by local organisations were also discussed as well as the ways in which EL*C can support those projects and showcase them during the forthcoming European Lesbian* Conference. Following the community event, EL*C visited the exhibition "The other Bulgarian women" and met its organiser and artist. The exhibition features portraits of trans women in traditional Bulgarian clothes and it has been subject to violent attacks by far-right groups during its opening on the 8 of March.

- **Poland** 1st March to 1st June 2022

From March the 2nd 2022 to July 2022 the EL*C has been operating 4 safe houses in Poland at the borders with Ukraine. During this period, we had several very important meetings with the Polish civil society, LGBTI and feminist NGOs, addressing the situation of the activists and their organizations.



Among others, we visited the Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva Synagogue in Lublin where a religious LGBTI group set up a shelter and distribution of food and all kind of materials for Ukrainian refugees. The welcome desk was decorated with several rainbow flags to show acceptance to this discriminated group of peoples, both in Ukraine and in Poland. Hundreds of Ukrainian families, included LGBTI refugees, showed up every days to collect something to eat or clothes.

In the city of Rzeszów, we meet with Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej (The Society for Anti-Discrimination Education) a non-profit organization that brings together professionals working in the field of anti-discrimination education.

They described the Polish civil society situation as extremely complex especially for women and LGBTI human rights defenders. For them, the actual political leaders are undermining the amazing work performed by the Polish civil society. At the same time, because of the Ukrainian crisis, the government needs the support of volunteers and at this particular moment is relying heavily on the work of the NGOs. Due to the ongoing war, the situation is extremely complex and unusual. The EL*C will organize future field visit in Poland to get more specific information on lesbian civil society.

- **France** 17th June 2022

11 NGO and organizations were invited to the field visit meeting: Violette&Coop – lesbian and feminist bookshop; InterLGBT – the main LGBTI umbrella organisation; Mille et une lesbiennes & queer – Muslim Lesbian and bisexual NGO; AJL - LGBTI Journalist Association; ARCL Archives lesbiennes Paris – Lesbian Archives; Lesbiens Raisonnables – Paper Magazine, Internet Media; Degommeuses – Lesbian Football NGO; Marche lesbienne – Organizers of the Paris dykemarch; Guinement lundi – Lesbian Radio show; La Lig – Lesbian foundation; Les Bavardes – Lesbian and bisexual community organizers in Amiens city

While France is considered as a progressive country for LGBTI rights and a wealthy state, the organizations expressed a very complex situation. Finding money is almost impossible, which

raises the question of how to pay the work of the activists, even though they have great public success and their work is vital for French civil society in general.



As a conclusion, the Paris city council historically considered that lesbians issues are covered by LGBTI general actions, and this is unfortunately factually not true. A lot of lesbian cultural initiatives are emerging in France during the last 2-3 years. The main problem is resources, scarce, not from institutions, only via crowdfunding directly tapping into the same community.

- **Italy** 1 to 4 July 2022

EL*C conducted a trip to Naples, Italy within the projects: “Intersectionality matters: Promoting equality, preventing and combating discrimination against LBQTI women and non-binary persons”. The meeting was attended by 17 activists representing the following NGOs: ALFI (with representatives of chapters from 4 different towns in Italy), Lesbiche Bologna, Campo Lesbico Agape, Rete Donne Transfemminista di Arcigay, Arcigay Caserta and Azione Gay Lesbica Firenze. The discussions focused on several topics depending on the specific activities of each organisation and the difficulties experienced by them.



The situation is globally changing a lot in the human rights field in Italy. The economic crisis forced NGO to professionalise their staff. We are also witnessing more lesbians and bisexual women taking leadership positions within LGBTI national and regional organisations. Today, the main challenges in Italy for the lesbian movements are: to find resources because the government and the public institutions are not able to provide almost none; to resist the rightwing backlash against feminism and LGBTI movements especially in the context of the radical far-

right party Brothers of Italy winning the Italian election.

- **Georgia** 15 September 2022

In Georgia the EL*C had two meetings, one with Women Initiative Support (WISG) started off 20 years ago as a general feminist organisation. The founders were lesbians, gradually developing into focusing on LBT. Kick-off: collection of oral history of Georgian lesbians by one of the volunteers, the organisation realised there was a huge need for specific support

and gradually focused the organisation on lesbians. Now they work exclusively for LBT women.



The second with the Equality Movement, a community mobilisation and queer feminism project. At individual level they work to provide social, legal, medical and psychological support while at collective level they are working on creating specific safe spaces for LBQ women (“LBQ women do not have spaces to meet”), they have created a queer feminist summer school (in collaboration with WISG), they are working on dissemination lesbian/queer feminism articles via a magazine they produced/articles and podcasts.

In conclusion, Georgia has a great number of outstanding lesbian activists individuals and great groups and organisations focusing on LBQT women. The EL*C will work in partnership with them to fundraise and be able to re-grant the resources necessary to strengthen even more the local communities.

- **Hungary 28 September to 4th October 2022**

The field visit meeting took place in the Budapest Feminist library, where now Labrisz have an office and 2 staff persons working.



Labrisz Hungary is an education, culture and community building NGO. They have a Lesbian cultural festival, oral history, and a school program. The NGO was officially registered in 1999 with 17 members, but the core group of the organization had been functioning since 1996. They work on the political vulnerability of lesbians and social minorities. In 2021 Labrisz published the book *A Fairytale for Everyone* in Hungary, where the inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters sparked political

controversy. It quickly became an important symbol in the fight for equality and against discrimination in Hungary and enjoyed a vast wave of support both within and outside the country.

Qlit is a magazine and community building NGO, mainly for lesbians living in Hungary. In addition to the magazine, they organize weekly sports trainings, monthly pub quizzes, bi-monthly speed dating, and bi-monthly improvisation theatre performances based on lesbian life situations.

- **Greece** 29 October to 4 November 2022

EL*C met with a group of lesbian activists from different NGOs: Orlando LGBT+; Colour Youth - Athens LGBTQ Youth Community; IOM - UN Migration; Feminist Autonomous Centre (FAC) for research; The Athens cultural lesbian and feminist festival; and Proud Seniors Greece.

Many of the activists present have a background in academic studies performed often in the UK and Greece. The Greek culture is strongly sexist and patriarchal. Life is really difficult for lesbian and trans peoples but also gay men are often attacked.

In September 2022 all of them organised together the first edition of the Athens Lesbian Art Festival with a full program for two days. The budget was around 1500 euro, gathered via an amazing crowdfunding. 700 peoples attended. Online coverage by the media was great.



The main need expressed by the group for lesbian communities in Athens is to have a community space, to have resources necessary to collect stories from the older generation peoples that nowadays feel disconnected, and lesbian archives and a minimum pension for everybody and shetler/retirement homes for elderly LGBTI persons in Athens.

- **Spain** 16 to 20 November 2022

In Spain, we decided to visit the Canary island and we organised a meeting between several LGBTI NGOs at the premises of the Instituto Canario de Igualdad in Santa Cruz, Tenerife. Several organizations attended: Lescorunia; Lesbicanaria; Althiay LGBTI Fuerteventura; Tenerife Lesfriendly; LesWorking; Fondation 26 December; VisibLes Festival Barcelona.



The global situation of those lesbian organisations is very diverse. Lesbicanarias is a website, created in 2007. Paola the founder was a geek lesbian, and wanted to have a platform, a kind of personal blog to connect all the information on lesbians but in Spanish. The tone is very

personal and fun. The website very quickly became the biggest lesbian information tool in Spanish.

LesCorunas at the beginning was focusing on the migration of women and lesbians from the rural areas around the city of Las Coruna. They have a yearly budget of 15.000 euros by different public institutions, no staff, 4 or 5 volunteers run all the projects of the NGO. Their main axes of work are community organising and the archives.

2.4. Sustainability of EL*C

In 2022 we were, unfortunately, still able to observe that the access to resources for lesbian* organizations remains limited and that the needs and interests of lesbians* and lesbian* organisations are under prioritised by the overwhelming majority of grant-makers, including private foundations, international institutions, international and national civil society organisations, as well as governments. There is a continuous lack of funding for lesbian* organisations, which is confirmed by several recent studies, including a membership capacity assessment conducted by EL*C in 2022, which overwhelmingly showed that there is even less funding available now compared to previous years, which points to a negative trend. As a consequence of the above, the capacities of lesbian* organisations continue to be limited in all respects, including human resources, office space, technical and operational/management/thematic capacities.

In 2022, we have focused a lot on contributing to the improvement of access to resources for EL*C and for lesbian groups in Europe and Central Asia. We were using every chance we got to inform the relevant stakeholders that lesbian groups are among the most underfunded groups globally, and especially in our region. For example, as the European Commission has been preparing the new funding cycle for civil society (CERV Program), we have participated in the consultation meetings with the Commission, and we have sent our letter to the relevant EU bodies, urging them to make sure that the new funding opportunities would be accessible also to lesbian groups, and the intersectional position within which they work should be adequately recognized and supported. This has actually resulted in EL*C signing the 4-year Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission, which is not only aimed at increasing access to resources for EL*C, but also for EL*C's member organizations through re-granting as of 2023. The FPA includes regular operational funding for EL*C in the approximate value of 1.000.000,00 EUR per year, for 4 years. Due to the above-mentioned efforts, as well as the continuous financial support by EL*C's long-term donors (Dreilinden Foundation, MamaCash Foundation and Astraea Foundation), as well as several new donors (Guerilla Foundation, OutRight International) and many individual donors, EL*C has managed to exponentially increase its annual budget in 2022, making it the most capacitated and resourced lesbian organization that ever existed. This has allowed EL*C to further develop its programs of work and accompanying activities, as well as its human resources, that now include 6 full time staff members. Having achieved significant levels of its own sustainability, in the coming period, EL*C will focus all its efforts on increasing the financial capacities of its member organizations.

2.5. BOARD EXECUTIVE REPORT 2022

The EL*C General Assembly approved the new Board on December 2021 composed by the following members:

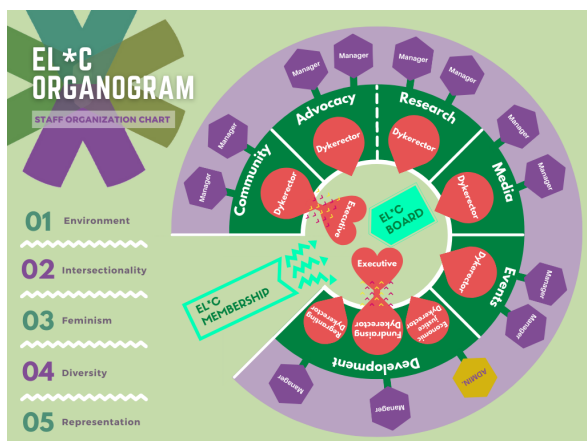
1. ALEXA SANTOS Portugal	1. MARAME KANE France
2. ALICE COFFIN France	2. NATIA GVIANISHVILI Georgia/Sweden
3. ANASTASIA DANILOVA Moldova	3. OLENA SHEVCHENKO Ukraine
4. ANDREA M. AYALA EI Salvadoran/Belgium	4. RHONDA D'VINE Austria
5. ELISABETH CHEVILLET France	5. RUTH BORGFJORD Romania
6. EVA PEREZ NANCLARES Spain	

7. EVGENIA GIAKOUMOPOULOU Greece/France	6. STEPH FLORQUIN Sweden/France/Belgium
8. EVIEN TJABBES The Netherlands	7. SYINAT SULTANALIEVA Kyrgyzstan
9. GULZADA SERZHAN Kazakhstan	8. VIRGINIE JORTAY Belgium
10. HELENA VUKOVIC Serbia	9. VLADA THOR Russia
11. JOËLLE SAMBI Belgium	10. ZHANAR SEKERBAYEVA Kazakhstan

The Board of the EL*C consisted of 21 members at the beginning of the year, although two of them resigned, so by the date the present report was drafted is currently 19. The Board, as per indication in the Statutes, conducted monthly meetings from January to November, with the only exception of the summer break, so the number of meetings was nine. Those meetings were chaired by one of our Co-Chairs that conducted and moderated discussion among the participants. The average number of Board members to attend was 11 /12 plus the Staff, normally 4 of them. All meetings were conducted via internet tools with the exception of the October one that took place in person following our Budapest Conference.

The Plan across and during 2022 was slightly changed because of the humanitarian crisis that took place in Ukraine, so it was amended since the EL*C decided to take action on the grounds to help our siblings that were suffering the consequences of the war. The 2022 board main decisions were:

- A. Approval of action on the Ukrainian crisis: the Board approved among others the following actions:
 - Open safe houses in Poland to provide support to Lesbian * refugees
 - Provide medical and basic needs to the Lesbian* refugees
 - Fundraising activities to contribute to the above
- B. In relation with the EL*C Staff:
 - Addition of two new Staff members, Communication Manager and Finance Manager
 - Approval of the new organigram (see image below)
 - 3rd EL*C Conference held successfully in Budapest (Hungary) in October and ILVA in Tenerife (Spain) in November



- Approval and Board support on significant work and achievements in Advocacy and Research work with the remarkable success on the EU, Action Coalition and Gender Equality Forum
- Approval of the incorporation of 12 new member organizations to the EL*C Network
- Approval and incipient execution of a number of policies and mandate documents to continue improving the internal strengthening of the EL*C as the referenced and unique Lesbian organization that it became.

3. Unleashing the Lesbian Movement

One of EL*C's key strategic priorities is to work on **enhancing visibility, self-determination and autonomy of lesbians in Europe and Central Asia**, while reclaiming power within political, economic, social, cultural and media spheres. In 2022 we engaged the movement by providing capacity building and empowerment for our communities, financial and political support, accessible and timely information, while continually raising awareness and fighting lesbo-, bi- and transphobia within our intersecting communities such as various women's, ethnic, migrant and faith based groups.

3.1. LESBIAN RESISTANCE Conference in Budapest

In 2022 we decided to hold our third biennial conference in Budapest in order to join all other whistle-blowers denouncing the resurgence of far-right politics and of anti-human rights narratives in Europe and other parts of the world. Our theme for EL*C #3 in Budapest 2022 is "LESBIAN RESISTANCE: one lesbian is a blessing, hundreds coming together are a revolution."

The aim of the conference was to reunite amazing lesbian activists to help [re]build a strong lesbian resistance movement while supporting the Hungarian lesbians on the ground in their fight against authoritarianism. This year we also made an important space to talk about the war in Ukraine and show solidarity to our Ukrainian siblings in their bold fight for peace.

Ultimately, the Budapest conference was a strong message of support and an empowering moment of gathering with our comrades, loves, colleagues and lesbians partners in Ukraine, neighbouring country, and beyond fighting tirelessly an unprecedented pandemic during the past two years and during the last 10 months to survive. For three days, we were able to refill our activist batteries and load on healthy amounts of rage, hope, love and courage! In adversity we stand proud, visible, united, unapologetic and unyielding! In adversity, we shall thrive because a community of lovers can never be defeated!

Due to the current political climate in Hungary with anti-migrant, anti-LGBTQA+, xenophobic and racist rhetoric being spewed by the governing party, it was important to ensure that all the conference participants were as safe as possible. For this purpose, we consulted local trans and Roma activists on the matter of safety for trans, gender-diverse persons and BIPOC people.

For its third edition, the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community decided to join forces with two local lesbian groups: Labrisz Lesbian Association and qLit. For the dyke march, the three organisations benefited from the support of Budapest Pride.

The conference main program was the following:

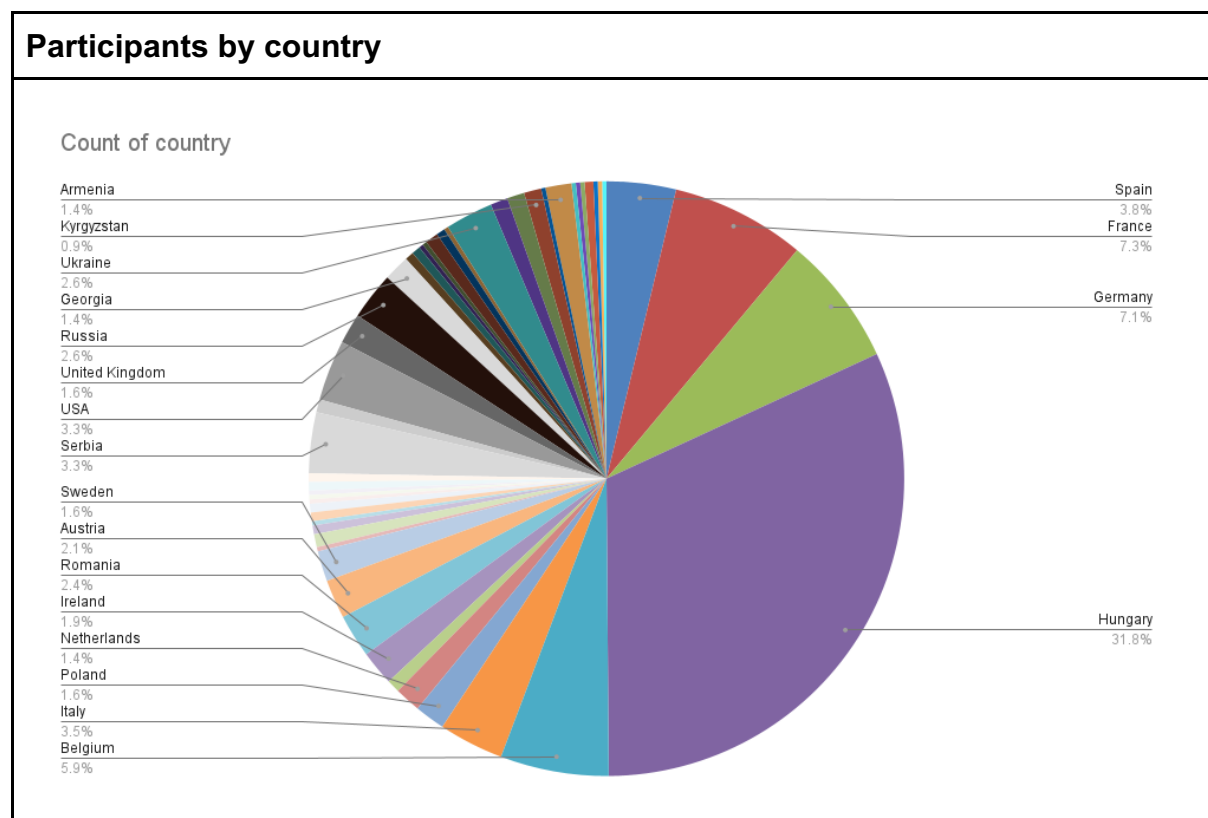
- 28 September: Pre-conferences at the Budapest Mayor's offices
- Welcome reception and exhibition (Kristály Színtér)
- 29 September – 1 October: Conference (Central European University) with 3 main tematics: lesbians on the frontlines; we are the revolution; the future is lesbian
- 1 October: Dyke March

"Dear Lesbians*, Sweet activists, visionaries, artists, revolutionaries, dear you who make our asterisk shine bright, welcome to our 3rd lesbian conference in Budapest!" With those words the EL*C Co-Chairs & MCs opened the first day of the conference.

The opening day of the conference was a celebration of the possibility offered by this gathering to get together, to take a precious and unique moment to reflect on our movement, our accomplishments, our dreams, our strategies, our plans.

A total of 426 official registrations were recorded for the third EL*C conference, with 329 coming from EU countries. A total of 50 volunteers supported the events between the 28th of September and the 1st of October.

The EL*C conference in Budapest welcomed participants from 47 countries from all over the world, with a majority from Europe and Central Asia. Thanks to simultaneous interpretation throughout all the plenary sessions and whisper interpretation during the workshops, the conference was fully translated into English, Ukrainian, Spanish, Hungarian and Russian.



Online participation: We had between 214 and 853 views on Facebook and YouTube (most streams on the higher 200s) so the average is 533 viewers.

The media coverage was also important: 26 articles in Hungarian Media; dozens of international articles in international media and institutions communication channels.



3.2. First edition of the International Lesbian Visibility Awards

The [International Lesbian Visibility Awards](#) is a new EL*C project which aims to recognize and celebrate the outstanding contributions of lesbians worldwide excelling in all walks of life be it activism, sports, business, culture or any lesbianized endeavour. While LGBT awards are held all over the world, lesbians are scarcely among the awardees, thus we embraced the responsibility of celebrating visible lesbians during this first edition.

In August 2022, we publicly announced the first edition of this brand new event. For this inaugural edition of these prestigious awards, the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community in partnership with LesWorking, the amazing Spanish lesbian NGO, decided to use this opportunity to fundraise for war relief for Ukrainian LBQ women and nonbinary persons.

The event took place during a glamorous evening at the sumptuous Tenerife Auditorium, Santa Cruz de Tenerife on 18 November 2022.

In September, after the call for community nominees we organized the voting for the Lesbian Community awardees via a survey.



For this first edition, the award categories and awards were handed out as follows:

- 🏆 International Lesbian Visibility Awards – Olena Shevchenko
- 🏆 Spanish Lesbian Visibility Awards – Paloma del Rio
- 🏆 Lesbian Community Award #1 – Shadi Amin
- 🏆 Lesbian Community Award #2 – Sapphosutra
- 🏆 Lesbian Pioneer Award – Shelley Anderson
- 🏆 Lesbian Allyship Award – Ise Bosch

The Awards Gala was hosted by lesbian slam poet and performance artist Joëlle Sambé and bisexual comedian Patricia Galván and featured performances by indie rock superstar Michi and the talented flamenco artist Noelia La Negri as well as world famous DJ Sofia Cristo.

This event was broadcast live on social media and thanks to its success, will have a second edition in 2024.

3.3. Lesbian Organizational Capacity Assessment (LOCA)

In 2022 EL*C – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian Community (EL*C) has organized and conducted a Lesbian Organizational Capacity Assessment (LOCA) as a part of its 2022 Strategic Action Plan with the goal of assessing and developing the capacities of the European lesbian movement.

The LOCA process has shown that the lesbian movement in the EU and accession countries is fairly young and largely underdeveloped, while organizations that have existed for a longer time have either regressed or disappeared. Sporadically, there are organisations that have managed to achieve high levels of development, and have managed to secure stability in their work, which was mostly due to their ability to successfully navigate donors' priorities, and re-shift and reshape their activities based on available opportunities.

The key recommendation for EL*C 4 years capacity development plan is to focus on increasing capacity in three priority areas:

1. **Financial stability.** The main recommendation for EL*C is to focus on making financial resources more stable, as it allows organisations to engage professionals, hire more staff, distribute work tasks more strategically, and invest time and efforts into organisational development, alongside developing and implementing programs and activities.
2. **Organisational development and professionalisation of the work.** The LOCA process has also revealed that most organisations need to develop capacities in the areas of organisational and strategic management, leadership, governing structure, internal policies and procedures.
3. **Development of the programs and activities.** Finally, given the lack of financial stability and lack of capacity in organisation development and strategic planning, organisations involved in the LOCA process need support in developing programs and activities.

It is important to notice that these 3 overall priorities are interconnected, and that each capacity area requires development also in the others to be fully successful. Considering that the underdevelopment concerns all those areas, a holistic approach should be taken that would allow them to gradually secure financial stability, while improving organisation development and improving the implementation of their activities.

3.4. Lesbian capacity building

One of the clear needs pinpointed by the 2022 capacity assessment is that trainings conducted by EL*C should serve to bring about political transformation. By consequence, EL*C training has been developed in order to structure and increase the capacity of lesbian and feminist communities and also taking into consideration the very different situations on the ground, like the economic conditions, as well as the different social and cultural contexts.

By consequence, for this first year of training, the EL*C has decided to use a methodology of horizontal self-training, through experience, the collection of "best practices" in oral and written ways, and to train in political action. In other words, our objective is to foster and develop the skills and capacity of the lesbian communities and groups in Europe spanned during the last 50 years, being not only part of progressive struggles, but often being the driving force behind them while increasing capacities in those areas where we identified gaps.

Having in mind the needs expressed by the lesbian communities and the opportunities of the current events that marked this year 2022 and the work of lesbian civil society in Europe, we proposed to the members of the Lesbian Network the following topics:

- **Lesbians For refugees**

Content: The Ukrainian crisis and how to organize a first aid humanitarian chain of solidarity

Date: March 5th 2022

Location: Online via Zoom

Target audience: The EL*C members, individuals, and NGOs; The participants of the second EL*C conference in Kyiv, Ukraine; the Housing Network of 500 volunteers proposing to host lesbian refugees from Ukraine in their houses.

Objectives of the training:

- How to implement a humanitarian support for Ukraine LGBTI women? What actions: example of the Safe houses, the European Housing Lesbian Network, Logistic approach; Risk assessment; Budget evaluation; Fundraising; Communicatin; What happens after a crisis?

Resource persons/trainers: Major Helena Vucic, ex officer serving in the military for over 20 years; Dragana Todorovic, coordinator of the EL*C shelters for lesbian refugees in Poland; Ilaria Todde, organizer of the EL*C Housing Network for relocation; Oksana: Ukrainian refugee; Manuela Kay: Volunteer Host in Berlin, Germany.

● **Why Advocacy matters?**

Content: How to Lesbianize the institutions.

Date: 14.03.2022

Location: The Steps, Cultural and community Center, ul. "Bratya Miladinovi" 12, 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

Target audience: Civil society NGO and groups working in Sofia for LGBTI rights.

Resource persons/trainers: Ilaria Todde, EL*C advocacy director; Denitsa Lyubenova, Lawyer of "Deystvie" Bulgarian LGBTI NGO

Objectives of the training: The objective of this training was to explain via a recent practical example of EU advocacy realized by EL*C, how to structure the national data collection and reporting. The training addressed the following main questions:

- How do you do advocacy?
- What tools are available under EU law?
- Are there any good examples?

● **Dykemarches**

Content: Catch me if you can: Dykes marching all over the world.

Date: 11.05.2022

Location: Online Zoom

Target audience: All lesbians wanting to organize a dyke march in their city.

Resource persons/trainers: Maxine Wolfe & Terry Ferreira, New York Dyke March coordinators; Dana Muller, Dyke March Berlin; Karin Schoenpflug, Dyke March Vienna; Alice Coffin, Marche Lesbienne Paris.

Objectives of the training: during the last 20 years, after the 1993 March on Washington organized by the Lesbian Avengers, dyke marches are organized in several cities all around the world to give visibility to lesbians. During this training we will share the experiences of the historical organizers as Maxine Wolfe from the NY dyke march as well as the newcomers like Dana Muller from the Berlin dyke march and learn what are the main challenges to organize a dyke march in your own town, for your local community.

● **Community Organizing**

Content: Community Organizing - Starting, campaigning, and winning our battles.

Date: 1st September 2022

Location: Online Zoom

Target audience: EL*C lesbian NGO Network Members

Resource persons/trainers: Silvia Casalino, EL*C executive Director

Objectives of the training: It is not easy to bring about significant change in one's community and it is often difficult to know where to start. In this first training, we will begin to gather our experiences of community organizing and try to understand the fundamental techniques that form the core of effective grassroots organizing. This training is a first step, designed for new organizers who want to start, and an excellent refresher for those who are already politically active.

- **Fundraising**

Content: Lesbian Resources and competition.

Date: 28.09.2022

Location: Office of the Mayor of Budapest Metropolitan Municipality, Városház u. 9-11. Budapest, Hungary

Target audience: Lesbian NGOs members of the EL*C network

Resource person/trainers: Dragana Todorovic, EL*C co-executive Director

Objectives of the training: To learn how to better fundraise for lesbian projects by creating national and international alliances between lesbian organisations. The main topics will be developed during the training: Current funding challenges for the lesbian movements; How to build sustainability; How to diversify the resources; How to develop re-granting targeting the lesbian NGOs; Create alliances to strengthen the global fundraising.

- **Lesbian Archives**

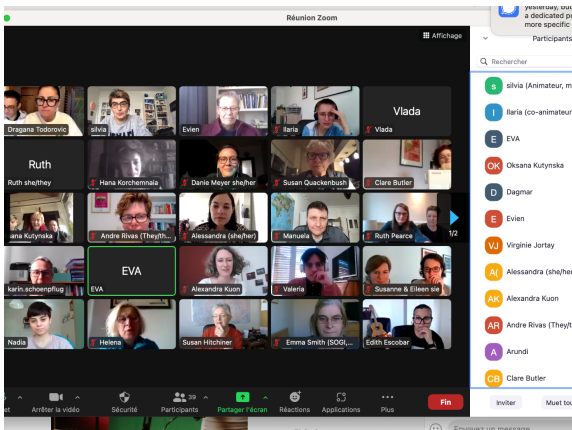
Date: 30.09.2022

Location: CEU - Nádor u. 15, 1051 Budapest, Hungary

Target audience: All EL*C members

Resource persons/trainers: Marian Lens, founder and coordinator of Les Lesbianaires, Lesbian Archives in Brussels; Loise Tachon, member of ARCL Archives Lesbiennes Paris; Alex Zorilă, founder of the Lesbian oral herstory project in Accept Romania; Anna Borgos historian working at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience and Psychology, Budapest, and founding member of Labrisz Lesbian Association in Hungary; Orla Egan, Queer Archival Activist, Chair of the Cork (Ireland) LGBT Archive.

Objectives of the training: the training will give the opportunity of constructing a shared space for all the peoples involved in the lesbian movement who want to preserve, store, share and display information in relation to the rich history of the lesbian communities. By exchanging the difficulties faced by several experts in lesbian archives from all over Europe, we will try to answer the following fundamental questions: How to set up a space for lesbian archives? Which content/language? And finally, how we can collaborate in the future?



3.5. eLES the EL*C eLearning platform

The EL*C LOCA process initiated in 2022, has shown that the lesbian movement need a well thought out and specific support and training. In order to cope with those results, EL*C decided to start the development of eLES - an eLearning platform aimed at offering an easy, efficient and transparent tool that responds to the training needs of European and Central Asian Lesbian NGOs and organizations, but also individuals, foundations and their communities. At the time of publication of the 2022 Activity Report, work is in progress. The first modules of this platform will be ready by the end of 2023.



3.6. Towards a Global Lesbian Movement

It was in 2017 not long after its inaugural conference that EL*C got involved in lesbian organising at a global scale. At the time, COC Netherlands facilitated a working group made up of about twenty lesbian activists (individuals and groups among which EL*C), to represent different regions and sub groups of lesbian movements across the globe. This was the start of a two-year process, which led EL*C to be one of the key forces in the organisation of the Global Feminist LBQ Women's* Conference, which took place in 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa. This conference has brought together 500 LBQ activists from across the globe.

Months following the gathering, the working group released a conference report, which it presented during two online meetings open to anybody interested in listening to the project outcomes. By 2021 and 2022, realising the challenges of pushing for another global LBQ conference with practically no funds to steer the process, EL*C suggested that instead of individual members and COC Netherlands, the process be taken forward by a coalition of regional LBQ networks & groups.

Multiple international organisations from all regions are interested in joining forces with other lesbian groups on a global scale. A series of online meetings with these groups were held, and an in person meeting has take place, organized by LesLac (Latin American lesbian network) and the EL*C called the Lesbian Pre-conference at the 2022 Ilga World conference in Long Beach, California.

Each regional group attending the lesbian pre-conference in California confirmed its desire to coalesce with others on a global level. As outcome, the following priority needs were agreed upon as focus for a global lesbian movement:

1. Spaces to meet in person and online
2. Information sharing (research, data)
3. Joint communication / advocacy & solidarity
4. Knowledge and data production
5. Increasing lesbian visibility
6. FUNDING
7. Language (translation)
8. Addressing different forms of violence
9. Capacity building

This has led to several important discussions and plans made with the South East Asian LBQ Network, the Central Asian LBQ Network, LesLAC and the Southern African LBQ Network, that included plans on how to cooperate together, exchange, learn from each other and support each other, and to leverage global cooperation to secure lesbian rights on the regional and national levels. In addition, our combined experience has shown that we can only go so far without proper funding, which is why EL*C is currently also working on federating regional lesbian groups and coordinating next steps with key donors.

4. Bringing lesbian genius to the world

Finally, one of EL*C's key priorities is to advocate, promote and improve protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of lesbians in Europe and Central Asia, and to influence the external environment that affects the fundamental rights and freedoms of lesbians.

In addition, we are also using the media as a strategic tool. On the one hand, lesbians are still invisible in all domains and the word "lesbian" in itself still has a derogatory connotation. Either because it is considered a slur, conveying shame and pain, or because it is associated with pornography, making social media and internet search engines censoring this specific word. On the other hand, since the beginning, the EL*C group was composed by young media activists with great experience in utilising media and communication technologies for social and political movements, publishing news on EL*C website, creating video and audio investigations, spreading information about protests, or organising campaigns relating to media and communications policies, enhancing the creation of communities online over specific issues and social connections.

4.1. Communication and Media

i. Activity Summary

As an intersectional feminist lesbian network, EL*C's communication priority is increasing visibility around lesbian issues by building a platform for lesbians by lesbians. In order to reach its desired audience of lesbians, bi and queer women and non-binary persons of all ages, races, ethnicities and social classes, EL*C uses multiple channels to spread awareness and engage lesbians throughout Europe, Central Asia and the world. EL*C is present on the most used social media platforms – Facebook - Meta, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and has also become present on TikTok during the course of 2022. Furthermore, EL*C has gathered a network of over 42 member NGOs and hundreds of individual members with whom we communicate via newsletters and email campaigns.

In January, the EL*C pointed out that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe missed the opportunity to include lesbophobia as an intersecting form of discrimination in their report denouncing rising hate against LGBTI in Europe. For Holocaust Remembrance Day that same month, EL*C drew attention to the tireless work and research by lesbian activists and scholars which have led to the recognition of lesbian victims of the Holocaust such as Eva Kotchever.

In February, EL*C focused more on research and started gathering information for an observatory on lesbophobia while also bringing attention to the previous research of this sort done by EL*C and made public the previous year. Further down the line, EL*C published a report on lesbian health, putting together data and information from many activists, researchers and organizations. Once the war broke out in Ukraine, EL*C focused all its efforts - including communication efforts - on war relief for LGBTQ women and non-binary persons, at first through our member organization Insight Ukraine, then extending to a much larger operation.

Thus, in March EL*C communicated strongly about the refugee services we offered: safe houses in Poland, emergency hotline, relocations to safer countries and assistance to Insight Ukraine. EL*C also organized a fundraiser in order to finance all these efforts in support of LGBTQ women and non-binary persons fleeing war. Multiple news outlets wrote about EL*C's efforts, including Irish [GCN](#), the French [BFM TV](#), the Spanish [ShanGay](#) or the international news outlet [Insider](#). Throughout the month, EL*C raised the news about the trial of Argentinian Eva Analia de Jesus, known as Huigui, who was facing accusations about causing the death of one of the aggressors during an attempted corrective rape.

April proved to be a packed month as EL*C continued to communicate about war relief in Ukraine, but also began focusing communication efforts in other directions, namely announcing the third EL*C conference taking place in Budapest as well as Lesbian Visibility Week taking place in the European Parliament. During this month, EL*C raised awareness regarding a pepper-spray attack on our Ukrainian board member Olena Shevchenko, showcasing how in crisis situations, women, LGBTI people and minorities are always the first target of violence. For Lesbian Visibility Week, EL*C organized an event titled "Fight like a Lesbian" in the European Parliament, hosted by lesbian MEP Malin Bjork, discussing lesbian activism against war, oppression and discrimination. Communication around this event involved a livestream from the event and a series of photographs of visible and fierce lesbian activists across Europe. Furthermore EL*C participated in the Marche Lesbienne in Paris with a banner in solidarity with Ukraine.

In May, EL*C aimed its communication efforts on the "Lesbian Futurities" ILGA World pre-conference organized by EL*C together with LesLac (lesbians from Latin and Central America) and continued the search for a communication and media specialist for the organization. EL*C advanced on the research front at a roundtable at the European Focal Points Network, where we presented recommendations for governments to advance lesbian rights at a local, national and European level. During this month, EL*C took part in multiple events for IDAHOBIT and also further communicated about efforts in Ukraine while EL*C board member and Insight Director Olena Shevchenko from Ukraine and her organization became laureates of the city of Paris international prize for LGBTIQ rights. With great sadness, EL*C shed light on the passing of legendary lesbian activist Urvashi Vaid and posted an interview done with her by our board member Alice Coffin. In lighter news, EL*C was awarded by the city of Brussels for our art and culture event Lesbiennale.

The month of June started with EL*C expressing support for local Belgian politician Sihame Haddoui in her complaint against indecent assault and sexism at the hands of a male politician. We also announced an event titled "Inclusive Sports in Europe: Lesbians and feminists on the move" organized by EL*C in partnership with our member organization Les Degommeuses. Later in the month we shared photos and snippets of the discussions we had at this event. We raised awareness about the situation of lesbian WNBA player Brittney Griner who was awaiting trial in Russia. We celebrated World Refugee Day by standing firmly with Ukrainian refugees as they moved through Europe. June is also the month when we opened registrations for EL*C #3 Conference as well as launched two separate calls for workshops and scholarships for the conference. Towards the end of the month, EL*C raised awareness on anti-LGBT attacks in Turkey and Norway as well as the overturning of Roe vs Wade in the USA.



In July, EL*C further pushed for registrations for our 3rd EL*C Conference in Budapest as well as for the calls for workshops and scholarships and circulated important logistical information about the Conference. We posted updates from our trip to Italy where we participated in Napoli Pride and a teaser about the Italian observatory on lesbophobia. This month, we also launched a call for tenders for a consultant or company to help EL*C build our new website. July was ripe with Conference related communication so this was the month we unveiled the visual identity of the conference realized by French artist Maic Baxane and created the facebook

event for the Conference, Dyke March and Lesbian Party organized in Budapest by EL*C. Towards the end of the month we posted a rewind post with photos from our past conferences to give people a taste of what's to come. We celebrated the coming out of Russian lesbian tennis player Daria Kasatkina with a social media video.

August came with Conference fever as we announced the two co-host organizations from Budapest for the EL*C #3 Conference, Labrisz and qLit. We condemned Victor Orban's racist outburst and reminded people that the anti-LGBT propaganda legislation issued by his government as well as the ban on a minority-focused fairytale book were being discussed for possible sanctions by the European Union. Further down the pit of daunting news, we joined activists worldwide in denouncing Brittney Griner's conviction to spend 9 years in a Russian prison. We pushed our communication regarding the Conference with multiple posts on social media and press releases towards media contacts. This month, we celebrated Guadeloupe's first LGBT Pride march which was organized by four black lesbian activists and we launched a call for volunteers for the Conference. Excitedly we announced a new brand of event which EL*C is organizing the inaugural edition of International Lesbian Visibility Awards taking place in Tenerife and launched a call for community nominees. We also denounced the Serbian President's call to cancel EuroPride and shared that EL*C's research on cancer and LBQ women has been published in a Springer book. As an end to the month, the Orban government once again found itself criticized by EL*C for commissioning a study which suggested that there are too many women with higher education degrees in Hungary in comparison to men and that "feminine" traits are being taught instead of "masculine" ones.

September started strong with a press conference about EL*C #3 which took place at the Brussels Press Club and was written about in the [EU Observer](#) and the French [Komitid](#) as well as 24 Hungarian media outlets such as [EuroNews Hungary](#) or [RTL Hungary](#). We communicated in parallel about the International Lesbian Visibility Awards and the upcoming EL*C #3 Conference, launching a video with EL*C board members stating reasons why coming to the conference is pivotal. We raised awareness about the death of Malte, a 25 year

old transgender man who died as a result of a violent assault during which he defended lesbians in Münster, Germany. As in July, we communicated details of the Conference such as panels, keynote speakers and the cultural program. We denounced the Serbian police's attempt to cancel EuroPride in Serbia with an informative video on the situation. We raised awareness about two Iranian lesbian activists who were facing a death penalty for their sexual orientation and we also raised awareness regarding a lesbophobic attack which happened after EuroPride in Serbia. We joined forces with TGEU to create a powerful lesbian and trans solidarity video which touched many on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We also launched our bilingual website lesbians4refugees.org where Ukrainian LBQ women and non-binary persons can find centralized information on all EU member states and be assisted in fleeing war. We celebrated Bisexuality Day with a post from our board member Rhonda D'vine and gave people a taste of what a Dyke March is like with a video compilation of photos from previous such events.

Since September was the month of the Conference, we accelerated communication around the event beginning with a photo of lesbians for reproductive rights in solidarity with Hungarian women for whom it became harder to solicit abortions due to new legislation by the Orban government. We streamed all the conference days on Facebook and YouTube as well as live-tweeted the entire event. Our Dyke March attracted the attention of local press, having reports written in 5 Hungarian media outlets such as 444.hu and Telex as well as video reports by Reuters – OpenlyNews and Human Rights Watch.



As we reached October, communication became more concentrated on the inaugural edition of the International Lesbian Visibility Awards with our main aim being to sell tickets for this one of a kind fundraiser for EL*C war relief efforts around Ukraine. We also shared commemorative images and videos of the EL*C #3 Conference and made efforts to advance our research on lesbophobia by engaging our audience to share events from their respective countries. This month, EL*C was also present at the “Our tradition is love” protest march against anti-LGBT legislation proposal in Romania and at the EIGE Gender Equality Forum.

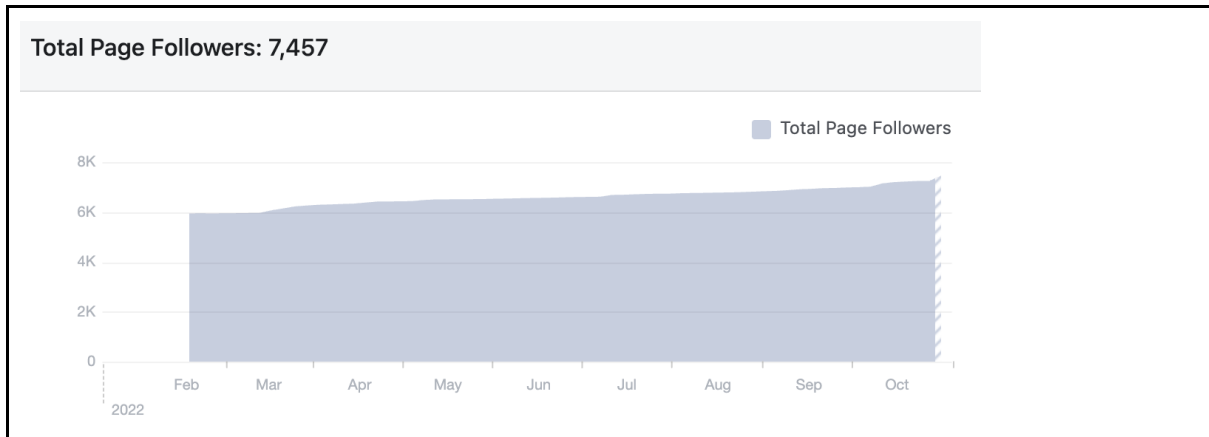
November was marked by communication around the International Lesbian Visibility Awards with heavy social media posting about the event and great press coverage in national Spanish media such as Radio Television Canaria and El Diario. The event was live broadcasted through our YouTube channel and drew the attention of the international lesbian community.

In December, we focused on year-in-review posts, communicating about the new open positions at EL*C and celebrated the release of Brittney Griner.

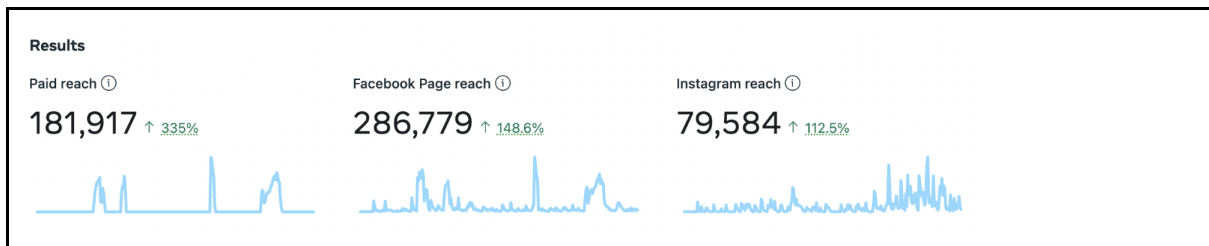
ii. Audience & Metrics

EL*C targets lesbians, bisexual and pansexual women and non-binary persons of all ages, ethnicities, social classes throughout Europe and Central Asia.

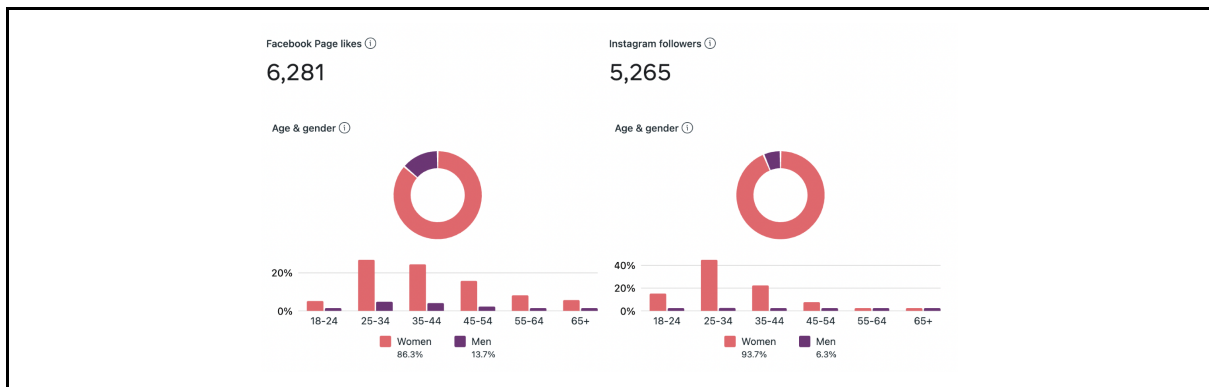
Meta: In 2022, the combined number of followers across Meta social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) has increased by 28% from 6000 followers at the beginning of the year to almost 7500 followers:

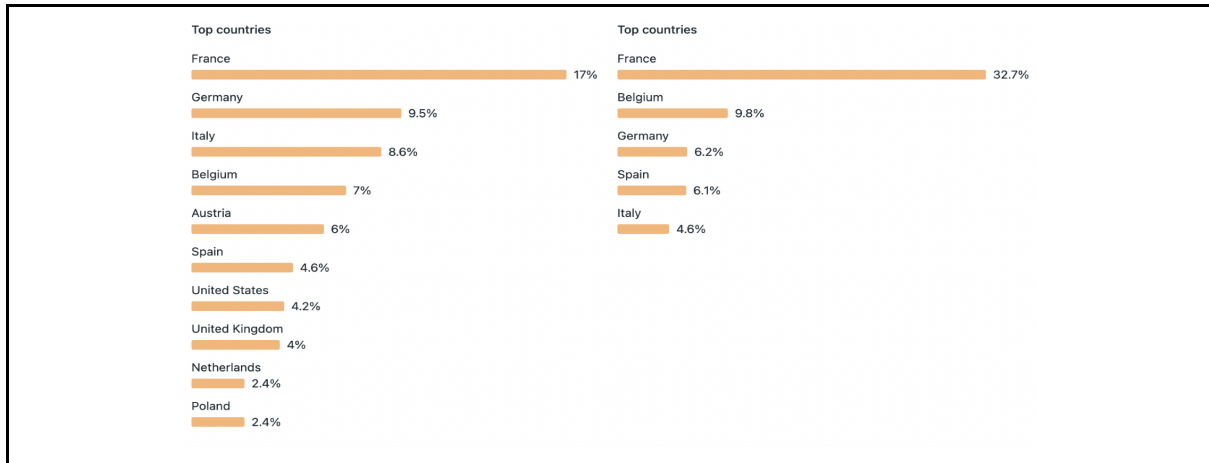


We have also seen an increase in both organic and paid reach on Meta social media platforms from 112% to 335% more than the previous year.



Our current audience is made up of over 80% women, most of which fall in the 25-34 and 35-44 age categories, with most of our audience based in Western and Central Europe.



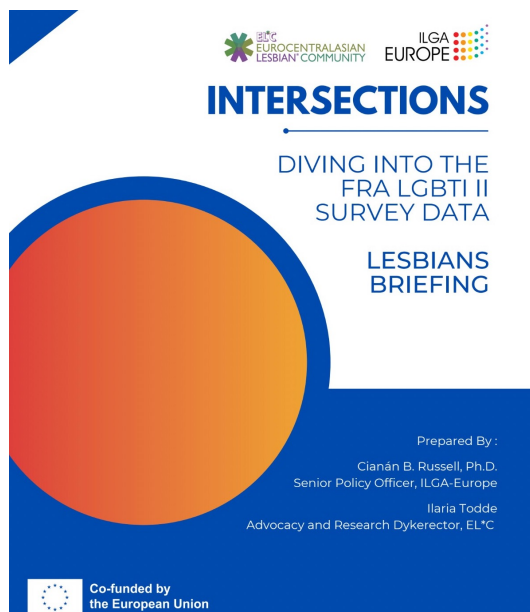


4.2. Data Collection & Research

One of the many effects of the intersectional discrimination faced by lesbians is the chronic lack of data and general invisibility of lesbians in research. This is connected with the lack of funding for specific data collection on the lived experiences of lesbians as well as with the lack of attention in broader research on topics that might be particularly relevant for lesbians. For these reasons EL*C research activities have two main objectives: 1) analyse existing research and make lesbians visible in them 2) collect data and produce research targeting lesbians specifically.



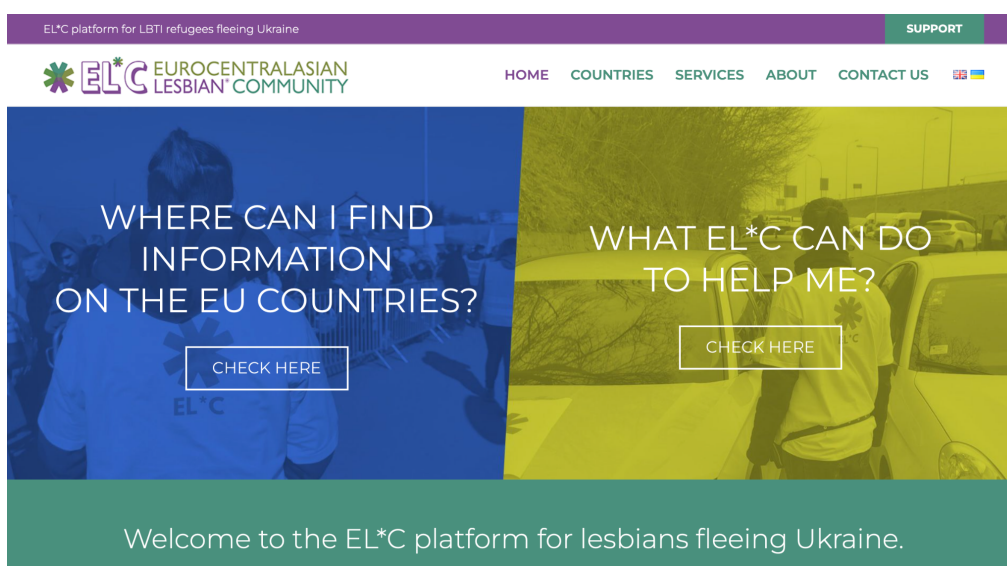
One of the main findings of our research on [The state of lesbian organising and lived realities of lesbians](#), published in 2020, was the lack of research on lesbian health, in particular if compared with production of research concerning other members of the LGBTI community. For this reason, in February 2022, we published the report [“A bitter pill to swallow: gaps and discrimination for lesbians in healthcare”](#), a summary of the findings, data and information, collected in years of work and collaboration with researchers, activists, experts and organisations engaging in countering the effects on lesbians of sexist and heteronormative oppressions in healthcare. Some of the results collected in this research were used to contribute a paper [on Cancer and LBQ Women: Advocating for More Research and Activism Collaboration](#), included in the book published by Springer: “LGBTI populations and cancer in the global context” edited by Prof. Boehmer and Prof. Dennert.



Analysing existing research meant also having a more detailed look at one of the main sources of data concerning LGBTI people in Europe, the 2019 LGBTI Survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union. In collaboration with Ilga Europe, we produced [a lesbian analysis of the data contained in the LGBTI Survey II](#). The report, published in November 2022, uses the data collected by FRA to create a more inclusive sample group and better disaggregates the data, allowing more detailed information on lesbians depending on different identities and lived experiences. Finally, the report goes one step further and provides an analysis of the data coming from researches on broader gender inequalities to demonstrate how gender-based violence and discrimination experienced by women and people

perceived as such in society impact also lesbians' lived experiences.

As part of the effort to support lesbians fleeing the war in Ukraine, EL*C built the website: <https://www.lesbians4refugees.org> A platform dedicated to centralise information to lesbian refugees from Ukraine on what EL*C can offer them, to provide clarity regarding their rights, as well as how and where to obtain help and services inside each of the EU member states. The project was developed in collaboration with 2 consultants, themselves lesbians who fled the war in Ukraine, that conducted the research and ensured that the website would facilitate the relocation and integration of lesbians and their families, including through the support of lesbian and/or refugee networks in the host countries. The information collected through this project also informed EL*C advocacy activities toward international institutions and national authorities working on crisis response, humanitarian aid and integration of Ukrainians in the EU.



In 2022, EL*C has been conducting research on the needs and lived experiences of older lesbians and on the intersection between gender, sexual orientation and old age. The aim of the research is to assess the situations of ageing lesbian concerning issues such as their socio-economic situation, integral health, discrimination, access and experiences of housing, care and other services, as well as to identify individual and collective strategies and good practices favouring older lesbians' wellbeing and rights. The research team adopts a mixed methodology, including a desk research, quantitative data analysis, a mapping of good practices as well as qualitative semi-directed interviews. The preliminary results will be presented at an event in Madrid in December 2022.

EL*C is also preparing the 2022 annual report on Lesbophobia to create a standing Observatory on Lesbophobia. A survey for EL*C members was launched in autumn and aims at collecting new cases of lesbophobia registered during the year, as well as to collect information on access to justice for lesbian victims or survivors of lesbophobic violence, institutionalized lesbophobia perpetrated by law enforcement and judicial authorities, gaps in support services as well as lesbophobia in media and incited by political figures. The results will be published at the beginning of 2023.

4.3. Advocacy: lesbianizing the institutions!

Since the beginning of its activities, EL*C had the aim to influence policy and legislation, when this is relevant for the lesbians in Europe and Central Asia. However, advocacy work requires resources and expertises, as well as time to be part of processes that are often long and complex and need continuous follow up.

Initially, since our efforts were conducted through volunteer work, we had to select our battles carefully, engaging when we consider it key in our broader strategic development or in processes that were fundamental in shaping LGBTI and gender equality policies in the region. This is the reason why the main focus of EL*C advocacy activity in 2020 had been the LGBTIQ Strategy of the European Union. In 2021, EL*C was able to hire a part-time staff member focusing on this work-package, allowing to extend the focus to other international stakeholders, to prepare advocacy activities related with the operational grant of the European Commission and to conduct research projects in line with broader advocacy objectives. As from January 2022, EL*C has a full-time staff member dedicated to advocacy and research.

2022 was therefore the year when a more structured approach to advocacy activities was possible and a continuous presence to decision making tables and to processes was finally achievable. This meant being included as members and observers in forums such as the European Focal Points network and the LGBTI Subgroup, places where the EU and the Council of Europe institutions shape the policies and approaches around LGBTI issues together with their Member States. We were able to start engaging actively on issues related directly with gender equality policies, such as the Violence against Women Directive in the European Parliament, the Harmful practices recommendation of the European Commission and the Generation Equality Forum at UN level.

We were also finally able to look at advocacy on a national level, starting to engage with representatives from Member states (Italy, Sweden, Iceland, France) and taking part in a specific project on hate crime in Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia together with local partners and the UK LGBTI organisation Stonewall. More energy and resources meant also launching a Resolution on LBQ women in the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, which if approved will be the first international law instrument focusing specifically on the lived experiences of lesbians.

In 2022, after 5 years of intense work in advocacy, things seem to start progressing. The main lesson learnt from this year's achievements is that our presence matters and that if lesbians are at the table the conversation changes, it becomes more aware of gender inequalities and more inclusive and intersectional. All in all, those institutions will not be lesbianised by themselves.

i. European Union

The intersectional position of women in the LGBTI community was recognised for the first time in the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy of the European Union. For this reason, EL*C's work toward EU institutions has been focusing on ensuring that in the implementation of the strategy, intersectionality is not forgotten.

EL*C engages actively in the LGBTI Subgroup of the High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime. EL*C participated as observer in 3 meetings of the LGBTI Subgroup focusing on national actions plans on LGBTI rights, hate crime and hate speech and rights of trans people (respectively in February, June and November 2022). In this capacity, EL*C successfully advocated for the adoption of a gender-aware approach, for more focus on the lived experiences of lesbians and for the explicit inclusion of LGBTI women as a group requiring specific policies. The Guidelines for Strategies and Action Plans to Enhance LGBTIQ Equality, adopted by the Subgroup and published on 17 May 2022, included specific mentions of LGBTI women, referred clearly to the need of intersectional approach and of involving the lesbian movement in policy-making.

EL*C intervened also in the legislative processes of the EU, to ensure that lesbian voices are represented and heard when it is relevant and when LGBTI topics are part of the discussion. For this reason, in March 2022, EL*C answered a public consultation on the creation of a minimum European standard on equality bodies, the institutions that deal with anti-discrimination in the EU Member States. The proposed legislation was presented by the European Commission and now the European Parliament and the Council are discussing them.

In May 2022, [EL*C provided feedback](#) on a proposed directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence published by the European Commission. The proposed directive is being examined by the legislative bodies of the EU (Council and Parliament). EL*C is actively advocating for an improvement of the text, in collaboration with other LGBTI and feminist networks. EL*C prepared a set of amendments, together with Ilga Europe, OII Europe, TGEU and IGLYO and presented it to the Parliament's rapporteurs during a meeting held in October 2022. More work on this legislative file will be conducted by the end of the year and further into 2023.

In June 2022, EL*C participated in the consultation process for the European Commission Recommendations on harmful practices, taking part in 4 days of consultative meetings and [providing data and information on the impact of harmful practices on lesbians](#) collected via EL*C membership and research work.

Finally, EL*C engaged with EU bodies that work on research on equality and human rights to improve their data collection. For this reason in June 2022, EL*C took part in consultations for the 2023 LGBTI Survey III conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Unit, both by participating in consultative meetings and providing written feedback to representatives of FRA and of DG Just in the European Commission. In October 2022, EL*C also engaged in the Gender Equality Forum organised by the European Institute on Gender Equality and spoke at the panel on "[The role of data and evidence for policy making](#)".

ii. Council of Europe

In January 2022, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) approved a resolution on [Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe](#). The text included some mentions of hate episodes against lesbians but recognised explicitly only "homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia", [missing an opportunity](#) to explicitly address lesbophobic violence and discrimination. As a result, EL*C stepped up its advocacy efforts toward the PACE and in June 2022, the Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee of the Assembly approved a motion calling for a resolution that focuses on [preventing and combating violence and discrimination against LBQ women](#). In the second part of the year, the Assembly also approved the motion, the Committee appointed a rapporteur and the work is now starting on a resolution on this topic. EL*C will continue working with the Committee secretariat and the rapporteur.

In order to increase EL*C's reach, influence and engagement with Council of Europe bodies and policy-makers and mobilize support for the resolution, meetings were organised in June 2022 with representatives from the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, with GREVIO, ECRI and the Gender Equality Unit. On 20 June 2022, EL*C took part in the launching event of the Parliamentary Platform for LGBTI rights at PACE and developed contacts with Christophe Lacroix, General Rapporteur on LGBTI Rights, Zita Gurmai, General Rapporteur on Violence against women and Hannah Bardell, Member of PACE from UK openly lesbian. Additional meetings will be held in Strasbourg in November 2022.

Furthermore, in October 2022, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted [a resolution calling to end discrimination against women in the world of sport](#). During 2022, EL*C held meetings with the Rapporteur to present the [report on LBTI women](#) in sport. The [explanatory memorandum](#) makes several references to EL*C's contribution and the resolution notes that discrimination against LBTI women has a negative impact on women in general, recognises the multiple discrimination and forms of violences to which LBTI women are subject and calls to "prevent violence against women and girls, including LBTI women, in sport at all levels".

Since May 2022, EL*C is also a member of the European Focal Points Network and has participated in the IDAHOT Forum held in Cyprus on 12 and 13 May 2022. EL*C took part in

a panel concerning LGBTI refugees, presenting its experiences of supporting lesbians fleeing Ukraine and a set of recommendations for national authorities. During the EFPN meeting EL*C presented its activities, objectives and missions and advocated with member states for an increased collaboration with lesbian NGOs and funding for projects lead by and focused on lesbians.

EL*C took part in monitoring activities of the Council of Europe, in particular by participating in the annual thematic review of Recommendation 2010/5 of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE organised by the working group on LGBTI issues of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (GT-CDADI). The countries taken into consideration were Albania, Romania and France. Thanks to the information collected during the field visits in Romania and France, EL*C provided written comments, took part in the Roundtable on SOGIESC-based Hate Crime and other hate motivated incidents in France on 14 October 2022 and in the European Roundtable: Combating SOGIESC-based hate crime across Europe, held in Dublin on the 27 October 2022.

iii. United Nations

EL*C has also engaged in February 2022 with the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity by answering a call to inputs on physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The [report](#) summarised the findings, data and information that EL*C was able to collect in these years of work and collaboration with researchers, activists, experts and organisations engaging in countering the effects on lesbians of sexist and heteronormative oppression in healthcare.

EL*C is also actively engaged in the **Generation Equality Forum**, a civil-society centered, global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France. In early 2020, EL*C was selected to be one of the **leaders of Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership** in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum. The Action Coalitions gather representatives from States, international organisations, funders, the private sector and the civil society and are tasked to build concrete, ambitious and transformative actions to achieve progress in gender equality. In 2022. in its position as af leader, EL*C contributed to the numerous discussions, meetings and dialogues.

iv. EL*C Advocacy Events

In 2022, EL*C organised events aimed at bringing lesbian activists and grass-root experiences in contact with international organisations and to ensure the visibility of lesbian issues at international level.

Lesbian activists week

From the 24th to the 27th of April 2022, EL*C organised the Lesbian activists week in Brussels which combined a three days study visit to the EU Institutions for EL*C members and the event in the European Parliament “Fight like a lesbian: activism against war, oppression and discrimination”.



The study visit was attended by 20 activists representing 15 EL*C members from the EU. The program included training on advocacy, on the functioning and competencies of EU institutions and UN mechanisms, on fundraising and peer-to-peer learning on good practice. It included: a meeting with representatives of the European Commission held at DG Justice and a networking reception with representatives of European civil society organisations and policymakers, both on 25 April; a lunch with MEPs in the European Parliament on 26 April; a workshop with Sihame Haddioui, an openly lesbian elected representative in Brussels, on lesbians in politics and a visit to one of Brussels municipalities held on 27 April.

The event in the Parliament was held on 26 April 2022, International Lesbian Visibility Day. It was hosted by MEP Malin Bjork. The event was composed of two panels, including activists working to welcome refugees from Ukraine and beyond, dealing with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and facing the backlash from the far-right movement in Eastern Europe, as well as activists who are powerful voices of anti-racism movements, fight anti-Roma backlash and work to empower older people and migrants and refugees.

Inter-institutional Dialogue on Lesbian Rights in Europe

On the 28th of September 2022, EL*C organised the “Inter-institutional dialogue on lesbian rights in Europe” in Budapest. It was held one day before the conference and it connected EL*C members and decision-makers responsible for women’s rights and LGBTI’s rights at European and International levels.



It was attended by 50 representatives of EL*C members organisations, as well as representatives from academia, the Council of Europe, the EU Institutions and the UN. The event was opened by a video message from Reem Alsalem, UN special rapporteur on violence against women. Speakers included: Borbála Szigeti, Head of Political Team, Representation of the European Commission in Hungary, Manon Beury, Human Rights Officer, Mandate of the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Ruth M. Mestre I Mestre, Women's Studies Institute and Faculty of Law University of Valencia and GREVIO and Malin Bjork, MEP Vice-chair of the LGBTI Intergroup in the European Parliament.

Participation in events organised by others

EL*C took part as speaker in the following events:

Date	Event	Location	Organiser
7 March	Reclaim your space	Online	PES women and Rainbow Rose
12 May	Protecting the rights of LGBTIQ refugee, IDAHOT Forum 2022	Cyprus	European Focal Points Network
17 May	IDAHOBIT Event	Online	IOM and UN Human Rights Commissioner
17 May	National action plans on LGBTIQ Equality	European Parliament, Brussels	LGBTI Intergroup at the European Parliament
13-17 Sept.	Human rights Conference at Europride and side events	Belgrade	EPOA and Belgrade Pride

20 Sept.	LBQ connect: queer women's networks	Online	Outright International
22 Sept.	Toward a European framework on gender-based violence	European Parliament, Brussels	MEP Maria Eugenia Palop, The Left, Spain
19-22 October	Ilga Europe Conference	Sofia	Ilga Europe
24 October	The role of data and evidence for policy making, Gender Equality Forum	Brussels	European Institute of Gender Equality

4.4. Campaigns

Our struggles are intersectional, and we face them with solidarity as our guiding torch and by making our voices heard through awareness raising. We draw from early forms of lesbian activism, from their social knowledge and skills, their political positionality and their tactics of reaching. From eco-feminism and anti-racism, from social justice and global justice movements. In this vein we have engaged in cross-sectional and intersectional struggles through campaigns.

i. Visible & Fierce! A photo campaign with lesbian* activists in Europe

This photo campaign was set up by the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community - EL*C to mark lesbian visibility day 2022. For this campaign, EL*C decided to collaborate with the photographer Serena Vittorini to make portraits of lesbian* activists from different European countries who came to Brussels in April 2022 for a week of advocacy work with the European institutions. A powerful way to mark the International Day of Lesbian Visibility (April 26).



Above are three samples from the sixteen photographs made with lesbian activists from Europe. In November 2022, this photo series was also part of Pink Screens, Brussels 20 year old LGBTIQ film festival art exhibition.

ii. Participation to Dyke Marches and LGBTI pride parades

In 2022 EL*C Lesbian Genius banner travelled all around Europe to represent the lesbian community. Among others, the EL*C was visible and proud in:

- Bucharest International Women's Day
- Paris Marche Lesbienne 27 of April
- Budapest Dyke march
- Belgrade Europride
- Bucharest "Our Tradition is Love" protest against proposed anti-LGBTI legislation



5. Conclusion

The year 2022 has been extremely challenging and has therefore produced many concrete results. First of all, as already mentioned in the introduction, we have been mobilised by an important series of aid actions in Ukraine.

The implementation of the "Partnership agreement" with the European Commission allowed us to strengthen our procedures and internal organisation, to enlarge our network, to prepare a first cycle of training for the different lesbian associations on the ground and to carry out an even more precise and qualitative advocacy with our partners.

We also organised two major events, the third EL*C conference in Budapest and for the first time the International Lesbian Visibility Awards.

Our presence in the media (mainstream and social networks) was very important, allowing us to give visibility to a wide range of lesbian experiences.

Last but not least, our advocacy and research work has generated a great amount of groundbreaking new data on lesbians' lives. 2022 was also the year when a more structured approach to advocacy activities was possible and a continuous presence to decision making tables and to processes was finally achievable at all levels with a specific focus on EU institutions, the Council of Europe and United Nations.

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