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## Call for proposals

### Lesbian Economic Power (Non-EU), 2026 – Funding Stream 1

*This call for proposals is aimed at EL\*C member organisations based outside of the EU (see the concrete list of countries under the “Eligibility Criteria” section). In case your organisation is based in the EU, please read our [Lesbian Economic Power \(EU\), 2026 call for proposals](#).*

EL\*C - EuroCentralAsian Lesbian\* Community is happy to announce its Lesbian Economic Power (EU), 2026 call for proposals! Our goal is to build capacities of EL\*C member organizations outside of the European Union, in Europe and Central Asia, and support them in Empowering lesbians through Employment and Entrepreneurship and in Establishing Sustainable Income-Generating Models for Lesbian Organisations.

*Within this call, we have two funding streams, and you must choose one. In case you are interested in Funding Stream 2 (Establishing Sustainable Income-Generating Models for Lesbian Organizations), please read [the dedicated page](#).*

Please note that EL\*C uses the term lesbian as inclusive of cis, trans and intersex women, and non- binary persons who self-identify as lesbian, bisexual, and queer.

### Core information

- **Application deadline:** 23:59 CEST on June 8th, 2026.
- **Length of the project:** between 6 months and 12 months.
- **Start date** should be between October 15 and November 15, 2026.
- **Requested amount:** minimum 5,000 EUR and maximum 20,000 EUR.
- **No co-funding is necessary**, EL\*C will cover 100% of the costs.
- The whole of the awarded grant amount will be paid out at the start, within the first month of the project.

### Eligibility criteria

Applicants meeting the following eligibility criteria will be considered for funding:

- Approved full member organization of EL\*C at the time the call being launched *(an organization is an approved full member after going through a separate application process for membership and receiving a formal notification about approval of*

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*membership)*

- Non-profit and non-governmental, civil society organization (registered and unregistered)
- Based in and working in the following countries:
  - Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
  - Europe: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine
  - South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia
- Fully completed application form, budget and the signed declaration of honor, submitted before the deadline.

Applicants found ineligible will be informed within 2 weeks after the application deadline.

## **Project objectives to be supported under Funding Stream 1**

### **Empowering Lesbians through Employment and Entrepreneurship**

Under this stream, lesbian organizations will be funded to design and deliver tailored activities aimed at improving lesbians' access to sustainable and dignified employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

These activities aim to directly address the structural barriers that lesbian women face in accessing employment or starting businesses, such as discrimination, invisibility, limited access to formal support systems, and a lack of initial capital or expertise.

**Please note that [Funding Stream 2](#) will be prioritized, with more resources allocated to it, given the strategic importance of building long-term sustainability of the lesbian movement.**

### **Eligible activities**

**Please note that all project activities have to benefit actors/communities within the countries listed in the "Eligibility Criteria" section, they have to take place within these countries and the costs have to be incurred also within these countries.**

Eligible types of activities are the following, and they are divided into main activities, which should be the main focus of the project, and supporting activities that are intended to accompany the main activities:

#### **Main activities**

- Vocational training programs and workshops tailored to the skills and labor market conditions in local contexts
- Career counseling, job search support, and job placement services

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- Mentorship and peer networks for professional development
  - Business development support for lesbians starting or expanding micro-enterprises, including cooperatives and social enterprises
  - Entrepreneurial skills development and market access facilitation
  - Testing of innovative approaches
  - Recognition and validation of skills, including support for certification and recognition of prior learning
  - Partnerships with employers and inclusive workplace initiatives
  - Digital inclusion and digital skills development for employment and entrepreneurship

### **Supporting activities**

- Facilitation of contacts between employers and job seekers
- Communication, information and dissemination activities
- Awareness raising activities
- Publication of promotional and informational materials, guidelines
- Internal/organizational capacity building activities
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activities

Other activities not listed above cannot be included in the project; for example, regranting cannot be included.

### **Guidance on costs**

The grants will be lump sum based, and the exact amount will be calculated based on the budget that was submitted by the applicant and based on the assessment of the eligibility of costs. During the application process applicants will be requested to submit a detailed budget for each of the Activities, which will be reviewed and evaluated by the Selection Committee in order to see how they are planning to spend the funds. No operating costs will be covered, and only costs for eligible activities (see above) will be allowed. Reviewers will undertake a careful check regarding budget items and will only approve budgets with well-justified and reasonable items, and only allowable costs. If needed, they will request adjustments to the budget, based on which the Selection Committee will make the final decision on the amount to be approved. The budget for each Activity will be fixed in advance, following a lump-sum approach. As a result, project implementation will be reported on and assessed based on the level of completion of the agreed deliverables and outputs for each Activity. Following the signature of the grant contract, 100% of the grant amount will be paid to the grantee as pre-financing.

At the reporting stage, EL\*C will verify the completion of each Activity against the predefined list of deliverables and outputs, in accordance with the deliverables indicated in the Activity Implementation Measurement Matrix. Based on this verification, EL\*C will determine the percentage of completion for each Activity. If an Activity is not completed in full, the uncompleted percentage will be calculated and translated into the corresponding financial value of that Activity, proportionate to the budget allocated to

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that Activity in the approved Budget. EL\*C will then issue a recovery request for the calculated amount, which the grantee will be contractually required to repay within seven days of receiving the request.

**General principles** for admissible costs are the following:

- they must be actually incurred by the applicant
- they must be incurred in the grant period
- they must be declared under one of the budget categories included in the application forms
- they must be incurred in connection with the planned actions
- they must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the applicant's accounts in accordance with the accounting standards
- applicable in the country where the applicant is established and with the applicant's usual cost accounting practices
- they must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labor and social security
- they must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Categories of costs **that can be included** are the following:

- Personnel costs
- Subcontracting costs
- Travel and subsistence costs
- Equipment costs (must be declared as depreciation costs)
- Other goods, works and services

Costs **that are not allowed** are the following:

- costs or contributions that do not comply with the conditions set out above
- costs related to return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary
- debt and debt service charges
- provisions for future losses or debts
- interest owed
- currency exchange losses
- bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from EL\*C
- excessive or reckless expenditure
- deductible or refundable VAT (including VAT paid by public bodies acting as public authority)
- costs incurred or contributions for activities implemented during grant agreement suspension
- in-kind contributions by third parties
- costs or contributions declared under other EU grants (or grants awarded by an EU Member State, non-EU country or other body implementing the EU budget)
- costs or contributions for staff of a national (or regional/local) administration, for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities.

As for specific guidance for the various budget categories included in the application forms, we are providing a [Budget Guide](#) as part of the [Budget Template](#).

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## Selection criteria and selection process

The applications will be evaluated against the following evaluation criteria, with a maximum total score of 100 points.

### 1) Relevance of the proposed action (40 points)

1. Evaluators will first check if the applications comply with basic relevance requirements outlined in the CFP, in particular, if the application responds to the objectives defined in the CFP, if the activities are in line with the predefined list of eligible activities, and if the project focuses on the lesbian community. If the application fails the basic relevance check, it will not be supported.
2. Eligible proposals will be evaluated along the below questions:  
Is the project's goal/objective fully relevant from the perspective of the call for proposals and are all activities in line with the CFP? Are the project's objectives and activities in line with EL\*C's work program? Based on the information provided in the application, is the project relevant for lesbians in the applicant's context; and are the needs well-justified? Is the project being led by lesbians, and are the target group and final beneficiaries well-defined?

### 2) Design of the action and Implementation Approach (20 points)

- Are the activities realistic and doable within the project period? Are the activities well-chosen, well-planned and effective? Are the expected results and impacts clearly explained? Are the proposed methods (e.g. research methods, working with the community, advocacy methods, communication methods, etc.) suitable for the achievement of the project's objectives? Do the proposed methods and implementation reflect the values that the CFP envisions, for instance, is the active participation and leadership of lesbian persons a key part of methods and implementation approach?

### 3) Budget effectiveness (15 points)

- Are the planned budget items in line with the planned objectives and activities? Are they detailed enough to understand how they were calculated? Are they fully aligned with the eligibility of costs included in the CFP? Are they reasonable or potentially under-planned/ overestimated?

### 4) Operational capacity (15 points)

- Based on the application, does the applicant have the capacity to implement the project? (e.g. How complex is the project as compared with the applicant's prior experience? Has the applicant managed other similar projects in the past? Does the applicant have staff/ volunteers with experience in managing projects?)

### 5) Sustainability of the action (10 points)

- Is the project going to produce positive impacts/ influence for the target group beyond short-term gains? What are the mid-term impacts that the project will contribute to? Are there plans for sustaining the project's activities and gains after the end of the project period?

**Applications submitted by organizations that in their mission and work predominantly focus on lesbians will be prioritized, as well as organizations that are in greater need of financial assistance.**

We will acknowledge the receipt of the application. It is possible that EL\*C will be in touch with you with clarifying questions regarding the application. It is also possible that the Selection Committee will suggest changes to the project.



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A Selection Committee comprising of EL\*C Board Members – thus persons elected by the community -will assess eligible proposals and will make funding decisions. Only a select number of EL\*C Board Members will take part in this work, in particular those who do not have any conflict of interest in relation to potential applicants.

Eligible applicants will be informed about the grant decision as soon as possible. Awarded projects will also be announced on the [EL\\*C Grants Program's webpage](#).

## How to apply?

You need to submit the completed **application form, budget, and the signed Declaration of Honor** before **23:59 CEST on June 8, 2026**, to the following email address: [grants@lesbiangenius.org](mailto:grants@lesbiangenius.org)

*Please make sure not to send it last minute, as it may take a few minutes for different mail servers to send the emails.*

You can download the application form, the budget template and other useful documents from the [EL\\*C Grants Program's webpage](#).

## Info sessions and questions

EL\*C will provide online information sessions in English about the call for proposals. You may register for the information sessions [HERE](#). It is sufficient to join only one session, as the information provided will be the same in each session. Following your registration, we will send you the link to the information session.

- May 14 at 10:00 CEST
- May 19 at 12:00 CEST

A **Question and Answers document** will be available on the [EL\\*C Grants Program's webpage](#), with updates after every information session.

In addition, if you cannot find an answer to your question in this document, in the Q&A file or during the information sessions, you may also send an email to [grants@lesbiangenius.org](mailto:grants@lesbiangenius.org) any time prior to June 1st, 2026. We will regularly update the Q&A document with responses sent to your questions.

## Complaints Mechanism

In case you would like to appeal the decision of the Selection Committee, you will have five calendar days after the notification email about the grant decision has been sent. The complaint has to be sent to [grants@lesbiangenius.org](mailto:grants@lesbiangenius.org), and will be shared by staff with a three-member Appeal Committee consisting of one of EL\*C co-directors and two Selection Committee members, who did not review the application. The Appeal Committee will review and decide about the complaint within ten calendar days.

*This call for proposals is supported by The Potluck Fund.*