

Anastasia Danilova's speech at the opening of the 15th LIFT Festival (22 November 2024, CEU, Budapest)

(Anastasia is the executive director of GENDERDOC-M Information Centre, the only LGBT rights advocacy organization in Moldova and the board member of EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community)

Dear friends, colleagues, and honored guests,

It is a joy and an honor to stand here with you all tonight on behalf of EL*C, the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community, at this special 15th edition of the LIFT Festival, especially in a year that marks a significant milestone for Labrisz - 25 years of resilience, creativity, and profound impact on our communities. Labrisz, you have been such an inspiring presence in Hungary and beyond, and I am proud to say that EL*C has had the privilege to have you as our member and partner, particularly through our joint efforts at the EL*C conference in Budapest in 2022.

For those who may not be familiar with EL*C, we are the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community, a network of more than 160 member organizations across Europe and Central Asia, along with hundreds of individual members.

Together, we celebrate a powerful truth: lesbians have always existed, and we have persisted. Despite the challenges that many of us face in the journey toward equality, gatherings like LIFT showcase the strength of our herstories, the richness of our cultures, and the depth of our solidarity. The theme Timeless Lesbians is a reminder of the enduring power of our community, spanning decades, and standing strong against adversities, prejudices, and erasures.

In Hungary and across Europe, lesbian lives have often been sidelined, as if our contributions are invisible or our stories unimportant. But this festival, created and nurtured by Labrisz for 15 years, tells a different story. It tells of a community that has always been here dynamic, creative, and resilient. A community that creates spaces like this, where we can all be seen, understood, and celebrated for who we truly are.

At EL*C, we share your vision to ensure that lesbians are given the recognition, rights, and respect we deserve. Our collaboration with Labrisz is a strong statement about this shared commitment to community building, visibility, and advocacy. Through art, literature, culture, political actions, and open dialogue, events like LIFT help build a future where each one of us, in all our diversity, can live openly and freely.

So tonight, as we honor the achievements of the past 25 years and look forward to the next chapter, let's remember that we are not just celebrating an organization or a festival. We are celebrating our legacy as a community – a legacy that will continue to thrive, inspire, and lead.

Thank you, Labrisz, for creating this beautiful space, and thank you all for being here to celebrate with us.