



YOUNG FEMINIST SUMMER CAMP

**AG**  **RA**

08-12 SEPTEMBER 2025  
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

**REPORT**

# Table of CONTENTS

01	<u>Executive Summary &amp; Introduction</u>
02	<u>Objectives</u>
03	<u>Programme Highlights</u>
04	<u>Take Aways &amp; Results</u>
05	<u>Challenges &amp; Lessons Learned</u>
06	<u>Next Steps &amp; Participants' Legacy</u>
07	<u>Conclusions</u>
08	<u>Acknowledgements</u>
09	<u>Resources</u>

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"I will leave AGORA feeling and cherishing this feminine solidarity in my heart, and I will have an even clearer feminist perspective and goal in my mind. It has been a dream of two years to participate in AGORA, and all this waiting was worth it."



"AGORA is a space for critical thinking, and not absorbing. The biggest win is to go out of the room with deeper feminist perspectives and more reflections, not just receiving"





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AGORA 2025 brought together **38 young feminists** from across Europe and beyond for five days of exchange, learning, and collective action in Brussels. This 10th anniversary edition of AGORA took place at a moment when civic space for feminist activism is shrinking, funding is under threat, and backlash against women's rights is growing.

Throughout the week, participants engaged in policy dialogues with EU institutions, exchanged strategies in peer-led workshops, and created spaces for healing, solidarity, and collective reflection. They connected across borders and identities, carrying forward the knowledge, confidence, and energy needed to sustain their activism.

The feedback results show that participants described AGORA 2025 as **"life-changing," "transformative,"** and **"an unforgettable week of solidarity and learning."** They left with new friendships, practical tools, and a stronger commitment to feminist leadership.

AGORA remains a flagship initiative of the European Women's Lobby, supported through its core funding. It is a living expression of EWL's values of solidarity, diversity, and collective care, and an essential space to prepare the next generation of feminist leaders to face today's challenges and shape tomorrow's movements.



# INTRODUCTION



The AGORA is the European Women's Lobby (EWL) "Young Feminist Summer School", held annually in Brussels. It brings together young feminist leaders from all over Europe for five days of exchange, learning, connection and collaborative action. The selection process for this year's cohort aimed to emphasise the diversity of feminist leaders in Europe: people living in Europe but from outside of Europe, women in all of their diversities, as well as people with diverse neurotypes.

Framed as a participatory summer camp, AGORA combines structured sessions with networking and bonding opportunities in group activities, creating a unique environment where activism, reflection and skillbuilding intertwine.

This year's edition was framed around "Violence against women and girls" (VAWG). Sessions explored VAWG through multiple lenses: policy and institutional responses at the EU level, grassroots resistance, the challenges of online violence, and collective practices of care and healing.

As an organiser and convener, EWL anchors AGORA within its wider movement of 2,000+ women's rights organisations across Europe. Since its launch in 2015, this year's EWL AGORA was particularly special, marking its **10th anniversary** and bringing together over 300 feminist leaders over the years. It opened the door to deeper reflections and more impactful discussions on the objectives, impact and future of AGORA for participants, alumni and EWL.

Our hope is that the pages of this report will reflect the outstanding energy, courage, and brilliance carried forward by the participants, which have left a powerful, permanent mark on all of us.

# WHY WE NEED AGORA NOW MORE THAN EVER

Across the world, feminist organisations and human rights defenders are facing mounting challenges. Civic space is shrinking, core funding for women's rights organisations is being reduced, and activists are increasingly targeted by backlash and hostile narratives. At a time when the voices of young feminists are urgently needed, opportunities to connect, learn, and lead are under threat.

AGORA is one of EWL's flagship initiatives and is supported through our core funding. It represents EWL's values in practice: **solidarity** across generations, collective **care**, and **feminist** leadership rooted in **diversity** and **inclusivity**. For many participants, AGORA is a rare space where they can feel safe, inspired, and connected, and where they are equipped with skills and confidence to continue their activism in difficult contexts.

As Mary Collins reminded us, ***"Even if alone, with knowledge, you can change things. And together, everything is possible."*** AGORA embodies this spirit. It ensures that young feminist leaders are not alone but part of a powerful movement that spans Europe and sustains **hope**, **resistance**, and **action**.





## AGORA 2025 Participants



The greatest strength of AGORA 2025 lies in its participants. This year, 40 young feminists gathered from across Europe and beyond, representing almost 30 nationalities, including dual or migrant backgrounds from Uganda and Somalia bringing with them an extraordinary diversity of experiences, professions, and struggles.

Among them were students, lawyers defending women's rights, social workers supporting survivors of violence, journalists, educators, and artists. Many wore several hats at once, balancing studies or professional work with their feminist activism. Several participants are themselves survivors of violence against women and girls, turning their lived experiences into powerful leadership and advocacy.



This richness is not incidental: it is the essence of AGORA. Each participant carried knowledge rooted in their own communities and struggles, and by sharing it, they created a collective resource greater than the sum of its parts.

Together, the AGORA 2025 participants embodied the breadth of the feminist movement today and the hope that sustains it into the future.

The diversity of our group was the greatest learning. Hearing from others with realities so different from mine changed the way I understand feminism.







The objectives of AGORA 2025 emerged from different visions and experiences. At organisational level, they reflected EWL's commitment to empower young feminists and integrating their perspectives into wider strategies. At thematic level, they were framed by the urgent need to resist and end violence against women and girls. And at participant level, they were shaped by the hopes and expectations anonymously collected on the first day: the desire for connection, inspiration and growth. Together, these objectives gave direction to the week, while leaving room for co-creation.

## Organizational level

- Connect young feminist movements and activists across Europe, especially after years of democratic backsliding and increased threats to women's rights and foster peer learning.
- Provide EWL with insights into the realities and needs of young feminists today, and ensure these are reflected in advocacy and campaigning efforts.
- Encourage intergenerational dialogue to strengthen young feminists' leadership while connecting them with EWL's network, structures and strategies.

## Thematic level

Ending VAWG, digital safety, accountability, healing, collective resistance. At the thematic level, the objectives aimed to connect participants' experience with wider feminist debate and institutional response to VAWG. These included:

- Deepen participants' knowledge and understanding of contemporary challenges in addressing VAWG, including online violence.
- Engage critically with EU-level tools, such as the forthcoming EU Directive on combating VAWG, digital safety strategies, and the upcoming Gender Equality Strategy.
- Encourage a feminist approach to accountability, resilience, and healing, recognising that activism against VAWG and feminist activism in general should also integrate collective care and healing as well as trauma-informed practices.

The programme combined policy dialogues with EU institutions, participant-led workshops, artistic expressions, and moments of deep reflection, always rooted in solidarity, care, and feminist values. From opening rituals and safe-space agreements to hands-on sessions with policymakers and evenings of cultural connection, the flow of the week was designed to move between the personal and the political, the reflective and the action-oriented.

This section captures the daily highlights of AGORA 2025: what participants experienced, the activities they led, and the ideas and emotions that emerged. It traces the journey of the camp, from building trust and naming hopes, to engaging with institutions, sharing knowledge, and imagining feminist futures together. The following pages are more than a record of a week; they are a glimpse of the energy, creativity, and collective spirit that defined AGORA 2025.

## Day 1 – Monday, 8 September: Welcome, Connection & Safe Space

### Welcoming & Introductions

With a brief intro from the facilitators, we started the day with a grounding breathing exercise, which became our daily ritual for morning check-ins. The group was full of energy and eager to start. Participants introduced themselves through metaphors and icons with a movement as an icebreaker. Some of the words and images that came up included: sunflower, sloth, rain, river, sun, and cloud. It was interactive and engaging.

### EWL values & AGORA 2025 principles

Before diving into the programme, it was essential to define the principles of AGORA 2025 collectively, starting with reviewing EWL values and principles. Building on this, participants gathered into smaller groups to build a safe space at AGORA.

Framing principles for such space included: setting clear expectations, taking our time to process, asking questions, keeping communications open, not pressuring, not judging, respecting the time and energy of others, tolerance, providing emotional support, being friendly, respecting different views, consent and empathy.

Things to avoid include: exclusion, pressure, triggering topics, stereotypes, being dismissive about some topics, side talks when someone is presenting, interruptions, and assumptions.



## Hopes, Wishes, and Concerns

Participants anonymously shared their hopes, fears and wishes in an effort to have an inclusive space and understand the different levels of expectations.

### Hopes & Wishes

Alongside these fears came powerful hopes: to build lasting friendships, be **inspired**, and **connect** across cultures. Participants wanted to learn more about feminism, gain **new perspectives**, and challenge their views. They hoped to speak up, even on difficult issues, and to find confidence in sharing their voices. Many wished for **solidarity**, **motivation**, and **collective energy** that would carry beyond AGORA.

### Fears & Concerns

Participants arrived with some worries: being left out or misunderstood, feeling too opinionated or not knowledgeable enough, or being triggered by difficult topics like violence. Others worried about the pace of the week: the busy schedule, managing ADHD, or not resting well. Some feared the space might feel too white, too liberal, or lacking queer feminist perspectives. Underneath was a shared question: Will I feel safe, included, and able to connect?

## Othering & Inclusivity and Theme discussion

After the break, a light movement and thoughtful activity focused on breaking down the principle of “othering”, which landed an important lesson on inclusivity and tolerance. Then, in four circles, participants co-created collages that represented their feminist journey. It resulted in beautiful pieces of art alongside deep and honest conversations.

## Spaces & Daily Journalist

Considering the busy schedule, the diverse level of energies and emotions, we considered different spots to rest, including the venue’s terrace and the quiet and prayer room.

One of the ideas we experimented with this AGORA edition that worked really well was the “daily journalist”, a volunteer-based contribution giving participants the opportunity to document AGORA from their perspective, capturing interesting moments and quotes, as well as emotions they observed throughout the day. It was received with enthusiasm; some participants volunteered right away and suggested creating videos as well.

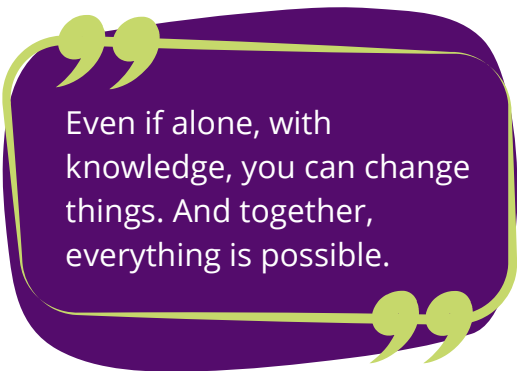


### EWL Policy Priorities session

EWL's Policy & Campaigns Officers Sabrina Terentjew & Adèle Philtjens, and Policy intern, Tarik Emre Kirim, shared an overview of the EWL work, from its mission, values, priorities, strategic framework, and how the EU works. It was crucial for participants to understand EWL's work in relation to EU policy. The section on backlash against women yielded the most interactivity and engagement from participants.

### EWL's Executive Committee Meeting

Members of the EWL committee, including Dina Loghin, Mary Collins, Edite Kalnina, Anne Negre, Maria Jose Landeira Ostergard, Marion Böker, and Teresa Nevado, shared with participants lessons from their personal experiences, calling for solidarity, passing the flame and knowledge to the younger generation. The session had a powerful impact on participants, with some describing it as inspiring and emotional.



Even if alone, with knowledge, you can change things. And together, everything is possible.

### European Network of Migrant Women

Kenji Sario, in person, and Sodfa Daaji online, presented the values and work of the European Network of Migrant Women. The session's diverse format was refreshing and included: presentations, a short animated film 'Mothers of The World', and dived into engaging discussions with participants. Despite the sensitivity of the topics presented and discussed (SGBV, child marriage, honour killing, state violence and more), polarising themes, such as surrogacy and prostitution, sparked a lot of reactions and questions, which highlighted the richness of feminist views. One of the interesting resources shared was the RIZA funding call providing support and capacity building for grassroots actors (*see the Resources section for more information*).

### Self-defence class

AGORA Participant Paula Ciortan led the self-defence class (her 100th session!). Paula introduced the five principles of self-defence: Run, Fight, Tell, Think, and Yell. With interactive physical exercises and basic self-defence moves, participants learned different lessons about both physical and mental self-defence. Participants described feeling: "empowered," "difficult," "in control," "stronger," "weak," and "grounded".

## AGORA 2025 Through Their Eyes



### Daily Journalists

Dina Chaerani, Joy Munyoro  
& Adamantia Pavlopoulou



Dina and Joy captured the second day's energy in a short video, while Adamatia shared written reflections on Tuesday's sessions.

### Reflections & Feelings

In the morning, the atmosphere was buzzing with energy, and participants felt inspired, hopeful, grateful, and lucky to be there. As the day went on, some heaviness and overstimulation crept in, but these feelings were acknowledged as part of the process. The quiet room offered space to recharge, and by the end of the day, many left with hope and the reminder that "slow movement forward is still movement."

### Memorable Phrases & Quotes:

"It is important to leave AGORA with hope."

"No culture, tradition, or religion can excuse or legitimise the violence against women."

"Divide & conquer no more!"

"Celebrate our victories, each step ahead, no matter how small."

"Passing the torch but keeping the flame burning."

Get strength from  
each-other, draw  
power from solidarity.

### Takeaways

Throughout the day, participants were reminded of victories won, such as the legal reform in Greece (2019) that redefined rape as a non-consensual sexual act thanks to feminist protests. They also reflected on AGORA's meaning as a "public square" for open discussion, now reclaimed by feminists. The presence of older feminist voices offered a valuable perspective and highlighted the progress that has been made, big and small.

*"I will leave AGORA feeling and cherishing this feminine solidarity in my heart, and I will have an even clearer feminist perspective and goal in my mind. It has been a dream of two years to participate in AGORA, and all this waiting was worth it."*

### If I Wasn't Polite

Because the programme covered intense and sometimes triggering topics, we opened the day with the exercise "If I wasn't polite." The responses were powerful and engaging, with participants voicing statements such as: "No is no," "Stop mansplaining me," "Listen," "Stop telling me I'm talking too much," "Stop telling me not to be political," "Stop telling me what I already know, I am pro," "Stop telling me I'm cute when I'm angry", "Stop telling me I talk too much", "Stop telling me I'm too political", and "Stop saying I'm too emotional."

### European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers

Esther Luigi and Rune Vanleeuw led the session, presenting the **Gender Equality Strategy** they are currently working on, sharing what their daily work looks like, and reflecting on the **impact** and **limitations** of their work within the EU framework.

The presentation sparked a lot of questions and reactions from participants, including: the different terminologies around violence and equality; the importance of intersectionality in shaping policies; the uses and limitations of data in reflecting lived experiences; ideas for improvement and accountability mechanisms; and the need to consider regional nuances when implementing EU-wide measures.

This exchange underscored both the potential of EU-level strategies to drive progress and the ongoing challenges of ensuring that policies remain inclusive, practical, and rooted in diverse feminist realities.

### European Institute of Gender Equality - EIGE

Sarah Cooke O'Dowd & Victoire Olczak introduced the participants to the details of EIGE's work. This session brought the most engagement from participants, as some reported regularly using EIGE data and resources for their work and studies. One participant was even a former EIGE trainee!. After explaining the role and mission of EIGE, questions and contributions started pouring in: "How do you involve people other than women in your work?", "Is there a procedure for organisations to reach out to EIGE, or does EIGE have a specific way of getting in contact with organisations?", "Do you work with organisations outside of the EU?", "How do you cope with the work and preserve yourself working on these issues?", and more.

By the end of the session, participants were keen on having more time to discuss and meet with the guest speakers.





In the afternoon, participants visited the RoSa Library, one of Belgium's leading feminist resource centres. The visit itself was very well received. The RoSa team welcomed the group warmly and created an atmosphere that participants described as calm, inclusive, and aligned with their values.

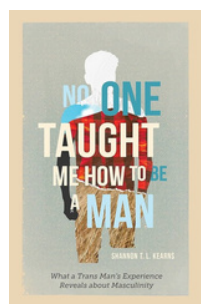
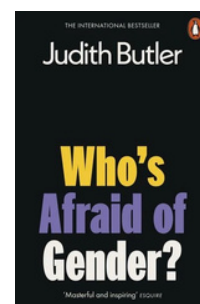


The presentation explained the history of the library, its principles, and its work in documenting feminist knowledge since the second wave of feminism. The inclusive language used by the speakers resonated strongly with participants, and the presence of a male speaker was noted as a refreshing addition.

The session sparked lively exchanges, with questions ranging from "Do you have fiction books in your collection?" to "Why are poems and comics not part of feminist knowledge?"

Participants left the library inspired, appreciating the combination of activism, knowledge-sharing, and inclusivity embodied in the space. The day ended with vouchers to eat at the Wolf food market, giving participants a chance to rest and connect informally after the visit.

When asked about books to recommend for men or readers seeking to unlearn toxic masculinity, RoSa highlighted titles such as *The Will to Change, Feminism Is for Everybody, and All About Love* by bell hooks, as well as *No One Taught Me How to Be a Man* by Shannon T. L. Kearns. Among their most borrowed books in 2024 are *Who's Afraid of Gender?* by Judith Butler, *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Pérez, and *Feminist City* by Leslie Kern. The library also curates a living list of around fifty recommended titles across ten central themes, regularly updated to inspire visitors with diverse perspectives on feminism and gender.



## AGORA 2025 Through Their Eyes

We want to be there for each other, learn, exchange & support.



### Daily Journalists - Silvia Spada & Valeria Martiniuc

The daily journalists for Day 3 were Valeria, who captured the spirit of the day in a short video, and Silvia, who shared her personal reflections.

### If I Weren't Polite

The morning began with a breathing and energising exercise that set the right tone, bringing focus and energy. The playful “If I weren’t polite” activity gave participants space to express themselves freely, setting up the day with laughter and honesty.

### Solidarity!

The strongest feeling that carried through the day was **solidarity**: the sense of being together, learning from one another, and standing ready to act. And the theme of the day was “Knowledge.” It was interesting to know that Silvia had worked with EIGE before.



### Cherry on Top

Participants expressed their will to support one another, exchange ideas, and grow together. The visit to RoSa library was described as the “**cherry on top**”: a **calm**, **safe**, and **deeply inspiring** space that embodied **feminist values** in action. It sparked important reflections on the power of feminist archives and the importance of spaces dedicated to learning and debate.

### The Tree of Promises

✿ We gathered around a painted olive tree, a symbol of **peace**, **resilience**, and **rootedness**. Participants added a painted leaf carrying a personal promise, small or big, to themselves, to the group, or to the broader feminist movement. As the branches filled, the tree became a living collective artwork. The circle was described as grounding and unifying. It was both inspirational and hopeful, capturing the essence of AGORA: many roots, many leaves, one shared purpose. ✿



### Participants Workshops

The highlight of the week for most of the participants was this day. Participants had the chance to step into speakers' roles and lead workshops on issues close to their expertise and activism. These sessions were deeply engaging, creative, and often emotional, blending knowledge with lived experience. Together, they highlighted the power of peer-to-peer feminist learning. This is a summary of the participants' sessions:

#### Digital & Legal Resistance - Facilitator: Joy Munyoro

Joy's session on Feminist Futures in a Digital Age unpacked the fast-evolving threats of deepfakes and online sexual exploitation, and the slow pace of legal regulation. She argued that platforms profit from harmful content and lack the incentive to act. The group discussed shifting shame from victims to perpetrators, the impunity that persists, and practical tools like StopNCII.org for content takedowns from META. Participants noted the urgency of the issue, pointing to the upcoming EU AI Act and directives on online VAWG (to be enforced in 2027).







## Solidarity and Sisterhood - Facilitators: Patricie Kyslíková & Effie Kotsiopolou

Through creative exercises and storytelling, this workshop explored stereotypes about rivalry among women and the practice of building solidarity. Activities included crafting life stories for lemons, reflecting on “What they told you” vs. reality, and weaving wool into a symbolic net before making bracelets of solidarity. The session created a safe and emotional space, where participants shared powerful personal stories. Words that emerged to describe solidarity included uplifting, support, care, and intergenerational connection.



## Urban and Structural Change - Facilitators: Nerea Cillán and Katja Vironen

This session focused on feminist urbanism and how structural violence shapes cities designed largely by and for men. Participants reflected on how women's daily journeys differ from men's, weaving together work, care, and community roles. Using trauma-informed journaling and collective mosaic-building, participants connected personal experiences with broader urban dynamics. Reflections pointed to how internalised misogyny and structural invisibilisation make feminist design an urgent issue.

## Feminist Education and Youth - Facilitators: Ieva Šaduikė and Manal Kharbouch

Using the interactive “Red Flag, Green Flag” game, this workshop helped participants identify toxic relationships and stereotypes in media, pop culture, and everyday life. Dividing into groups, they debated communication styles and solutions, often coming to different conclusions, a reminder that feminist practice is not one-size-fits-all. This session was very interactive and yielded a lot of engagement (and fun!) from the participants attending, especially on the red/green flag game.





### Anti-Feminist Backlash - Facilitator: Silvia Spada

Silvia's session examined femonationalism, how populist movements co-opt feminist language to advance xenophobic and anti-migrant agendas. Discussions ranged from abortion laws in Malta and Ireland to parental leave policies in Portugal, to state narratives around fertility in Italy. And a story from Algeria, where female athletes like Imane Khelif face questioning over her sex, based on what is accepted as a "feminine" look. The group also reflected on racialised sexism and the dangers of co-optation. Participants stressed the importance of shifting narratives with data, solidarity, and intersectional feminist analysis.

### Decolonial & Global South Feminisms Facilitators: Ester Pinheiro & Melissa Amann

This session challenged participants to critically examine everyday language in activism and development work. Words like empowerment, poverty, voice of the voiceless, and Global South were unpacked for their implicit hierarchies and colonial roots. Alternatives such as amplifying voices or the Global Majority were proposed. The group also debated "white saviorism," child privacy disparities, and the depoliticisation of feminist language. The session emphasised unlearning and relearning without judgment, and sparked a rich dialogue on privilege, positionality, and responsibility.



### Art and Cultural Resistance Facilitators: Muminah Koleoso & Michelle A. Modica

Through poetry, storytelling, and testimony, this workshop centred art as a tool for healing and resistance. Stories and examples were shared, demonstrating how storytelling can transform pain into action. Participants reflected in pairs on patriarchy in culture and religion, and then wrote poems about feminist figures who inspire them. Names included Michelle Obama, Frida Kahlo, Malala, Amy Winehouse, and Whitney Houston. The exercise highlighted art's role in reclaiming narratives, supporting survivors, and building solidarity.





### **Funding & Engagement Strategies - Facilitators: Janani Padmanabhan and Hande Yüksel**

Janani and Hande tackled one of the toughest topics for grassroots groups: how to fund feminist futures. They described the exhaustion of constant applications, the bureaucracy of fundraising, and the reality that core feminist work often goes unfunded. Participants shared experiences of struggling to sustain teams. The session also introduced HREP's 16-module feminist human rights training in Turkey, which has reached 20,000 women, building knowledge around CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, political participation, and gender equality frameworks. The link between mental health, wellbeing, and feminist organising was emphasised.



### **Gender-Based Violence - Facilitators: Rusné Kirtiklytè & Erica Micallef**

This session explored the objectification of women as a root cause of GBV, from advertising to entertainment to NGO communications. Participants debated complex issues like nudity in modelling: empowerment or exploitation? Erica also introduced restorative justice approaches to domestic violence, with a focus on Malta. The discussion revealed gaps between systems, laws, and survivors' lived realities, underlining the need for community-based responses and cultural change alongside legal reform.

### **Gender Equality in Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe Facilitators: Sountou Guirassy and Sanja Batinjan**

This comparative session examined EU actions to promote gender equality in Africa, with a focus on Senegal, alongside Croatia's experience of radical movements and domestic violence. Discussions emphasised the layered nature of gender equality struggles — spanning community, policy, education, and law. Participants reflected that leaving abusive situations does not always end violence, underscoring the need for comprehensive support structures. Education emerged as a key solution across contexts.







## Feminism in the Digital Age

**Facilitators: Adamantia Pavlopoulou and Dina Chaerani**

Adamantia and Dina mapped diverse forms of online GBV; from deepfakes and revenge porn to harassment in the gaming industry, and presented on decolonising Comprehensive Sexuality Education online. Together, they highlighted how structural gaps in digital literacy and language create stigma, while corporations often escape accountability. The discussion stressed the urgency of equipping women and youth with tools for digital self-defence, while also holding platforms accountable. The session closed with reflections on how feminist education can reclaim digital spaces as safer, more inclusive environments.

## Key Takeaways

These workshops demonstrated the depth of expertise among AGORA participants and the diversity of feminist practice, ranging from law, activism, art, education, digital safety, and solidarity. Together, they embodied the spirit of AGORA: young feminists leading, teaching, and learning from one another in ways that are as practical as they are transformative.







# YOUNG FEMINIST SUMMER CAMP AGORA

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
LOBBY  
EUROPÉEN DES FEMMES

08-12 SEPTEMBER 2025  
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



**AGORA 10<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
& CERTIFICATES**





# 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and certificate ceremony was a powerful and emotional moment. Participants were excited to gather for a dedicated celebration, which became an opportunity for deeper bonding with the Executive Committee, the organising team, and the facilitators. For some, the evening festivities felt overwhelming after such an intense week, and the terrace offered a welcome quiet space to decompress.

Mary Collins, Secretary General of EWL, and Dina Loghin, President of EWL, gave speeches, signed certificates, and celebrated the graduation of the AGORA 2025 participants.

The certificate celebration began with words of appreciation that participants had written for one another, setting a tone of gratitude and connection.

The ceremony began with words of appreciation that participants had written for one another, setting a tone of gratitude and connection. Each certificate was accompanied by a letter from an AGORA Alumni, which painted a portrait of the group's diversity and kindness.

The messages celebrated each participant's unique qualities: "I love how gentle but also direct she is!"; "Your calm presence and insights made me feel comfortable"; "Fantastic energy, charisma — you're so inspiring and gave me such great vibes and hope." Again and again, participants celebrated each other's strength, humour, warmth, and intelligence: "So passionate about her job", "really lovely and strong way to communicate," and "She welcomed me with such warmth that I instantly felt friends with her."

Some notes were playful: "Very beautiful long hair, and very stylish!" or "The funniest!", while others were deeply touching: "She inspires great admiration. If she was president, I would definitely vote for her," and "Since the beginning, we built a deep connection that I think is going to stay for very long: pure, genuine, spontaneous. I'm glad I can call you my sister."

Together, these words became a living archive of solidarity, proof that AGORA is as much about building **feminist knowledge** as it is about weaving lasting bonds of **care**, **recognition**, and **friendship**.



## AGORA 2025 Through Their Eyes

We want to be there for each other, learn, exchange & support.

### Daily Journalists - Viola Ruggieri & Nadine Rushe



Yesterday was **our day**. The workshops belonged to the participants, a space where knowledge, stories, experiences, and expertise flowed freely. The certificate celebration carried this spirit forward. Appreciation messages written for each other were read aloud, filling the room with warmth and recognition.

As one participant put it: “We laughed, we hugged, we cried.” We spoke about sisterhood and solidarity, but also about the pain of being toned down by our own sisters. The questions we asked were bold: How can we deconstruct the systems embodied in our minds? How do we tackle objectification and domestic violence, and what solutions can we imagine together?

### Participants Workshop Day

The power of the day came from its dialogue. Instead of lectures, workshop leaders asked: “How is it in your country? How do you think about this? What solutions can we find?” It was a demonstration of what feminism looks like in practice: a collective movement grounded in talent, passion, determination, intelligence, and care.



Viola shared: “Reading on the wall of testimonies that it was a ‘life changing experience,’ I thought it was too cheesy. But after this AGORA, I changed my mind. Be bold. Be humble. Yesterday showed me that we can do both.”

Nadine’s final video left everyone emotional, capturing the atmosphere: “Never had such an atmosphere, so hopeful.”

We closed with one last promise to the olive tree: let’s keep this love alive back in our countries, and not forget what feminism is truly about.



The final day of AGORA 2025 opened with breathing exercises and a grounding circle of appreciation, reminding everyone that we were present to learn from one another, and that everyone has their own timeline and objectives. We should not compare ourselves to the achievements or successes of others. The last daily journalist entry was a moving video created by Nadine, capturing the spirit of the week and leaving many participants emotional and hopeful. Viola's reflections added depth, sharing that she once found "life-changing experience" too much of a cliché, but by the end of AGORA, she had changed her mind.

The agenda began later than usual to honour participants' feedback on pacing after the anniversary celebration. The focus shifted to closing activities that marked the transition from one AGORA generation to the next.

### Letters to the next AGORA participants

This offered a powerful and collective exercise. Together, participants wrote messages of hope, encouragement, and advice while soft music played in the background, sending their words forward to inspire future cohorts.

### Alumnae Network

Mary Collins underlined the bittersweet feeling of leaving. Mary reminded participants: "It is a sad and happy day. Be kind to yourselves. When we work hard to change the world, we can easily forget ourselves."

She invited dialogue on expectations for EWL, with questions about mentorship, networking, funding, alumni connections, and future themes. Participants' suggestions highlighted the importance of co-design, continuity, and inclusive approaches. Mary responded by sharing resources and encouraging participants to remain connected through newsletters, national coordinations, and the Alumnae Network. Participants spoke of carrying home skills, insights, and solidarity, as well as the determination they had nurtured during the week.





The outcomes of AGORA 2025 reflect how the organisational and thematic goals set at the start of the programme came to life during the week. What began as commitments to empower young feminists, strengthen networks, and address violence against women and girls translated into new connections, fresh skills, collective advocacy messages and wider visibility. These takeaways show how AGORA continues to nurture feminist leadership in practice and carry its impact well beyond the days spent together in Brussels.

## Building Connections That Last

Participants consistently named the **friendships** and **solidarity** they built as one of the most meaningful outcomes. Networks extended across borders, with many expressing a desire to stay connected through the Alumnae Network (on LinkedIn) and informal Whatsapp channels. Feedback emphasised that these connections made participants feel 'less alone' in their activism and gave them renewed courage to continue their work at home.

One participant reflected: *"Opportunities like this are a powerful reminder of hope and resistance amidst the great challenges across the globe right now, and I feel so grateful to be returning home with lots of hope for our future as feminist leaders."*

## Skills and Practices We Carry Home

Peer-led workshops provided concrete feminist tools: digital safety strategies, community-based resistance, decolonial perspectives, and storytelling methods. The self-defence session and grounding rituals embodied practices for resilience and protection. Many participants said they left with stronger advocacy skills, greater confidence in public speaking, and new methods to integrate feminist approaches in their activism.

As one LinkedIn post highlighted: *"I was especially proud to present on Feminist Futures in a Digital Age, exploring how law and activism can respond to online sexual exploitation. I also had the privilege of attending powerful workshops on decolonisation, femonationalism and cyber violence."*

## Advocacy Messages for Change

Across sessions, participants generated reflections and recommendations for EWL and policymakers, including:

- Create more opportunities and funding channels for youth-led feminist organisations.
- Strengthen inclusive language and ensure queer and intersectional perspectives are embedded in all advocacy and policy strategies.
- Build stronger bridges between institutions and grassroots movements so young feminists feel represented in decision-making spaces.



## Making AGORA Visible Beyond the Room

AGORA 2025 resonated far beyond the five days in Brussels. Participants carried their experiences into their networks, sharing reflections, gratitude, and commitments on LinkedIn and other platforms. These posts amplified AGORA's impact, showing the **solidarity** and **inspiration** of the week to wider audiences. Posts reflected gratitude, solidarity and a sense of transformation:

*"As we close AGORA's first decade, I hope we may never be complicit in silence. May we keep speaking about and for young women, girls, and children who cannot be in the room?"*

*"For five days, I shared thoughts, fears, laughter, and tears with incredible women from all around Europe. In each of them, I saw a little reflection of myself, and together we created a space to learn from one another and to unite our hopes and our commitment to continue striving for a world that is more just, equal and inclusive."*

*"I feel deeply grateful to have been selected as a participant of the 10th AGORA...The amount of understanding, solidarity, and love I have received is unmatched."*

AGORA 2025 was a week of growth and experimentation. Alongside moments of connection and achievement, the programme also surfaced challenges and valuable lessons that can inform future editions.

## What Worked Well

The feedback gathered throughout AGORA 2025 was overwhelmingly positive. Participants described the week as **"transformative," "life-changing,"** and **"an unforgettable experience of solidarity and learning."** The evaluation results reflect very high satisfaction, strong appreciation for the diversity of the cohort, and a clear sense of impact on participants' activism and perspectives.

## Overall Experience

- All participants who filled out a feedback form rated their AGORA experience as 4 or 5 out of 5.
- Every respondent said they would recommend AGORA to someone else.
- A large majority expressed interest in joining the EWL national coordination in their country.



## Diversity & Inclusion

- Participants consistently valued the diversity of the group and the richness it brought to discussions. They highlighted how much they learned from peers with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.
- The inclusive facilitation style and the co-created safe space were praised as creating an environment where everyone felt respected and able to contribute.

## Shift in Feminist Perspectives

- Many participants reported that their understanding of feminism broadened during the week. Topics such as cyber violence, femonationalism, decolonial perspectives, and trauma-informed activism shifted or deepened their perspectives.
- One participant shared: *"I learned how important it is to pace ourselves in the fight for equality and that collective care is part of feminist resistance."*

## Key Takeaways & Skills

Participants described leaving AGORA with:

- New ideas for feminist action.
- A stronger sense of solidarity and shared purpose.
- Concrete skills in advocacy, digital safety, storytelling, and self-defence.
- Greater confidence in their feminist leadership.

## Actions Moving Forward

Several participants committed to concrete follow-up actions, such as:

- Sharing learnings with colleagues and local organisations.
- Starting or joining campaigns in their communities.
- Strengthening their involvement in national feminist movements and EWL structures.
- Informal exchanges also generated practical tips and campaign strategies that participants said they would take home.
- One participant reflected: "I am taking back hope, strength, and new ways to act locally while staying connected to a European feminist community."

## Facilitation and support

- Suha and Léa's facilitation was described as "amazing, safe, open, and interactive," and repeatedly cited as a highlight of the week.
- The personal care and 24/7 availability of the EWL Secretariat were widely recognised. Participants described feeling safe, respected, and cared for throughout the programme.
- The quiet room, grounding rituals, and energisers were valued for helping balance the intensity of the week.
- The "daily journalist" role was appreciated as a creative way to capture AGORA in participants' own voices.



## Programme Highlights

- Participant-led workshops stood out as the most engaging sessions of the week.
- The mix of institutional voices (EIGE, European Commission, ExCo) and grassroots activists provided balance and inspired critical reflection.
- Legacy and community-building moments such as alumni letters, the alumnae network, and the 10th anniversary celebration were described as emotionally powerful and deeply motivating.

## Challenges

Alongside these achievements, AGORA 2025 also surfaced challenges that can help strengthen future editions. These reflections come from the facilitation team's observations, daily debriefs, and the end-of-week evaluation.

- **Programme intensity:** The schedule felt dense and tiring at times, with limited breaks or informal time.
- **Content delivery:** Some policy sessions were too technical or abstract, and participants wished for more actionable, concrete learning.
- **Sensitive content:** Trigger warnings were not always provided ahead of heavy topics, leaving some participants unprepared.
- **Inclusivity:** Participants asked for more consistent intersectional perspectives across the week.
- **Workshop design:** Parallel workshops concentrated in a single day were enriching but exhausting. Many would have liked the chance to attend more than one.

## Lessons Moving Forward

- Spread participant-led workshops across several days.
- Provide clearer preparatory materials for technical sessions.
- Ensure consistent trigger warnings and offer alternatives for heavy content.
- Allow more unstructured time for networking, rest, and reflection.
- Strengthen intersectional perspectives throughout all content.







## Next Steps & Participants' Legacy

AGORA 2025 was a moment of connection and an opportunity for continued action. The energy, ideas, and recommendations generated during the week will carry forward into EWL's strategies, the Alumnae Network and participants' own activism. The following steps outline how the legacy of AGORA will be sustained.

### Strengthening the Alumnae Network

The existing network will include the 2025 cohort, ensuring they're connected with alumnae from previous years. EWL also plans to facilitate ongoing exchanges through online platforms and invite alumnae to future EWL events. Mentorship opportunities between past and current participants could also be considered to create continuity and intergenerational support.

### Integration Recommendations Into EWL's Work

EWL plans to feed participants' reflections and policy proposals into its next Strategy Framework and upcoming advocacy priorities. EWL will ensure that insights on digital safety, intersectionality, and inclusive practices inform its campaigns and advocacy work. EWL will use AGORA 2025 learnings to inform its advocacy around the 2028 EU funding framework so that the priorities raised by young feminists are represented in future budget and policy debates.

### Supporting Participant-led Follow-up Actions

EWL highlighted the importance of linking its national coordinations with the participants in their home countries to join efforts, receive support and achieve a greater impact. The team also aims to provide light-touch support on connecting participants to partners or provide guidance on EU opportunities. It will also explore possibilities for regional or thematic gatherings, building on the momentum of the 10th anniversary edition.

## AGORA Beyond the Training

The legacy of AGORA lives through its participants. Once the week ended in Brussels, the 2025 cohort carried their learning and connections back into their studies, workplaces, and activism.

- Some have successfully defended their master's theses or returned to university with a renewed feminist perspective.
- Others have been shortlisted for awards such as Sustainable Leadership and Creative of the Year.
- Several participants have gone on to speak at or facilitate advocacy events..
- Many have returned to their tireless daily work defending gender equality: in courts, classrooms, shelters, NGOs, media outlets, and grassroots movements.

These individual steps create a collective legacy. AGORA's strength lies in the five days spent together and in the way participants transform that experience into action that ripples across Europe and beyond.

AGORA 2025 marked ten years of bringing young feminists together across Europe. This anniversary edition reaffirmed why AGORA matters: it is a rare space where **knowledge**, care, and **resistance** meet, and where the **courage** of individuals grows into the strength of a **collective**.

The week left participants inspired, equipped with new tools, and deeply connected. It also left a legacy for EWL: fresh insights, renewed energy, and a strong commitment to ensuring that young feminist voices shape the future of our movement. AGORA remains a living expression of EWL's values of solidarity, diversity, and collective care, and its impact will continue long after these five days in Brussels.

AGORA 2025 was made possible through the dedication and support of many.

- To the **participants**, who brought knowledge, experiences, and hopes, making this space vibrant, challenging, and inspiring.
- To the **EWL Secretariat**: Andreea Carabulea, Roxanne Christiaens, Gaïa Dufour, Mary Collins and Maya Doneva for their tireless support, care, and organisation throughout the week.
- To the **EWL Executive Committee**, who shared wisdom, encouragement, and solidarity across generations.
- To the **facilitators**, Suha Nabhan and Léa Valenti, for guiding the journey with warmth and creativity.
- To the **guest speakers** and partners who enriched AGORA with their expertise and solidarity.
- To the **funders**, whose trust and support make AGORA a core pillar of EWL's work.
- To **Amazon**e, the feminist house in Brussels that hosted AGORA 2025. We thank them for their hospitality, their services, and their longstanding work for gender equality.
- To the **RoSa Library** for hosting us and presenting a thoughtful and insightful session.

Finally, to all who have shaped AGORA over the past decade: your contributions have built more than a programme. They have created a community that grows stronger with every year.



The following resources were shared during AGORA 2025 by speakers, facilitators, and participants. They provide further tools, learning opportunities, and references for those who wish to continue their feminist journey after the programme.

- **Funding and support**

- RIZA Fund is led by the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW), in partnership with Foundation Pangea, Monika (Finland), and Melissa Network (Greece). RIZA supports up to 99 grassroots organisations across EU Member States over four years, prioritising those led by migrant or refugee women and operating in isolated or under-resourced areas. It is a European Union-funded initiative under the CERV programme.
- European budget network meeting, Cyprus, March 2026.
- Council of Europe trainings (application via EWL).

- **Webinars and learning opportunities**

- Upcoming EWL webinars (to be shared via newsletter and Alumnae Network).
- Gender budgeting webinar with Marion Böker (recording available via EWL).

- **Policy and advocacy references**

- EIGE Gender Equality Index and resources.
- European Commission Gender Equality Strategy.
- EU Directive on combating violence against women.

- **Knowledge and inspiration**

- Mothers of the World (animated film by ENoMW and partners).
- First Class Citizen (documentary by Diana Maria Olsson).
- RoSa Library's fifty recommended titles
- Safe digital tools such as StopNCII.org for reporting and removing non-consensual intimate images.



YOUNG FEMINIST SUMMER CAMP

# AGORA



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