



# ECON

European Community  
Organizing Network

# Annual Report 2025



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# Message from the Board



**Annamária Kovács**

Chance Lab  
Association, Hungary



**Bernadett Sebály**

Organizing expert,  
Hungary



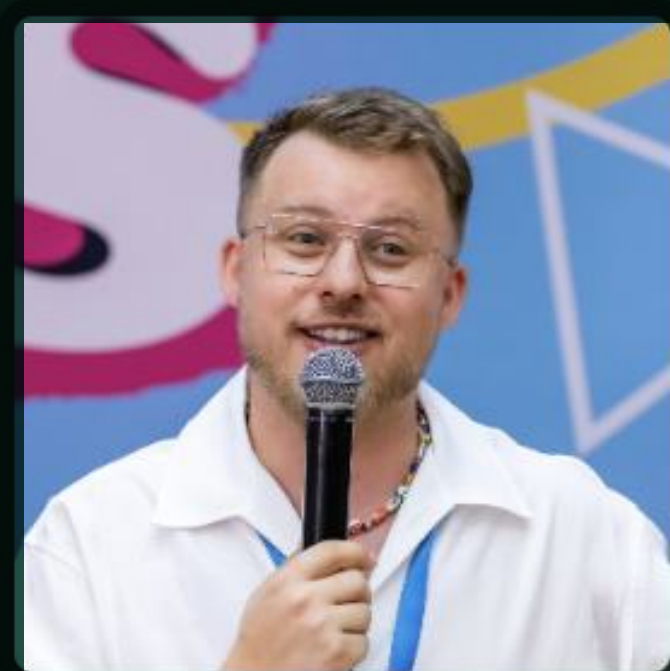
**Tobias Meier**

Organizing Germany



**Siphwe Moyo**

Communities Against  
Racism, Ireland



**Victor Catalin Toma**

Asociatia pentru  
Dezvoltare Activa,  
Romania

2025 was a year of transition and growth for ECON. Building on several years of organizing and network-building, the Board's priority was to safeguard continuity while supporting an ambitious expansion of the Secretariat and a clearer pathway toward a more member-led governance model.



The Board accompanied the recruitment of new consultants, the launch of new member spaces, and the preparation of a longer-term strategy process, while maintaining oversight of ECON's financial health and organizational risks.

Throughout the year, ECON continued to welcome interest from new groups: additional organizations from Romania, Serbia, France and Scotland applied to join in 2025, reflecting a growing demand for connection, learning and solidarity across borders. The network's diversity, spanning small grassroots initiatives, established NGOs, academic and educational institutions, and community-based organizations, is a core strength, enabling rich exchange of experience and strategies.

Looking ahead, the Board's role will increasingly focus on stewardship and strategic coherence: holding the long-term vision, accompanying the Executive Director and Secretariat, and ensuring that members' voices and experiences shape ECON's priorities and direction. The Board is grateful to all members, Secretariat, partners and donors who have contributed to ECON's work in 2025 and invites them to continue co-creating the network's future.

# Message from the Executive Director



Martin Avila, Executive Director

In 2025, ECON took important steps toward becoming a stronger, more connected and more strategically focused network for organizers across Europe.



Over the course of the year, ECON expanded its Secretariat from a small core team to a more structured group of specialized consultants engaged across key functional areas. This new team allowed ECON to increase the number and quality of activities, from online learning spaces and member meetings to a big offline event and a donor event, while also investing more time in listening to members.

At the same time, 2025 highlighted important challenges. In the first half of the year, limited capacity and leadership transition meant that the team had to carefully prioritize what was feasible. In the second half of the year, bringing in new consultants and aligning a growing group of collaborators, managing rapid growth required patience, internal reflection, and attention to organizational culture. ECON's members also faced intense political and financial pressures, which shaped the themes and urgencies of joint work.

Despite these challenges, the year ended with stronger infrastructure, deeper relationships across the network, and clearer questions about ECON's future governance and strategy. ECON enters the next period with renewed commitment to building people power, defending democracy and human rights, and supporting members to organize in their local contexts while learning and acting together transnationally.

# About ECON

## Who we are as a membership organization

ECON is a European network that brings together organizations and individuals who use community organizing and related practices to advance democracy, social and climate justice, and equality. In 2025, the network included 25 member organizations from 14 countries – Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Sweden.

Throughout the year, ECON continued to welcome interest from new groups: additional organizations from Romania, Serbia, France and Scotland applied to join in 2025, reflecting a growing demand for connection, learning and solidarity across borders. The network's diversity, spanning small grassroots initiatives, established NGOs, academic and educational institutions, and community-based organizations, is a core strength, enabling rich exchange of experience and strategies.

### Member engagement took different forms in 2025.

The annual General Assembly in Bucharest brought together 30 participants from 13 countries to discuss the state of democracy, share organizing experiences, and visit local initiatives. Online Agoras created space for members to meet the new Secretariat team, discuss ECON's identity, vision and strategic priorities, and celebrate leadership transition. One-to-one conversations with 20 members from 13 countries helped the Secretariat better understand members' needs, expectations and contexts.



# About the organization



# Mission, vision and values

## What is ECON?

A network of people, groups, and organizations across Europe engaged in community organizing for democracy, justice and sustainability.

## What is our vision?

ECON's vision is a just, democratic and sustainable world in which we all live with dignity, democratic rights and in solidarity with each other.

## What is our mission?

Our mission is to support organizers, groups & organizations in Europe to build capacity, alliances and collective power to organize for a just, democratic and sustainable future for all.



# What are our values?



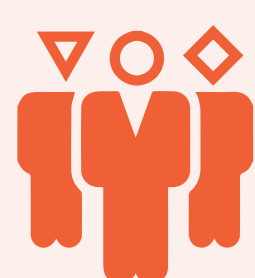
## Justice

We challenge and work to dismantle unjust power structures and relations to ensure equity and opportunities for all.



## Democracy

We value the democratic rights of all people and their participation in decisions that affect their lives. We value spaces for democratic dialogue with respect towards diverse opinions.



## Diversity

We seek to build a diverse, pluralistic, democratic society that is internationalist, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-gendered, and which values the sexual identities of all.



## Solidarity

We believe our struggles for justice and liberation are interconnected. We build intersectional solidarity and organize to stand with those affected by injustice.



## Learning

We value learning from each other's experiences, struggles and wins by reflecting, listening, sharing, asking questions and exchanging lessons learned.



## Collective Power

We believe in building bottom-up collective power rooted in relationships and alliances among people, communities, groups, organizations, movements to transform unjust systems and create a better future together.

# Brief history and context

ECON was created to connect organizers and organizations working with diverse communities across Europe, many of whom confront rising authoritarianism, inequality and shrinking civic space. Over time, the network has grown in membership and ambition, moving from a small coordination node toward a more structured hub for learning, strategy and joint action.

By 2025, ECON had established a recognizable presence as a convener of transnational gatherings, a platform for member-led exchange, and a partner for philanthropic and institutional actors interested in supporting community organizing. The publication of a new study on organizing across borders, the launch of the Organize Europe Festival, and the creation of the Organizers' Kitchen and Alliance to defend democracy illustrate this evolution toward deeper strategic engagement with key issues in Europe.



# Governance model and role of members

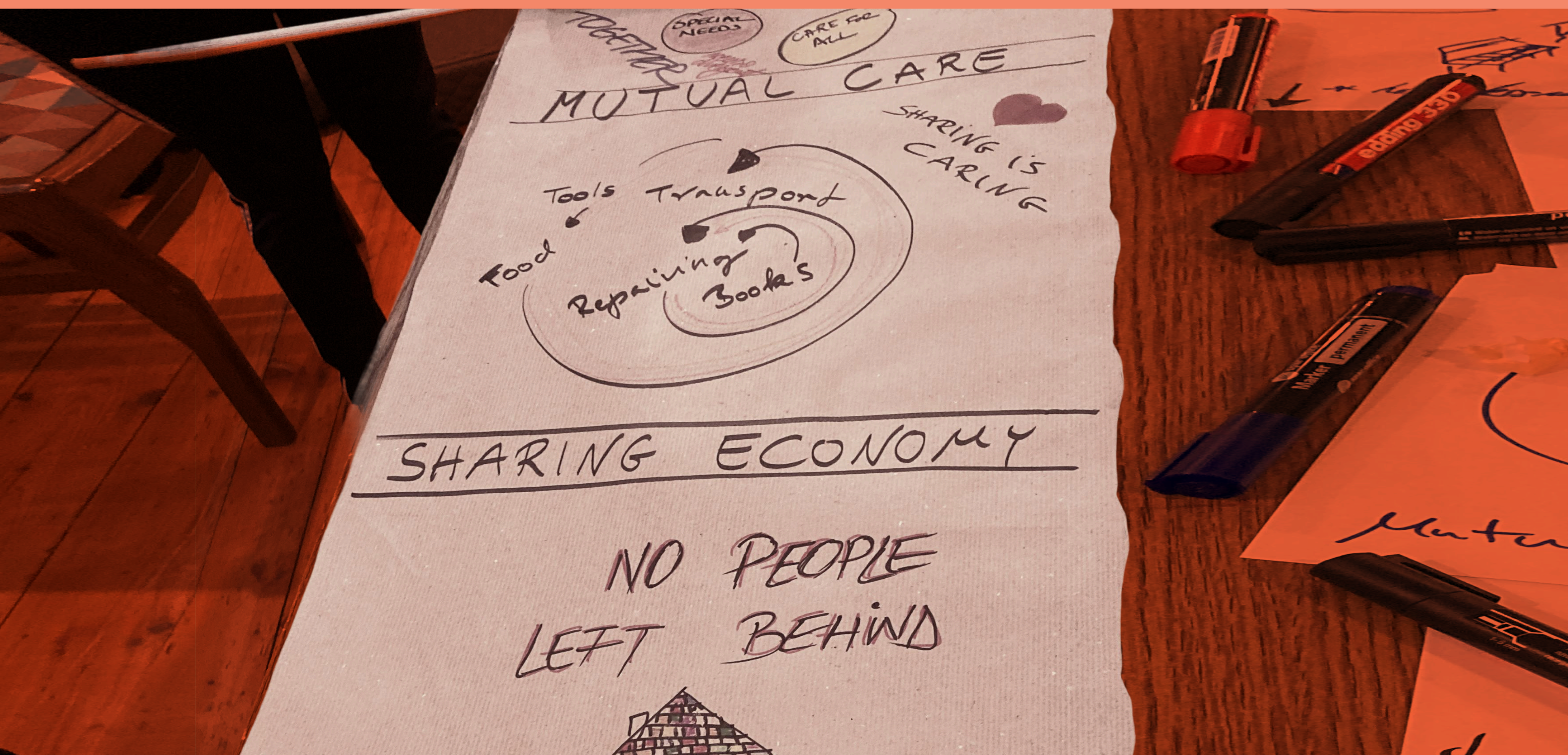
ECON is a membership-based network with the General Assembly and the Board as governance pillars. The General Assembly brings together member organizations to review and approve strategy and key decisions, elect Board members, and provide overall political direction. The Board is responsible for stewardship, oversight and strategic coherence, while the Secretariat leads programme implementation, coordination and day-to-day management.

In 2025, ECON began an intentional process to evolve its governance toward a more clearly member-led structure that aligns identity, governance architecture, membership model and long-term strategic direction. Within this model, full members are expected not only to benefit from network activities but also to contribute actively to governance: participating in annual listening processes and surveys, engaging in Agoras, and sending well-prepared delegates to General Assemblies. This approach reflects a cooperative understanding of membership, where rights are linked to responsibilities and shared stewardship of the network.



# Our collectively decided Strategic Priorities

- 1 Network Building
- 2 People Power
- 3 Solidarity
- 4 Sustainability
- 5 Infrastructure



# Network Building: Strategic and Intermediate Outcomes

## Network Building

ECON is a growing network of members, partners and allies that are **interconnected, engaged and aligned** around a shared vision, mission and values, with participatory governance, strategy and programme development processes.

## People Power

ECON's network actively participates in our **high-quality training, coaching and learning programmes** that increase organising capacity to build collective power for systemic justice, democracy and sustainability across Europe and beyond.

## Solidarity

ECON's network of **alliances of members, partners and allies** take effective collective action to advance systemic justice, democracy and sustainability and that provide solidarity in times of crisis.

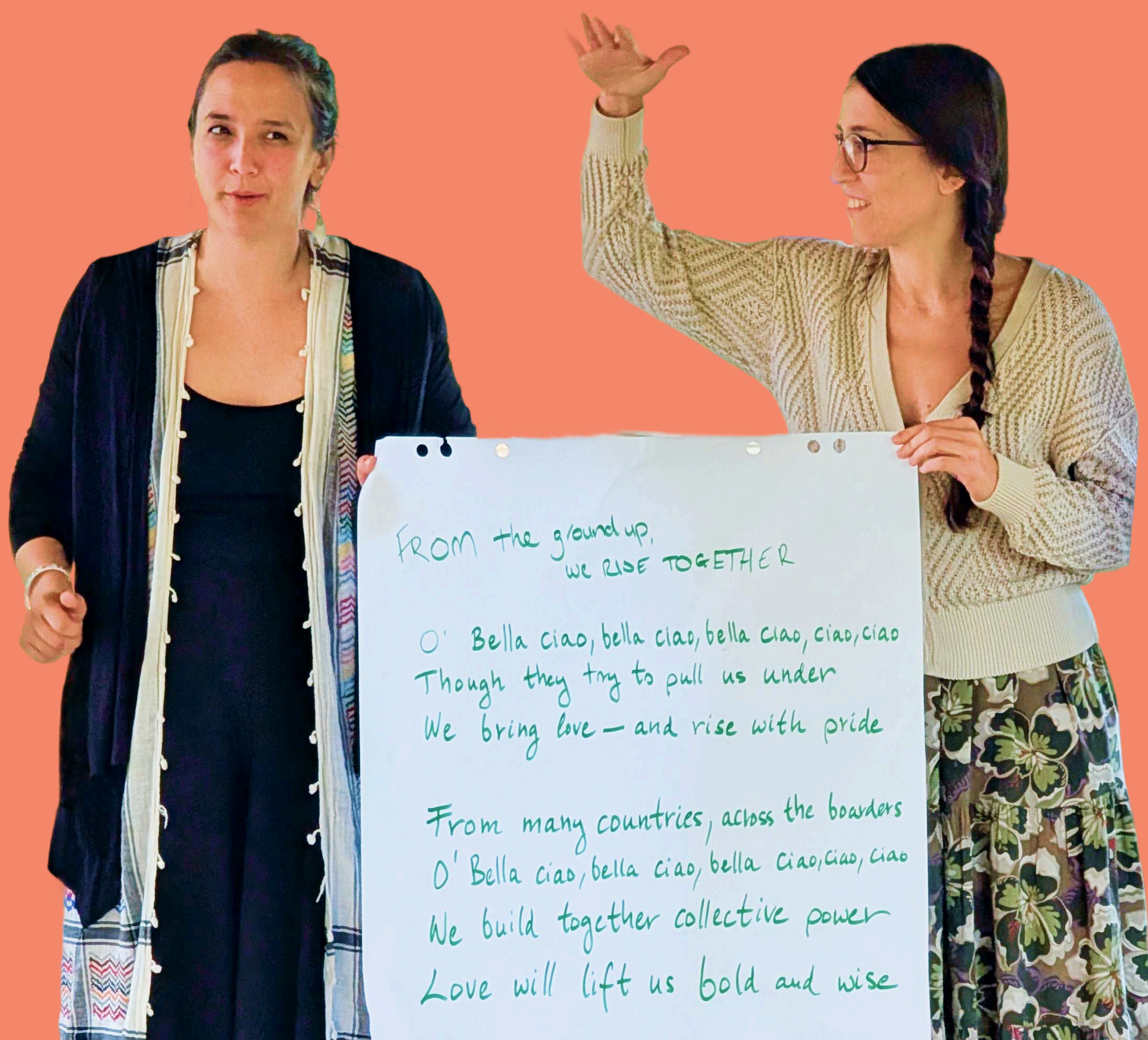
# Sustainability: Strategic and Intermediate Outcomes

## Sustainability

ECON builds lasting relationships with donors and develops the capacity our or network to **grow and manage diverse** and resilient revenue streams that protect our effectiveness, flexibility and independence.

## Infrastructure

ECON has the organisational capacity and systems **to operate efficiently, scale effectively** and support the wider organising movement.



# Our analysis: The World as it is

Across Europe, and beyond, our current realities fall far short of this vision. We live in a world full of intersecting systems of injustice. In a biosphere under threat by these same forces

**Ethnic superiority and White supremacy**

**Imperialism and authoritarianism**

**Patriarchy**

**Extractivism**

**Ableism and neuro-ableism**

**Economic exploitation**

# Our transformative goals: The World as it should be

Our work towards our vision is guided by our transformative goals:

## Racial, gender, economic justice

A multiracial and multi gendered world in which economic resources are equitably distributed, and all people can live a life of dignity.

## Democracy, peace and human rights

A democratic and peaceful world, where human and civil rights are respected and basic services are accessible for all. We want functioning democracies where there is pluralism, respect for the rule of law, and citizens can participate in decisions that affect them.

## Climate justice and sustainability

We want to live in a sustainable and healthy environment in harmony with nature, free from extractive and exploitative economic and social systems.

# What Strategic Intention for 2026 ?

ECON has, with the active participation of our members, scaled sustainably to become an interconnected network, through which Europe's community organizing movement builds capacity, alliances and collective power for systemic justice, democracy and sustainability.



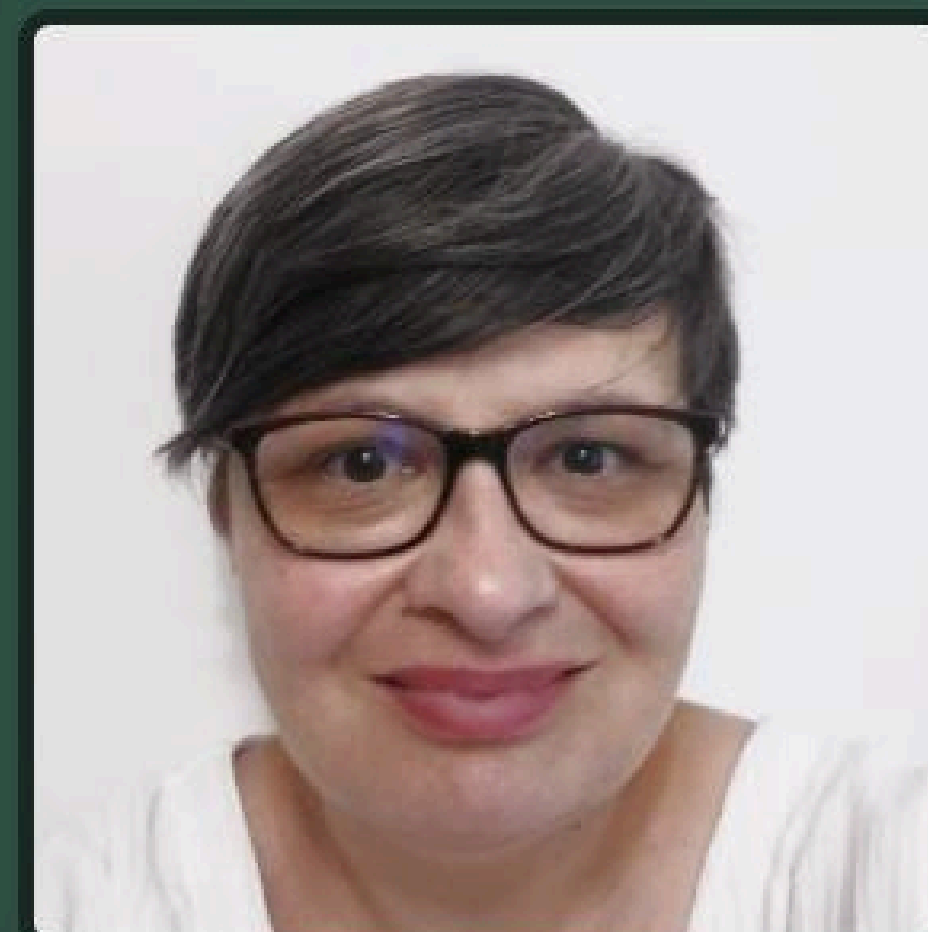
# Secretariat



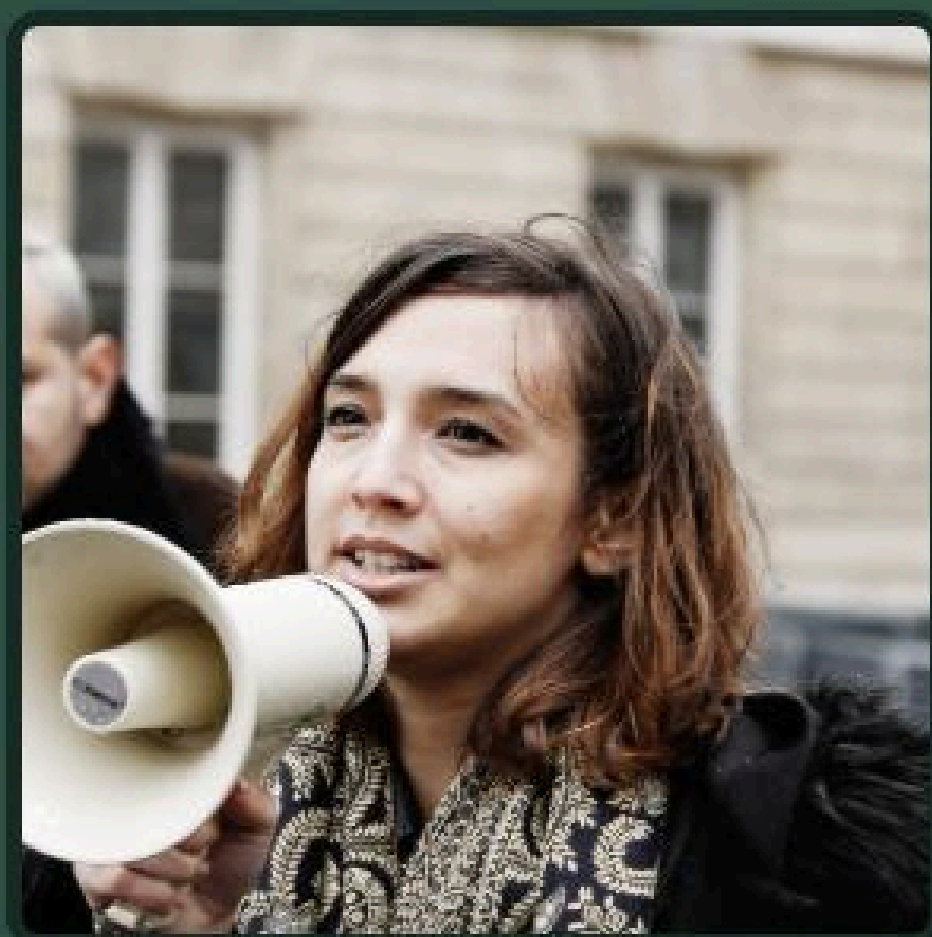
**Martin Avila**  
Executive Director



**Aleksandr Voronov**  
Fundraising Programme  
Consultant



**Aliz Pocsuvalzki**  
Network Programme Consultant



**Céline Lebrun Shaath**  
Organizing Programme Consultant



**Barbora Briestenska**  
Finance and Admin Consultant

# Year in review: 2025 highlights and milestones



# Key successes and challenges

In 2025, ECON achieved several key successes:



launching the Organize Europe Festival as a major transnational gathering;



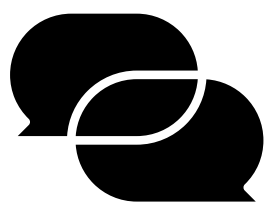
organizing anti-oppression and anti-racism training for the Secretariat and Board;



creating the Organizers' Kitchen as a member-led community of practice;



recruiting a significantly expanded Secretariat team;

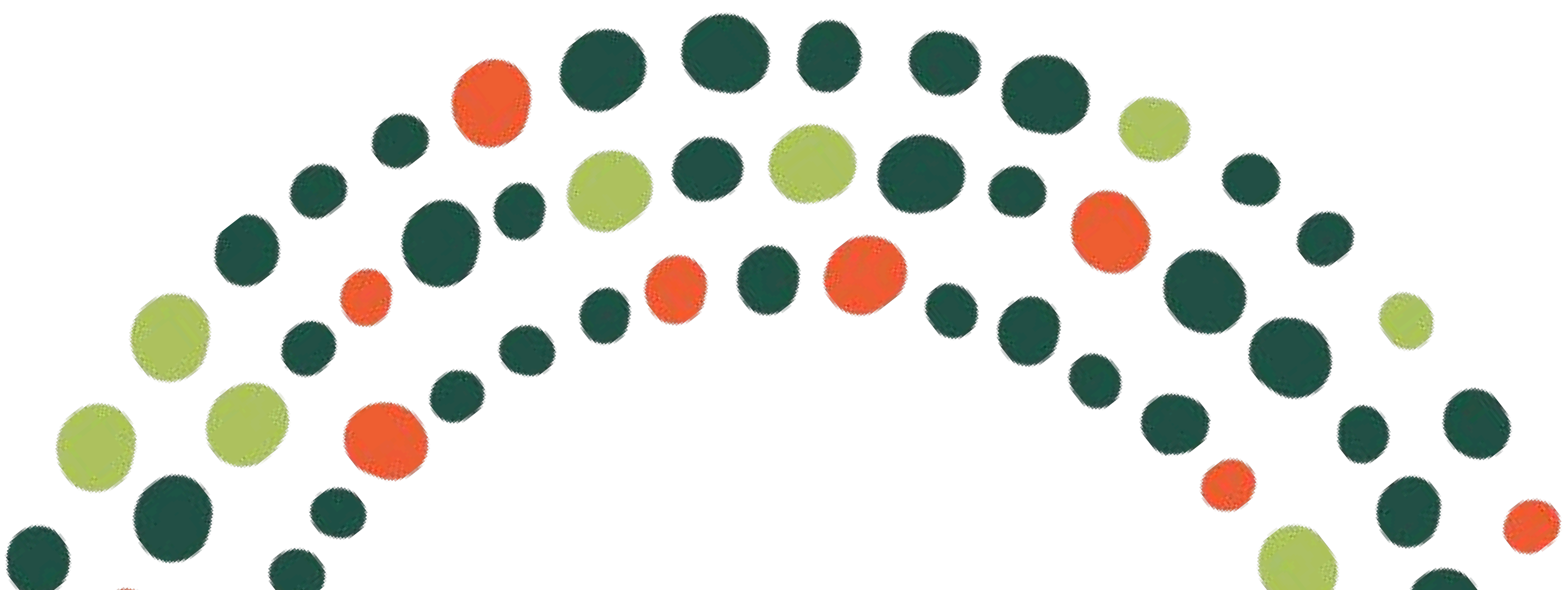


introducing the Agora programme as a regular space for strategic dialogue;



initiating the Alliance to defend democracy against authoritarianism and the far right

These advances took place alongside important challenges. For much of the first half of 2025, ECON operated with limited capacity, which affected the pace at which new initiatives could be developed and implemented. In the second half of the year, the onboarding of new team members and the organization's rapid growth required time and care to align expectations, clarify roles, and embed democratic, anti-oppressive practices in the emerging internal culture.



# Quarter 1: General Assembly gathering and "Organizing Across borders"


The year began with the ECON General Assembly and Central and Eastern European Gathering of Communities for Local Green Deals, held in Bucharest, Romania from 3–7 February 2025 and hosted by CeRe. The gathering brought together 30 participants from 13 countries, representing NGOs, civil society organizations, academics, practitioners and community-led initiatives.

During the General Assembly, one new full member organization, Genova Che Osa from Italy, was approved to join the network, and Victor Cătălin Toma from ADA in Romania was elected to the Board. This expanded ECON's geographic reach and strengthened its leadership with additional experience from the region.



# In parallel, ECON published the study "Organizing Across Borders: Stories of Community Organizing Campaigns from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland".

Based on a two-year project with members Re-set (Czechia), Center for Community Organizing (Slovakia), and Common Thing Foundation (Poland). The report documents how frontline communities affected by climate change, inequality and social injustice organized campaigns, built bottom-up power, and strengthened civic participation across borders, offering lessons for organizers, activists and donors working for climate and social justice in Europe.

 Organizing Across Borders: Stories of Community Organizing Campaigns from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland



In March, ECON organized an online anti-oppression and anti-racism training for members of the Secretariat and Board. Led by experienced trainers, the sessions focused on critical whiteness, intersectionality, colonial history in and outside Europe, and practical questions of allyship, supporting ECON's intention to embed anti-oppressive practice in its organizational culture.

# Quarter 2: Members meetings, onboarding and governance reflection

**In the second quarter, ECON focused on strengthening its internal capacity and deepening discussion on democracy and authoritarianism.**

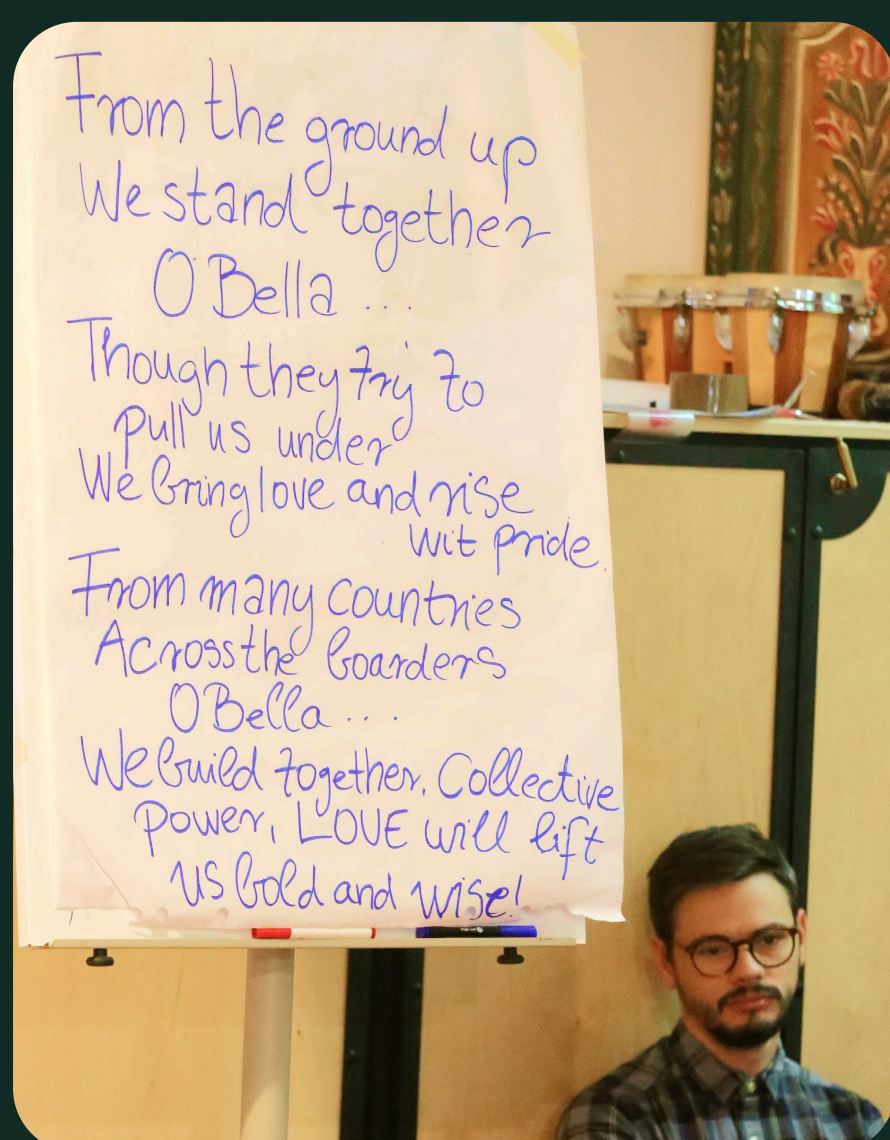
Two members' meetings in April and May brought together organizers from multiple countries to share stories from Hungary, Serbia and Slovakia and to discuss the rise of authoritarianism and far-right politics, as well as tools for crisis response and international solidarity.

At the governance level, the Board held an online retreat in April to review the network's governance structure, discuss roles and responsibilities within the Secretariat team, and reflect on financial planning and onboarding needs. Shortly afterwards, ECON launched a major expansion of the Secretariat and prepared for a leadership transition at the end of 2025. Calls were published for a Deputy Director with a pathway to become Executive Director, and for four additional roles.



By June, the first new consultants had joined the Secretariat. These appointments marked the beginning of a new phase in which responsibilities for organizing programmes, network support and overall strategy would be more widely shared across the team.

# Quarter 3: Organize Europe Festival and network-building



The third quarter was marked by the Organize Europe Festival, ECON's flagship transnational gathering in 2025. The festival took place from 7–11 July 2025 in Kunbábony, Hungary, hosted by Civil Kollégium Alapítvány (CKA). It brought together 56 participants from 16 countries, including community organizers, activists, creatives, adult educators, civil society organizations and allies from across Europe.

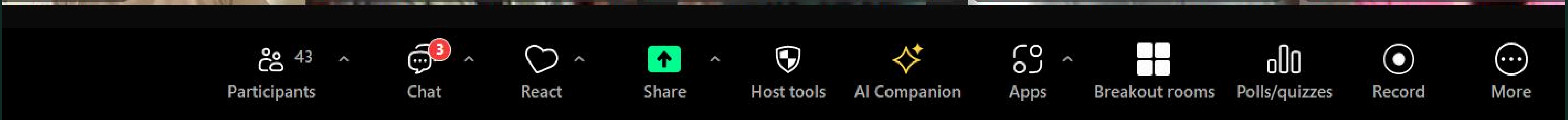
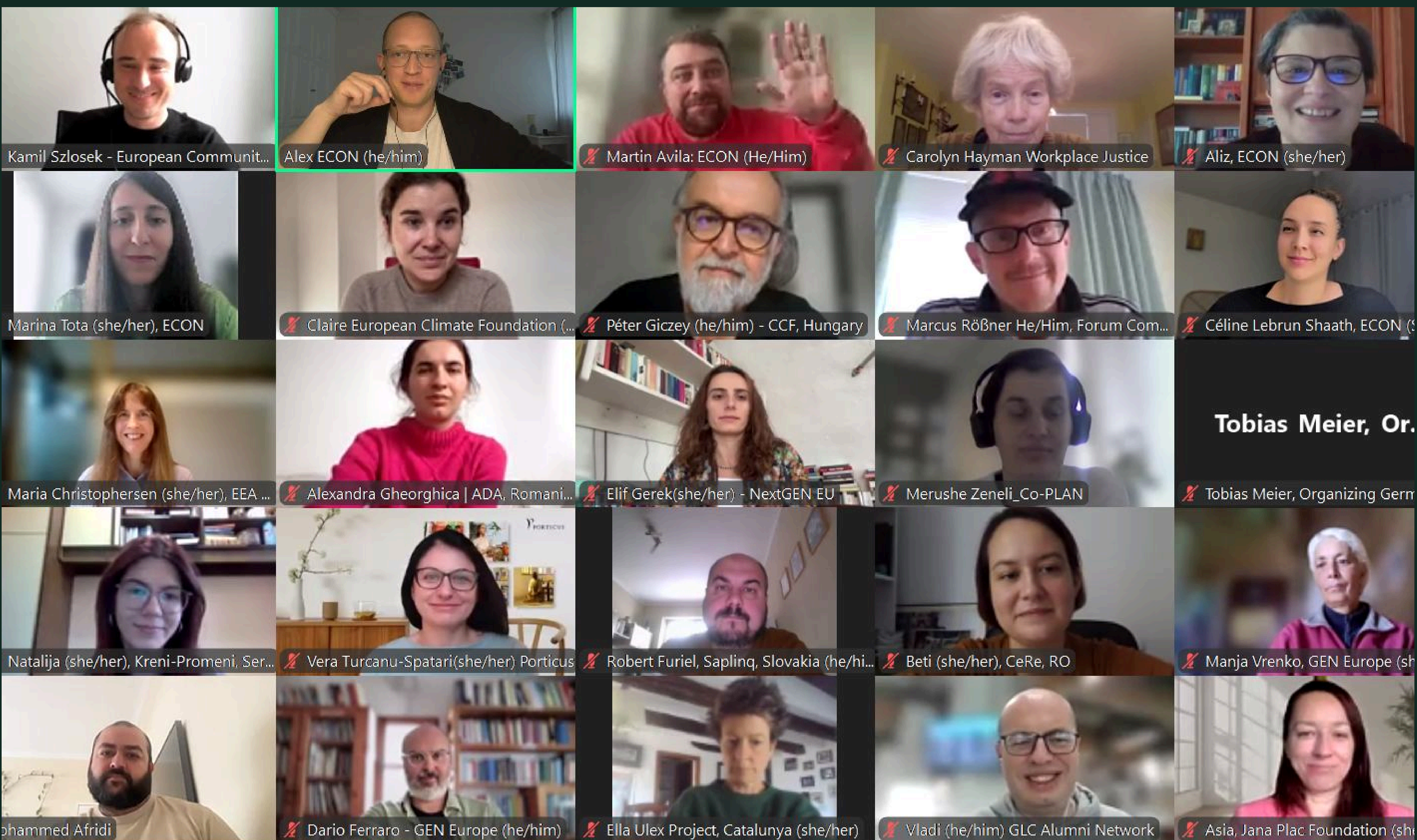
Beyond the festival, the third quarter also saw the continued expansion of the Secretariat team. The new team held an in-person retreat in Zvolen, Slovakia in late September, hosted by the Center for Community Organizing, to build internal relationships, discuss strategic priorities and plan activities for the following 15 months.



During this period, ECON launched the Agora series as an online space for participation, strategic alignment and relationship-building across the network. The first Agora, held in September, gathered 19 members from 15 organizations and 10 countries. One-to-one conversations with 20 members from 13 countries further deepened understanding of members' needs and experiences.

# Quarter 4: Donor Forum, Alliance and new learning spaces

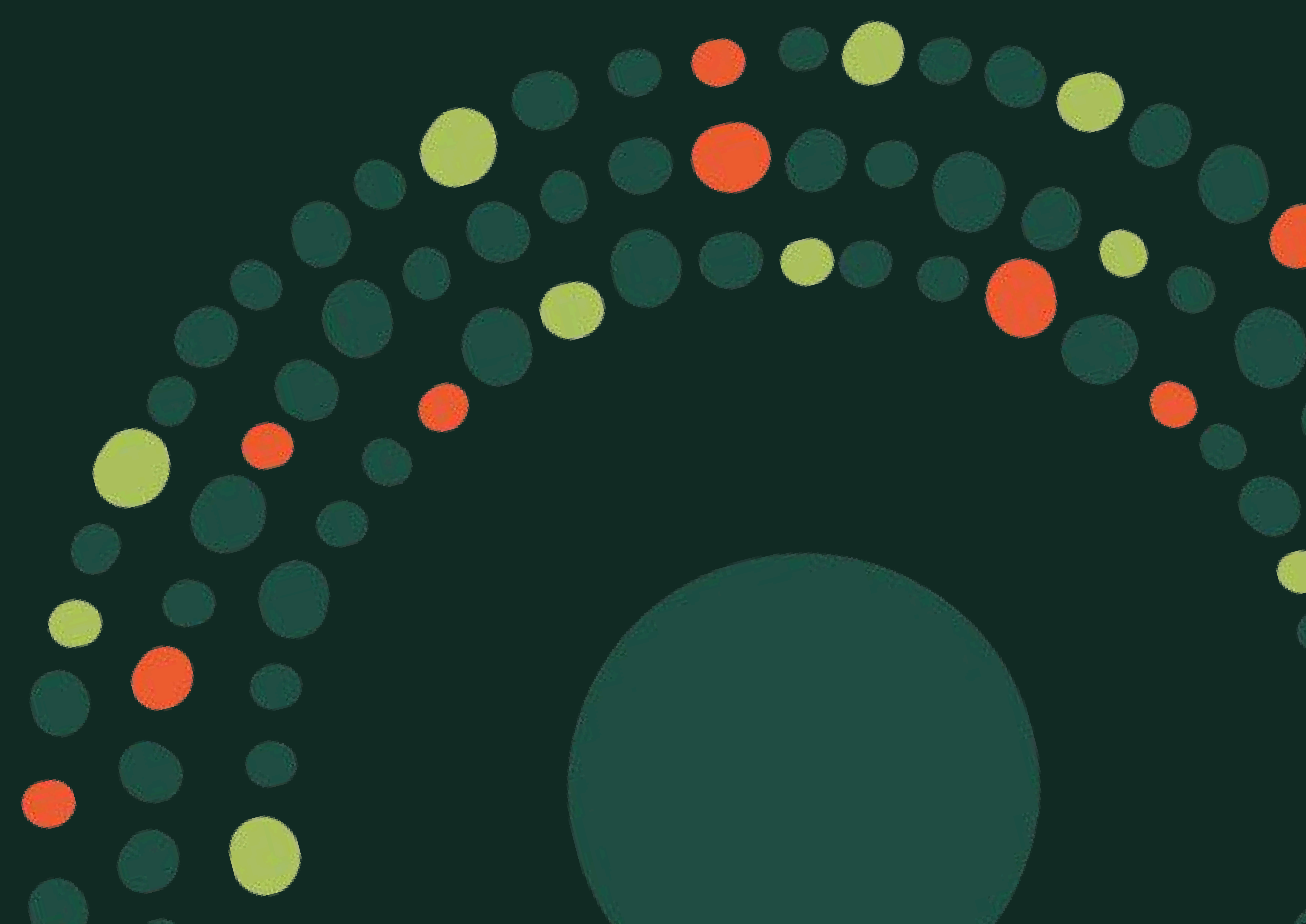
In the final quarter of 2025, ECON focused on creating new spaces for learning, solidarity and alliance-building. In October, ECON convened a Donor Forum that brought together more than 50 organizers, activists and donors to discuss how to work together to resist the rise of authoritarianism in Europe. Speakers included representatives of ECON member organizations and several philanthropic actors, and participants engaged in small group discussions on how to better resource organizing for democracy.



Throughout the last quarter, ECON also continued the Agora series. A November Agora focused on ECON's vision, mission, values and strategic priorities in preparation for decisions at the next General Assembly.

Also in October, ECON launched an alliance-building process to defend democracy against authoritarianism and the far right, bringing together organizers and frontline communities from different countries to coordinate strategies and solidarity actions. An information meeting about this initiative gathered 10 members from 6 countries, and eight members applied to join the alliance.

In November, ECON launched the Organizers' Kitchen, a member-led community of practice described as a "recipe-sharing" space for strategies, tools and stories. The first event, with 12 participants, focused on adapting organizing to local contexts, with hosts from the Netherlands and Romania presenting practices from their work and participants reflecting on how to translate organizing principles across different political and cultural settings.



By the end of December 2025, leadership had formally transitioned to Deputy Director Martin Avila as the new Executive Director.

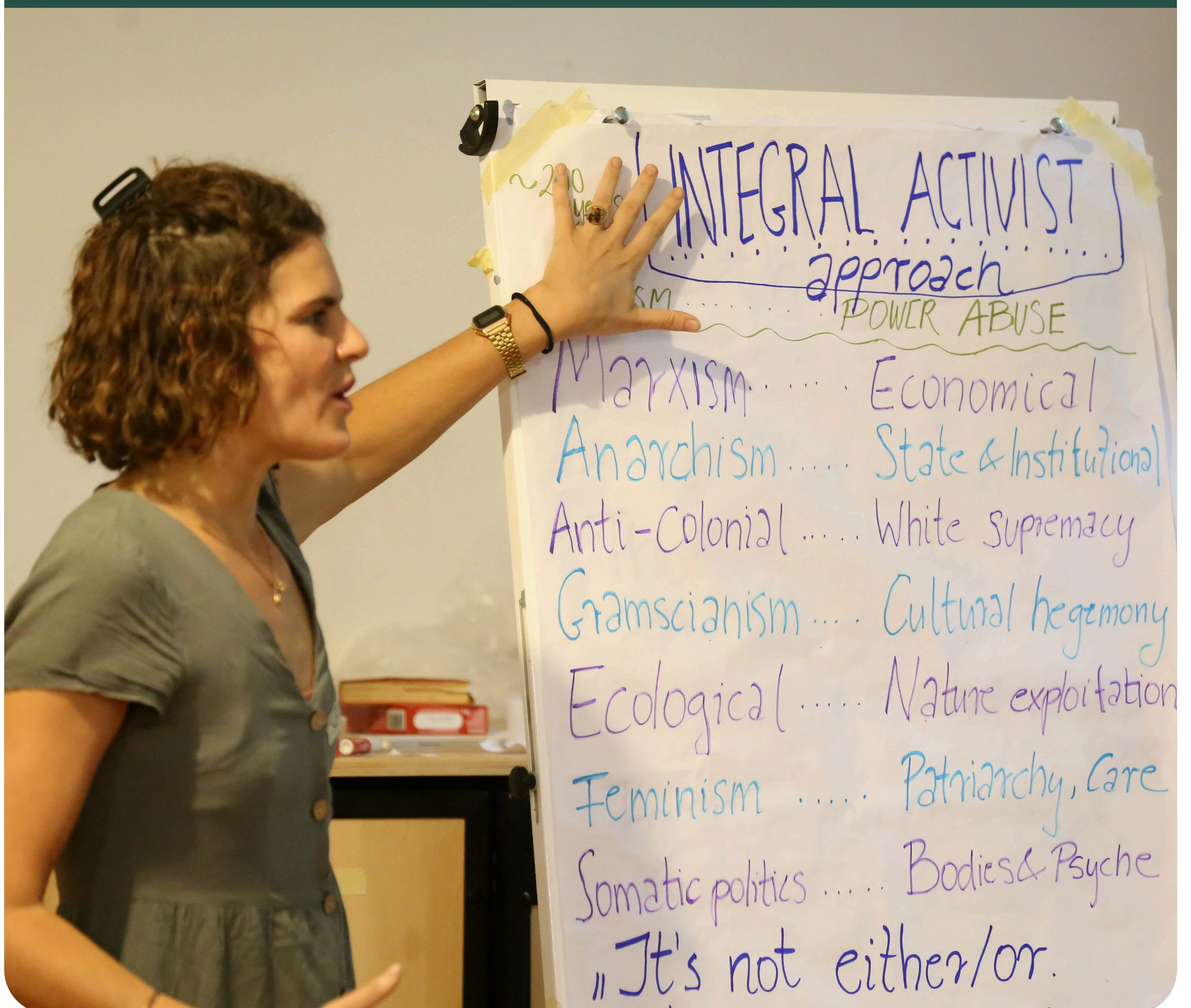


Marina Tota



Martin Avila

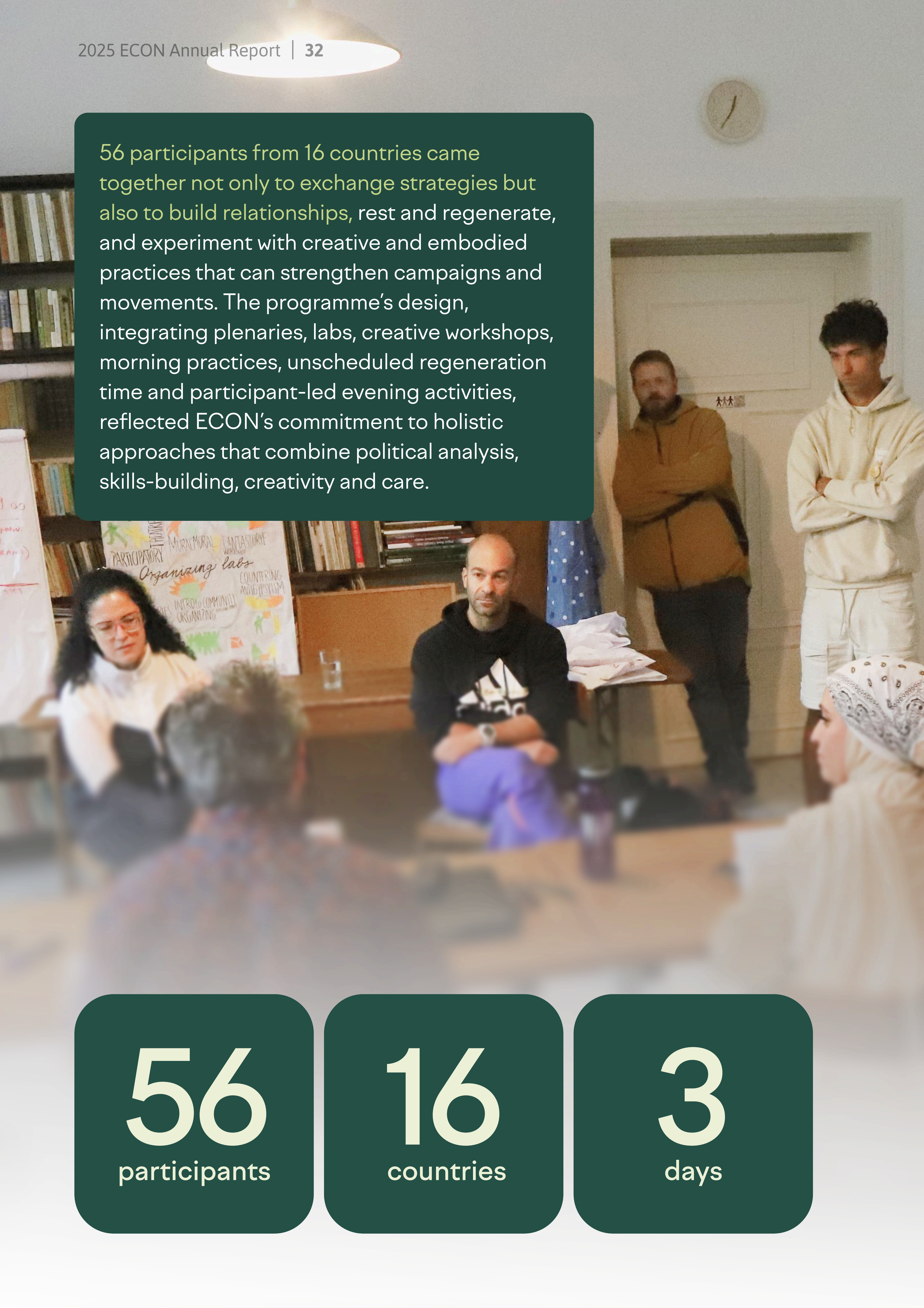
# Flagship event: Organize Europe Festival 2025



The Organize Europe Festival deserves special attention as a milestone for ECON and the broader movement ecosystem around community organizing in Europe. Organized by ECON and hosted by CKA in Kunbábony, Hungary, the festival created a rare space for transnational connection among organizers, activists, artists and educators working on democracy, equality and climate justice.



56 participants from 16 countries came together not only to exchange strategies but also to build relationships, rest and regenerate, and experiment with creative and embodied practices that can strengthen campaigns and movements. The programme's design, integrating plenaries, labs, creative workshops, morning practices, unscheduled regeneration time and participant-led evening activities, reflected ECON's commitment to holistic approaches that combine political analysis, skills-building, creativity and care.



56

participants

16

countries

3

days



The festival addressed key questions facing progressive movements in Europe: how to resist authoritarian and illiberal trends; how to build alliances across issues, identities and borders; how to use art and culture to communicate and organize; and how to nurture sustainable leadership in the face of burnout and fragmentation. It also showcased stories and practices from ECON's member organizations and allies, from climate justice organizing to anti-racist and feminist struggles, helping participants situate their local work within a wider European landscape.

Feedback from participants highlighted the importance of such spaces for renewing hope, deepening solidarity and generating new ideas for joint work. The festival created momentum for further collaboration within ECON's membership and with partner organizations, and informed the design of subsequent online and offline programmes.



# Members in action



# ECON's impact is best understood through the work of its members.

## Victory for Workers! How People Power Won the Minimum Wage Raise in Genoa

Genova Che Osa, an ECON member organization from Italy tackled a core issue facing Genoa: a city losing its young people and stuck in a cycle of inequality driven by precarious, poverty-level wages. With a shocking 42% of young workers making only 6-8 Euros per hour, they recognized that the fight for a dignified life and a brighter future for the city starts with fair pay.

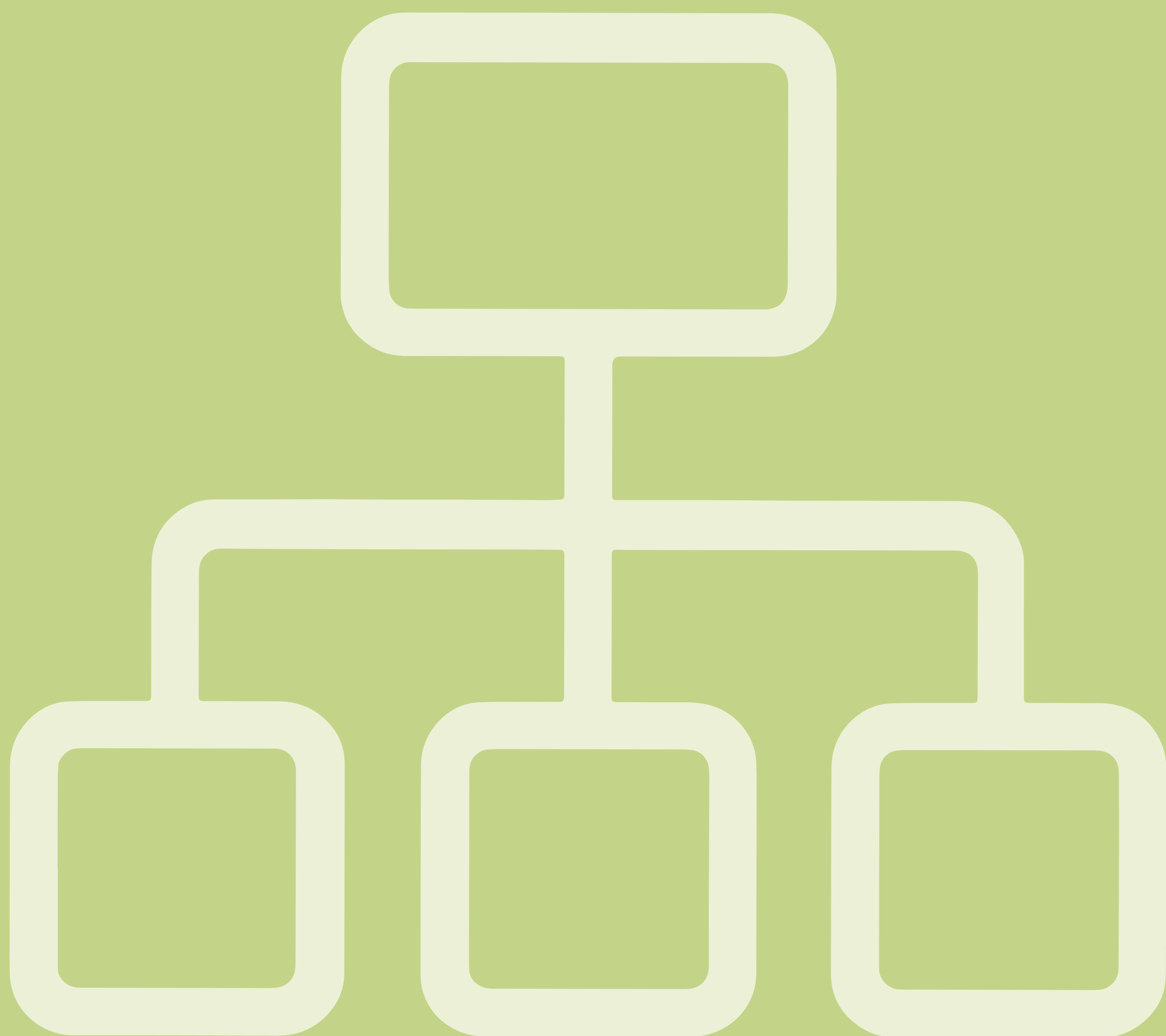
Their organizing work was a masterclass in leveraging local democracy. They launched a popular initiative resolution to mandate a minimum wage in municipal contracts. The plan was clear: gather 200 initial signatures, then push for the critical 2000 certified signatures needed to force the City Council to vote about their proposal based on the local legislation. When the previous, hostile administration attempted to shut them down by rejecting the petition on technical grounds, they didn't back down. Instead, they used the upcoming local election in May 2025 as a momentum and secured a game-changing commitment from center-left mayoral candidate Silvia Salis, ensuring the proposal would be championed if she won.

Their pressure successfully changed the public conversation on job quality, and the minimum wage became reality shortly after the new mayor's election. This victory means that people working on municipal contracts must now be paid at least 9 Euros per hour, alongside mandatory contract reviews and biannual City reporting. This success proves that people power works!



# ECON

# Members





InspirAlba  
Scotland



Center for Change  
Serbia



FILIA (FILIA Center)  
Romania



Genova Che Osa  
Italy



Freie Ungarische  
Botschaft (Free  
Hungarian Embassy)  
Germany



Conatus  
France



Center for Community  
Organizing  
Slovakia



Fundacja Rzecz  
Społeczna / Common  
Thing Foundation  
Poland



Resource Center for  
Public Participation  
Romania



Civil College  
Foundation  
Hungary



Re-set  
Czech Republic



Forum Community  
Organizing  
Germany



Kreni-Promeni  
Serbia



CIVICA Association  
Romania



Together Creating  
Communities  
UK



Digidem Lab  
Sweden



Chance Lab Association  
Hungary



DICO Gesellschaft  
für Community  
Organizing gGmbH  
Germany



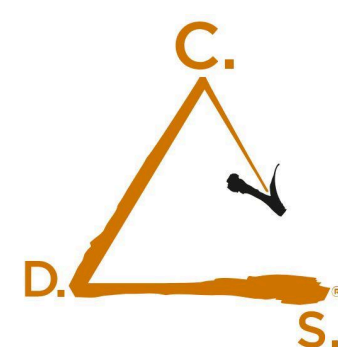
Serbia on the Move  
Serbia



Asociația Pentru  
Dezvoltare Activă  
Romania



Communities Against Racism  
Ireland



Centrum Doradztwa Strategicznego /  
Strategic Consulting Center  
Krakow, Poland



Ökotárs  
Hungary



CONTACT-Cahul  
Republic of Moldova



CATU  
Ireland



Lowlander Project  
Netherlands



Institute Republica  
Ukraine



Organizing Germany  
Germany

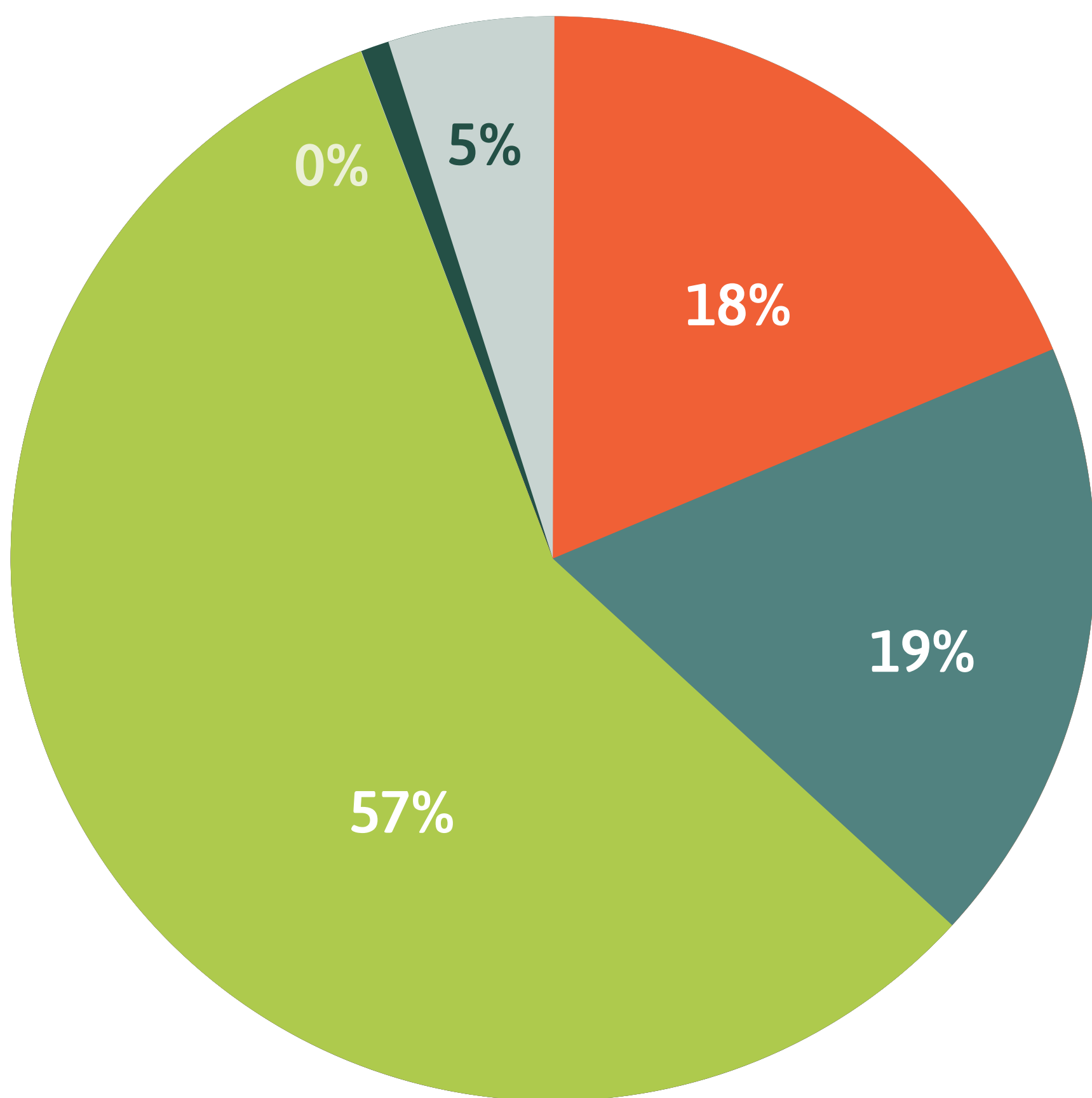


Sapling, o.z.  
Slovakia

# Financial Overview



## ECON ensures transparent and accountable use of funds and complies with applicable legal and financial reporting requirements.



In 2025, ECON’s activities were supported by a combination of project-based funding (including EU-funded initiatives), philanthropic grants, and membership-related income. Main funding sources in 2025 were grants from Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, and Porticus. Some additional income was received through the provision of services, receiving membership fees, and from the private donations.

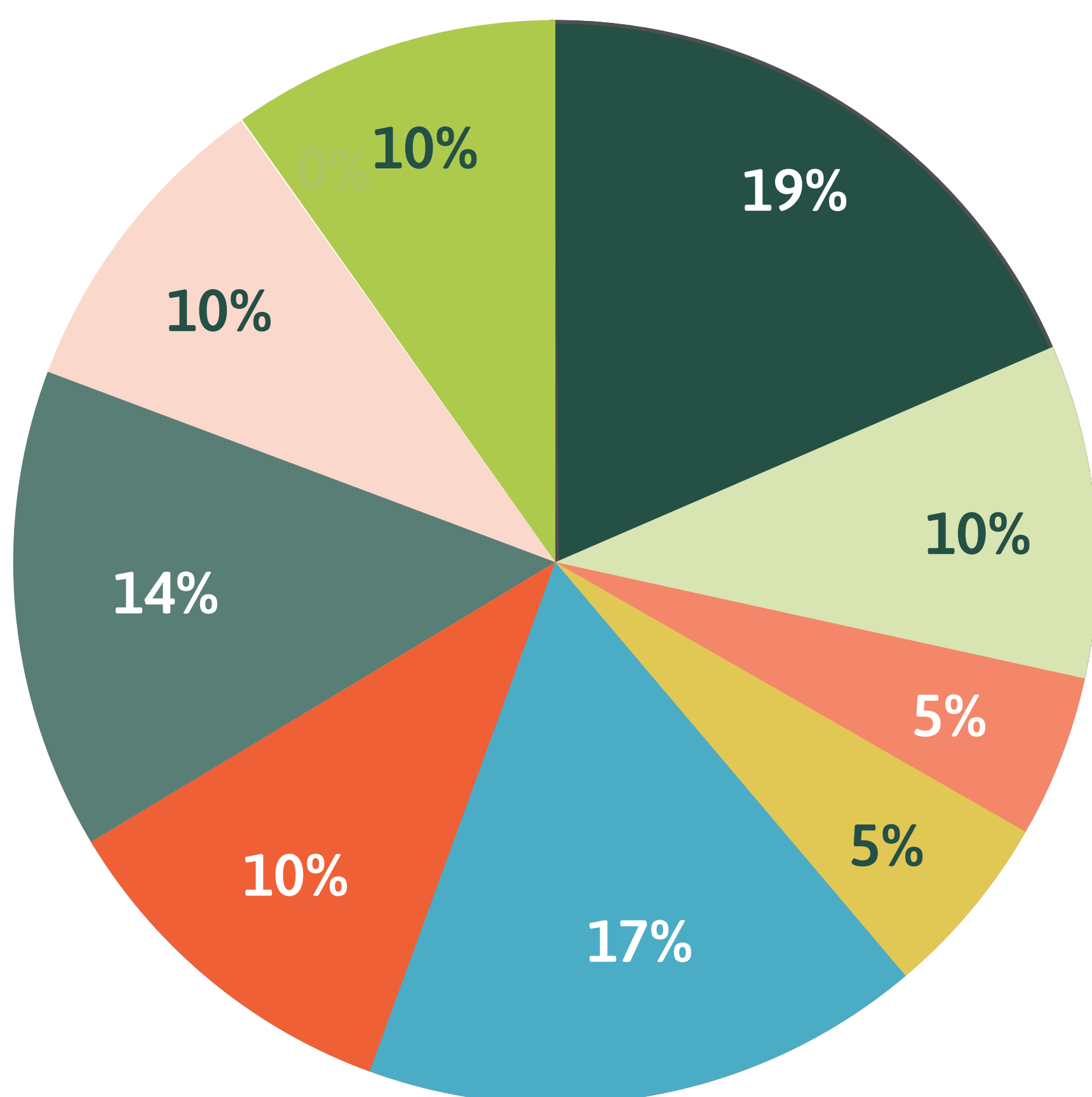
ECON’s financial situation shows stable growth that allows the organization to think forward and plan activities for the upcoming years.

\*Some of the grants are multi-year projects with funds paid in advance

### Income

Porticus	300,000.00
Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH	100,000.00
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	92,000.00
Services Event fees	25,436.62
Membership fees	3450.00
Private Donations	206.68
Other	583.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>521676.93</b>

**ECON's annual expenses were distributed across nine main and support areas, with resources broadly balanced between core infrastructure and direct organizing work.**



The largest share of spending went to organizational sustainability, which accounted for 43 063,36 EUR, or 19% of total expenses, and includes infrastructure, some of the administrative costs, and the team expansion.

Network coordination at 39 930 EUR (17%) and organizing activities at 33 400,75 EUR (14%) reflects organizing work and work with ECON members.

\*The difference between expenses and income is caused by the pre-financed multi-year projects.

Expenses

Organizational sustainability	43,063.36
Leadership transition	24,062.39
Fundraising and Communications	12,000
General Assembly	11,317.46
Network Coordination	39,930
Regranting	23,610
Organizing Activities	33,400.75
Admin expenses	22,275.54
Organize Europe Festival	23,077.51

A further group of mid-sized allocations clustered around 10% each of the budget: regranting to partners (23 610 EUR), the Organize Europe Festival (23 077,51 EUR), administrative expenses (22 275,54 EUR) and leadership transition costs (24 062,39 EUR) reflect ECON's work to ensure stability and sustainability of the organization and the network, as well as capacity building of the member organizations.

Smaller portions supported fundraising and communications (12 000 EUR) and the General Assembly (11 317,46 EUR) ensuring that ECON could both sustain its governance and communication functions and invest in the events and partnerships that underpin its organizing work.

Total short-term liabilities as of 31 December 2025 amounted to EUR 42,082 (2024: EUR 21,290).

Of this, EUR 27,988 were due within one year and EUR 14,094 were overdue at year-end.

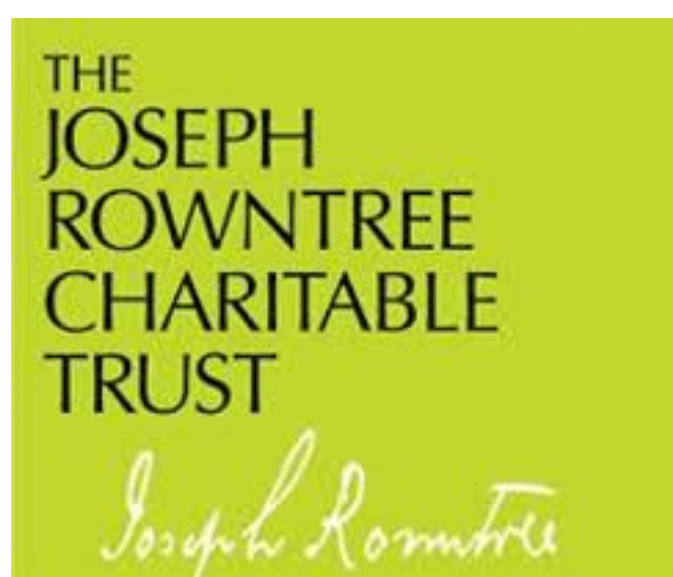
No significant off-balance sheet items or contingent liabilities were identified.

# Appreciation and getting involved



ECON's work in 2025 was only possible thanks to the commitment, creativity and resilience of its members, Secretariat team, Board, partners, funders and many allies across Europe. Organizers, activists, educators, volunteers and community leaders contributed their time and experience to gatherings, campaigns, working groups and online exchanges, helping the network to grow as a space of solidarity and shared learning.

ECON warmly thanks all member organizations and individual members for their engagement throughout the year, and donors and funding partners who invested in community organizing and democratic resilience.



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European Community Organizing Network (ECON)

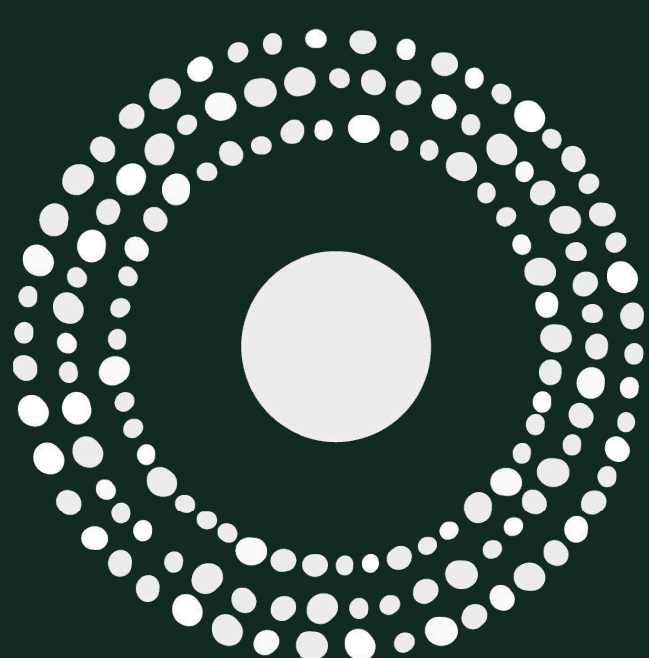
Date of establishment: 14 October 2016

Statutory representative: Maroš Chmelík

Address: Karadžičova 16, 821 08 Bratislava

Reg no.: 50525387

[info@organizeeurope.org](mailto:info@organizeeurope.org)



**ECON**

European Community  
Organizing Network