



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

**BILITIS RESOURCE
CENTER FOUNDATION**

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bilitis

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS



Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2024, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible work we have accomplished together at Bilitis. This year has been one of resilience, growth, and impactful advocacy for LGBTIQ+ rights in Bulgaria. Despite ongoing challenges, our community has shown unwavering strength, driving meaningful change.

A major achievement was the expansion of our community programs, ensuring safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ people across Bulgaria. Our work with trans and non-binary individuals, young LGBTIQ+ people, and lesbian and bisexual women has empowered individuals and strengthened our movement.

We also made strides in political and legal advocacy, campaigning against legislative threats and pushing for recognition of LGBTIQ+ families. Through national and international collaboration, we amplified our community's voice in decision-making and raised awareness about the urgent need for protections against discrimination and hate speech.

A highlight of the year was the Sofia Pride Community Fest, a vibrant celebration of diversity, creativity, and resilience. As part of the Sofia Pride celebrations, the fest brought together artists, activists, and community members, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and solidarity.

Education and awareness-raising remained central to our work. Through training programs, public campaigns, and research initiatives, we engaged educators, healthcare professionals, journalists, and corporate allies in fostering a more inclusive society.

None of this would have been possible without our dedicated team, volunteers, and supporters. Thank you for standing by us and being part of this journey toward a more equal Bulgaria.

With heartfelt gratitude and hopeful anticipation,

Manuela Popova, Pol Naidenov
Co-Directors

2024 AT A GLANCE



EMPOWERED OVER 500 INDIVIDUALS THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS
AND TRANSFORMATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS.

INSPIRED LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVISM ACROSS FIVE CITIES,
NURTURING 20 PASSIONATE ACTIVISTS.

INITIATED GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, SPOTLIGHTING THE LIVES OF GENDER-
DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS.

SOFIA PRIDE 2024 RESONATED LOUDER THAN EVER, UNITING
THOUSANDS IN AN ELECTRIFYING CELEBRATION OF LOVE AND
EQUALITY.

"LAVENDER VISION" COMMUNITY FEST FOSTERED DEEP
CONNECTIONS AND INSPIRED MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ACTION
AMONG OVER 200 PARTICIPANTS.

OPENED DOORS TO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF 81 VULNERABLE
LGBTIQ+ GENDER NON-CONFORMING INDIVIDUALS, PAVING THE WAY
FOR DIGNITY AND OPPORTUNITY.

EXPANDED OUR VOICE, REACHING THOUSANDS THROUGH
POWERFUL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY.

RESISTING LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS BACKSLIDING

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ANTI- LGBTIQ+ LEGISLATION



On August 7th, discriminatory changes in the law for pre-school and school education were passed in a tactical and damaging anti-human rights campaign. The changes banned any mention of “non-traditional sexual orientation” in class or through any materials and left the LGBTIQ+ community vulnerable. Despite the many challenges, Bilitis remained vigilant in offering community support and mobilized the psychological support chat, provided up-to-date information on developments and impact, and participated in numerous CSO-led initiatives and protests. We embarked on a joint international advocacy to combat this discriminatory law with ILGA Europe and peer LGBTIQ+ organizations from Bulgaria. Our co-director, Manuela Popova, participated in a meeting with EU-level officials in Brussels, which determined the next steps in the coming years to oppose the law and, one day, overturn it.



EXPANDING THE LGBTIQ+ MOVEMENT OUTSIDE OF THE CAPITAL

Bilitis' Leadership Academies became a beacon of hope, igniting activism and fostering powerful grassroots initiatives in Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, and Dupnitsa. Our work outside the capital has continued expanding substantially throughout 2024. Through providing training and mentorship, along with ongoing support for initiatives, we have developed the capacity and knowledge of over 20 new activists from the mentioned cities, equipping them with skills and knowledge needed to advocate for equality, build local movements, and create safe spaces for their communities. The new LGBTIQ+ grassroots organizations QueerVarna and Community Center Pogled in Plovdiv are founded by Leadership Academy alumni and are currently building community spaces and providing for their communities.



ADVANCING TRANS AND INTERSEX RIGHTS



Bilitis walks the talk in trans and intersex communities empowerment through provision of services, leadership building, and research of the current needs of these highly vulnerable groups. In collaboration with the Gender Equality Unit of Johns Hopkins University and Vital Strategies, we kickstarted a first-of-its-kind research into the lives of gender-diverse people and the impact the lack of updated and accurate documentation can have on their quality of life and access to services.

Considering the current challenging and almost impossible nature of the legal gender recognition process in Bulgaria, this research will shed light on the barriers and explore the possible solutions in the path for recognizing trans people's rights in the country. The research project named: **Diverse Gender Identities and Implications for Civil Registries and Vital Statistics** led by Johns Hopkins University in collaboration with national partners is being conducted in Bulgaria, Peru and Thailand. The findings will be published in a research journal. In Bulgaria's case, an in-depth report will be developed and used to advocate for trans people's rights in the country. The project includes 40 in-depth interviews, a total of 3 focus groups with gender-diverse people and a national report with the findings of the research, which will analyze the level of access to civic registration systems and the impact that has on trans and non-binary people's access to services and quality of life. An event will also be organized in 2025 to release the report, showcase the findings and continue the conversation on trans rights.

EMPOWERING THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY, MOBILIZING ALLIES



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND VISIBILITY EVENTS

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND VISIBILITY EVENTS



Our signature event, the **LGBTIQ+ Community Fest**, echoed with joy, creativity, and powerful moments of connection, sparking lasting impact and resilience. The 2024 edition of the Community Fest, "Lavender Vision," was an outstanding success, surpassing expectations and strengthening the LGBTIQ community through creativity, empowerment, and collective action. Designed as a space for connection, skill-sharing, and leadership development, the festival brought together over 200 participants, including more than 20 individuals from outside Sofia, and engaged eight volunteers who played a key role in its execution. With five diverse events, the fest ensured that marginalized voices were centered at every stage—from planning to execution. A major highlight was the electrifying "Drag Kings: Rise Up!" event, which not only showcased the artistry of queer performers but also reinforced the importance of visibility for LGBTIQ individuals in Bulgaria.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND VISIBILITY EVENTS



Beyond performance-based events, the festival embraced creative expression and community-building through interactive workshops, such as the "Lavender Poetry Workshop," where participants explored queer poetry and experimented with their own writing. The "Queer Mocktail Masterclass" became an unexpectedly popular gathering, exceeding attendance expectations and evolving into a meaningful discussion on queer history, safe spaces, and community engagement. Additionally, the "Queer Partner Dance Class" provided a rare opportunity for gender-diverse individuals to enjoy partner dancing in an affirming and inclusive space. Finally, "The Flowers in Us: Emotion and Power" workshop allowed participants to reflect on personal growth, strength, and vulnerability through storytelling and art, fostering a deeply personal and supportive environment.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND VISIBILITY EVENTS



A key achievement of this year's festival was its lasting impact. It sparked long-term engagement, with several attendees stepping forward to volunteer, collaborate, and contribute to future initiatives. Through this fest, Bilitis successfully expanded its network, strengthened ties with queer-friendly spaces, and identified new leaders, including a graphic design intern and over 20 individuals eager to organize events in the community center. The festival also reaffirmed Bilitis' capacity to organize large-scale, impactful events while remaining flexible in addressing unexpected community needs. By prioritizing accessibility, inclusion, and empowerment, "Lavender Vision" laid the groundwork for an even stronger and more connected LBTIQ movement in Bulgaria.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND VISIBILITY EVENTS



Sofia Pride 2024

Sofia Pride 2024, in which Bilitis is a co-organizer, was an awe-inspiring testament to the strength and solidarity of our community, drawing thousands into the streets in a powerful chorus of love, dignity, and inclusion. For the 17th consecutive year, Sofia Pride brought thousands together in the streets of Bulgaria's capital in a peaceful protest for LGBTI+ rights. This year, the event took place at Knyaz Alexander Battenberg Square, hosting a vibrant concert featuring some of Bulgaria's biggest music stars. As always, Sofia Pride provided a platform for emerging artists, giving young performers the chance to sing before thousands. "Bulgaria Is Our Home" was the title of the 2024 pride awareness campaign, which explored the themes of patriotism and national identity through the lens of the LGBTI+ community and its allies. It aimed to spark conversations about belonging, equal rights, and the role of LGBTI+ people in shaping Bulgaria's future. The campaign highlighted 11 Bulgarian families who courageously shared their names, faces, and personal stories in support of the Pride movement. Once again, in 2024, thousands marched in solidarity, affirming that equality, dignity, and love are fundamental human rights.



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ORGANIZING

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ORGANIZING



2024's expanded edition of our **annual community needs assessment** survey received more than 500 responses and gave us an even clearer picture of the challenges faced by LGBTI+ people and the priorities that matter most to them. These insights shaped and supported initiatives such as the Rainbow Network, the Community Fest, and our collaborative projects with local organizations. Through them, we helped build stronger bridges between activists, laid the groundwork for local movements, and uplifted the leadership and visibility of queer people. The survey was expanded to include more questions on the participants' mental health and provided even more space for assessment of the current situation of LGBTIQ+ rights. It also allowed participants to provide input on the most necessary next steps in the fight for LGBTIQ+ equality. Overall, we think this allows for an even clearer picture of the ways in which organizations and collectives can answer the community's needs.

In 2024, **our community organizing efforts** reached new ground. At the heart of it all is our commitment to building a strong, connected, and resilient LGBTI+ community - not just in the capital, but across the entire country. Guided by the voices of the community itself, we deepened our understanding of its needs, supported emerging initiatives outside of Sofia, expanded our partnerships, and continued to create spaces for empowerment, solidarity, and collective action. Our work beyond the capital gave rise to the **Rainbow Network** that continued its expansion in 2024.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ORGANIZING



The **Rainbow Network** was launched in 2023, with the financial support of the German Marshall Fund. Together with our partners from Glas Foundation and with the financial support of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Program of the European Union, we continued to develop local infrastructure for the protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and their defenders across the country. Beyond the Leadership Academies, mentioned above, which trained 20 new movement leaders from 5 cities, this expansion has already yielded remarkable results. The grassroots organizations QueerVarna in Varna and Community Centre Pogled in Plovdiv began actively organizing events, festivals, protests and community spaces, while PokolenieBunt and Solidaria in Veliko Tarnovo were providing vital support for LGBTIQ+ individuals through activities like queer support groups and intersectional workshops. Bilitis has been providing ongoing support to these collectives through tailored mentorship, access to resources, and opportunities for collaboration, including a shared Discord channel that facilitates close coordination and knowledge exchange among activists. These efforts are creating a ripple effect, embedding democratic values and inclusion into regions where such movements are often nascent.

The Rainbow Network will continue expanding in 2025. Our next Leadership Academy is scheduled to take place on April 11-13, 2025, where we aim to solidify and expand our network even further, empowering more activists to lead local initiatives, strengthen community resilience, and drive meaningful change across Bulgaria. We expect the network of local allies, including NGOs, individuals, and businesses, to continue increasing, creating broader support for the LGBTIQ+ community in different parts of the country.



COMMUNITY SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES



Our Rainbow Hub, co-managed with GLAS Foundation, offered more than support—it provided a lifeline, nurturing mental health and offering personalized guidance, creating spaces where everyone felt welcomed, respected, and empowered.

Community Self-Support Groups

Bilitis strengthened and diversified its community groups, fostering safe and empowering spaces for LGBTIQ+ individuals across Bulgaria. BraveLab maintained regular sessions focused on self-confidence, overcoming fears, and identity, while also expanding its reach beyond Sofia with the launch of BraveLab Veliko Tarnovo, providing critical support to queer youth in smaller towns. TransMission remained a vital space for trans individuals, offering peer support, thematic discussions and a space for shaping the strategy around trans activism in Bulgaria. Following community feedback, QueerFemme and Blnonymous were restructured into a more inclusive Queer Support Group, which hosted a variety of events including speed friending, art workshops, and other community-building activities. Reflecting a post-COVID shift towards activity-based engagement, new initiatives like QueerHiking emerged, offering outdoor experiences that foster connection and belonging through nature and shared movement.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Economic Empowerment

Bilitis continued its efforts to support the LGBTIQ community through its economic empowerment service, launched in 2023 with the financial support of the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe. This initiative addresses the multiple challenges individuals face in labor market integration due to their gender identity or gender expression. At the heart of this project, funded by the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe (AGEE) in partnership with GLAS Foundation, is a mission to foster greater inclusion in the professional landscape for lesbian, trans, and non-binary individuals. These individuals often encounter unique barriers, making their path to securing employment more complex. Spanning a two-year timeline, the project has already welcomed 81 participants into its embrace. Each individual who was seeking support was invited to an in-depth interview and connected with a Career Adviser, HR, a Psychologist, or directly with companies offering open positions. Three of the interviewed individuals have already reported successfully finding a new job. In addition to this, we negotiated to set up branded stands at Bulgaria's most popular job fair chain, the Career Show, in October 2024, with a second one planned for 2025. These fairs serve as vibrant platforms, enabling program participants to engage with employers actively looking for new team members.



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Connecting the Dots

This new economic empowerment project, funded by the European Social Fund, unites four partners: LGL and the Diversity Charter from Lithuania, Bilitis and Glas foundations from Bulgaria in developing an integrated employability model for NEETs from the LGBTIQ+ communities, which has two main pillars: strengthening young people's employability skills and building a support network that will facilitate their first entry or re-entry into the labor market. The partners will utilize a "connecting the dots" approach to motivate LGBTIQ+ NEETs to utilize existing pathways to employment, strengthen their technical as well as interpersonal skills, adaptability, commitment to continuous learning, resilience and conflict resolution skills. At the same time, the partners will engage potential employers which value diversity and inclusion at the workplace, and create a "bridge to employment"; a strategy that can be replicated in different EU contexts for other vulnerable groups of NEETs. The project, which started in the last quarter of 2024, will support 120 NEETs in 2 years, and the expected placement rate is at least 40% by the end of the project, expected long-term effect - 100% of supported individuals improve their employability.



connecting the dots



TRANS AND INTERSEX PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT

TRANS AND INTERSEX PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT



In 2024, a project, supported by the Equal Rights in Action (ERA) Fund, made remarkable strides in building a resilient and empowered trans community across Bulgaria, even amid an increasingly hostile socio-political climate. The year was marked by a determined effort to create safe spaces, strategize, nurture emerging trans leaders, and provide vital support services that respond directly to the urgent needs of our community.

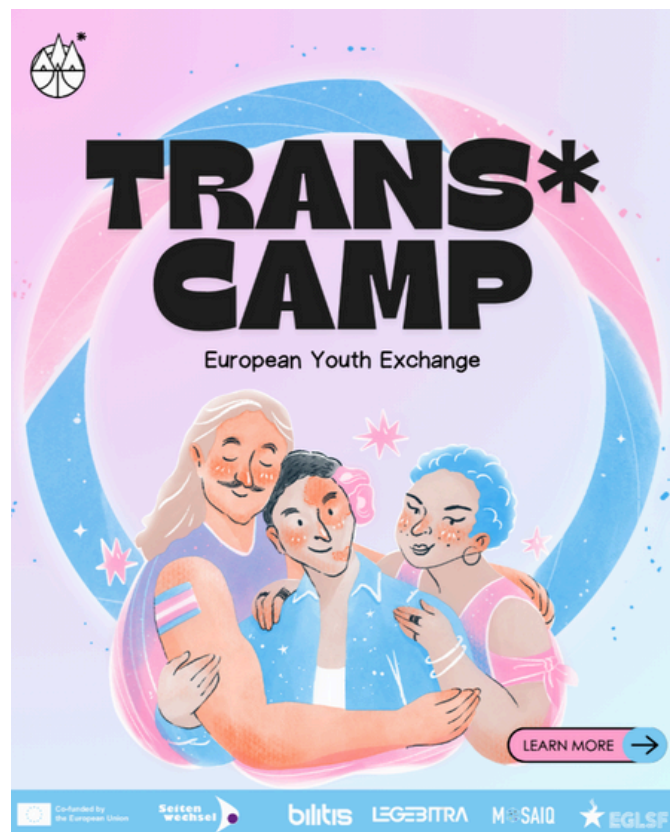
At the heart of our work was the Rainbow Hub community center in Sofia, which continued to serve as a beacon of hope and solidarity for all. In Rainbow Hub, we hosted TransMission's meetings that not only offered emotional and practical assistance but also functioned as an incubator for new trans leadership and strategic planning of the trans rights movement in Bulgaria. Central to our success was the emphasis on trans-led advocacy and leadership development. Bilitis carried out two strategic meetings with trans people, focused on making a positive impact for the trans rights movement in Bulgaria through trans-led initiatives. The two strategic meetings involved more than 20 trans people in total. Additionally, our leadership academy, held for the fourth time, offered training for activists from across the country. As a result of our two strategic meetings, our commitment to public awareness was demonstrated during Trans Awareness Week in November. Innovative campaigns - a heartfelt letter-writing initiative and a creative living library event held in a queer-friendly venue - allowed trans individuals to share their personal narratives in accessible and engaging formats. These initiatives not only reached a diverse audience but also helped shift public perceptions by humanizing trans experiences and inspiring broader dialogue on trans rights.

Throughout the year, individual consultations at Rainbow Hub proved indispensable. Conducted in person and via online platforms, these one-on-one sessions addressed pressing concerns ranging from mental health support to navigating legal gender recognition procedures and others. Even as the political environment grew increasingly uncertain, our personalized approach ensured that every trans person seeking assistance was guided toward the resources they needed, reinforcing the community's trust in our work.

TRANS AND INTERSEX PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT

Trans* Camp

Trans* Camp is a youth mobility exchange that is organized in partnership with Spain, Slovenia, Germany and the Netherlands. The partnership will carry out this project so that young transgender, intersex and non-binary (TIN) people have the opportunity to connect with their community, learn wellness strategies and participate in physical activities, as TIN people are often isolated, suffer from mental health difficulties and lack access to sports. The project includes quality non-formal learning through workshops, physical activities, participants' own skill-sharing sessions, cultural activities, and reflections. It also facilitates personal development, especially in the field of well-being and sport. Participants will acquire and develop competences, in the areas of well-being, physical activity, and active participation. Their new skills and attitudes will help them deal with mental health difficulties and participate in physical activity, through empowerment, increased confidence, and connection to their community. The exchange is planned to gather a total of 30 participants and be implemented in September 2025.





ENHANCING LGBTIQ+ EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING IN AND THROUGH SPORTS

SPORTS AND WELLBEING



MESIS

The “Missing pieces for educators and local stakeholders addressing inclusive sport” Erasmus+ funded MESIS project served to foster LGBTIQ+ inclusive sport communities by developing new pedagogical tools and competences in the field of the “Education Through Sport” (ETS) methodology. The idea has been developed starting from the outcomes of Erasmus+ project “Outsport” (2017-2019). This project involves 5 partners from Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. A total of 14 educators from Bulgaria were involved in the 3 Capacity building trainings that took place in Rome, Ljubljana and Lisbon. These trainings aimed to teach the Outsport methodology and have the participants improve their knowledge on SOGIESC issues. Towards the end of 2024 the design of open e-learning content in 7 different languages is almost completed and is structured for operators who train sport coaches and PE teachers and for educators who directly work in the field. The project foresees 2 dissemination events to deliver and test project outputs. Starting from the achieved know-how and results, the partnership aims to create a EU-wide model by implementing a Policy Vademecum designed for local policy implementation in the fields of sport and education.



SPORTS AND WELLBEING



Women's Active

The Erasmus+ funded project LBTIQ* WOMEN* ACTIVE aims to enhance the inclusion and participation of LBTIQ women* in European grassroots sport by examining the challenges and barriers they face. It is a unique multilateral European project which advocates for equal opportunities for LBTIQ women in sport. This project is done in collaboration with organizations from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Bulgaria. The project brings LBTIQ women athletes together to critically examine their access, participation and visibility in grassroots sport, and will raise awareness of the experiences of LBTIQ women in grassroots sport. The project consists of multiple eco-activity days and workshops that aim to educate local communities and empower them to take action. Along with this, a creative resource that showcases the results of all previous activities will be created and will include the lessons learned and recommendations for inclusion and accessibility.



SPORTS AND WELLBEING



#JustGender: Community Wellbeing

Another Erasmus+ funded project, #JustGender: Community Wellbeing, will enhance the inclusion and participation of athletes defining as women and athletes with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions in European grassroots sport through combatting discrimination & addressing intolerance and establishing an inclusive sport culture where all can participate. It addresses the horizontal priority Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport and fulfills the mandate of promoting social inclusion and aims at improving the outreach to people with fewer opportunities. By exploring barriers to participation for women and athletes with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions the initiative will propose good practices to implement. The project will also explore how sport and physical activity can be used to create community, paying particular attention to ways in which gender inclusivity is achieved, and highlighting methodologies to ensure people are at the forefront of these communities with their wellbeing needs being of primary concern. It also involves themes of community wellbeing, theory and practice around community health and social health. The project will contribute to a European-wide network of actors on sport and physical activity, social and community wellbeing and gender equality.





AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGING ALLIES

AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGING ALLIES



Through impactful training sessions, Bilitis equipped educators, healthcare providers, corporate allies, and community organizations to champion equality and inclusion. Projects such as "Words to Stories" and "Rainbow Rise" built powerful alliances to combat hate, fostering a more compassionate and understanding society.

Words to Stories

As part of the European Union-funded project From Words to Stories, we organized two full-day training sessions on November 9 and December 7, 2024, in Sofia. The sessions gathered 62 participants from all over Bulgaria, including activists, community leaders, and individuals committed to countering hate speech. To maximize impact, the sessions were structured to encourage diverse participation, with a strong representation of LGBTIQ+, Roma, and Jewish communities. The training program focused on understanding hate speech, its intersectional impact, and strategies for effective advocacy. Expert-led sessions covered key topics, including communication tools for campaigning, countering discrimination, and fostering collaboration. Participants engaged in dynamic discussions, exploring challenges and solutions in addressing hate speech in their communities. A key takeaway from the trainings was the importance of constructive dialogue in navigating complex social issues. Discussions reinforced the need for inclusive spaces where diverse perspectives can be expressed and understood. Looking ahead, From Words to Stories will continue with masterclasses in 2025, providing mentorship and support for participants to further develop their initiatives. These efforts are strengthening networks of activists and equipping them with the tools to create meaningful change.



AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGING ALLIES



Rainbow Rise

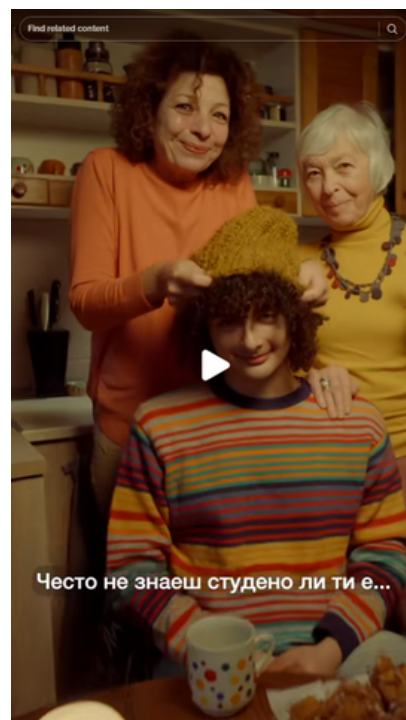
The project aims to encourage and equip local civil society organizations that work with marginalized groups with skills to answer to the LGBTIQ+ community in the city of Varna. The activities raised the awareness of local NGOs on the daily challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people such as vulnerable groups and the systematic violations of their rights, but also created partnerships between Bilitis and those organisations to improve the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in their initiatives. In 2024, a training on sensitivity, intersectionality and inclusion was held with a total of 39 participants from local NGO's and further mentoring was provided in order to strengthen cross-city collaboration and ensure adequate service provision of LGBTIQ+ people. Along with this, a handbook on intersectionality and LGBTIQ+ rights was developed and designed in order to disseminate good practices on inclusion and recognition of intersectional identities and their specific needs. The handbook can be found on Bilitis' [website](#).



AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGING ALLIES

Bursting the Bubble

As part of the broader communications initiative “Bursting the Bubble: Changing Public Opinion on LGBTIQ+ in Bulgaria,” Bilitis Foundation focused its efforts on shifting narratives around queer families through a strategic, hope-based campaign. The aim was to challenge prevailing stereotypes and reach beyond the LGBTIQ+ community to engage a broader, movable middle audience. Central to this effort was the “Chosen Family” video campaign, which applied design thinking methodology to develop emotionally resonant content grounded in real-life stories. Implemented between April and December 2024, the campaign featured three short-form videos distributed via Instagram Reels and TikTok, portraying diverse chosen family dynamics in joyful, everyday moments. Navigating external challenges, including the passage of anti-LGBTI+ legislation, the campaign deliberately centered narratives of love, support, and belonging rather than confrontation. By showcasing queer joy and authentic representation, the “Chosen Family” campaign reached over 225,000 viewers across platforms, successfully reshaping public discourse around queer families and laying a strong foundation for future storytelling-based advocacy.





RESEARCH AND DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY

RESEARCH AND DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY



In addition to the groundbreaking research project on gender identities and civil registration systems, Bilitis also commenced another research project funded by the EL*C on **gender-based violence against LBTI+ people**. Through research and awareness raising Bilitis aims to address gender-based violence (GBV) against LBTIQ women, trans and non-binary persons in Bulgaria, which are under researched and legally neglected sub-groups of survivors of this widespread social anomaly. The project will help develop an evidence-based advocacy strategy for improving the legal protection and support to survivors, strengthen the internal capacity of Bilitis for provision of support to survivors, enhance collaboration with other service providers, and empower the target groups to build resilience towards GBV.

During the first months of the project, an online survey on LBTI+ people's experiences with GBV was created and disseminated, gathering 266 responses. As part of a more expansive report, a look into the current Bulgarian legal framework as well as research into EU best practices for combating GBV as it pertains to LBTIQ+ people will be executed in order to get a fuller picture of the situation both in-country and on the European level. In 2025, the project foresees deepening connections with service providers and improving their knowledge on working with LBTIQ people through a focus group that will help identify needs and 5 short videos that will showcase specific experiences and steps to take in their journey to better service provision. We look forward to continuing the work into 2025 and publishing an in-depth report on the topic.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

The strengthening of our organizational resilience this year was profound. By embracing horizontally inclusive decision-making and strategic collaboration, we enhanced our agility and impact. Sustained core support from trusted donors, such as the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Astraea Lesbian Foundation, and the Bulgarian Fund for Women, strengthened our foundations and fueled our ambitious vision for the future. It also helped us pass through institutional compliance checks, instigated by radical anti-rights groups that sent signals to four state institutions to check if our work with adolescents meets all legal requirements. The compliance checks did not find any legal breaches.

We significantly advanced our organizational capacity to conduct rigorous scientific research within the community. Through dedicated training provided by Johns Hopkins University, three staff members mastered qualitative research methodologies, data coding, and in-depth analysis techniques, empowering Bilitis to lead impactful, evidence-based advocacy and interventions.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, Bilitis maintained a stable cash flow through a strategic mix of core support and project grants. Core funding was generously provided by the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice – Intersex Human Rights Fund, and the Bulgarian Fund for Women, ensuring operational sustainability and enabling organizational growth. Additionally, project grants were primarily received from the European Commission and the European Social Fund, with valuable contributions from the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe and the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation, which regrants EU Funds. Other project support was received from ERA Fund and the Johns Hopkins University, as well as from the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C). This diversified financial strategy supported Bilitis' ability to confidently expand critical community programs, research, and advocacy.

PUBLISHED BY:

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WE EMBARK ON 2025 WITH UNWAVERING COMMITMENT AND A CLEAR VISION FOR CHANGE. WE WILL FURTHER AMPLIFY OUR ADVOCACY, EXPAND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, AND DEEPEN IMPACTFUL PARTNERSHIPS OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION GOES TO OUR INSPIRING TEAM, PASSIONATE VOLUNTEERS, COMMITTED PARTNERS, AND GENEROUS DONORS. YOUR BELIEF AND SUPPORT EMPOWER US EVERY DAY, FUELING OUR JOURNEY TOWARD A BRIGHTER, INCLUSIVE FUTURE. TOGETHER, WE STAND STRONGER.



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THE SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



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