



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

**BILITIS RESOURCE
CENTER FOUNDATION**

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bilitis

TABLE OF CONTENTS



LETTER FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS	3
2025 AT A GLANCE	4
OUR CORE AREAS OF WORK	5
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND MOVEMENT BUILDING	6
BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF LGBTI ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS	7
SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE	9
TRANS, INTERSEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE EMPOWERMENT	12
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION	16
COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND STRENGTHENING PUBLIC DIALOGUE	18
COMMUNITY SPACES AND SUPPORT SERVICES	20
CELEBRATING PRIDE AND COMMUNITY VISIBILITY	22
SPORT AND INCLUSION	23
RESEARCH AND DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY	25
RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION	26
SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND ADVOCACY IN INTERNATIONAL SPACES	28
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	30
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	33

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS



Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2025, we do so with gratitude and a strong sense of responsibility. In a difficult political climate, Bilitis continued to defend rights, strengthen communities, and invest in long-term resilience for LGBTI people in Bulgaria.

Amid growing anti-LGBTI rhetoric and legislative pressure, we focused on consolidation and strategic growth. Through the Rainbow Network and our Leadership Academy, we strengthened activism beyond Sofia, supporting regional groups and emerging leaders with training, mentoring, and coordinated action. We deepened our commitment to trans, intersex, and non-binary people—advancing research on legal gender recognition, hosting the “Trans Awards: Everyday Wins,” and implementing initiatives such as Trans* Camp and Rising Voices. We also expanded our response to anti-LGBTI and gender-based violence through projects like INSPIRE and The Courage to Speak Out, providing psychological support, legal resources, and national partnerships.

Economic empowerment remained central to our mission. Through national and European collaborations, we supported LGBTI youth and vulnerable community members in accessing employment, skills development, and inclusive workplaces.

Sofia Pride once again brought thousands together under the message that Bulgaria is our home, alongside year-round community initiatives that foster connection and belonging.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated team, volunteers, partners, and donors. Since the beginning of 2025, we have also welcomed Karmen Abrashkova as our Communications Specialist, strengthening our connection with the community and ensuring that our work, values, and opportunities reach more LGBTI people across the country.

The road to equality in Bulgaria remains complex, but our community is organized, capable, and determined. We will continue to resist backsliding, build alliances, and work toward a future where every LGBTI person can live with dignity and safety.

With gratitude and determination,

Manuela Popova, Pol Naidenov

Co-Directors

2025 AT A GLANCE

OUR IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS



Community Empowerment and Movement Building

700+ LGBTI people empowered through community events, trainings, leadership programmes, and peer-support initiatives across Bulgaria. 250,000+ people reached through campaigns amplifying LGBTI+ voices.

Safety and Protection from Violence

40+ organizations engaged in a national support network responding to anti-LGBTI violence and providing coordinated assistance to survivors.

Trans, Intersex and Gender-Diverse Empowerment

Celebrated trans resilience and visibility through the Trans Awards: Everyday Wins, honoring the achievements of trans and non-binary people.

Economic Empowerment and Inclusion

70+ LGBTI people supported in accessing employment through career consultations and connections with inclusive workplaces.

Community Spaces and Support Services

33 community gatherings hosted at Rainbow Hub, creating regular spaces for connection, support, and belonging.

Celebrating Pride and Community Visibility

Thousands of LGBTI+ people and allies united at Sofia Pride, bringing people together in support of equality and dignity.

Research and Data-Driven Advocacy

300+ participants engaged in research contributing to 8 publications and advocacy resources, including Bulgaria's first research on gender-based violence against LGBTI+ people.

OUR CORE AREAS OF WORK



Bilitis works across a wide range of issues affecting LGBTI people in Bulgaria, from community organizing and support services to research, advocacy, and public engagement. Our activities respond to the needs of the community while also addressing broader structural challenges affecting equality, safety, and participation in society.

In 2025, our work was organized around two interconnected areas. The first focuses on community empowerment and movement building, through which we support activists, build networks across the country, provide services to community members, and create spaces for connection, learning, and collective action. The second area focuses on research and documentation for data-driven advocacy, where we gather evidence about the experiences of LGBTI people and use this knowledge to inform advocacy, policy discussions, and public debate.

Together, these areas of work allow Bilitis to respond both to the immediate needs of the community and to the long-term structural changes necessary to advance equality and human rights. The following sections present key initiatives and achievements from 2025 within these two areas.

The following sections present the main areas through which Bilitis pursued this work during 2025.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND MOVEMENT BUILDING

At the heart of Bilitis' work is the belief that lasting social change grows from strong, connected communities and an active, resilient movement. In 2025, we continued investing in initiatives that empower LGBTI people to participate in community life, develop leadership skills, and organize collectively to defend their rights.

Our efforts focused on expanding activism beyond Sofia, strengthening cooperation between grassroots organizations across the country, and providing spaces where community members can find support, build connections, and engage in collective action. Through leadership development, community services, empowerment initiatives, and targeted support programs, Bilitis continued to nurture a growing and increasingly interconnected LGBTI movement in Bulgaria.

BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF LGBTI ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Expanding and connecting LGBTI activism across Bulgaria remains a central priority for Bilitis. In 2025, we continued to strengthen the Rainbow Network, our framework for supporting LGBTI activists and grassroots organizations outside Sofia. Through this two-year CERV-funded project, Bilitis worked closely with regional groups to foster cooperation, build leadership skills, and strengthen local capacity for community organizing and advocacy.

A key activity within the Rainbow Network was the Leadership Academy, which took place in April and brought together nine participants from different towns across Bulgaria. The academy served as an entry point into activism, equipping emerging leaders with practical knowledge and tools for community organizing, advocacy, and movement building. Participants also had the opportunity to connect with activists from other regions and develop relationships that can support future collaboration and joint initiatives.



BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF LGBTI ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Throughout the year, Bilitis also provided mentoring and tailored support to regional organizations and initiatives, including Pogled Foundation (Plovdiv), Queer Varna Foundation (Varna), and ColourWave (Dupnitsa). Additional trainings and webinars focused on crisis management, improving inclusivity, and working effectively in increasingly hostile environments for civil society organizations. Regular coordination meetings supported knowledge exchange, strengthened solidarity among activists, and helped maintain collective readiness to respond to emerging challenges.

In December, Bilitis implemented a campaign promoting volunteering in queer organizations. The campaign included participation in DobroFest, Bulgaria's largest volunteering festival, where the team engaged directly with visitors and partner organizations. At the same time, Pogled Foundation and Queer Varna carried out targeted online outreach campaigns, with Bilitis' support, to recruit new volunteers and expand community engagement.

Through these activities, the Rainbow Network continued to strengthen regional activism and collaboration among LGBTI organizations and community groups across Bulgaria, contributing to a more resilient and interconnected movement.



SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

In a context of increasing anti-LGBTI rhetoric and limited institutional protection, ensuring safety and access to support for community members affected by violence remained a central priority for Bilitis in 2025. Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening community-based support systems, expanding access to psychological and legal assistance, and building cooperation with organizations working with young people and vulnerable groups. Much of this work was implemented through the projects INSPIRE: The Power of the Community (funded by the European Union and the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation) and The Courage to Speak Out (funded by the European Union and the Bulgarian Fund for Women).

A key focus was strengthening the infrastructure needed to respond to anti-LGBTI violence. Within the INSPIRE project, Bilitis expanded its online psychological support service by onboarding six new volunteer psychologists. The new volunteers were integrated into the service through structured onboarding and regular professional supervision provided by psychotherapist Miroslava Manavska, ensuring both quality of care for young people and sustainable support for the professionals providing assistance. At the same time, Bilitis convened a multidisciplinary focus group with psychologists, psychotherapists, and NGO practitioners working with youth at risk to discuss emerging patterns of anti-LGBTI bullying, gaps in prevention in schools, and strategies for supporting young people facing discrimination and violence.



SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

To strengthen referral pathways and improve access to support, Bilitis also conducted a mapping of more than 40 organizations across Bulgaria providing services for children and youth at risk, including crisis centers and organizations working with refugees, young people with disabilities, addictions, and juvenile offending. Following proactive outreach, 11 organizations from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Pernik, Kyustendil, and Haskovo joined a newly established support network. This network created a foundation for cross-regional cooperation and more coordinated responses to cases of anti-LGBTI violence.

Alongside strengthening professional networks, Bilitis continued providing direct support to survivors. Within The Courage to Speak Out project, the teams of Bilitis and Queer Varna strengthened their capacity to respond to cases of violence through specialized staff training delivered by experts from Animus. The project also expanded mechanisms for documenting and monitoring cases of anti-LGBTI violence, ensuring that survivors could access timely and coordinated support. In November, Bilitis hosted two group therapy sessions that created a safe space for people who had experienced violence to share their experiences, support one another, and begin processes of healing and resilience.

In the same period, Bilitis presented a legal guidance handbook designed to help survivors, community members, and professionals recognize, report, and respond to anti-LGBTI violence. The launch event combined the presentation of the handbook with a feminist quiz, creating an accessible and engaging space for discussion and learning within the community.



SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

Public awareness and community engagement were also important components of this work. In November, Bilitis organized a month-long campaign in Plovdiv together with Pogled Foundation, Community Center Pogled, and Lyuta Hala. The campaign included an information stand in the city center, where the team engaged directly with passersby and distributed resources on preventing and responding to anti-LGBTI violence. On 25 November, the partners organized a peaceful march commemorating victims of gender-based violence in Bulgaria and raising public awareness about the issue.

As part of the campaign, Bilitis also launched an online petition accompanied by an open letter calling on authorities to address the systemic causes of violence—including discrimination, inequality, and social exclusion—rather than responding only to individual incidents. Signatures were collected both online and during campaign events, reinforcing public support for stronger protections for women and other vulnerable groups in Bulgaria.

Through these combined efforts—strengthening professional networks, expanding support services, and engaging the public—Bilitis continued working toward a more coordinated and community-based response to anti-LGBTI violence across the country.



TRANS, INTERSEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE EMPOWERMENT

Supporting trans, intersex, and non-binary people remained a central priority of Bilitis' work in 2025. In a context where legal gender recognition remains uncertain and access to services continues to be shaped by stigma and administrative barriers, we focused on strengthening community resilience, expanding opportunities for civic participation, and amplifying the voices of trans and gender-diverse people in public conversations.

A key initiative in this area was Rising Voices, a project supported by Transgender Europe (TGEU) that focused on strengthening community participation and visibility. Between June and November 2025, Bilitis organized a civic participation workshop that brought together 15 young trans people to explore ways to engage more actively in community organizing and advocacy. As part of the project, we also developed a communication handbook for trans activists, designed to support community members in navigating public communication, responding to misinformation, and strengthening advocacy efforts.

Rising Voices also included a creative public campaign developed together with allied illustrators and creators. Through a series of empowering visual messages and an impromptu pop-up exhibition, the campaign reached more than 25,000 people across social media and attracted over 200 visitors in person. By combining artistic expression with advocacy, the initiative created new opportunities for dialogue between the trans community and its allies while increasing visibility and representation.



TRANS, INTERSEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE EMPOWERMENT



TRANS, INTERSEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE EMPOWERMENT



Celebrating everyday resilience and community achievements was another important aspect of this work. The “Trans Awards: Everyday Wins” event brought together approximately 50 participants for an evening dedicated to recognizing the experiences and contributions of trans and non-binary people in Bulgaria. Hosted by influencer Mimi Shishkova and featuring a special performance by pop artist Mila Robert, the event combined humor, storytelling, and symbolic awards to highlight both the challenges faced by the community and the everyday victories that often remain unseen.



TRANS, INTERSEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE EMPOWERMENT



Bilitis also continued to support opportunities for learning and international exchange. In September 2025, we co-organized Trans* Camp, an Erasmus+ youth mobility exchange implemented together with partner organizations from Spain, Slovenia, Germany, and the Netherlands. The six-day exchange brought together more than 30 trans, intersex, and non-binary participants from across Europe. Through workshops, sports activities, peer-learning sessions, and cultural exchange, participants explored the relationship between sport, identity, and wellbeing while building confidence and community connections. Six participants from Bulgaria took part in the exchange and reported increased confidence, stronger intercultural awareness, and renewed motivation to engage in community organizing in their local contexts.

In parallel with these community initiatives, Bilitis continued investing in research and evidence-based advocacy to better understand the structural barriers faced by trans and gender-diverse people. In partnership with the Gender Equity Unit at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Vital Strategies, we contributed to an international research project examining how civil registration systems affect the everyday lives of trans people. The study will inform future advocacy efforts and policy discussions in Bulgaria. More details about the research are presented in the section on Research and Data-Driven Advocacy.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

Economic exclusion remains a significant challenge for many LGBTI people in Bulgaria, particularly for those whose gender identity or gender expression exposes them to discrimination in the labour market. In 2025, Bilitis continued expanding its work to support community members in accessing employment, developing professional skills, and connecting with inclusive workplaces.

A central component of this work was the continuation of Bilitis' economic empowerment service, launched in 2023 with the support of the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe (AGEE) and implemented in partnership with GLAS Foundation. The initiative aims to support lesbian, trans, and non-binary individuals who face barriers when entering or re-entering the labour market. In 2025 alone, the programme provided support to more than 70 participants through individualized consultations and career guidance. Individuals seeking support were invited to an in-depth interview and then connected with career advisors, human resources specialists, psychologists, or companies offering employment opportunities. Several participants reported successfully securing new employment through this process.

In addition to individual consultations, the programme focused on building bridges between community members and inclusive employers. As part of these efforts, Bilitis worked to create opportunities for direct interaction between job seekers and companies committed to diversity and inclusion. Participation in Bulgaria's Career Show job fair created a visible platform where programme participants could engage with employers and explore new professional opportunities.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

Bilitis also contributed to the implementation of Connecting the Dots, a project funded by the European Social Fund and implemented in partnership with organizations from Lithuania and Bulgaria. The project focuses on supporting LGBTI young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) by strengthening their employability skills and facilitating their entry into the labour market.

Through this initiative, Bilitis established a structured support system for LGBTI NEETs in Bulgaria, combining outreach, personalized career consultations, and continuous mentoring. In 2025, the project reached 70 applicants, of whom 42 participated in tailored career guidance and employability support. Participants worked with career consultants to develop Personal Career Development Plans, identify training opportunities, and build practical job-seeking skills. Each participant had access to a series of one-on-one consultations, allowing for sustained guidance and monitoring of their progress.

At the same time, the project actively engaged employers interested in strengthening diversity and inclusion in the workplace. By connecting participants with companies and training opportunities, Bilitis and its partners aimed to build sustainable pathways to employment that can be replicated in different national contexts.



COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND STRENGTHENING PUBLIC DIALOGUE



Countering hate speech and fostering constructive public dialogue remained an important part of Bilitis' work in 2025. Through two initiatives funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, Bilitis worked together with partner organizations, youth groups, and civil society actors to strengthen alliances that can effectively respond to hate speech and discrimination targeting LGBTI people.

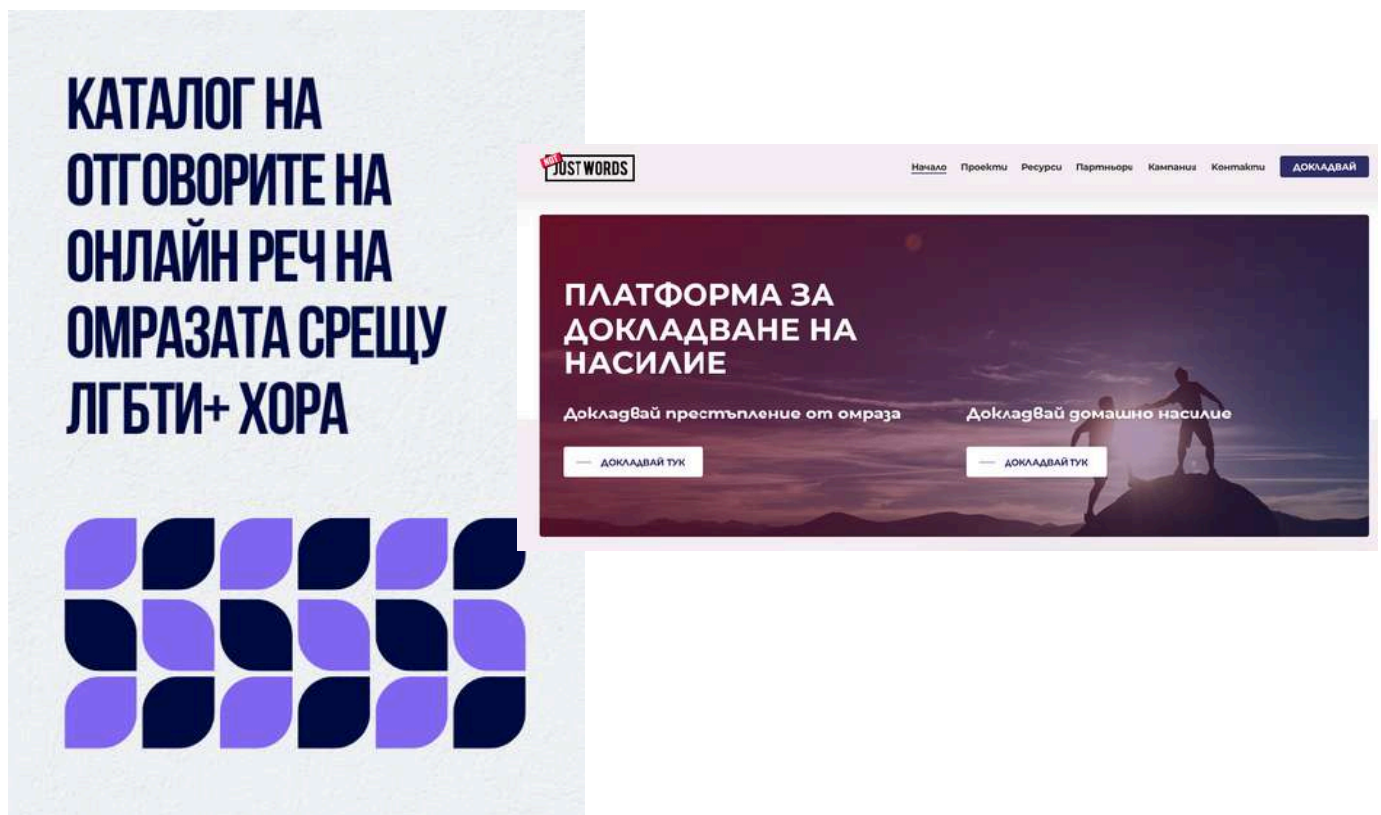
One of these initiatives was From Words to Stories, a CERV-funded project led by GLAS Foundation, which focuses on empowering young people from marginalized communities to counter hate speech through storytelling, advocacy, and community action. The project emphasizes intersectionality, youth leadership, and the creation of sustainable networks beyond the duration of formal trainings. In 2025, the project continued generating youth-led initiatives that combine activism, environmental engagement, and community building. One such initiative was Project Rea, developed with the support of Bilitis, which explores connections between environmental awareness, community participation, and queer identity. As part of its activities, Bilitis and Project Rea co-organized a volunteer clean-up event on Vitosha Mountain, bringing together community members to combine ecological action with inclusive community engagement.



COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND STRENGTHENING PUBLIC DIALOGUE

In parallel, Bilitis participated in the Responses project, another CERV-funded initiative led by GLAS Foundation and implemented together with the Association of European Journalists – Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Society for Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis. The project focuses on strengthening collective responses to online hate speech targeting LGBTI people by bringing together civil society organizations, journalists, and mental health professionals.

During the first phase of the project, partners developed a catalogue of response strategies designed to support individuals and organizations in responding to online hate speech. The catalogue presents accessible and practical approaches for reporting incidents, building counter-narratives, seeking psychological support, and protecting mental wellbeing. By combining these strategies with alliance-building between different professional and civil society actors, the project contributes to creating safer and more supportive online environments for LGBTI people and their allies.



COMMUNITY SPACES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Alongside its programmatic initiatives, Bilitis continued to provide spaces and services that support the everyday wellbeing and connection of LGBTI people in Bulgaria. These initiatives create opportunities for community members to meet, share experiences, access support, and build a sense of belonging in a safe and welcoming environment.

A central role in this work is played by Rainbow Hub, a community space co-managed by Bilitis and GLAS Foundation. Throughout 2025, Rainbow Hub remained an important point of connection for the community, offering opportunities for social interaction, mutual support, and access to guidance and information. The space also facilitated access to individual consultations and referrals, helping people navigate questions related to identity, legal and social services, and personal wellbeing.

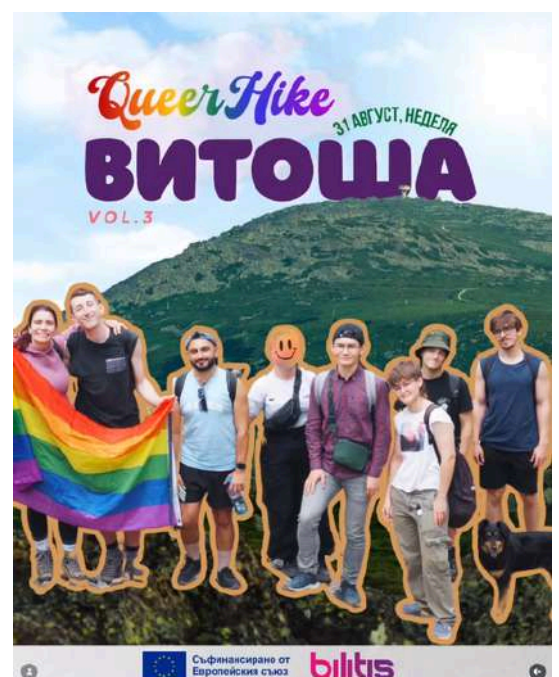
Bilitis' Open Doors initiative continued throughout the year, hosting regular events that created informal opportunities for community members to gather and connect. Nearly every Thursday, Open Doors events welcomed participants for social meetings, discussions, and creative workshops. These gatherings attracted hundreds of participants over the course of the year and played an important role in strengthening community bonds.



COMMUNITY SPACES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Community groups continued to play an important role in strengthening peer support and community participation throughout the year. The OutInBulgaria queer hiking group, Bulgaria's only queer-focused outdoor initiative, organized several hikes to Vitosha Mountain during the summer months, bringing together more than 50 participants and creating opportunities for connection, wellbeing, and visibility in nature. The TransMission group remained an important peer-support space for trans people, offering regular meetings and discussions while encouraging leadership and mutual support within the community. In 2025, Bilitis also launched a new Artivism community group, which combines artistic expression with social engagement and activism, creating new opportunities for community members to participate in creative forms of advocacy and collective expression.

To complement these in-person activities and reach people who may not be able to attend physical events, Bilitis also launched a Discord server, which quickly grew to more than 150 members. The platform enables real-time communication, peer support, and community coordination in a safe and accessible online environment. Through these spaces and services, Bilitis continued to provide vital support infrastructure for the LGBTI community in Bulgaria—ensuring that people can find connection, support, and opportunities for participation throughout the year.



CELEBRATING PRIDE AND COMMUNITY VISIBILITY



The 18th edition of Sofia Pride 2025 took place on June 14 in Sofia under the theme “We are people, not propaganda,” responding to the growing rhetoric that portrays LGBTI people and their rights as a threat. Organised by GLAS Foundation alongside Bilitis Foundation, LGBTI Deystvie, and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the event brought together thousands of participants in a visible call for equality, dignity, and human rights. The program began with an opening ceremony at Knyaz Alexander I Square featuring messages of support from international partners and diplomatic representatives, followed by a march through central Sofia and a community concert and celebration. In response to the repeated vandalism of Pride billboards in previous years, the organisers also launched a symbolic billboard campaign stating that the advertising space originally intended to promote the march was instead donated to support other social causes, highlighting solidarity and shared values across civic movements. Despite a challenging context, including several announced counter-protests and obstacles to public outreach, Sofia Pride once again demonstrated the strength and resilience of Bulgaria’s LGBTI community and its allies.



SPORT AND INCLUSION



Sport and physical activity can play an important role in strengthening wellbeing, confidence, and community belonging. In 2025, Bilitis contributed to several international initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion and equal participation of LGBTI people in grassroots sport and physical activity across Europe.

One of these initiatives was the MESIS project (Missing Pieces for Educators and Local Stakeholders Addressing Inclusive Sport), funded by Erasmus+. The project focused on strengthening the capacity of educators and local stakeholders to create inclusive sports environments using the Education Through Sport (ETS) methodology. In 2025, the project concluded with the launch of the Outsport e-training course for sports educators and trainers. In Bulgaria, Bilitis organized two dissemination events to introduce the training and continue building a network of stakeholders committed to inclusive sport. The project also produced a policy Vademecum designed to support local policy implementation in the fields of sport and education.

Bilitis also contributed to initiatives addressing gender equality and participation in sport. Through the Erasmus+ project LGBTQI Women Active, implemented with partners from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Bulgaria, the project explored the barriers faced by LGBTQI women athletes and promoted more inclusive sporting environments. In 2025, partners organized three eco-activity days and workshops in Barcelona, Nice, and Valencia, providing safe spaces where participants could engage in sport without fear of discrimination. Feedback and experiences gathered during these activities were documented and incorporated into a short film presenting good practices and personal stories from participants.

At the same time, Bilitis continued contributing to broader efforts to promote gender equality in sport through the Erasmus+ project #just-gender_community-wellbeing. In 2025, partners met in Sofia to coordinate project activities and strengthen collaboration among participating organizations. Later in the year, representatives from Bilitis took part in the project's Interactive Network Conference in Berlin, which brought together practitioners, NGOs, and experts to exchange knowledge and discuss intersectional approaches to gender equality in sport and physical activity.

SPORT AND INCLUSION

Bilitis also piloted a new approach to inclusive sport through the Erasmus+ small cooperation partnership project En Garde for All, coordinated by Bilitis and implemented together with five partner organizations—three from Bulgaria and two from Spain. The project tests an innovative methodology designed to improve the inclusion and wellbeing of neurodiverse and LGBTI people in sports environments, using fencing as the first sport in which the approach is implemented. By working closely with sports educators and practitioners, the project explores how training methods, communication styles, and learning environments can be adapted to make sports participation more accessible and supportive. Following the testing phase, Bilitis plans to promote the methodology more broadly and encourage its application across additional sports disciplines.

Through these initiatives, Bilitis continued contributing to the development of more inclusive sports environments while strengthening the connection between community wellbeing, physical activity, and social inclusion.



RESEARCH AND DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Evidence and documentation play a central role in Bilitis' advocacy work. In a context where reliable data on the experiences of LGBTI people in Bulgaria remains limited, our research initiatives aim to document lived realities, identify structural barriers, and generate knowledge that can inform policy discussions, public debate, and community strategies. In 2025, Bilitis contributed to several research initiatives at both national and international levels, combining qualitative research, community consultation, and policy analysis.

A key research focus during the year was documenting the experiences of trans and gender-diverse people navigating administrative systems. In partnership with the Gender Equity Unit at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Vital Strategies, Bilitis contributed to the international research project *Diverse Gender Identities and Implications for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)*. Fieldwork in Bulgaria was conducted in Sofia, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, and Burgas and included 21 in-depth interviews with trans and gender-diverse participants, as well as a focus group with legal experts, healthcare professionals, and therapists working with the community. The research explores how mismatched or inaccessible identity documents affect everyday life, including access to healthcare, employment, education, banking services, and mobility. The findings will contribute to a cross-country academic publication and a dedicated national report that will support advocacy for legal and administrative reforms in Bulgaria.

Проучване за транс, интерсекс и небинарни хора в България

Ако си:

- транс, интерсекс и/или небинарен човек
- на възраст над 18 години
- в процес на смяна на документи (или обмисляш процедурата и искаш да ни разкажеш за това)

Сподели историята си в интервю!

- Анонимно
- Онлайн или на живо
- Удобно за теб време

JOHNS HOPKINS BLOOMBERG SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
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66%* от ЛБТИ хората са преживели една или друга форма на насилие.

Разкажи ни своята история.

* Според анкетата на "Токсичните отношения в ЛБТИ връзките" и интервюта със 8 български ЛБТИ хора в България" от 2025г.

ELC bilitis

АНКЕТА
ЗА ТОКСИЧНИТЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В ЛБТИ ВРЪЗКИТЕ

ПОПЪЛНИ

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RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION



Bilitis also finalized a comprehensive research report on gender-based violence against LGBTI+ people, supported by the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C). The study combined qualitative interviews, quantitative data collection, analysis of the Bulgarian legal framework, and a review of European good practices. As the first research of its kind focusing specifically on LGBTI+ people in Bulgaria, the report provides an important evidence base for organizations and institutions working to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The findings were disseminated to service providers across the country and discussed during a community event at Rainbow Hub that brought together activists, professionals, and community members to reflect on recommendations for improving support systems.

In 2025, Bilitis also launched the implementation of the CLICK project (Connecting families, educators and policymakers to improve the well-being of LGBTIQ children through an intersectional approach), led by the University of Girona and implemented in partnership with organizations from Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, and Italy. The project aims to better understand experiences of gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ children and to strengthen the capacity of educational professionals and families to respond effectively. During 2025, partners met in Girona to establish the research methodology and project timeline, laying the groundwork for data collection that will begin in 2026. The project will produce both national and consortium-wide reports that will inform policy discussions and educational practices across Europe.

Bilitis also **developed and launched the Ripple Effect project**, a national research initiative designed to address the lack of reliable data on the social impact of the anti-LGBTI “propaganda” law adopted in Bulgaria in 2024. As the coordinator of this project, Bilitis works together with partner LGBTI organizations in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna to document how the law affects communities, civil society organizations, and public discourse. In 2025, the partners established the research methodology and implementation plan and organized a training on research ethics, safeguarding, and qualitative research methods to prepare for interviews and focus groups that will take place in 2026. The project will generate the first systematic assessment of the law’s social impact and produce policy recommendations to support advocacy efforts aimed at protecting fundamental rights and civic space.

Through research, documentation, and international collaboration, Bilitis continues to build a stronger evidence base for advocacy—ensuring that the voices and experiences of LGBTI people in Bulgaria inform policy debates and contribute to lasting structural change.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND ADVOCACY IN INTERNATIONAL SPACES



Beyond formal research projects, Bilitis also contributed to international discussions on LGBTI rights, policy development, and community support through participation in several European and global advocacy spaces.

In June 2025, Bilitis took part in UN Trans Advocacy Week in Geneva, where trans activists from around the world met during the session of the UN Human Rights Council to engage with UN mechanisms and advocate for the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI). The mandate was successfully renewed later that year.

Bilitis also participated in TGEU’s Trans Legal Net meeting, which brought together legal practitioners and grassroots activists working on trans rights across Europe. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange legal expertise and raise awareness among European policymakers about the lack of implementation of key EU court decisions related to gender identity rights.



SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND ADVOCACY IN INTERNATIONAL SPACES



In addition, members of the team took part in several European conferences and strategic meetings, including the ECAS conference in Brussels, where Bilitis spoke about the lack of recognition of rainbow families in Bulgaria, and a policy meeting in Bologna organized by TGEU and ILGA-Europe focusing on healthcare, education, and legal recognition for transgender youth, and ILGA-Europe Annual General Assembly and Annual Conference in Vilnius, Lithuania. Additionally, as a full member with voting rights, Bilitis participated in the Annual General Assemblies of EGLSF, TGEU, and OII Europe, contributing to decision-making within these international networks.

Through these engagements, Bilitis contributed perspectives from Bulgaria to international policy discussions while strengthening partnerships with organizations working to advance LGBTI equality across Europe.



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



In 2025, Bilitis continued strengthening its organizational capacity in order to sustain long-term impact and respond effectively to an increasingly challenging environment for civil society organizations in Bulgaria. Alongside its programmatic work, the organization invested in internal learning, professional development, and institutional resilience.

A key area of development during the year was the expansion of Bilitis' capacity to conduct rigorous community-based research. Building on specialized training received from Johns Hopkins University, in 2025 the Bilitis team conducted research and data analysis as part of a collaborative project with the Gender Equity Unit at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, working under their practical guidance and mentorship. This process allowed our team to apply advanced qualitative research methodologies, data coding, and analytical techniques in practice, significantly strengthening Bilitis' capacity to contribute to high-level academic research and evidence-based advocacy.

The team also participated in additional professional trainings aimed at strengthening the quality of support services provided to community members. These included training on working with survivors of violence and trafficking, ensuring that Bilitis' services remain responsive, ethical, and aligned with best practices in community-based support. Team members also participated in international learning opportunities such as IGLYO's Activist Academy and a volunteering seminar organized by Ljubljana Pride in Slovenia, which provided valuable spaces for exchanging experiences with activists from across Europe and further strengthening our capacity for grassroots organizing and community support.



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Bilitis continued strengthening its international partnerships and professional networks through participation in key European and regional gatherings of civil society organizations. In 2025, members of the team participated in the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C) conference in Rome, which brought together activists and organizations working on lesbian, bisexual, and trans rights across Europe and Central Asia. The conference provided an important space for exchanging experiences, discussing emerging challenges for feminist and LGBTI movements, and strengthening regional collaboration.

Bilitis also took part in the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe (AGEE) Grantee Convening in Athens, which gathered organizations supported by the alliance to reflect on strategies for advancing gender equality and strengthening economic empowerment initiatives across Europe. In addition, the team participated in grantee convenings organized by the Bulgarian Fund for Women (BFW) and the European Social Fund (ESF), which provided opportunities for peer learning, exchange of practices, and reflection on the implementation of supported initiatives.

Beyond these gatherings, Bilitis also took part in capacity-building activities offered within national and European funding programs, including those organized under the ProEUValues, INSPIRE (WCIF), and BIRDS (BFW) initiatives. These learning opportunities supported the team in strengthening program implementation, improving monitoring and evaluation practices, and enhancing collaboration with other civil society organizations working on human rights and democratic participation.

Finally, Bilitis continued strengthening its internal communication capacity. In 2025, we welcomed Karmen Abrashkova as Communications Specialist, further enhancing our ability to engage with the community, share opportunities and resources, and communicate the impact of our work to wider audiences.

Through these efforts, Bilitis continued building a stronger and more resilient organization capable of supporting the LGBTI movement in Bulgaria in the years ahead.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 2025, Bilitis maintained a stable financial position through a strategic combination of core support and project-based funding. Core funding was provided by the Bulgarian Fund for Women, which supported the organization's operational sustainability and enabled us to maintain key community services and advocacy activities. At the end of 2025, Bilitis was also awarded a new core support grant from the Bulgarian Fund for Women, which will support the organization's work throughout 2026.

Additional core support was provided by the Astraea Foundation Intersex Human Rights Fund, which continues to support Bilitis' work advancing the rights and visibility of intersex people in Bulgaria.

Alongside core funding, Bilitis implemented several projects supported by European and international donors. Project grants were primarily received from the European Commission and the European Social Fund, with additional support from the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe, the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF), and the Bulgarian Fund for Women, which also supported specific project initiatives. Additional project support was provided by the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C) and Johns Hopkins University.

This diversified funding structure allowed Bilitis to continue expanding its community programs, research initiatives, and advocacy work while strengthening the organization's long-term sustainability.

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WE EMBARK ON 2026 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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