



# Annual Report of Youth LGBT organisation Deystvie

Sofia | 2020



# Mission and Vision

Deystvie is an organization dedicated to contributing to change in the lives of LGBTI people in Bulgaria through legislative change and regulation of the rights of same-sex partners and their families, incrimination of hate crimes and a legally regulated procedure for gender reassignment. Our vision is to achieve full legal recognition and social inclusion of LGBTI people in Bulgarian society, in which they feel safe and acknowledged.

# Goals

- Informed and empowered LGBTI community;
- Improving the qualification of state and municipal employees in working with the LGBTI community;
- Informing the general public about the problems/rights of the LGBTI community;
- Legal regulation of relationships between same-sex partners;
- Legal regulation of same-sex families with children;
- Legal regulation of the procedure for gender reassignment;
- Incrimination in the Criminal Code of hate crimes on homophobic and transphobic grounds.

# Political and Social Context of Our Work

According to a survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2012, Bulgaria ranks in one of the last places in Europe in terms of tolerance and one of the first in terms of discrimination against LGBTI people. In 2020, the largest survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights among LGBTI people in Europe was conducted (more than 140,000 LGBTI people participated), and it shows that LGBTI people continue to live in the shadows for fear of discrimination and violence. One in two respondents to the survey said they had been harassed in the previous year based on their sexual orientation, and one in five trans or intersex people had been physically or sexually assaulted.

In Bulgaria, the political discourse is mostly sexist and homophobic. There is no political party in the Parliament that protects the rights of LGBTI people. The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria regulates marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and the legislation does not allow the conclusion of the so-called civil partnerships. Therefore, the families of LGBTI people in Bulgaria do not have legally regulated protection and according to a study of Deystvie from 2018, they are deprived of over 300 rights which heterosexual persons in the country can enjoy. A 2015 Amnesty International report about Bulgaria shows that 86% of LGBTI people in Bulgaria who have suffered from hate crimes based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity do not report them. The low rates of reporting are also confirmed by the work of Deystvie in a 2017 report. Hate crimes based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity are not included in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria either as a basic offense or as an aggravated one, which leads to low levels of criminal investigation and lack of prevention according to Deystvie's data.

There is no legal procedure in the Bulgarian legislation for gender reassignment for trans and intersex persons, which creates a contradictory case-law of the courts in such cases.

# What We Are Fighting For

- Mobilizing the LGBTI community
- Social change
- Amendment of the Criminal Code
- Legal recognition of the relationships of LGBTI people and recognition of the families we have created
- Establishing a legal procedure for gender reassignment

**What We Achieved in 2020 z.**

# We started the process of expanding, reorganizing and supporting the Legal Program:



We started activities to expand the Legal Program in the cities of Burgas, Varna, Plovdiv and Veliko Tarnovo;

We continued working with the coordinators of the Legal Program in the 5 cities;

We conducted 3 specialized trainings for lawyers on the topics related to the protection of the rights of LGBTI people and expanded the circle of lawyers who work and support the activities of the Legal Program;

We helped increase the skills for recognizing discrimination and hate crimes at the training of young LGBTI activists organized by „Bilitis“;

We learned from the legal program of our Romanian colleagues, Accept, who led the Coman case - a landmark case for the LGBTI community in Europe;

We participated in the meeting of the European LGBTI lawyers in Frankfurt;



We published the book *The Courage to Be* with 11 stories of people who used the Legal Program, and we organized launches of the book in the cities of Sofia and Burgas.;



We provided 100+ consultations on various LGBTI cases;

We launched the only [legal platform](#) for access to specialized legal aid for LGBTI people.

# For same-sex families:



We launched the *Family for All* campaign on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and organized over 200 people to file an application to the Sofia Municipality with a request to register their civil partnerships with a person of the same sex;



Sofia Pride Film Fest was held under the motto “Family for All“;



We filed the first case before the ECtHR for recognition of same-sex marriage concluded abroad - Koilova and Babulkova v. Bulgaria, Application no.40209/20;

We sent a [request for a preliminary ruling](#) to the CJEU on birth certificates for children of two same-sex partners - C-409/20. Interpretation of this case is likely to change European Union law and ensure the rights of all children born to same-sex families across the EU;



We submitted a petition to the National Assembly for recognition of civil partnerships of persons of the same sex;



Deystvie presented submissions during the [UN Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights](#);

We launched the first [video](#) for our “Family for All“ campaign.



# In the fight against hate crimes:



Together with OSCE, we launched a [platform for reporting hate crimes](#) for all groups;



We created a [series of publications](#) on hate crimes;

In 2020 we organized four regional and two national trainings for investigative police officers together with the Ministry of the Interior, the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior and police officers from Serbia and Greece;



We organized the first [round table](#) with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Council of Europe with a focus on hate crimes against LGBTI people;

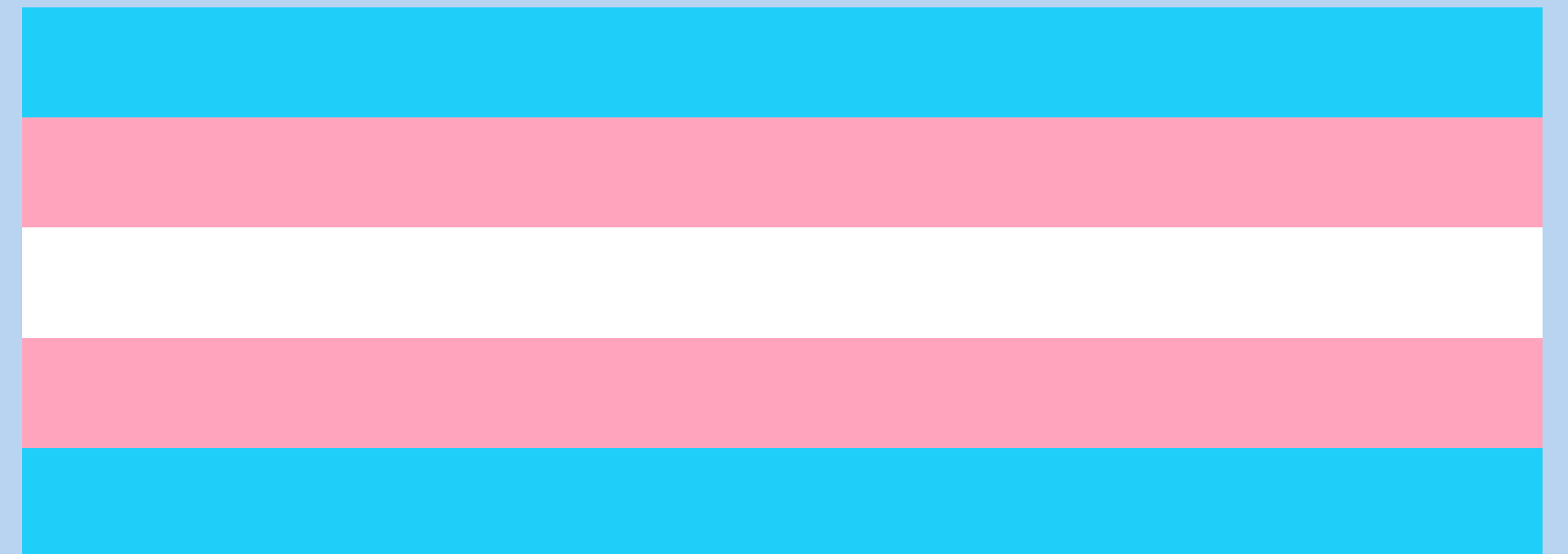
Thanks to the tireless work of the LGBTI organizations Deystvie, GLAS and Bilitis, Bulgaria received [14 recommendations](#) to amend the Criminal Code and add hate crimes against LGBTI people in it during the UN Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights.

# For trans and intersex people:

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We continue to handle and win cases of trans and intersex people for changing their legal gender throughout the country, and we won 6 such cases in 2020;

For the first time [a recommendation](#) was made to Bulgaria to respect the rights of trans and intersex people during the UN Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights.



# Visibility and LGBTI rights:

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In February 2020, we managed to hold the Sofia Pride Film Fest which was attended by over 1000 people;

In June 2020, we organized the display of the rainbow flag in a visible place in the capital;



Our activity covers 5 regional cities - Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo - and in some places, we work with local communities, local coordinators, and local lawyers;

We organized the first training of its kind for discrimination and law of the Roma, deaf and LGBTI communities;



We successfully co-organized the first online Sofia Pride;

We organized the summer Equality Festival of the Equality League;



We held over 50 psychological support meetings;

We supported the LGBTI community on the city of Plovdiv at the “No to Homophobia” march organized by them;

We organized a training for community organizing especially for young activists from Plovdiv and Burgas.

# What Awaits Us in 2021 z.

- A new member joining the organization's team;
- We were recognized as an organization that has the potential to contribute to social change, and we were among the 5 organizations selected to receive funding for their administrative needs for 2021 from the Bulgarian Fund for Women; 5½
- The publication of the next book from the *The Courage to Be* series – a study of the needs of parents of LGBTI people and a book of stories of parents of LGBTI people;
- Facilitating access to legal advice and aid for LGBTI cases;
- And much more...

You have rights. Find us!

**TOGETHER WE MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN**



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