

Meet Denitsa from the Bulgarian organisation Deystvie, co-host of our Annual Conference

[Blog, Bulgaria, ILGA-Europe Annual Conference](#)

Denitsa Lyubenova is co-founder of Deystvie, one of the three Bulgarian LGBTI organisations co-hosting the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference in Sofia this month. Here Denitsa talks about the recent elections in Bulgaria and what the possible outcome will mean for LGBTI people in the country.

Our Annual Conference is almost upon us, and this year it will place later in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. The conference is a very much needed moment of connection and empowerment for the LGBTI movement in Europe and Central Asia, as we have not been able to get together in person since 2019. We can only do this thanks to the support of the three Bulgarian organisations who will be hosting us all, Bilitis, Deystvie and Glas Foundation.

In this blog, Denitsa Lyubenova, lawyer and co-founder of [Deystvie](#), tells us about what it means to co-host ILGA-Europe's conference, what the key developments have been for Bulgarian LGBTI communities and organisations in recent years, and what they expect from the government elected this month, on October 3.

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Denitsa Lyubenova

Hi Denitsa, tell us, what does it mean for your organisation to co-host ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference?

I think it's a great opportunity, not only for our organisation and to show our work, but also to show the problems the community in Bulgaria face. And I think all the participants, people from Europe and Central Asia, International guests, politicians, donors and the media will basically feel what we experience here on a daily basis.

For Bulgaria this will be the biggest LGBTI event of the decade, of the millennium so far, and we're really looking forward to it. We are working a lot to make it happen!

Originally, the decision to celebrate the Annual Conference in Sofia was made in 2019 but it was postponed it for well-known reasons. What key changes or events have taken place for the LGBTI movement and communities in Bulgaria ever since?

At the moment, the three organisations Glas, Bilitis and Deystvie are working together very closely. Each organisation is putting on a lot of events. For example, Deystvie has organised a couple of round tables with institutions. Also, since last year, we've been organising something that we're very proud of, called Sofia Human Rights Forum. It's not only an LGBTI related event. It concerns human rights as a whole and rule of law, not only in Bulgaria, but also for those who grew up here. It also touches base with human rights violations and opportunities all across the European Union. We had this event in March this year, with people talking about LGBTI rights and

gender equality from Poland, the UK, and from Bulgaria as well.

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The GERB party has won the parliamentary elections and it is reported that it will form a coalition. How do you expect this will affect LGBTI people’s rights and communities and organisations?

Well, we’re still not sure if GERB will form a coalition, but if that happens, it will definitely not be with the pro-liberal and pro-democratic parties in Bulgaria, which took a stand for the LGBT rights in the last couple of elections.

I’m not very an optimistic person. My understanding is that if GERB forms a coalition, it will be with the far-right political party, Revival. But we’ll see. By the time the conference happens, we will know whether GERB will form a coalition or if we’ll have another election.

It’s a very difficult situation. Bulgaria has been in a political crisis for a year and a half. This prevents our work because we need a stable government to work with to achieve more sustainable legislative change. Without having a government in place, it’s very difficult for us to navigate these changes.

During the last six months, with the last government Bulgaria had, the Deystvie team managed to be part of a working group with the Ministry of Justice in order to amend the criminal code of Bulgaria, and we were very happy about this. We made a very big step forward for the LGBT rights in Bulgaria, especially in hate crime legislation. However, the government fell and as a result the amendment of the criminal code was not voted on in parliament.

Also, we’re looking forward for the implementation of the Baby Sara case. The lack of government prevents us from getting the judgment of the Court of Justice of the EU, recongising Baby Sara and her same-sex parents, implemented. At this rate, I think we’re going to have Granny Sara before she gets her rightful citizenship in Bulgaria.

The ILGA-Europe Annual Conference takes place in Sofia, Bulgaria from October 19-22. To learn more about Deystvie, [visit their website here](#).