

#IESofia2022: Daily Report, Friday October 21

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

We began the day imagining the future of collective resilience, as part of the work of ‘shaping the world to come’, which is the theme of our Annual Conference 2022. Read our daily report for a snapshot of another day of great panels, discussions, workshops and more!

It was another sunny morning in Sofia as hundreds of LGBTI activists got up and ready for the second day of ILGA-Europe’s Annual Conference. Under this year’s theme, ‘Shaping the World to Come’, LGBTI activists and organisations from across Europe and Central Asia spent a wonderful day, connecting and learning from each other so that we can continue to build our resilient movement.

Kicking the day off, our board member Natia Gvianishvili moderated the second panel of the week. Speakers Dajana Bakić, Operations Manager at Sarajevo Open Centre; Nour Adis, Co-president of Queer Intersection in France; and Radoslav Stoyanov from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, discussed and imagined what collective resilience can look like in the LGBTI movement – “or movements” as Natia noted. Collective resilience is the second strand of this year’s Annual Conference and a pillar for LGBTI activism to continue to drive positive change in our societies.

The meanings of resilience



Panel: Collective Resilience in the LGBTI Movement at the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference 2022. Photo by Marina Bandelyuk

Beginning with the basics, the panel shared their own definitions of resilience. “Solidarity and support among each other, and a safe space where we can share ideas and the sense that you belong, where you will find someone who will find with you – that’s collective resilience for me,” Dajana said.

Resilience also means looking outside of our own spaces and beyond the immediate struggles, Nour explained. “We try to go back to the body and our connection with creativity, to express new and many things. We create magical moments where things can happen outside of our mainstream work, our cities, our usual queer spaces.”

“Resilience for me, in Bulgaria specifically, comes through visibility,” Radoslav explained. At the age of 14, he searched the word “gay” on Wikipedia and found a photo of hundreds of people at a Pride march in New York City.

“This small photograph was very important for me,” he said. “When I first realised I was into guys I was very scared. It was a photograph taken from above and there were so many people. That really helped.”

This is why Sofia Pride is key to LGBTI communities in Bulgaria, Radislav explained. “Sofia Pride gives courage to many. I can see that because each year the number of participants increases.”

Resilience and the politics of joy



Left to right: Nour Audis, Co-President of Queer Intersection, Dajana Bakić, Operations Manager at Sarajevo Open Centre. Photo by Marina Bandelyuk

Other insights that came from the panel were that anyone can be a stakeholder of LGBTI people's resilience. Allies can be found among academic researchers who are "shaping the future" too, as well as activists from other movements. Or flexible donors who understand the needs, and state funders that give back to civil society because civil society is doing the work on their behalf. Also, our own networks of families and friends can be helpful in providing resources that LGBTI communities need.

What really came to the fore was that to prioritise resilience, we have to bring it back to the basics. After some years living a nomadic life, Nour realised they needed some stability to bring healing to the community. "For our organisation, resilience comes from a place of privilege, because we can take the time to slow down and reflect."

"It's important to be aware that we need to build resilience; we need to prioritise and put building resilience in our schedules," Dajana said, emphasising the importance of the ILGA-Europe Annual conference in this respect.

"You need to pick your battles", Radoslav added. "Sometimes you don't need to react to everything or excessively. If we are always in reaction mode, we are not ready for what's needed in our communities."

The panel closed with a reminder to look and celebrate joy daily, but also during the fight for our rights, whether we win or lose. "We are constantly pushed by external actors to focus on trauma, Natia rounded up. "We are not

interesting to the external world when we are happy. I think this is what has kept us away from understanding the political importance of queer joy for such a long time.”

Today's workshops



Workshops throughout the day were full of great and vital discussion

Towards the end of the morning, there was a vital workshop about how humanitarian actors can understand what they need to do for LGBTI communities in a crisis, from providing shelter to translating information in local languages and much more. In parallel, other participants filled the room of the 'LGBTI Activism in the Face of Judicial Harassment' workshop, where activists from Poland and Turkey shared their experiences of abuse and harassment in the legal system, which has led some activists to leave activism and even their country.

At the 'Communicate to Engage the LGBTI Community' workshop, participants explored the important but often overlooked questions of how we engage our own communities. Key takeaways included the importance of building trust between organisations and communities; making sure communities see themselves reflected back in a positive light; communicating about positive things and not only focusing on negativity; making communities feel involved and giving them a platform; and keeping up to speed on the issues and needs of communities.

The 'LGBTIQ Equity in the Labour and Homelessness Sector' workshop proposed creative answers for some of the most vulnerable groups in our communities, including solutions outside the formal systems and informal

collaboration. For instance, a participant from Slovenia shared a success story of crisis accommodation for young LGBTI people with individual hosts.

After lunch

After a busy and chatter-filled lunch, Intersex Greece shared their learnings from six-months working with the government leading to the ban of intersex genital mutilation in the country, and results from their ongoing research. At the same time, a mini-panel was held to share experiences of working with institutions against hate crime in Bulgaria, Romania and Georgia, including international court rulings. At the Creating Inclusive Schools workshop, participants got to know more about the [School's Out Project](#), which aims to create safe environments for LGBTI students, and many other inspiring examples in the education field.

Self-care is a Feminist Issue was the topic of discussion of another activist-led workshop. There, participants brought ideas and experiences setting healthy boundaries at work and in personal relations so we can stay stronger together and remove existing stigma from mental health-related issues.

What leadership means was one of the questions addressed at the 'Maintaining the Resilience of Teams Providing Support to LGBTI People Facing Crisis' workshop. Speakers provided varied perspectives, from having different leadership levels to a full horizontal management. "Making decisions under war conditions is extremely difficult," Olga Poliakova from Gender Stream in Ukraine shared during the session.

Later in the afternoon participants had the chance to learn more about access to healthcare for trans children and teenagers, campaigning in Russia, and a chance to meet the candidates to the ILGA-Europe board and ILGA World board and steering committees over cake and coffee.

To wrap up the day, as we write this blog, participants are gearing up to sing at the now legendary Annual Conference Karaoke. Can you guess what was the hit of the evening? Stay tuned to our channels for tomorrow's report!