

ANNUAL REPORT

Feminism is for All



20
24

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1. ABOUT US

Bulgarian Fund for Women (BFW) supports feminist organizations, collectives and activists who challenge the patriarchal status quo and work towards a systemic change for women, girls, and all marginalized communities.

Our mission is to support the human rights movement and the social justice movement by fostering philanthropy focused on achieving structural change.

Our vision is that all women and girls live in a just and equal world where their choices are respected, and their voices are heard.

We strive to overcome numerous structural problems such as lack of gender justice, ubiquitous sexism and misogyny, increasing social inequalities, shrinking space for civil society, attacks against liberal democratic values, insufficient social engagement and philanthropic support for human rights movements and for achieving social justice.

Our values are: solidarity, self- and collective care, diversity, accountability, fearlessness, responsiveness and celebration.



BFW IS A MEMBER OF:



Council for Civil Society Development (CCSD), National Council on Equality Between Women and Men at the Council of Ministers, Committee on Direct Participation of Citizens and Interaction with Civil Society



BOARD OF TRUSTEES



**Stanimira
Hadjimitova**



**Denitsa
Lyuncheva**



**Vanya
Karaganeva**

TEAM

Nadejda Dermendjieva

Co-director

Gergana Kutseva

Co-director

Denitsa Mishonova

Accounting Manager

Daniela Raycheva

Financial Planning and Analyses Director

Rada Elenkova

Program Director

Veronika Petrova

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Martina Bogdeva

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Programs and Project
Evaluation Manager

Mira Dobрева

Learning, Evaluation
and Accountability Manager

Dobromira Terpesheva

Senior Project Manager

Rosena Ivanova

Project Manager

Siyana Raykovska

Project Coordinator

Victoria Petrova

Communications and
Development Director

Raya Raeva

Communications and
Campaigns Director

Anna Dineva

Administrative Coordinator

Alexandra Kamburova

Trainee

2. INTRODUCTION

ADDRESS FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

The year 2024 was a special year for Bulgarian Fund for Women (BFW) – we turned 20! We celebrated our anniversary by uniting our community of partners and supporters, together with whom we have built a strong and multifaceted feminist movement. At an international conference, we raised key issues for the rights of women and vulnerable groups and celebrated the victories achieved through courage and community strength.



The anniversary was also a moment for reflection. In two decades, we have implemented over 750 projects, achieved an impressive 75-fold financial growth compared to 2004 and consolidated our role as a strategic partner of the civil sector. These are not just numbers and projects. Behind these successes are people, causes and communities who keep fighting for change, despite the challenges, so that we can all live together in a fairer society. Because feminism is for all! And its strength is in the solidarity that unites us.

In our anniversary year, we have made significant progress in mobilizing resources. With the help of 22 institutional and corporate donors and 118 individual donors, we raised more than € 4.2 million, bringing our annual budget to more than € 2.3 million. Over 69% of these funds – more than € 1.5 million – were invested in 66 organizations through 82 grants as well as in opportunities for their capacity building.

The year 2024 was marked by the launch of the largest funding program in the history of the Fund – the FORCE Program, with a budget of over € 1.8 million to tackle gender-based violence. This program reinforces our commitment to channel European funds directly to organizations that defend human rights in Bulgaria.

For the second time, we won a project under the European Commission's (EC) Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) program. With BIRDS in BG 2 we will continue to strengthen the democratic and pro-European non-governmental sector through financial support and capacity building opportunities.

The year 2024 was full of challenges – against a backdrop of political instability and increased attacks on human rights and the civil society sector, we remained resilient and focused on our core mission. We are grateful to all our partners, donors and supporters who have steadfastly supported us in our quest for a more just and inclusive society.

20 years later, we continue to be drivers of positive change – for equal opportunity, human dignity and social justice. As long as inequalities exist, we will continue to uphold the principles of solidarity and democracy. Thank you for walking this path with us!

Nadejda Dermendjieva and Gergana Kutseva,

BFW Co-directors

THE YEAR 2024 IN FIGURES

€ 2,370,096
annual budget

25%
budget growth
compared to 2023

€ 1,574,746
allocated in direct grants

16%
increase compared
to 2023

22
institutional and
corporate donors

118
individual donors



82
direct
grants*

*This figure excludes 23 additional payments of 10% transferred in 2024 to organizations approved under BFW programs in 2023

€ 18,343
average
grant amount

66
supported
partners

€ 59,993
maximum
grant amount



2,876,235
persons reached audience

43,041
visitors
of BFW website

27
publications
on BFW website

600
registered mentions
in online media
and other internet
sources

14
interviews with
participation in TV,
radio programs and
online platforms

823
participants in

7 events

20 YEARS BULGARIAN FUND FOR WOMEN



Feminism is for All International Conference

BFW was founded in 2004 by the Gender Project in Bulgaria Foundation (GPBF) at the initiative of its director Stanimira Hadjimitova in response to the withdrawal of a number of international donors from Bulgaria due to the country's upcoming membership in the European Union (EU). At that time, European calls for proposals often remained inaccessible to 'women's' organizations in the country. The creation of BFW aims to provide a stable local fund which is in charge of raising funds and

distributing them through programs that address the challenges faced by girls and women.

The celebration of BFW's 20th anniversary was among the most exciting initiatives in 2024. It kicked off with the traditional Grantee Meeting, to which the organizations we have supported over the years were invited. The event has become a platform for making new connections, sharing experiences and inspiration.



BFW's Grantee Meeting

The biggest event on the occasion of the anniversary was the Feminism is for All international conference, which aimed to put the spotlight on our partners and their successes, to create opportunities for connections between local active organizations and international experts on issues related to sexual and reproductive rights and health, as well as to anti-gender movements around the world, and to promote dialogue for a common cause between the civil society sector and representatives of business and media, politicians and diplomats, who were guests of the event. Three thematic discussions examined the past and successes of the women's movement, the challenges facing the civil society sector today, and the visions and dreams for women's future.

A focus of the conference was the presentation of a major study of BFW archive conducted by PhD Lea Vajsova, to be published in 2025. The initial results of the analysis of all BFW-supported projects from the inception of BFW in 2004 to 2023 highlighted the significant impact of the Fund over the years. The total number of projects funded is 752, with an impressive 75% of these being delivered since 2018. The data also shows exceptional financial



20 Years of Feminist Victories Party

growth – between 2004 and 2023, the funds managed by BFW have increased approximately 75-fold, which is 7,500% growth. The study also highlights the Fund's key role in establishing and supporting newly formed organizations. Of particular note is the share of these organizations in 2018, when 47% of the funded projects were focused on new structures – probably in response to the public mobilization after the attacks on the Istanbul Convention.

The finale of the celebration days was marked with an inspiring party under the motto '20 Years of Feminist Victories', where we gathered our partners, supporters and friends to celebrate our achievements and to remind ourselves that it is important to appreciate and celebrate every success.

On the occasion of the anniversary, we also created a series of 20 highlights reflecting key moments in the history of BFW, as well as audio interviews with human rights activists whose organizations we have supported over the years. And in 2025, we will continue to share these materials, revealing the diversity of voices and stories that have shaped the Fund's path and achievements.

3. FUNDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

For BFW, grantmaking and capacity building are two inextricably linked processes, where we are guided by the belief that the right kind of comprehensive support for collective action by women, girls, LGBTIQ+ people and human rights defenders will bring about systemic and profound social, political, cultural, economic and environmental changes – urgently needed for a more just and equitable world.

BFW contributes to the development of social movements and helps them to be more connected, coordinated and effective. The activists and organizations we support are creating and transforming systems and communities to build a better world and resist the shrinking space for civil society.





BFW event for presenting the 'Study of the needs of organizations working on women, girls and vulnerable groups' rights in Bulgaria', as well as the FORCE program.

We strive to prioritize so-called grassroots partners – led by the communities for whose rights they work; organizations with small budgets, without a long project history, newly registered and/or those operating in remote locations, because BFW's philosophy is and always will be to support and empower vulnerable groups and communities who know best the problems and the possible solutions, but often have limited capacity and access to funding.

Our programmes are based on studies of the organizations' needs, which we conduct periodically and which show us that our efforts are focused in the right

direction. In 2024, we worked on the second **'Study of the needs of organizations working on women, girls and vulnerable groups' rights in Bulgaria'**, covering 108 organizations across the country that BFW supports.

We are excited to note that its data shows a significant improvement in some important aspects of the organizations' performance compared to our previous study on the same topic published in 2022. There has been an improvement in their financial situation – now the biggest proportion or 32% of the organizations are operating with annual budgets of



BFW event for presenting the 'Study of the needs of organizations working on women, girls and vulnerable groups' rights in Bulgaria', as well as the FORCE program.

€ 51,129 – € 255,646 (BGN 100,000 – BGN 500,000), 22% with € 25,565 – € 51,129 (BGN 50,000 – BGN 100,000), 12% with € 10,226 – € 25,565 (BGN 20,000 – BGN 50,000) compared to two years ago when the biggest proportion of organizations (34.5%) were operating with small annual budgets of € 0 – € 5,113 (BGN 0 – BGN 10,000). The overall improvement in their financial situation is leading to progress in an area of concern that organizations highlighted as key in the previous study – the small number of staff employed on an employment contract and the heavy reliance on voluntary labor. The data from this analysis

demonstrates a reduction in voluntary work by almost a half (19%) at the expense of a doubling of permanent employment contracts (40%) and a significant increase in civil contracts based on current activities (40%).

While the reasons for this positive development are complex, it is worth noting the active donor role of BFW. The Fund has contributed greatly to the overall strengthening and development of the sector, on the one hand through the significant level of European funding raised over the last two years, and on the other through its targeted focus on the administrative and strategic

development of organizations with the allocation of funds and support to smaller and vulnerable organizations.

A number of challenges identified in 2022 continue to hamper the work of organizations today – insufficient and short-term funding from non-BFW grant-providing sources, lack of financial support from public institutions, difficult access to EU funding, insufficient and short-term project-based funding from the state, mistrust towards the NGO sector, need for capacity building opportunities, etc. The full analysis will be published in 2025.

In an effort to respond to any difficulties identified, we regularly adapt our funding mechanisms to be transparent, accessible, timely and flexible. Through a combination of operational support, project funding, access to emergency funds in crisis situations or emerging opportunities, and efforts to connect with global activist movements, funds are distributed across seven thematic portfolios: freedom from violence, invisible issues and communities, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker rights, LGBTIQ+ justice, strengthening of social movements, sexual and reproductive health and patient rights, and democracy and civic participation.

We believe that multi-year administrative and organizational support (core funding) is crucial to ensure the sustainability and stability of the civil society sector. Therefore, in 2024 we continued our commitment to provide long-term, flexible and restriction-free funding under the **Mission: Possible** program.

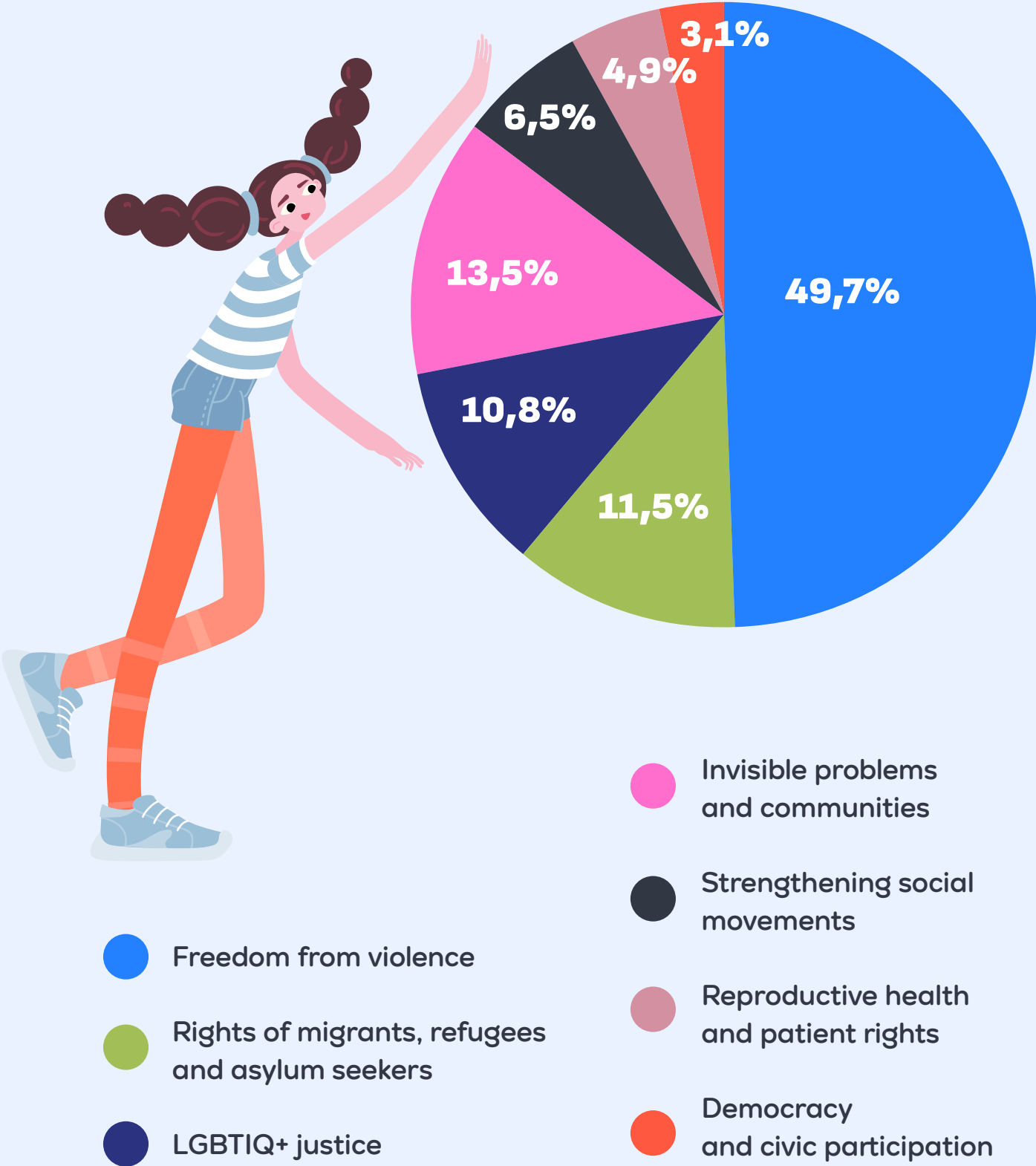
BFW **project funding** is implemented through quick and easy procedures that make it accessible even to emerging organizations, supporting them to build up experience and financial history to be able to apply to other donors in the future. The key to the success of the projects supported is that BFW provides the funds in advance and does not require own financial contribution from the organizations.

The year-long **Open Opportunities** emergency funding program provides support when it is needed most – without waiting and without competition. This program gives organizations the freedom to act immediately – on crises, threats or new opportunities that cannot wait. It provides advocacy resources for raising the visibility of key messages, issues and experiences related to women's and human rights. In a world that changes by the hour, Open Opportunities ensures that those fighting for justice and equality are not hindered by the lack of funding.

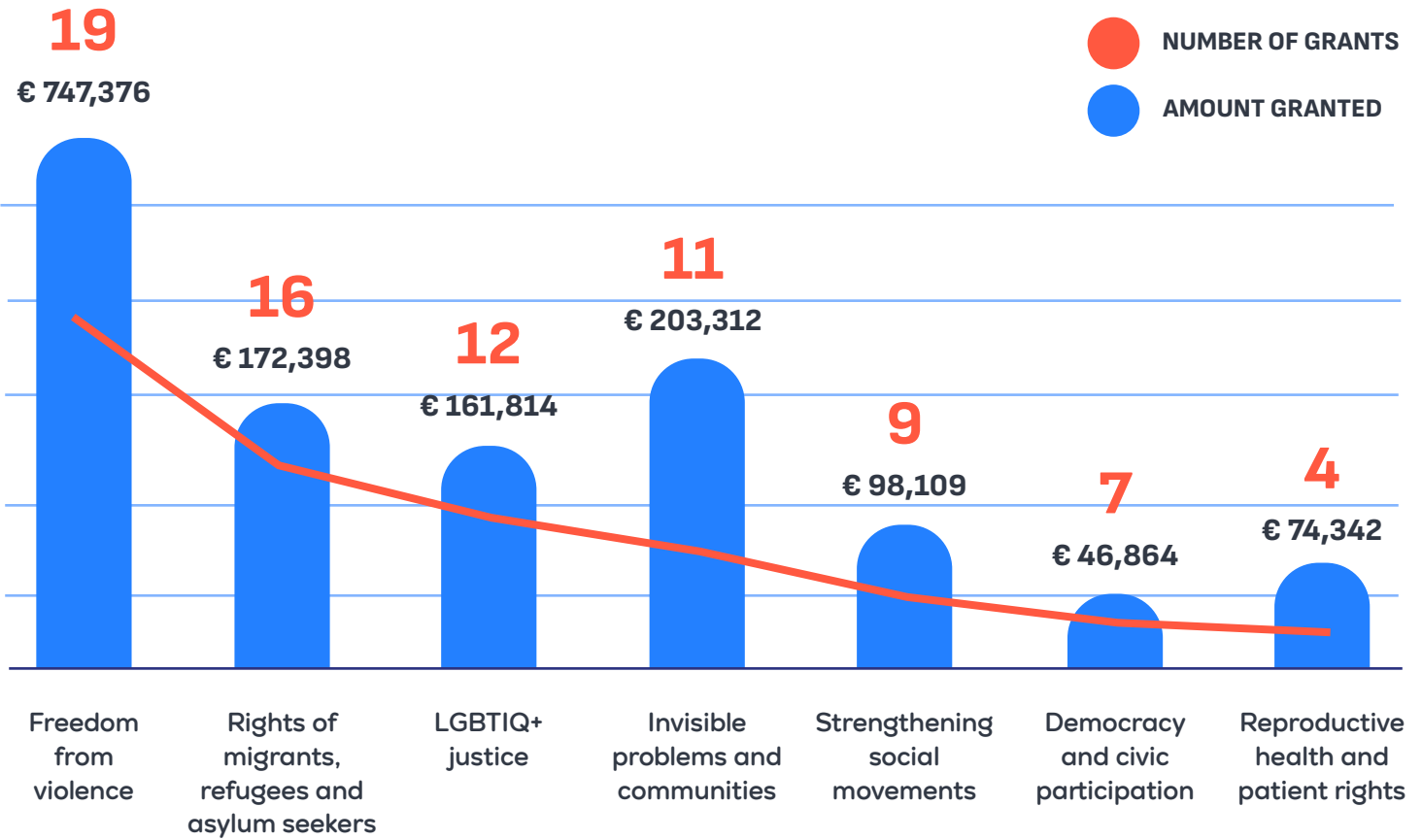
The Urgent Fund for Women and Children Affected by the War in Ukraine continues to be a lifeline for organizations working with people fleeing from the conflict – because support cannot wait.

Recently, we have also been providing funds for **participation** of representatives of Bulgarian civil society in **international events** in order to connect with global human rights movements and mobilize for collective action.

THEMATIC FUNDING AREAS



TOTAL AMOUNTS BY THEME



GRANTS BY AVERAGE AMOUNT

Freedom from violence	19	€ 747,376	€ 39,336
Invisible problems and communities	11	€ 203,312	€ 18,483
Rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	16	€ 172,398	€ 10,775
LGBTIQ+ justice	12	€ 161,814	€ 13,484
Strengthening social movements	9	€ 98,109	€ 10,901
Reproductive health and patient rights	4	€ 74,342	€ 18,585
Democracy and civic participation	7	€ 46,864	€ 6,695

NUMBER OF GRANTS

AMOUNT GRANTED

AVERAGE GRANT AMOUNT

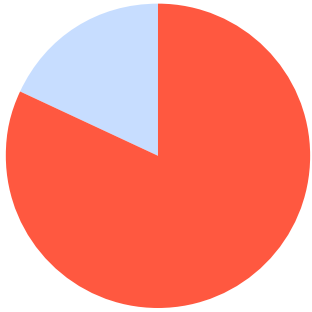
GRANTS BY TYPE OF SUPPORT



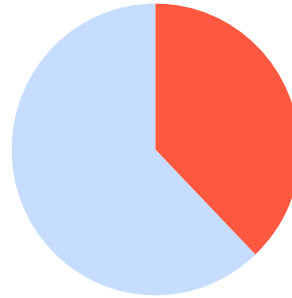
- NUMBER OF GRANTS
- AMOUNT GRANTED

* There are 10 core funding grants approved in 2024 for a total amount of € 260,759 (9 under Mission: Possible and 1 under Open Opportunities; 90% of the total funding was disbursed in 2024; the remaining 10% will be disbursed in 2025). Added to this sum are 23 additional payments of € 95,839, representing a 10% top-up payment to 23 organizations that were approved in 2023.

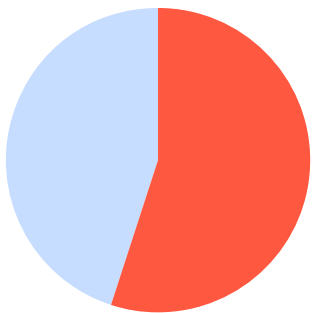




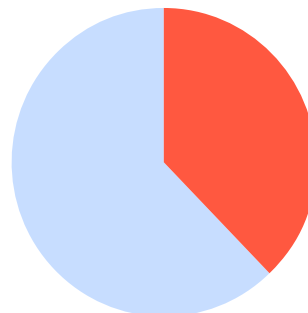
82%
of supported organizations are led by women or by representatives of the groups for whose rights they work.



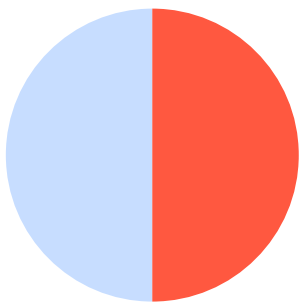
38%
of supported organizations are registered outside the capital – in regional centers and small towns where funding opportunities are very limited.



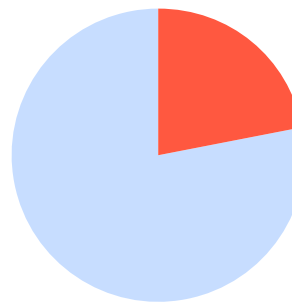
55%
of supported organizations operate nationwide.



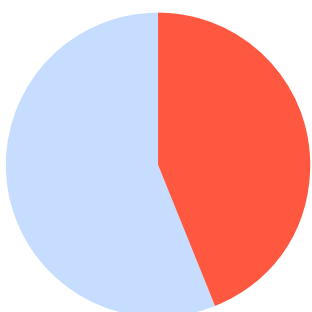
38%
of supported organizations operate at regional or local level.



50%
of the allocated funds were directed towards freedom from violence.

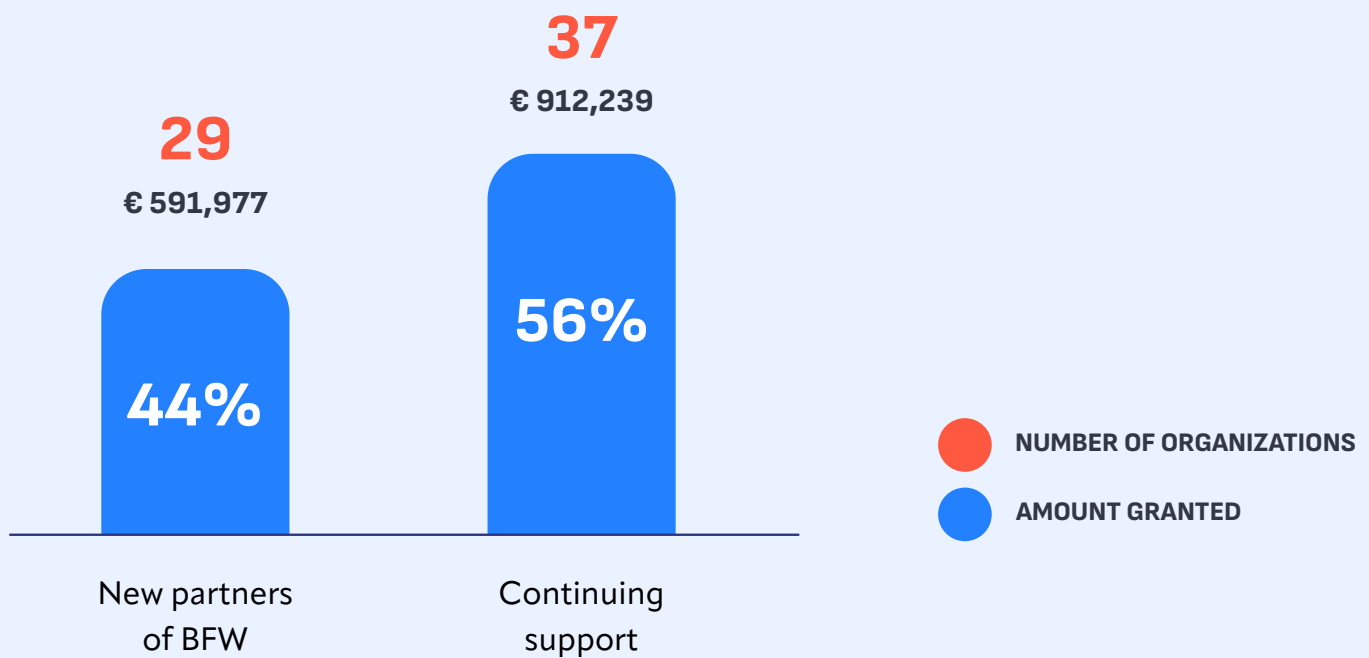


22%
of the funds were earmarked for multi-year core support to enable civil society organisations to plan strategically, be adaptable and focus fully on delivering their mission.

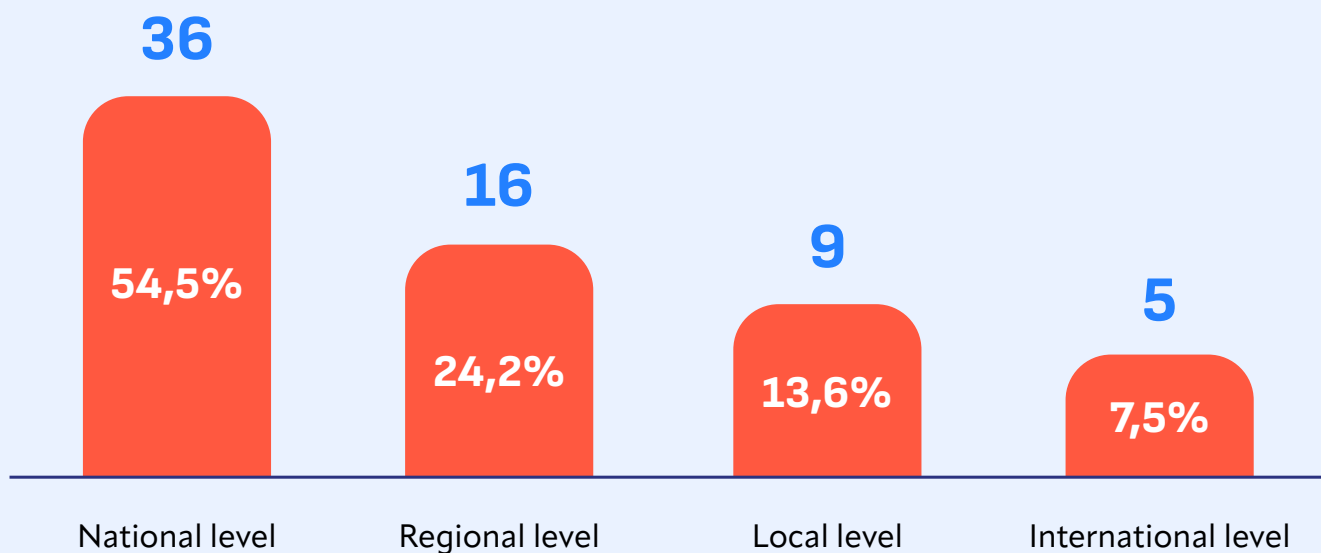


44%
of supported organizations are partners that BFW supports for the first time.

PARTNERSHIP WITH SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS

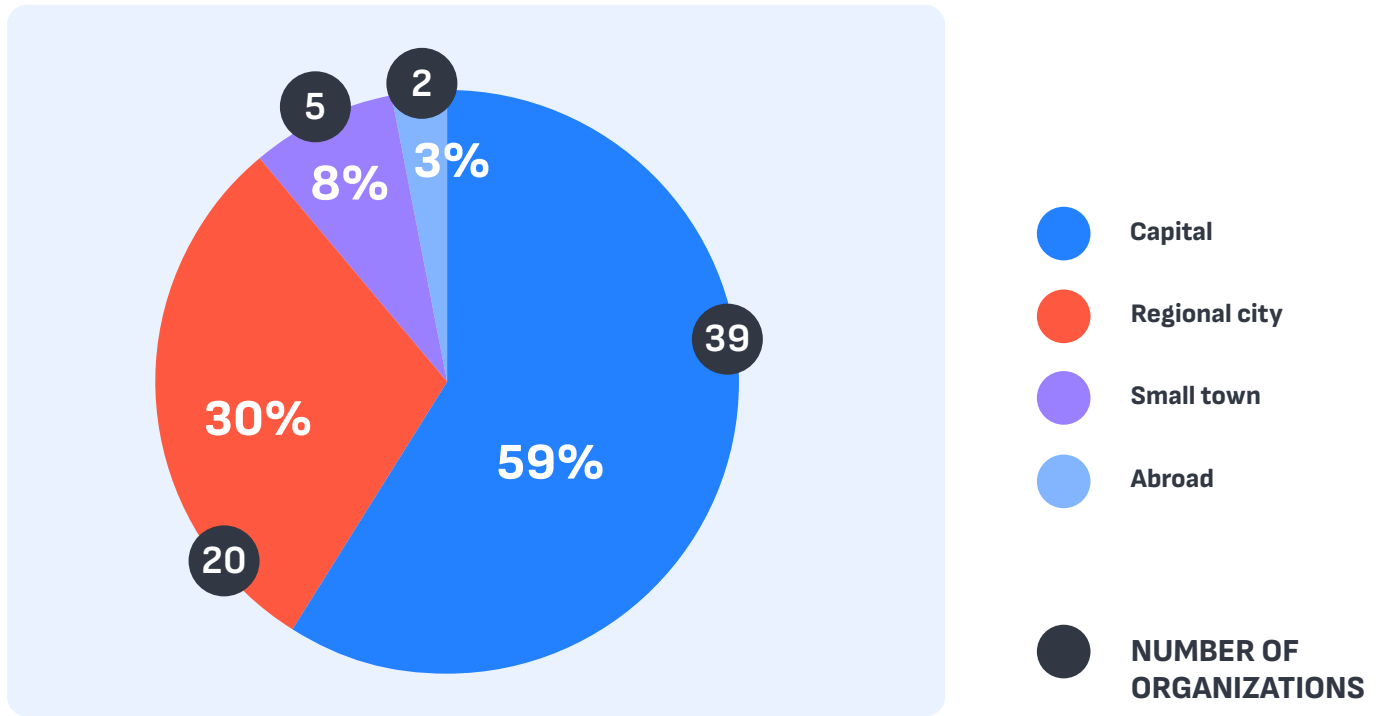


SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS

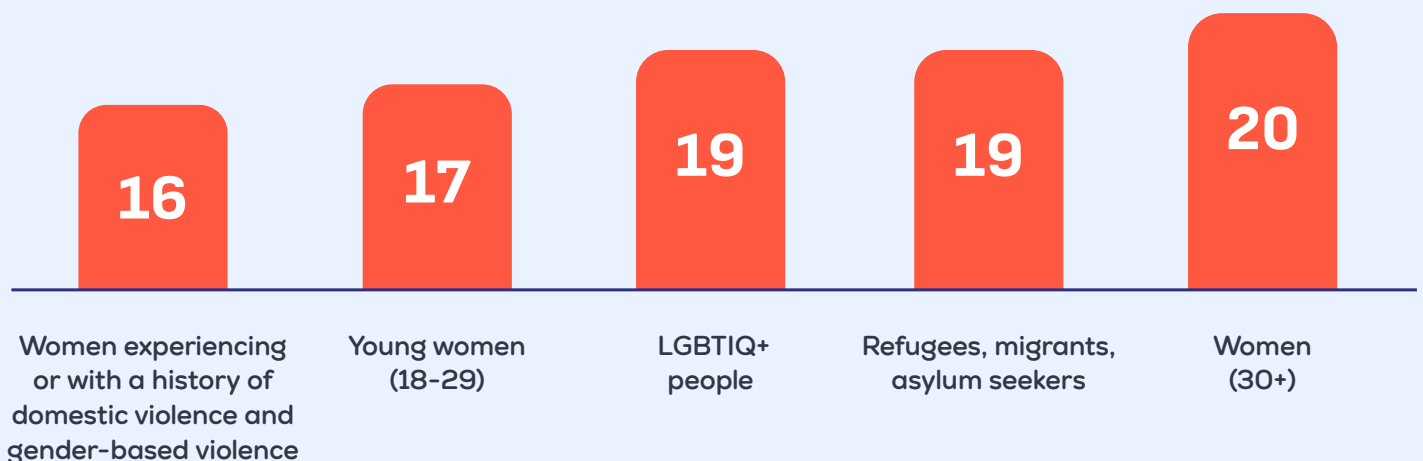


 NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS

LOCATION ACCORDING TO THE PLACE OF REGISTRATION OF THE ORGANIZATION



MOST POPULAR TARGET GROUPS AMONG THE SUPPORTED PROJECTS



NUMBER OF PROJECTS

3.1. CAPACITY BUILDING

For BFW, financial support for the civil society sector and capacity building among its representatives are inextricably linked processes, so we continue our efforts in this direction. With the two-day 'Strong Organizations, High Impact' training in October 2024, attended by 44 participants, we launched capacity building initiatives under the FORCE program – organizational development trainings, fundraising, advocacy and community mobilization workshops, networking and experience sharing events – to be implemented in 2025.





Strong Organizations, High Impact Training

In parallel with the announcement of the Open Opportunities and Values programs, we organized two information days, where our team presented the open calls, gave explanations and advice related to applying for them, and answered questions from the attendees – a total of 270 representatives of civil society organizations with interest in applying for funding under the respective programs.

In addition to these efforts, we focused on what we call accompaniment – a long-term and flexible approach to providing support that prioritizes trust, solidarity and shared learning. It is based on continuous dialogue, mentoring and responsiveness depending on the needs and context of our partners. As part of this approach, in 2024 we conducted 16 visits to organizations across the country and at their events to understand more about the local context, the needs of target groups and the impact on the community. We held 23 one-on-one online meetings with

our program partners for the purposes of accountability and learning from their frontline work, as well as providing help and assistance with resource mobilization, strategic planning, etc. We organized three information sessions for funded organizations to introduce them to the programs, clarify contractual relations and the general terms and conditions for utilizing the funds.

At the same time, we responded daily to queries via our online helpdesk and provided assistance and guidance when difficulties were encountered with applications and technical questions.

In the context of the BIRDS in BG project, 409 participants took part in 18 trainings and events and 31 consultations, focused and based on the specific needs of civil society organizations in Bulgaria and provided by our project partners Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law and Impact Drive Foundation.

4. THE IMPACT

OF OUR PROGRAMS

Leaning on BFW's 'Theory of Change', over the past year we have supported the development and sustainability of our partners, enabling them to participate in local and national decision-making processes, to mobilize and transform their communities, and to be among the leaders of the gender equality movement.



Although progress towards our ultimate goal of a more just society that respects women's rights and decisions takes time and is difficult to measure, the mutual trust between us and the organizations we fund and the evaluation of the impact of their efforts show us that we are on the right track.

Over the past year, our partners opposed the adoption of discriminatory and anti-democratic laws and addressed their consequences, highlighted the important role of strategic litigation and advocacy, told the invisible stories of vulnerable communities on national media, fought to continue to exist and support people with different abilities who rely on them, worked to address violence both on the frontline and through national outreach campaigns, supported refugees, people in the LGBTIQ+ community, victims of trafficking and more, and more... On the following pages we summarize their successes and thank them for their dedication.

MISSION: POSSIBLE – CORE FUNDING PROGRAM

In 2024, BFW continued to provide flexible funding under Mission: Possible, the only donor program in Bulgaria that provides unrestricted funds for the overall functioning of an organization. This type of support provides staff salaries, office rent, equipment purchases, and other underfunded needs through the widespread 'project-based' funding. Securing them helps organizations to become more resilient and adaptive, to focus fully on upholding their mission, and to develop their capacity and skills for strategic planning and measuring the impact of their work.

This support is key to the development of the whole sector as a participant in advocacy processes and decision-making at the highest level, as a source of expertise and a check on government institutions and businesses. The program seeks to provide long-term funding because the most significant changes take time.

In 2024, through Mission: Possible, we allocated funds amounting to € 323,620. This amount includes both the top-up final tranche of a total of € 95,839 to 23 organizations approved in the previous edition of the program, and funding for 9 organizations (out of 15 that applied) for a total of € 227,781 in 2024.

Thus, last year the total amount allocated by BFW to organizations for core funding for all editions from 2020 to the end of 2024 reached € 1,990,914.



Image: For Hope Foundation

THE MAGIC TRUCK OF CHILDHOOD AND HOPE

of For Hope Foundation, city of Sliven

The support of BFW gave wings to the dream of the For Hope Foundation to reach Roma children in the remotest corners of the segregated Nadezhda neighborhood in the city of Sliven and to give them a piece of the childhood they deserve. Thanks to this support, the mobile center is not just a vehicle that gives space to play – it is a tool to overcome structural inequalities related to poverty and violence. As well as bringing joy and inspiration, it provides essential multidisciplinary services to children and their families. Through it, the community gains access to health

counseling, social support and information about their rights – something that is difficult for people in marginalized neighborhoods to access.

With the help of a team of trained animators, social workers and health professionals, the mobile centre builds the trust and relationships needed for long-term change. One of the animators is part of the local community, which is a natural link between cultures and creates an environment where children and their families feel understood and accepted.



Image: Amalipe Center

THE FIGHT AGAINST FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGIES THAT THREATEN HUMAN RIGHTS

Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe, city of Veliko Tarnovo

Amalipe Center works for the empowerment of the Roma community and their equal access to education, health and social services. Today, however, this mission faces new challenges.

The Foreign Agents Registration Bill and changes to the School and Pre-School Education Act restricting the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community are raising

concerns among education professionals with whom the organization works across the country.

'The vast majority of them were unaware of the consequences. When we explained to them, the reaction everywhere was shock and silence. It sounded completely illogical to them,' says Teodora Krumova, program director of Amalipe.

In response, the organization launched an active awareness campaign supported by the Mission: Possible program. Meetings with professionals from over 200 schools help to expose populist propaganda and raise awareness of the risks. The topics of civil liberties and far-right threats are becoming part of all trainings and consultations, from health and education



Image: Listen Up Foundation

mediators to school principals. Many realize for the first time that they can be branded as ‘foreign agents’.

In parallel with this battle, Amalipe continues its long-standing efforts to empower Roma women and girls. The informal network for support and exchange of experience is inspiring more and more women to take an active role in their communities.

‘Despite the difficult moments, I told myself that I had to be a role model and show that we, Roma women, can do it too. There were many difficulties along the way that life challenged me to overcome, but I succeeded and proved that Roma women can also be role models,’ says a student, member of the informal network.

Amalipe's work proves that an active civic stand is key to protecting democratic values and gender equality. Without their efforts, dozens of schools and educational leaders could have remained unaware of the threats. The organization continues its fight with a clear goal: a free, informed and just society.

EMPOWERING THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Listen Up Foundation, city of Sofia

The Foundation advocates for the rights and needs of deaf people in Bulgaria. The team started its activities driven by the mission to oppose the outdated methodologies that make the care-based environment in which deaf people

develop suffocating and in which they gradually lose their activeness and come to terms with the imposed notions that they cannot do anything, that it is better to let others, especially hearing people, do it for them. At the same time, the organization fights against the double discrimination that deaf women face – on the one hand, because of their deafness, and on the other hand, because they are women.

In 2024, the organization expanded its network of active deaf women who play an important role in advocating for the rights of deaf people and in the advancement of sign language. The Foundation's main activities under the funding include initiatives to motivate deaf women, inspired by the visit of the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, Roberta Cordano, in February 2024, which encouraged deaf women, mothers of deaf children and young girls to gain confidence and engage in the

development of their community; leadership development, through which deaf women from the organization's team are able to expand their leadership competencies and become actively involved in projects aimed at advocating for the deaf community.

'The cause of deaf women's rights gained greater visibility, which attracted the attention of key institutions such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Sofia University. Their involvement creates a conducive environment for more serious work on the empowerment of deaf women through education, career development and social integration,' says Listen Up.

'Roberta Cordano's visit changed my life. It inspired me to learn sign language and to actively participate in advocacy for the rights of deaf children,' says Eli Todorova, mother of a deaf child.

THE VALUES PROGRAM

In 2024, we implemented the first edition of the Values program for funding projects of organizations working at local, regional or national level for the protection, promotion and awareness-raising of fundamental rights, gender equality, values of the European Union, and rule of law and democracy.

Against the backdrop of forceful attacks on human rights, vulnerable communities and civil society in Bulgaria, the program attracted 139 applications, of which 25 were approved and funded with a total of € 489,162. The organizations are based in 11 cities and their project activities cover dozens of locations in the country.

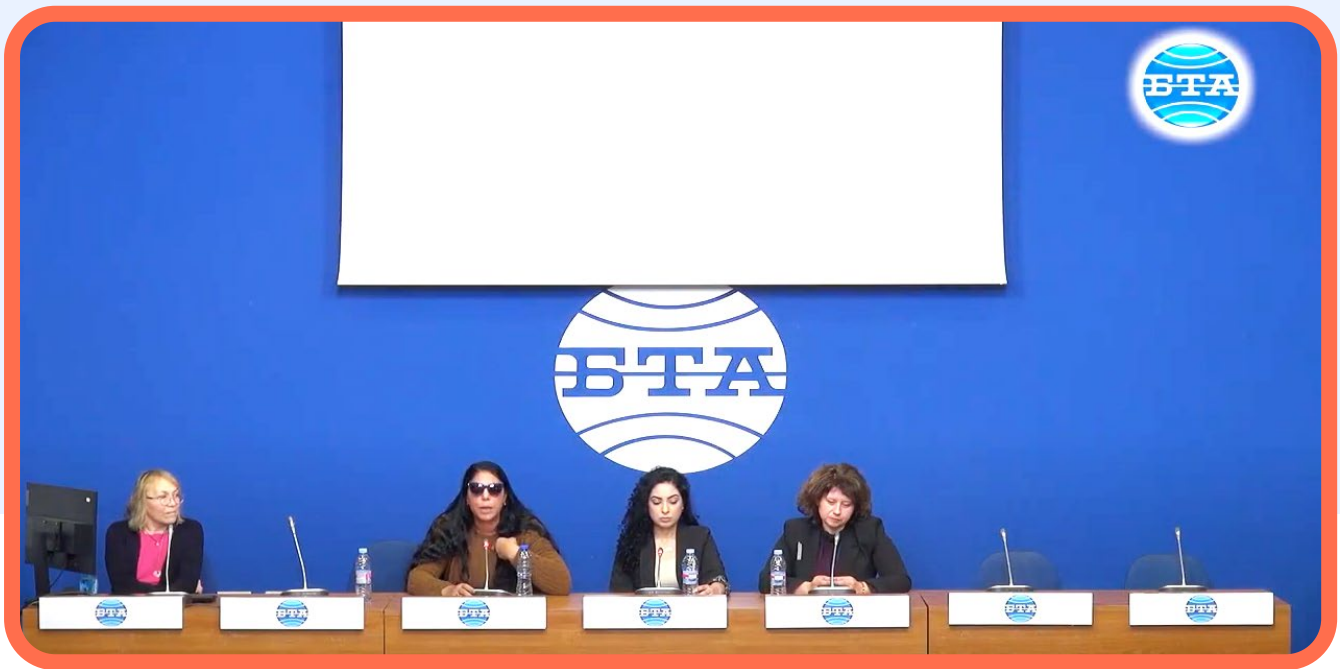


Image: A press conference of the Roma World - 21st Century Foundation, broadcast on BTA channels

'STRATEGIC CASES FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS – CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS' PROJECT

of The Social Teahouse Foundation, city of Varna

The organization is investing its efforts in building a strong and sustainable network of advocates who are actively fighting for women's rights inside and outside the courtroom. Through public meetings, trainings, and sharing of experiences, the initiative sheds light on the role of strategic litigation as a tool for change and protection of the rule of law. To have a lasting impact, the project focuses on capacity building in the civil society sector, viewing it as three main pillars:

- advocacy – the ability to defend causes with sustainable arguments and strategies;

- leadership – developing women and activists as drivers of change;
- communication – the ability to attract public attention and support.

Developing these three pillars in civic leaders and organizations will be an investment in the entire sector that supports women in their personal and legal battles for justice on a daily basis.

'YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON YOU' PROJECT

of Roma World – 21st Century Foundation, city of Sofia

The organization has been working for years in the field of human rights protection and raising awareness in the Roma community. The project 'Your life depends on you' becomes a mirror in which Roma women reflect not only their pain, but also the power to change their destiny.

'We have set an example and a direction for action, we have prompted reflection and awareness in the most vulnerable among the most vulnerable social group of Bulgarian society – Roma women,' say Kremena Budinova and Tsvetelina Stoyanova from the Foundation.

True stories, told through the fiction-documentary format of the show 'Small Stories from the Roma World', broadcast on Bulgarian National Television, touch the hearts of viewers and are widely shared on social media. Journalists are taking an interest, and the discussion about Roma women's empowerment is spreading far beyond the screens – among viewers, in the media, in the community.

The comments, the emotions, the questions – they all prove that the message of Roma women for solidarity and equality has reached where it is most needed – the hearts of the people.

'We cannot change the world with one project, but we can light the spark,' say the project's authors.

The initiative continues to exist in the products created – the films that inspire, and the unofficial learning toolkit that will educate the community beyond the end of the project. It is also in the long-standing work of the Roma World – 21st Century Foundation, which, despite all the challenges, remains a platform for the Roma people in Bulgaria to change attitudes and assert their rights.



THE FORCE PROGRAM

Last year, we launched the FORCE program, the largest call for applications in BFW's history, investing in feminist solidarity to address gender-based violence. The program aims to support projects of civil society organizations working on the frontlines of this issue, including in the context of migration, domestic violence, and all forms of violence against LGBTIQ+ people. Eligible initiatives include working directly with survivors, developing advocacy activities to improve the legislative framework, efforts to change attitudes and overcome gender stereotypes through awareness-raising campaigns, community mobilization, capacity building of other professionals and institutions, etc.

We received 86 applications, 32 of which were approved for funding totalling € 1,810,983. We allocated € 599,067 of the total amount to 11 organizations at the end of 2024. The rest of the approved applicants will receive the remaining funds in early 2025 and these will be reported in the 2025 Annual Report.



Image: Social Foundation
Indi Roma 97

'EQUAL RIGHTS AND SECURITY FOR ALL WOMEN' PROJECT

**of Social Foundation Indi Roma 97,
town of Kuklen**

The organization dedicates its initiatives to building a world where every woman – regardless of her background, age or ethnicity lives free from fear and discrimination. With a particular focus on Roma women and girls who live in rural and underprivileged areas, the team sheds light on issues of gender-based violence and gives voice to the deep-rooted stereotypes that perpetuate inequality.

Through awareness-raising campaigns, trainings and activation of local communities, Indi Roma 97 strive not just to inform, but to inspire change. Trainings for professionals prepare those on the frontlines of the fight against violence, while work with youth aged 15-19 in schools lays the foundation for a more just future.



Image: Zonta International Association

An important part of their work is building prevention and support networks that provide sustainable mechanisms to protect victims.

The active participation of Roma women and other vulnerable groups is not just a sideline project of the organization, but its engine – because real change comes when communities themselves are heard and included. At the heart of it all is the quest for a safe, supportive and equitable environment where every woman has the opportunity to live freely and with dignity.

'Our work on two feminist projects supported by BFW (targeting women from isolated Roma communities and refugee women from Ukraine) not only confronted us with the real problems of particular underprivileged groups – Roma and refugee women – but also helped us build working teams which work with our target groups in a more needs-based way. Thus, the working team created a

'personal experience group' for women of Roma ethnicity, which was especially successful,' says Albena Kostadinova, Chairwoman of Social Foundation Indi Roma 97.

'Thanks to meetings with the Indi Roma team and discussions in the personal experience group, I am even more convinced that I must do everything possible to prevent my daughter from being married off at an early age, like many of our sisters around us,' says a Roma participant from the village of Rozino, Karlovo region.

'RADA SAYS NO' PROJECT

of Area 05, District 30, Zonta International Association, city of Stara Zagora

'Rada Says No' is a call that mobilizes communities, builds partnerships and

changes attitudes. It puts the issue of domestic violence at the center of public attention through an awareness raising campaign that includes distributing materials in public spaces across the country, reaching thousands of people; building key partnerships with municipalities, institutions, hospitals, businesses, and others that promote the cause through public appearances and campaigns; and mobilizing the community through events, media coverage, and outreach to youth and institutions, making space for advocacy and prevention action.

These multidisciplinary approaches act as tools for long-term social change. But most importantly, they give hope and strength to those who have been silent for too long.

'This campaign has given me the courage to talk about something I have been silent about for a long time. Now I know that I am not alone and that there is someone to help', says a participant in the campaign, who downloaded the 'Help me' app via the QR code of the Rada doll.

'As a sports organization, we believe that we should not only be role models in the boxing ring, but off the ring as well. We are happy that we can support this initiative and help more people understand how important it is to say NO to violence,' says an athlete from the Bulgarian Boxing Federation.

'I've learned that domestic violence is not always physical – words can hurt too. It is important to recognize the signs and help those around us,' says a student who participated in an awareness event.

THE OPEN OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Over the past year, we continued to provide funding through the Open Opportunities program, a year-round program tailored to the specific needs of civil society organizations, allowing them to respond to unexpected opportunities, life-threatening or force majeure situations. These could be threats from non-democratic or far-right movements challenging EU core values and gender equality, physical or digital safety and security issues, organizational crises, urgent and unforeseen needs to secure the continuous work of organizations or their programs, unexpected opportunities for advocacy, mobilization or organization of protests that could lead to human rights advances, etc. Of the 35 applications received in 2024, we approved 12 initiatives, which we funded with a total of € 47,334.



Image: Made with Love Association

'MENTALLY HEALTHY TEAM' PROJECT

**of Made with Love Association,
city of Pernik**

In the most difficult moments, one realizes how fragile the margin is between strength and exhaustion. The 'Mentally Healthy Team' project is not just an initiative – it becomes a lifeline for those who give parts of themselves every day to support others.

When sadness and stress become a part of everyday life, the time comes for the team of 'Made with Love' to seek support to ensure that they continue to care for and make sense of the daily lives of people with disabilities and mothers of children with special educational needs from the city of Pernik and the region. The initiative provides an opportunity for sharing, reflection and respite.

Emergency funding is not just a resource for them, but care and recognition that those who help need help too. And with it begins the road to recovery of the team, which consists of: four group sessions with a professional psychotherapist, providing a space in which stress is transformed into words, words into awareness, and awareness into ease and lessons learned; 93 individual counseling sessions in which each team member is given the opportunity to talk through his or her pain and find a way forward; and three mountain hikes, offering a place for silence, rediscovery of nature's harmony, and a chance to look into the distance with new eyes and hope.

The activities create an atmosphere of acceptance of life's difficulties – through shared fears and hopes, pain is acknowledged but not left unanswered. The team goes through losses, through



Image: Queer Varna



Image: Orion Grid

illnesses, through challenges, but realizes that in order to keep giving, they must first take care of themselves.

'The program was a lifeline for us! Heartfelt thanks to BFW', says the Association.

THE AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL EDUCATION ACT

In August 2024 the National Assembly adopted obscurantist amendments to the School and Preschool Education Act, banning the non-existent 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientation' and the discussion of LGBTIQ+ topics in schools. The so-called 'Hate Law' actually contradicts the Constitution, the Law on Protection against Discrimination, a number of norms of European Union law and other provisions, agreements and treaties to

which Bulgaria is a party. It will subject students and teachers to harassment, isolation, discrimination.

To deal with some of the consequences, our partners at 'Single Step Foundation', 'Orion Grid for Leadership and Authority' and 'Queer Varna' applied for and were approved for grants to implement their initiatives. They participated in a workshop to create partnerships with MEPs in Brussels, set up an open line for psychosocial support, legal advice and strategic guidance for activists, organized a community meeting with a lawyer, teachers and the wider teaching community, as well as a meeting to discuss joint action and coordination in crisis situations, purchased basic supplies for organizing protests, etc.

URGENT FUND FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Established by BFW in the early days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Urgent Fund continued to provide vital support in 2024. With a deep sense of solidarity and urgency, the initiative provided grant funding of € 69,020 to all 9 applicant organizations working tirelessly to support thousands of Ukrainian refugees.

Women and children forced to leave their homes in search of safety have found support in these organizations that provide daily protection, care and hope. Although the war no longer dominates the headlines, its devastating impact continues to be felt – thousands of Ukrainian nationals in Bulgaria still struggle with insecurity, lack of resources and the need for long-term support, making the Fund a necessary support tool, ensuring that those affected have access to basic services and the opportunity for a more peaceful life. Since its inception, the initiative has provided funding to 35 organizations with a total of € 189,283, reaching over 11,000 Ukrainian citizens in Bulgaria.

In these difficult times, the Fund remains a symbol of empathy and commitment to those most in need, because solidarity, human rights and the protection of vulnerable communities are at the heart of any democratic society.

'TOGETHER FORWARD' PROJECT

of the Association of Ukrainians in Bulgaria 'Ukrainian Home', city of Varna

In the heart of Varna 'Ukrainian Home' is a haven for those who have left everything behind in a search for security. Here, far from their homeland, Ukrainian women and children find not only shelter, but also support, understanding and new opportunities.

The road to integration is paved with obstacles. Limited resources, the need for sustainable funding and the need for

professional support for the association's team are just some of them. The outside world also presents difficulties - a complicated administrative system, a language barrier and the emotional scars of war that are difficult to heal. Nevertheless, 'Ukrainian Home' does not stop.

The 'Together Forward' project is their response to these challenges – a warm, safe and inclusive environment where every woman and every child can build a new future. They offer counseling, assistance in contacting institutions, language courses and creative activities



Image: Ukrainian Home

that help with adaptation and social connectedness. The Bulgarian Language Conversation Club opens doors to communication and integration. Music art therapy heals trauma and brings back a sense of harmony. And in these small moments of shared joy, everyone discovers a piece of what they once called 'home'.

'Together Forward' is more than a project – it is a promise that no one will be forgotten. That every step forward is a step towards a new beginning. And that, even far from home, home can be where there is understanding, support and hope.

TOGETHER IN NEW BEGINNINGS: STORIES OF CONNECTION AND ACCEPTANCE

Multi Kulti Collective, city of Sofia

Multi Kulti Collective creates spaces where people find community, acceptance and a sense of home. In 2024, they organized two cultural and social events, bringing together about 80 people from different parts of the world and giving publicity to some of their stories in the media, including on Bulgarian National Radio.

Their meetings with the Ukrainian community and with partner organizations such as 'Ukrainski Vulik', 'Club Anna Bagryana', 'Magnet', 'Central Halls' and others lay the foundation for future cooperation and joint initiatives. Every conversation, every shared idea leads to the next step in building a true mutual understanding.

Light in the longest night

On a cold December evening, a restaurant in Sofia set up by an Afghan refugee is filled with the warmth of sharing. Two other Afghan refugee women, now successful entrepreneurs, welcome more than 50 people from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Iran, Afghanistan, Poland, Italy and other countries to celebrate Yalda, the Afghan holiday of the longest night of the year. The food is delicious, the conversations are lively, and the kids laugh as they create their little works of art. On this night when tradition says light conquers darkness, newcomers and locals connect through a shared sense of home.

Christmas at the shared table

On 25 December, in a home filled with laughter and flavors from different



Image: Multi Kulti Collective

cuisines, about 30 people from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Iran, Italy, Great Britain, Russia and other countries gather to celebrate Christmas. Everyone brings something – a dish, a story, a smile. At the table there are no borders, no strangers – just people who choose to be together.

Christmas is a time for family. And on this day, family extends beyond blood ties – it is created in sharing, in support, in the feeling that no one is alone.

A glimpse into the future

These events are not an end, but a beginning. Driven by experience, new ideas and meetings with the Ukrainian community, Multi Kulti Collective is planning a number of other initiatives. Because true integration is not just adaptation – it is a two-way process of bonding that happens when people reach out to each other. And this will continue – together.

RAVNI BG'S SOLIDARITY FUND

For the fourth year in a row, BFW has promoted an innovative model of support in which the community makes decisions about the distribution of grants on its own. The Solidarity Fund of the informal group Ravni BG (Equal BG), a coalition of nearly 40 civil society organizations across the country working for civic participation, human rights, and democracy, is a horizontal initiative that aims to challenge traditional philanthropic practices and put power back in the hands of the communities applying for funding – so-called participatory grantmaking, or an inclusive model for allocating funds. Guided by the feminist principles of radical trust, community accountability, and shared responsibility, Ravni BG organizations set last year's Solidarity Fund priorities and independently evaluated the applications submitted by the coalition. A new thematic priority for the Fund emerged – climate justice, which they identified as vital to meet the needs of their communities, and this was the focus of a third of the initiatives approved. The Fund supported 6 of the 10 proposals submitted and, following a unanimous decision by the coalition, its total budget was increased from € 17,895 to € 20,452 to support all the awarded initiatives. The initiatives are implemented in more than 10 locations in the country and include various strategies to promote civic participation.

The Bulgarian Platform of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) for example plans to highlight the role of women and vulnerable communities in the fight for climate justice by building a digital resource library and organizing a webinar with coalition members to find common ground for inclusive action. For the Earth Ecological Association will be working on a similar theme, focusing on building a common fundraising strategy and best practices to be used by organizations working for climate and gender justice. The Media Democracy Foundation, on the other hand, will carry out a detailed analysis of the accessibility of media information channels in small towns across the country, seeking to answer the question 'Are there information poor regions?'



Image: Participants in the AWID Forum

ACTIVIST MOBILITY PROGRAM

In 2024, we launched the new Activist Mobility program, through which we provide funding for travel to and participation in international events such as conferences, forums, trainings, workshops, etc. It supports representatives of organizations working for the protection of women's rights and vulnerable groups in Bulgaria to develop their knowledge and capacity by connecting them to global activist movements for collaboration, exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices, partnership building, and mobilization for collective action.

In 2024, we funded the attendance of 9 representatives of organizations with € 16,092 at 3 international events (including international experts who were panelists at the Feminism is for All conference), and in the future we aim to develop this effort into a sustainable program.



BFW team during the AWID Forum

THE AWID FORUM

The Association for Women's Rights in Development's 15th Forum was held in Thailand and brought together over 4,000 activists representing feminist, women's rights, gender justice movements, the LGBTIQ+ community and other marginalized groups. The event was an incredible opportunity to connect with global women leaders and feminists from different countries and contexts. In addition to some of BFW representatives, there were 5 representatives from our partner organizations supported under our new program.

'This forum has raised my belief in activism and bottom-up fight for justice to a new level. I had set out to learn more about the struggles of women and

LGBTIQ+ people and to look for parallels to our struggles here. I went in with the mindset that this would happen, yet I was amazed at the extent to which it applies to some national contexts – there are so many similarities between anti-gender movements in Bulgaria and other countries. For me, the forum was a space to think towards international solidarity. It is very special to talk to someone who lives thousands of miles away and realize that you can fight together. I saw an awful lot of potential for networking. I have met activists who are coming together on a regional and even continental level and are achieving extraordinary things, have greater visibility and are fighting much more effectively because they are working together,' says Kamelia Tseneva from Lespectra.



Image: On the Right Track

MEETING OF ON THE RIGHT TRACK

On the Right Track is a network of European and Latin American feminist foundations and civil society organizations that, since 2018, have been fighting against the rise of far-right groups and their attacks on human rights and democratic values. For the first time last year,

representatives from 20 women's funds, including BFW, and 45 partner organizations from both continents gathered in Belgrade, Serbia, to discuss strategies to collaborate and address the challenges. As part of our mobility program, we also secured the presence of two representatives from our partner organizations.

RESOURCES AND REPORTS SUPPORTED BY BFW

HANDBOOK ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER

Partners Bulgaria Foundation produced a [handbook](#) for teachers and youth facilitators that explores the link between the promotion of women's rights and democratic development,

where society values freedom and gender equality much more than in countries with authoritarian rule where there is increased negative social control over women and vulnerable groups. The paper proposes an interactive methodology including exercises, group work and discussions

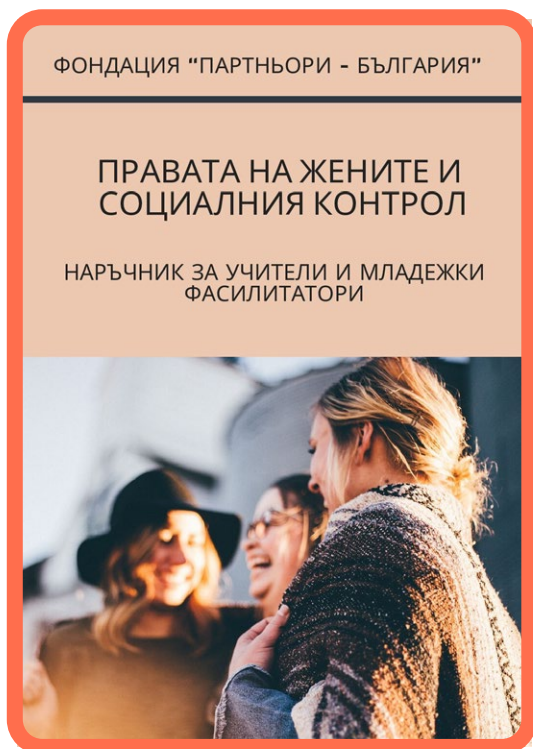


Image: Partners Bulgaria Foundation

to explore existing forms of negative social control, dominant stereotypes and perceptions of women's social roles. Attention is drawn to women's achievements historically and to current issues that hinder the reduction of gender inequalities. The aim is for young people to learn to be aware of and fight against practices that create divisions and discrimination based on gender.

FEMINIST COURSE

The left-wing feminist collective LevFem Association has created a free online [course](#) that aims to introduce participants to the vast field of feminist theory, covering topics ranging from a focus on concepts like 'intersectionality', 'gender', and 'social reproduction' to initial notes on more general issues like racism, transphobia, and domestic violence. Special attention is given to migration,

the climate crisis, reproductive justice and sex work. The course also includes a comprehensive overview of the history of social struggles related to women.

REPORT ON THE GENDER PAY GAP IN BULGARIA

The Bulgarian Platform of EWL produced a [report](#) 'Pay and Equality in Bulgaria'. In addition to providing an analytical overview of the gender pay gap at national, European and global level, the document focuses on the dimensions of the gender pay gap in Bulgaria for the period 2008-2022. The data shows a consistent trend – women are paid significantly less overall than men over the period studied. The report examines these differences in the context of a range of economic activities and provides information on where the largest and smallest pay gaps exist.



Image: Bulgarian Platform of EWL

5. ADVOCACY AND

AWARENESS RAISING



ПРОТЕСТ СРЕЩУ ЗАКОНА НА ОМРАЗАТА

Училища за всички!

7 август, 18:30

📍 пл. Независимост



Image: Feminist Mobilisations

THE HATE LAW

In its attempts to oppose the regressive amendments to the School and Pre-School Education Act and the proposals for even more repressive bills that followed, BFW team participated in protests, a parliamentary committee and a veto request. Despite considerable mobilization by various organizations and citizens, including from abroad, the amendments were promulgated and made Bulgaria the second country in the EU, after Hungary, where such discriminatory legislation is in place.

MY VOICE, MY CHOICE

In 2024, we supported the efforts of the European citizens' initiative My Voice, My Choice for the right to safe and accessible abortion in the EU.

The campaign recalls the alarming statistics that over 20 million women in

the EU still do not have access to safe abortion. This not only puts their physical health at risk, but creates undue economic and psychological stress for them, their families and loved ones, with women from vulnerable groups often most at risk.

At the end of 2024, the initiative gathered the necessary 1 million signatures, which obliges the European Commission to consider the demands of the document, namely – the EC to propose a solidarity-based financial mechanism through which EU Member States, where abortion is legal and accessible, should provide free abortion to all EU citizens, regardless of their nationality.

FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE

We have continued our efforts to address the persistent issue of domestic and gender-based violence. Despite the changes to the Protection against



Discussion in The European Parliament

Domestic Violence Act (PADVA) that came into force on 1 January 2024, the National Council for Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence is not yet fully operational as its work has been affected by the political crisis. And NGOs continue to count the murders of women – at least 20 for 2024 according to media reports because official national statistics does not yet exist.

We attended the now traditional 'March for Women's Rights' on 8 March and the 'Not One More' protest on 25 November – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. We also joined two spontaneously organized protests against violence against women that were triggered by a series of brutal cases of femicide, as well as two open letters from the Together Against Violence coalition calling on MPs to speed up the implementation of the changes set out in PADVA.

DISCUSSION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

As part of the European branch of the Prospera International Network of Women's Funds, BFW participated in a series of strategic meetings with EC representatives.

During her participation in a panel discussion at the European Parliament on the challenges and opportunities for women's funds, Dobromira Terpesheva, Senior Project Manager at BFW, focused on the need for feminist grantmaking as a key tool to address the shrinking civic space and limited access to resources for organizations and activists in Europe working for women's rights, gender equality and democracy.

She emphasized that women's funds apply a feminist transformative approach to philanthropy by prioritizing funding for

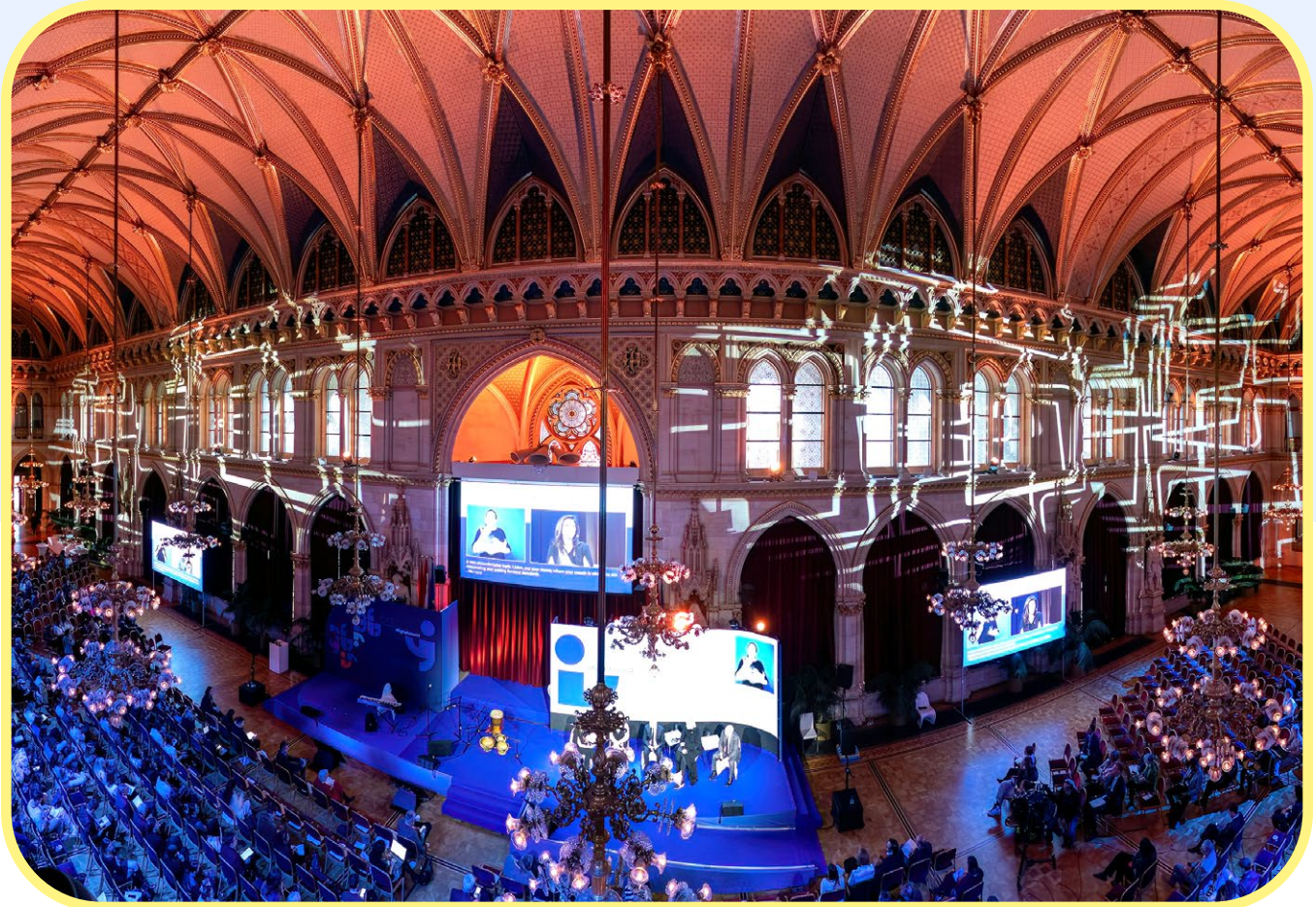


Image: Fundamental Rights Forum

local organizations with limited access to resources, women-led initiatives, and projects that give visibility to the experiences of women and marginalized communities. We know from research and experience that it is these groups that create the most sustainable solutions to social challenges.

PARTICIPATION IN THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FORUM

Our team participated in the Rights in Motion: Embracing Human Rights for Europe's Future forum, organized by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, to exchange

experiences with representatives of EU institutions, governments, human rights bodies, the academia, other civil society organizations, etc. The event aimed to create a space to discuss and seek solutions to the pressing human rights challenges we face in Europe today. The Forum focused on three key themes – threats to democracy and civic space, climate change and technological progress.

CIVIC UNION RAVNI BG

Ravni BG is an intersectional coalition of nearly 40 progressive civil society organizations, located mostly outside



The annual meeting of Ravni BG

Sofia, with small budgets and limited access to resources. The main priorities of the coalition are to protect democracy and human rights, to unite and empower the civil society sector in Bulgaria, to support advocacy and participation in decision-making processes, and to increase capacity to improve the image of the NGO sector in the country through various local and national initiatives.

In the context of the years-long political crisis, the series of parliamentary elections, the increasingly frequent attacks against civil society and democratic values, the successful work of the Ravni BG coalition has become increasingly visible and necessary. In 2024, through swift and coordinated action to create and disseminate opinions, coalition members united in condemning the so-called 'Hate Law' passed, directly

discriminating against LGBTIQ+ people in the education system, and the 'Foreign Agents Act' proposed three times in two years. Ravni BG also stood firmly behind Mission Wings, a member of the coalition that has come under attack from Bulgarian institutions for its work in support of refugees and the publicity it gave to the tragic death of three Egyptian children abandoned in Strandzha. In October 2024, on the basis of Ravni BG's manifesto and as part of a campaign coordinated by members of the group, an election declaration was created and sent to politicians demanding immediate action to protect human rights and democracy, support education, volunteering, civic participation, etc.

Organizations in the alliance also focused on developing coalition

partnerships and worked together on a number of initiatives. Among their goals was capacity building through various trainings focused on successful media engagements, organizing advocacy campaigns, etc.

COUNCIL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT (CCSD)

The CCSD is an advisory body to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, which should work for the development and implementation of strategies and policies supporting the civil society sector. Its functions are to monitor and review annually the needs and achievements of organizations, to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Strategy to support their development, to collect information on their public funding, to support the process of interaction between the state and local authorities and CSOs and to give opinions on all draft regulations related to them. BFW has participated in the Council since its constitution in 2022 to raise issues related

to women's rights and vulnerable groups and to advocate for the provision of more funding for the civil society sector by the state. Despite urgings from members to get the CCSD up and running, once again its potential was ignored. Due to the political crisis and inaction of the state, the Council was not convened once in 2024 and the election of new members was not initiated, although scheduled for December of that year. However, working groups within the Council initiated informal meetings and developed a roadmap for the development of a CSO Development Support Strategy and presented a draft financial mechanism to support CSO projects of public interest.

Unfortunately, this did not lead to a result, because we are faced with the impossibility to materialize the right to financial support for the public mission of CSOs, defined by law, due to the opinion of the Administration of the Council of Ministers that there is no legal basis for spending the financial resource of € 511,292 per year allocated in the state budget.



6. FUNDRAISING

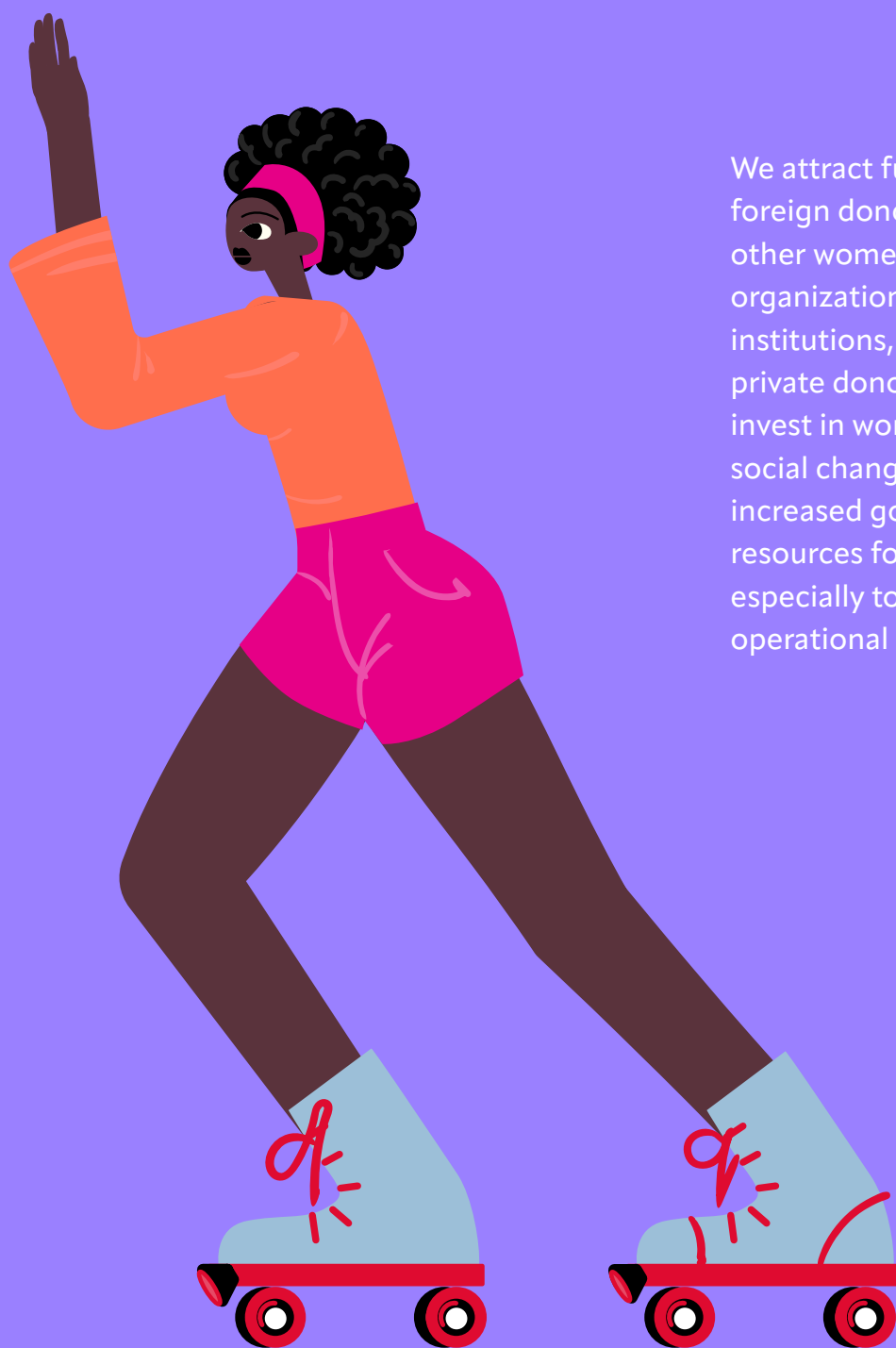
The BFW Philosophy

As the only feminist donor in Bulgaria, BFW develops philanthropy for social change, raises funds locally and leverages international resources to support the gender equality movement as a priority, as well as the intersecting struggles for social justice and for the promotion and protection of human rights and the rights of all vulnerable groups.



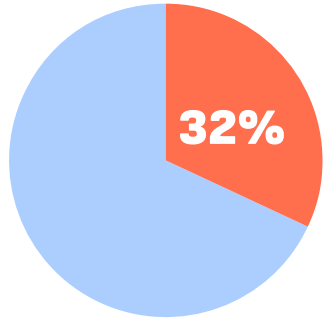
We are part of these movements, we know their needs and the challenges they face in their work, and so we support them in the best and most effective way.

Our fundraising philosophy is based on dialogue and trust – we educate donors, companies, and private donors about feminist struggles, promote the work and successes of BFW and those of our partners, ensure diversity in the resources we raise, build bridges between activists and donors, and create innovative, strategic, and effective funding models, such as pooled funding for greater impact of individual donations, emergency funds for crisis response, etc.



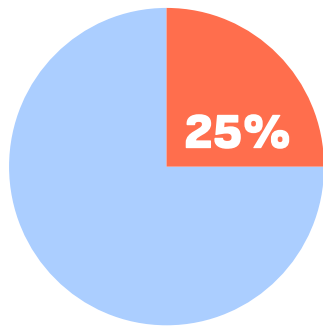
We attract funds from various local and foreign donors – private foundations, other women's funds, international organizations, European and Bulgarian institutions, embassies, companies and private donors, encouraging them to invest in women's rights, girls' rights and social change in Bulgaria. We advocate for increased government funding and more resources for the civil society sector, especially to cover the administrative and operational needs of organizations.

BFW FINANCIAL FIGURES



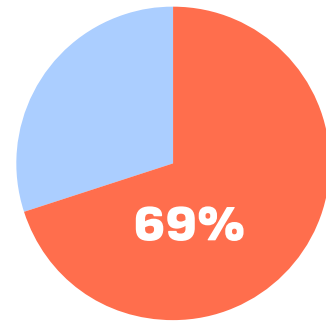
€ 4,288,506
MOBILIZED
RESOURCES

32% increase
compared to 2023

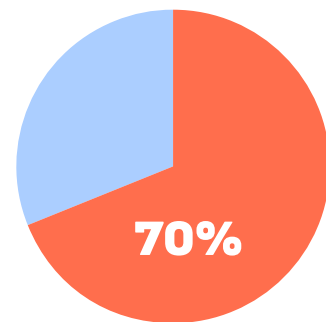


€ 2,370,096
ANNUAL BUDGET

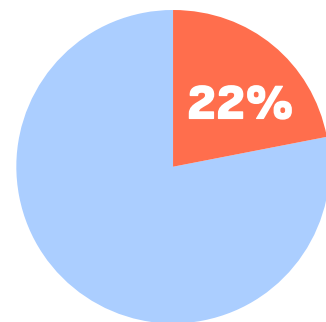
25% increase
compared to 2023



69% of the budget
was directed towards
grantmaking and capacity
building of civil society
organizations



70% of the funds
raised come from
European funding



22% of the funds raised
come from private
foundations

17

are the institutional donors
through which we raised

€ 4,259,954

118

are the individual donors
through which we raised

€ 6,488

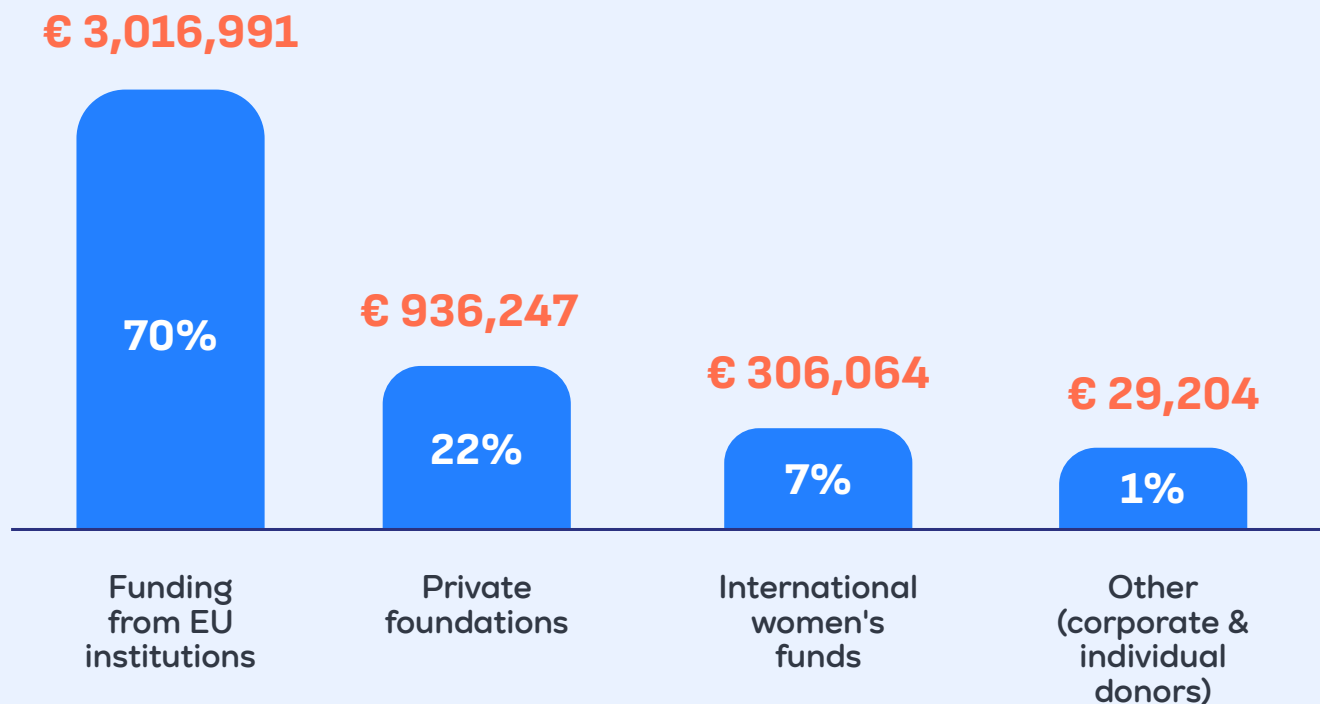
5

corporate donors
donated

€ 22,064

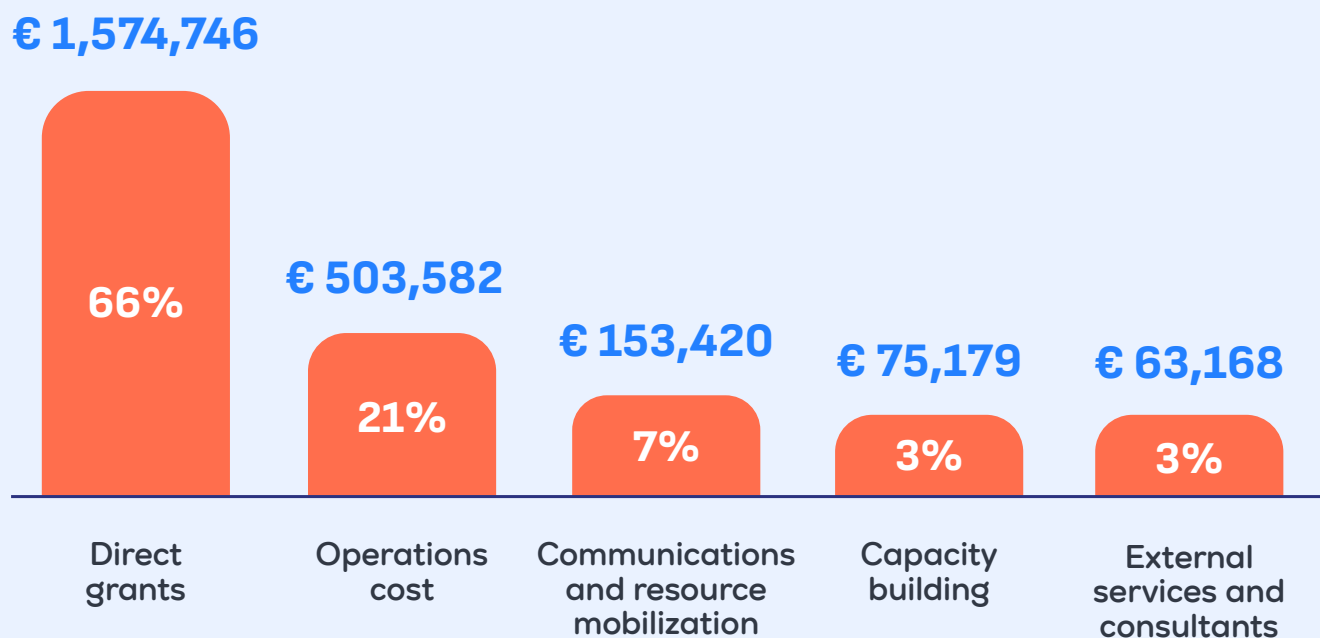


TYPES OF DONORS



ALLOCATION OF FUNDS SPENT *

**The figures are calculated on the basis of BFW's cash flows.*



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