

“Coming Out” LGBTQ+ Initiative Group

OUR WORK FROM 2008 TO 2022



COMING OUT

LGBTQ+ group



“Coming Out” aims to create a comfortable environment for the LGBTQ+ community in Russia and supports LGBTQ+ people affected by the Russian system by empowering them and providing them with resources to change it.

"Coming Out" provides free of charge psychological, legal, and other aid; we host seminars and support groups; and we inform society on topics related to the lives of LGBTQ+. We work with legal cases in Russian courts and international institutions, gather and research data related to the LGBTQ+ community in Russia for international organizations and institutions.

Core values

- 01 We address the needs of the LGBTQ+ community
- 02 Our work is based on proven evidence
- 03 We practice nonviolent communication and professional ethics in our work
- 04 We emphasize feminist values and trans* inclusiveness

Goals of “Coming Out”

Shaping a comfortable environment for LGBTQ+ people in Russia

Empower individuals to become agents of social change

Ensure that society recognizes the dignity and equal rights of all individuals, including LGBTQ+ persons

Timeline

2008

“COMING OUT” LGBT INITIATIVE GROUP IS FOUNDED IN SAINT PETERSBURG.

2009

“COMING OUT” LAUNCHES PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR LGBTQ+ AND THE LGBT-PARENTS PROGRAM. THE FIRST QUEERFEST IS HELD IN SAINT PETERSBURG.

2010

“COMING OUT” LAUNCHES THE PARENTS’ CLUB PROGRAM FOR THE PARENTS OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE AND THE LGBT-PARENTS MOVEMENT PROJECT.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE “HOMOSEXUAL PROPAGANDA” LAW. “COMING OUT” LAUNCHES DISCRIMINATION MONITORING PROGRAM TO REPORT VIOLATIONS OF LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN SAINT PETERSBURG.

2011

“COMING OUT” STARTS PROVIDING LEGAL AID TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE.

2012

2018

“COMING OUT” STARTS PROVIDING CAREER CONSULTATIONS FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE.

2011

AFTER A LARGE-SCALE STUDY OF THE NEEDS OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY, “COMING OUT” HAS LAUNCHED THE TRANS*MISSION PROGRAM.

2022

“COMING OUT” STARTED A TRAINING COURSE ON TRANS* INCLUSIVITY PRACTICES FOR NGOS AND COMPANIES AND ALSO DEVELOPED AN EDUCATIONAL COURSE FOR TRANS* PEER CONSULTANTS.

“COMING OUT” HAS ALSO STARTED ORGANIZING TRAINING COURSES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES ON WORKING WITH LGBTQ+ CLIENTS.

2016

“COMING OUT” LAUNCHES THE HATE CRIME INVESTIGATION PROGRAM TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQ+ AS WELL AS THE CONSULTATION PROGRAM FOR OTHER LGBTQ+ INITIATIVE GROUPS IN RUSSIA.

2015

“COMING OUT” LAUNCHES STRATEGIC LEGAL ACTION PROGRAM DEDICATED TO DIRECTLY ASSISTING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN COURT.

2014

“Coming Out” work structure

International level

- Pursuing cases in international organisations
- International advocacy

Work within Russia

- Pursuing cases in courts
- Monitoring LGBTQ+ rights abuses
- Work with professional societies
- Advocacy campaigns

Services

- Psychology Service
- Legal consultations
- Support groups
- Career consultations

Information programs

- Information about and for the LGBTQ+
- Engaging with the society to fight homophobia and transphobia

SERVICE PROGRAM

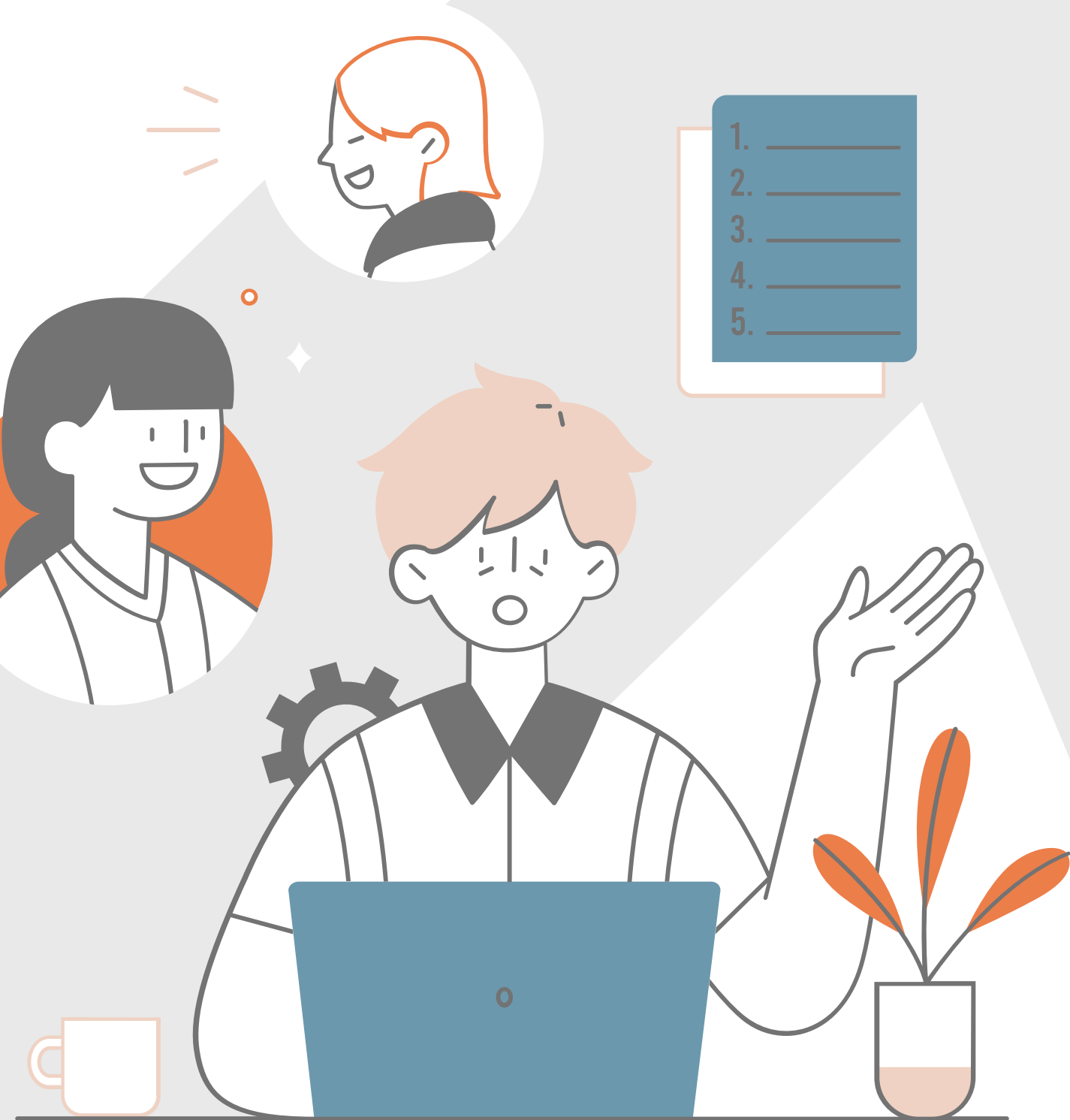
Psychology service

Psychology Service brings together volunteer psychologists to provide free individual and group help to LGBTQ+ individuals and their loved ones. The “Coming Out” team provides a safe and confidential environment for psychological counseling and helps prevent the negative consequences associated with mental health issues, including suicide and depression.

During the last year, the volunteer psychologists team has doubled in size, which has helped reduce the waiting time to less than two weeks, however, we still see an increase in the need for psychological counseling every month. Therefore, the “Coming Out” team continues to recruit and train new volunteers and is constantly working to modernize the structure of our services.

Results (from 2009 to 2022):

- **>10 000** psychological consultations
- Around **150** emergency consultations
- More than **450** support group meetings
- More than **100** psychologists have worked with “Coming Out” clients
- Around **3 500** persons have received help



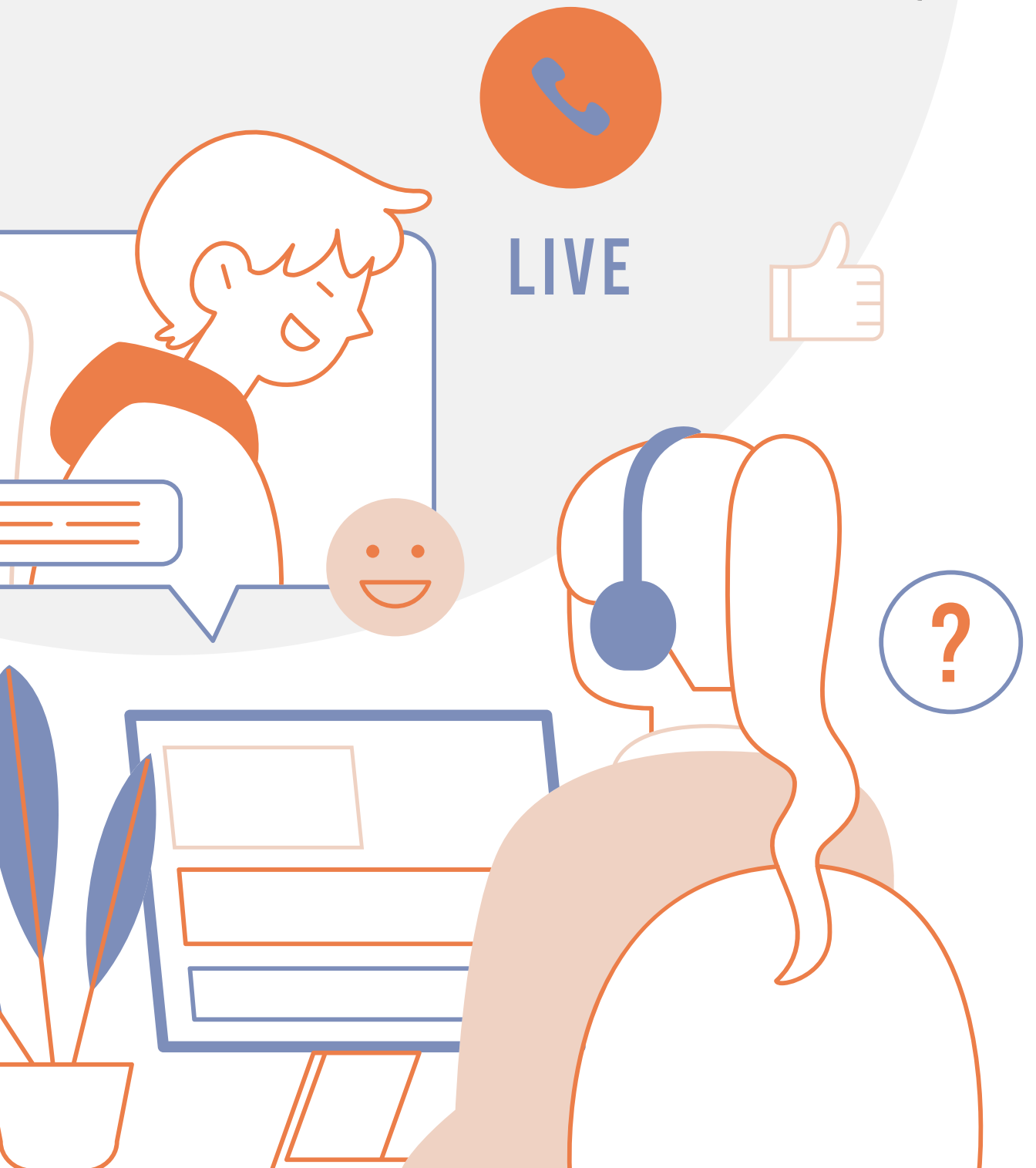
Legal work

The legal program of “Coming Out” provides direct assistance, protects the rights of LGBTQ+ persons, and helps them feel confident in this difficult period, when the Russian state has set a course for homophobia and neglect of human rights.

We also help strengthen the LGBTQ+ community by educating people about their rights, hosting webinars, advising other initiative groups, and helping organize LGBTQ+ events.

Results (from 2012 to 2022):

- **>2000** legal consultations for LGBTQ+ persons
- Advised more than **150** LGBTQ+ initiative groups, organizations, and companies
- We worked with **73** cases in courts, winning **24** of them
- During our work, we were helped by **4** volunteer lawyers and **11** attorneys
- We hosted **73** educational webinars and other events



Career counseling

The Career counseling program brings together professional career counselors from different sectors who strive to help LGBTQ+ individuals as volunteers. This unique program helps Russian-speaking LGBTQ+ individuals find their dream job or vocation, start their career, or find a way out of a critical period of life. Our clients find new vectors for their development and the improvement of their quality of life.

Results (from 2018 to 2022):

- We helped **>250** people find their jobs.
- **15** employment webinars.
- We consulted **15** companies on introducing inclusive practices at the workplace.



LGBTQ+ families and parents of LGBTQ+ children

The Parents' Club program was created by the mothers of activists in Saint Petersburg.

The Rainbow Families program was initially created as an LGBTQ+ families support group in Saint Petersburg that later became a series of public events: meetups, master classes, and lectures—for both parents and children.

Gradually, the programs turned into new initiative groups, which continue their offline work in Saint Petersburg.

Results

“Coming Out” maintains its work with LGBTQ+ families and parents of LGBTQ+ children, it continues to work with support groups, published materials, podcasts, and webinars, all in online form.

In **2022**, we hosted **13** support groups for the parents of LGBTQ+ children and **5** meetings as part of the Rainbow Families program.



Transgender people issues

Until 2023, there was a separate “Trans*Mission” program, which represented a separate branch of services for trans* persons and focused on peer counseling and the promotion of trans* inclusive practices. Now, this program’s activities have been redistributed among other programs of the organization. This is a step to overcome the seclusion of the transgender and nonbinary communities. With this approach, we aim to make transgender and nonbinary people more visible in the community and show that neither transgender nor nonbinary identities are “unusual” or “exotic”. Now trans* rights are a part of every program of “Coming Out”.

Each month, “Coming Out” helps more than **20** trans* individuals as part of different programs and also organizes support groups and trainings about trans* inclusivity practices for companies and non-trans* specific initiative groups.

The people we help

Slava was born and grew up in a small town. She went to work here, started a family, and people around her thought that everything was fine.

“Everybody around me told me to be a good boy. Since childhood, I tried to be “normal”, I showed the feelings and emotions expected of me. Over time, I started to notice I stopped feeling real positive emotions and instead felt endless misery and self-hatred,” says Slava.

Over time, anxiety turned into suicidal thoughts, and she realized that she must do something.

Slava, Saint Petersburg, transgender woman

"I tried to seek help in a local psychiatric facility; however, I couldn't even imagine that "doctors" like those could exist. They immediately became hostile towards me and tried to convince me that my feelings were wrong, that I shouldn't change anything, and that it was just a minor neurotic episode. The psychiatrist insisted that I should go to church, light a candle, and move on with my life. After the appointment, I felt irritated and angry for the first time, not about myself but about the "specialist" and society in general. It's not me who is "wrong", it's their attitude. This new experience gave me the will to fight for myself," recalls Slava.

Despite what the "specialists" have said, Slava decided to start her transition. She went to a psychoendocrinology center in Moscow to undergo a formal procedure needed to change the legal gender marker, but even there she faced discrimination: having heard about Slava's decision, the doctors refused to listen to her, asked insulting questions, and abused her.

Feeling desperate, Slava searched for organizations that help transgender people, and she was told to contact “Coming Out”. She received counseling, finally felt supported, and decided to move to Saint Petersburg. Here, Slava underwent the formal procedure and changed her legal gender marker. At every step, she was supported by peer counselors and lawyers from “Coming Out”.

“I have a feeling that before meeting “Coming Out”, I was living in total darkness, but as I moved to Saint Petersburg it’s like they lifted me up and showed that it is possible to live without this pain,” confesses Slava.

Now Slava regularly consults with our lawyers about her documents and wants to start seeing a psychologist to overcome the stress and psychological trauma she experienced. In the future, Slava wants to become an LGBTQ+ activist and write guides on gender-affirming surgery in different countries.

Discrimination monitoring and advocacy

"Coming Out" regularly works on collecting information about LGBTQ+ in Russia: we record cases of rights violations from personal accounts, monitor the media and social networks, and conduct our own research. Since 2011, when our monitoring program was launched, we have researched a wide range of topics, including human rights abuses and discrimination in any sphere, LGBTQ+ youth, conversion therapy, the economic vulnerability of LGBTQ+ people, LGBTQ+ emigration that started after the war, and others.

We use the results of our research to write analytical notes and reports for Russian and international institutions and organizations. Reporting helps international organizations better understand the situation in Russia and the issues LGBTQ+ people face there in order to adapt more effective policies towards Russia.



Results (from 2011 to 2022):

- **12** research works about LGBTQ+ in Russia,
- **44** reports to international human rights organizations (UN committees and Independent Experts, OSCE, Council of Europe).

Our data is used by:



О|ОВД-Инфо



ECOM

OSCE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ILGA
UROPE

Equality and human rights for LGBTI
in Europe and Central Asia

МХГ
осковская
ельсинкская
руппа



- Commissioner for Human Rights in St. Petersburg (annual reports from 2014 to 2021)
- Saint-Petersburg Human Rights Council

The work of “Coming Out” made possible **3** positive ECHR decisions on LGBTQ+ cases, **1** positive decision by the UN Human Rights Committee, and **1** positive decision by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. A number of cases “Coming Out” works on are still pending before the ECHR.

After Russia withdrew from the European Convention on Human Rights and the decision made by ECHR to stop working on Russian cases, our effort is aimed at pursuing these cases in the UN and ensuring the decisions are enforced in Russia. The UN committees do not award compensations, however, their decisions are a serious reason for reviewing the case.

Cooperation with international institutions on LGBTQ+ cases

Media work

The information and media team make our work visible both to the queer communities and society at large. We educate, entertain, explain what is difficult and unclear, keep the community abreast of major news, and promote common sense. The main goal of our media work is to attract our allies and help LGBTQ+ people express themselves.



Media successes

- **25** episodes of Queercast with **25 500** views in total
- **57 500** social media followers
- **2 700** subscribers on Youtube, about **2 000** people watch our live streams each month
- We published more than **50** materials on our website and distributed several thousand printed materials and brochures

Mass media and campaigns

Each year, international and Russian mass media outlets produce about **200** publications relating to “Coming Out”.

“Coming Out” organized **14** Rainbow flash mobs in Saint Petersburg—these annual events celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia.

Our most visible campaigns:

- against the first “propaganda law”
- against homophobic signs of German Sterligov
- for easing the legal gender change procedure for trans* persons
- against the “fostering the traditional family” bill
- #zerostart against inappropriate behavior of taxi drivers
- against conversion therapy

Queerfest

We held a Pride festival where Pride is forbidden—in Russia. Despite the terror (disruption of our meetings, homophobic attacks, threats to the organizers, inspections by the security forces, etc.), “Coming Out” created a safe space where queer people can relax and express themselves, while non-queer people could educate themselves by visiting a new environment.



Queerfest

Headliners and celebrities of Queerfest: Manizha, Karen Shainyan, Kristina Vazovski, Masha Latsinskaya, Anton Danilov, Vladimir Pozner, Artemiy Troitsky, Linor Goralik, Lena Katina (from the band Tatu), Marina Cherkunova (from the band Total), Stephen Fry, Ian McKellen, musician Jay-Jay Johanson, Alexander Bard and Army of Lovers, Boris Dittrich (Human Rights Watch).

“Coming Out” has held **14** Queerfests in total, details about each one can be found [here](#).



Volunteer work

Volunteer work is one of the most important resources of “Coming Out”. It is the volunteers who provide LGBTQ+ people with psychological, career, and peer consultations. Volunteers also monitor discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and gather statistics on cases of discrimination. Moreover, they also help with a variety of other tasks, such as collecting statistical data, website development and maintenance, and creative tasks.



Volunteer work

Currently, there are **159** regular volunteers working with "Coming Out"—this includes professional psychologists, career consultants, peer consultants, designers, developers, copywriters, translators, and simply like-minded people from a variety of backgrounds, willing to help the LGBTQ+ community.

Each year, volunteers help "Coming Out" with more than **100** one-time tasks.



Our plans

In 2022, the "Coming Out" team made a difficult decision to leave Russia. We were worried that this would result in us not being able to work as efficiently and extensively as we were used to. However, after more than a year since we left, we see that during this time we have not only managed to maintain our quality of work but also expand the majority of our programs: we have provided several times more psychological, legal, and career consultations in comparison to the last year; we have attracted several times more social media views, despite many of them being blocked in Russia; we have led more legal cases and—unfortunately—reported more cases of discrimination and violence.

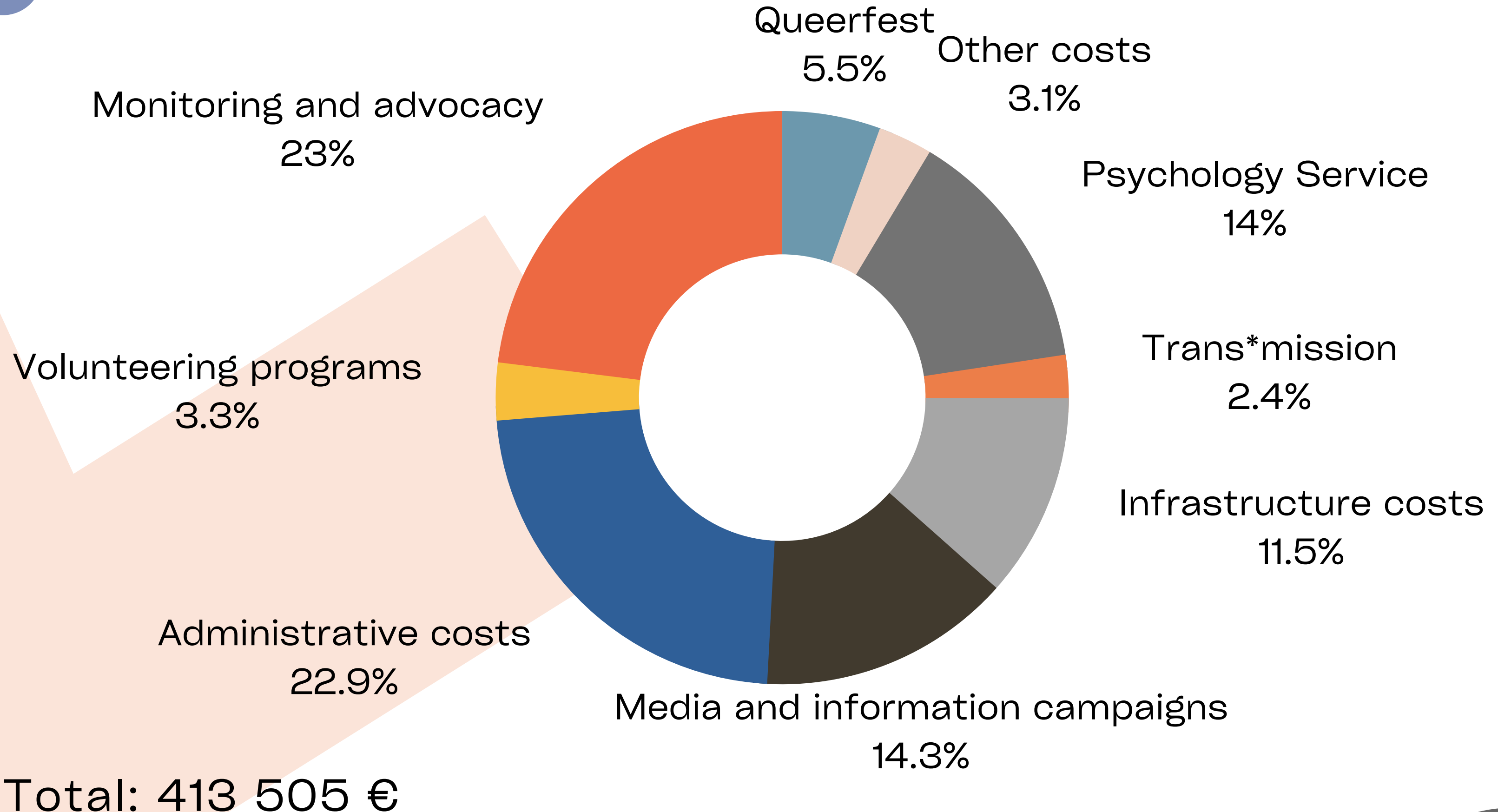
Our plans

All this convinces us that not only is our work relevant, but it is also needed more than ever.

In the coming years, we plan to continue expanding our direct support programs for LGBTQ+ people in Russia because we see a very high demand for them. We will continue trying to reach out to the Russian society at large in order to minimize the presence of homophobia and transphobia in the daily lives of ordinary LGBTQ+ people in Russia.

Our main goal is to preserve and multiply all that we have achieved in the 15 years of our work and make everything so that when we return home, we find it at least not worse than it was with us. And if we try hard enough it may be even better.

2022 Financial report



Total: 413 505 €

Friends of “Coming Out”

**DELO
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газета**



BECOME A PART OF “COMING OUT”!

Every day, “Coming Out” fights for a better future for LGBTQ+ in Russia: it helps people protect their basic right to be safe and makes queer lives visible, despite the absurd laws and official statements. This fight cannot go on without you — our supporters and allies.

Join “Coming Out” and speak up against LGBTQ+ discrimination in Russia. We value every donation, even the smallest ones, because behind every contribution there is a person who is ready to build a bright and safe future for the queer community in Russia together with “Coming Out”.

Say “No!” to discrimination against LGBTQ+ in Russia

We are always in touch!

Read more:
<https://comingoutspb.com>

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