

2024 Annual Report

For God's work
among students
in Bulgaria
through BCSU

Letter from the Director

Dear donors and friends of the Bulgarian Christian Student Union,

We sincerely thank you for your faithfulness, generosity, and support throughout 2024! With your help, we have seen how God continues to build and strengthen our ministry among students in Bulgaria. Together, we rejoice in the fruits of His grace, which transforms hearts and inspires young people to follow Him and be a light in their universities.

Your prayerful and financial support has enabled us to reach new students with the Gospel, build strong relationships in our communities, and bear witness to His love in a world so in need of hope. God is faithful! We want to share with you some of the most encouraging great works of God among us in 2024:

- A record number of participants in BCSU's mentoring and leadership program, "Barnabas" – 11 participants in the first level and 3 in the second level. Another miracle was receiving funding for most of them.
- God inspired the creation of two of the most original evangelistic events, which gained recognition in IFES Europe – an Easter Escape Room and a Christmas Escape Room.
- God wonderfully blessed the organization of the evangelistic "Mark Drama," performed 7 times in 3 churches across 3 cities, with nearly 1,000 attendees in total.
- For the first time in BCSU's history, students at the Forum raised our largest-ever donation for another European student movement in a financial crisis.
- Our small movement hosted one of the most significant conferences in IFES Europe, "Formacion," allowing BCSU to send 5 students as participants and another 5 as the worship team.
- Individual donors from abroad specifically funded the first team retreat outside the movement's office – something we never dreamed God would provide.
- Students came to faith, returned to faith, and began evangelizing. Some shared their stories during the "7 Weeks of Praise" campaign before Easter.

As we reflect on all these accomplishments, our hearts are filled with gratitude and humility before the One who makes all this possible. The words of Psalm 91, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty," deeply resonate with us as we look back on the past year and see how God has protected, guided, and blessed us. His covering has been over us in every challenge and success, in every open heart and life transformed by His word.

Thank you for every sacrifice you have made to enable God's kingdom to grow among students in Bulgaria. We pray that in the coming year we will continue to remain under the shadow of the Almighty, inspired by His faithfulness, and continue to bear witness to His works together with you.

With gratitude for your role in the great story of God's love,

Desislava Kisyakova

2024 in numbers

1. Number of Groups in BCSU – 13:

- 8 student groups in 4 cities: 3 in Sofia, 2 in Plovdiv, 1 in Veliko Tarnovo, and 2 in Varna.
- 2 groups for international students in 2 cities: 1 in Sofia and 1 in Varna.
- 3 groups for graduates in 3 cities: 1 in Sofia, 1 in Plovdiv, and 1 in Varna.



2. This fall, there were approximately 118 active students in these groups. A total of **161** Bulgarian students and **33** international students attended at least one event organized by BCSU during the fall, where the Word was shared. **13%** of them are not yet followers of Jesus, and **37%** are new to BCSU.



3. Staff this fall:

Full-time workers – 5

Part-time workers – 1

Interns in the “Barnabas” program – 14

Interns in the “Milagros” program – 3

Volunteers in the “Faithful” program – 6

Student group and Bible study leaders – 40

4. National Events During the Year:

- **National Forum “Living Water”** – attended by 75 students from across the country. The event was held in Plovdiv, with daily themes focused on passages from the Word about “living water.” Every intern from the “Barnabas” program had a significant responsibility, such as leading a main session, seminar, or key program element.
- **Leadership Conference “The Athlete, the Farmer, and the Soldier”** – 31 students received leadership training. The themes were based on 2 Timothy 2:2-7 and the leadership models presented by Paul.
- **Two Bible manuscript study camps “Trilogy”** – one on the book of Mark with four follow-up online meetings in the fall, and one on the book of Genesis with a record number of participants.
- **Autumn National Meeting for Graduates in Tryavna** – themed “Restores My Soul.” The conference was attended by 29 graduates and 3 team members. For the first time, the event was entirely organized by a team of alumni. The topics included rest (Sabbath), types of rest, and Psalm 23.

- **Winter Evangelistic Retreat for International Students** – titled “Explore,” held in Uzana. The event was attended by 12 students, 2 volunteers, and 3 student workers. One-third of the participants studied God's Word for the first time, and another third are still seeking the truth.
- **“Barnabas” Conference** – nine participants from the previous year officially completed their internship with BCSU. Two of them decided to become volunteers, and two continued into the second level of the “Barnabas” program.
- **“Mark Drama” Performances** – organized by three teams in Plovdiv, Varna, and Sofia. This 90-minute play allows the audience to experience every event in the Gospel of Mark, as the performance takes place all around them.
- **Partnership in Organizing “Formacion”** – the European IFES conference for student leaders with nearly 90 participants. BCSU sent 5 students to this training. The theme was “The Upside-Down Kingdom – Living Out Kingdom Values in Today's World,” and the training continues for a year with monthly individual mentoring sessions.
- We promoted BCSU through a **teamwork seminar and a large competition event** at the summer Christian youth camp “Karandila.”
- **We partnered with the Austrian and Irish student movements** as we sent team members to participate in and led elements of their national forums this year.

5. Local Initiatives:

- We organized evangelistic events such as:
 - Seminar “More Than Friends”
 - Easter and Christmas Escape Rooms
 - Christmas and Easter parties with messages from the Word
 - Movie nights, karaoke, skating, a December 8th event, DIY day for international students, holiday cookie-making, game nights, hiking, cinema, bowling, and more.
- We held prayer station events in Sofia and Plovdiv to mark the World Student Day of Prayer in IFES.
- We organized a total of 8 regional leadership days – 4 each semester, with three for Bulgarian students in Sofia, Varna, and Veliko Tarnovo, and one for international students in Varna.
- Outside the “Barnabas” program, 11 students meet individually with team members, volunteers, or other students for discipleship and mentoring aimed at spiritual growth.

6. Other Significant Events:

- We said farewell to a team member (Ivan Ivanov), who served in BCSU – Veliko Tarnovo for 5 years, and welcomed a new team member (Jasmine Svanda), who is helping with the work among international students in Sofia.
- We welcomed 2 new members to the BCSU Board – Ilina Teodorova and Kalina Karaboneva. During the year, two training sessions were

held for the board (one in person and one online). A new board chairperson, Todor Todorov, was elected this year.

- We published a total of 9 new articles and 10 interviews on the BC-SU blog "Missio Dei."
- Our team participated in the IFES Europe team conference, and one team member (Tatyana Weyrens) joined the planning team for the largest IFES event – the European Student Festival, which will take place in August 2025 in Latvia.
- We sent two students (one from Plovdiv and one from Veliko Tarnovo) to the "FEUER" conference for evangelism in the academic world.
- We sent 3 participants to the "Global Impact" training conference for work with international students. These participants volunteer in iConnect Sofia and Varna.
- One team member (Silas Walter) completed the "Young Staff Network" training for new workers.
- We applied for financial support for the "Barnabas" program from IFES and were approved, allowing us to accept a larger number of participants this year.
- We held a team retreat outside the office, the first "returning home" training for international students graduating, and a graduation party for international students.



Testimonies:

"If you have Christian friends and have some doubts or prejudice about the Christian religion, please consider joining at least once to feel how it is and learn about Christianity." - Sung Joon Huh about the **Winter retreat: Explore!**

"After studying the passages and reflecting on the message that leadership should be seen through the lens of being a patient, I've gained a fresh perspective. Additionally, having scenarios that demonstrate how to handle difficult situations has proven to be quite helpful, as it can be one of the biggest challenges for leaders." - Riya Stephen, medical student in Varna about the **Leadership day – ISM**

"To be honest, I wasn't in a great place before coming to the Forum. I felt dissatisfied with a lot of things and worried. I realized that I really needed some time with God and the Forum was exactly that. It helped me escape from everyday life and truly and completely immerse myself in God's presence. It is very important where a person's focus is, it is easy to get distracted, put our focus on things from the university, our family, our friends and forget the most important thing: that if our focus is on God, then everything falls into place. Something that we need to remind ourselves quite often." - Iva Koleva about the **National Forum "Living water"**

"Finding people who share your excitement and goals is one of the most enjoyable and encouraging experiences. At the leadership day, I liked that both people with longer experience in leading a group and students who have been learning to do this for a few years spoke and shared their observations and experiences. I was most impressed Ilin's teaching which showed clearly and decisively that we need the Word. This, as well as the other things they shared, were very refreshing and reminded me of the basics of leading groups and made me ask myself valuable questions." - Dani Ivanova, student in Plovdiv about the **Leadership day, spring 2024**

"This was a great way to learn about Easter for those of us who are not familiar with it. We had a great time solving the puzzles, riddles and solving the game. We really enjoyed it and it was a really good experience for us!!" - Friends of iConnect students in Varna (Annette Saji) about the **Escape Room - Varna**



"The Barnabas Program helped me make several decisions about my spiritual life. I started getting up early in the morning and having quiet time, which also helped me organize myself to go to bed earlier. I decided to limit myself as much as possible from social networks, which helped me find my new favorite activity - reading more. The program taught me to set goals every month that I should strive to achieve, and it taught me discipline." - Mihaela Rumenova, intern in the **Barnabas Program 2024/2025**

"I was greatly encouraged during this one week. I was inspired and called to participate in God's plan, namely to lead others in my life toward life and transformation. God wants us to take part in His plan as His helpers, and this was His original plan as well." - Ivan Penev, student in Varna, about **"Trilogy – Genesis"**

For me, FEUER was an unexpected adventure that will stay with me for a lifetime! I learned a lot about defending my faith. This event was at a high level and helped build me up at this stage of my life! In addition, I built contacts and connections with Christians from all over Europe and beyond! - Teodor Binev about **FEUER** (Fellowship of Evangelists in the Universities in Europe)



"When you put the words of Jesus Christ in your heart, you cannot remain the same. That is what I experienced. These nearly two months of preparation for Mark drama changed my life. My prayer life blossomed and my closeness to God multiplied. Until now, I had not learned the Word by heart and I had not even fasted. This has changed. Praise God, this experience was a great blessing. During the last week (the week of rehearsals) I was on the verge of getting sick every day and was almost not able to speak. My throat was hanging by a thread. God provided strength and enough health every day to lead me again and again in prayer. I realized how impossible it is to be His instruments without His support. Minutes before the last performance, I was hoarse, with a scratchy throat. God provided me with a voice for the entire performance - without pain and without voice problems! When you enter a role, this naturally spills over into your life, as much as you allow it, of course. Well, how much more wonderful than allowing the words of Jesus to enter your daily life? Do we realize what Christ really did for us and what He suffered for us? How He stood on the cross and bore all the shame and all that burden. For our sake. Let us appreciate His sacrifice with fear, repentance, reverence and love for Him. Let His sacrifice stand in our hearts and remind us Who our lives belong to. May God build us in such a way that we discover what it means to give God's things to God!" - Martin, actor in the role of Jesus, in **"Mark Drama" in Plovdiv**

"The time spent at the conference was a time of rest - a time when I had the opportunity to close my eyes and hear the gentle voice of my Father. In addition to leaving rested and restored, I was able to meet many people from different cultures, hear their stories, how God works in their lives, how their ministry with international students is going, and what are the common obstacles that we encounter in different countries. The seminars I attended were unique and I regret that I was not able to attend all of them, the most memorable being "3D Gospel", through which I discovered that the Gospel can be received by people from all cultures and that God has provided for absolutely everyone who seeks the truth in His Word." - Elisabeth Floreva, student in Varna and volunteer in the "Faithful" program about her participation in **Global Impact** (the European Conference for International Student Ministry)

"I saw how merciful God is and how He has taken care of me throughout my life! I am joyful and grateful to God that He did not allow me to harden my heart in a moment of distance to the point that I could not return to Him! And yes - I saw God working in my life! And I know that from now on I must deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him and, yes this will not be easy, but this is what God asks of each of us and He gives us a CHOICE!!!" - Iliya Tzvetkov, student in Plovdiv about **"Trilogy – Mark"**

"Formation was an incredible conference that challenged me a lot. I saw God's faithfulness, wisdom, generosity, and love in a new light. I made important decisions about my life. The StrengthsFinder workshops opened my eyes to my strengths as well as my weaknesses. I can't wait to use this knowledge in my student groups. I am also grateful for meeting students from different countries. The conversations with them were encouraging." - Dimitar Todorov, student in Varna about the European student leadership conference **Formacion**



"It was a very 'waking up' experience to talk about the things that are difficult for our generation, namely - doing difficult things. It's good to remember who we are in Christ and that we actually have a responsibility - that we need to be strong and brave. We are not children anymore and excuses don't work or help." - Danail Cherganski, a student in Sofia about the **National Leadership Conference**
"The Athlete, the Farmer and the Soldier"

"When I started participating in this drama based on the Gospel of Mark, I did not have much of a desire to get involved and my relationship with God was not stable. I had built a wall between Him and myself, a wall that I could not overcome for months. But at the end of the performance, this wall was no longer there. For the first time in a long time, I again felt a desire to read God's word and get closer to Him. I believe that God touched the hearts of many during the drama and that it changed the lives of many people." - Alexandra Konstantinova about the **Mark Drama in Sofia**

"I saw firsthand how important it is to be in an environment with people who are running in the same direction as you. I was deeply encouraged by the fact that absolutely everyone accepted the challenge to step out of their comfort zone, while the others supported and encouraged them, showing courage to step out of their own comfort zones as well. I am grateful for everything I heard. It was very precise and practically oriented." - Eli Goranova about the **National Leadership Conference** "The Runner, the Farmer and the Soldier"

"Trilogy" is one of the few events in my life that brings me extremely close to God, through deepening in the Word, developing good relationships, and a diverse and unique program! - Theo Vinaliev, student from Varna about **"Trilogy - Genesis"**

"BCSU is a place where everyone is welcome. I'm not very familiar with the Bible and sometimes, as we read, we have different points of view and see different details. They lead this in an understandable way so that we become more and more interested. I love this place and everyone in it. They are very nice people." - Diana Georgieva, student in Varna

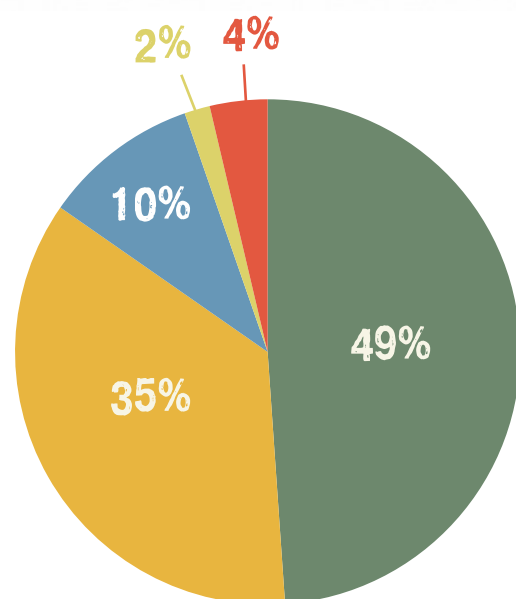


Financial year in numbers

Income:

● Donations from graduates and the church in Bulgaria.....	68 310 lv.
● Donations from abroad.....	49 990 lv.
● Targeted donations for projects & investments...	13 960 lv.
● Campaign for new student workers	5 150 lv.
● Projects and Internship Program	2 284 lv.

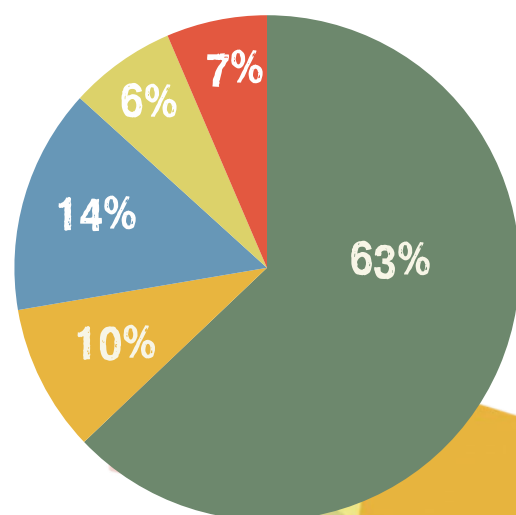
Total income - 139 694 leva



Expenses:

● Salaries and insurance	69 752 lv.
● Ministry expenses	10 467 lv.
● Office, taxes, and administration	15 975 lv.
● Conferences and training	7 576 lv.
● Projects and Internship Programs	7 143 lv.

Total expenses - 110 913 leva



New workers in the field:

We are grateful for the ways Jesus is working among students in **Varna and Veliko Tarnovo**. Currently, students in these cities are actively seeking ways to serve in the academic world and lead student groups and events without regular support and care from a staff worker. This is difficult for many of them and limits the groups' ability to grow.

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. BCSU needs to raise funds for two full-time student workers in Varna and Veliko Tarnovo to share the Good News with students and help develop and grow active witnessing communities of students in these cities.

You can be part of this great work in gathering the harvest without having to go anywhere! You can get involved by:

- Praying for these cities and for the fundraising
- Donating regularly to support the work of the staff
- Sharing this initiative with your friends and acquaintances

To hire a new worker, BCSU needs **1,870 leva** per month (**22,440 leva** per year) or:

- **5** people willing to commit to giving **100 leva** per month
- **20** people willing to commit to giving **50 leva** per month
- **25** people willing to commit to giving **20 leva** per month

You can continue to support us in one of the following ways:

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