



2014: THE YEAR OF MATURITY

Annual Report of the Sarajevo Open Centre

ABOUT Sarajevo Open Centre

Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) advocates full respect of human rights and social inclusion of LGBT people and women.

Sarajevo Open Centre is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit expert organisation aspiring to empower LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans*) people and women by strengthening the community and building a movement. Sarajevo Open Centre also publicly promotes human rights of LGBT people and women, and advocates improvement of legislation and better policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina at state, European, and international level.

By working on issues of human rights in general, improvement of civil society position, and the European integration, Sarajevo Open Centre contributes also to other human rights topics.

Sarajevo Open Centre was founded in 2007 and its professionalisation began in 2011. Today, with 12 team members, a steering board, its founders, activists, and an intensive partner network in BiH and all over Europe, the organisation is recognised as one of the key actors in the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina when it comes to LGBT and women's rights.

Sarajevo Open Centre
Čekaluša 16
BiH-71 000 Sarajevo



+ 387 (33) 551 000 (Programme Team)

+ 387 (33) 551 001 (Management, Finance and Administration)



+ 387 (33) 551 002

www.soc.ba - office@soc.ba

www.lgbt.ba - www.zenskamreza.ba - www.eu-monitoring.ba

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FOREWORD

When we started professionalising and profiling our work in 2011, we could not have even dreamed that Sarajevo Open Centre will develop in this direction and towards the position it has today. While 2011, 2012, and 2013 were the years of growing up and dynamic development, we can say that 2014 was the year of maturity and stabilisation. We have matured as organisation members, but our programmes have matured as well. A clear organisation profile has emerged, recognised by the community we work with, the media, but also other BiH and international stakeholders. Sarajevo Open Centre has thus become one of the key actors of the BiH civil society with regard to rights of women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) persons, and we therefore face great expectations. We hope to meet them.

Although 2014 was another elections year eaten by locusts, where it was practically impossible to achieve any significant changes in public policies and their implementation, we tried to make sure our programmes are not affected. Let us present three key achievements. We are very proud of being a part of the permanent training of around 1,300 police officers in Sarajevo Canton through which we raised awareness about the problems LGBT people face in terms of violence and hate crime. We used the October elections to strengthen our multiannual arrangement in the domain of political participation of women and gender equality, opening thus the path to more radical advocacy for new solutions to be expected in 2015. In 2014, we have taken over the task of coordinating the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH and have, by our continuous work and particularly by publication of the Alternative Progress Report, established ourselves as a relevant interlocutor for human rights and EU integration.

At the organisational level, 2014 brought two important novelties. We adopted our new organisational 2014-2017 Strategy. End 2014, we managed to obtain institutional support for the next few years. Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and Open Society Fund BiH/Human Rights Initiative of the Open Society Foundations became our new/old partners and demonstrated that they, together with our project donors and partners, believe that what we do, we do it right and deserve their support.

We are looking forward to your feedback.

Saša GAVRIĆ, Executive Director
Emina BOŠNJAK, Programme Manager



Art cinema Kriterion, International queer film festival *Merlinka*, Sarajevo, February 2014

RIGHTS OF LGBT PEOPLE

In our work on rights of LGBT people, Sarajevo Open Centre focuses on three aspects.

Social and legal support to LGBT people and building the activist movement

Because we recognise the personal needs of LGBT people, as well as the fact that state institutions are not providing them with necessary support, we greatly focus on social and legal empowerment. We believe that without the empowerment of the LGBT community, no LGBT person will be able to exercise his/her rights or become an advocate for human rights. We think that community activities (workshops, discussions, talks with activists), psychological counselling, access to information (web portal lgbt.ba), support groups (activist group, Trans* BiH group), as well as legal advice and representation are the foundations of empowerment of individuals. Long-term outcome of these activities will be the empowered LGBT people ready to exercise their rights before judicial and non-judicial authorities, becoming thus pioneers in the fight for human rights of this minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Increasing the responsibility of BiH institutions to protect human rights of LGBT people

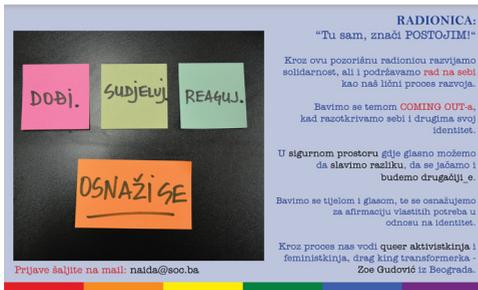
LGBT people are the only social group in Bosnia and Herzegovina whose problems and needs have been systematically excluded from public policies. This situation requires public policies, legislative changes, and innovation. Sarajevo Open Centre (together with its partners) is developing and advocating new proposals based on specific needs and experience, with the aim to increase its influence among decision-makers. Aware that legislation and policies are not sufficient, we also work with public officials (police officers, judges, prosecutors) to raise their awareness and knowledge on violations of human rights of LGBT people. Future professionals, particularly young lawyers and journalists, can contribute to these changes and therefore represent an important target group in our efforts.

Informing the public about rights of LGBT people

LGBT people and their lives are still a taboo in the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By targeted actions in leading TV, online, radio, and print media we contribute to dissemination of credible information among the wider public about the state of human rights and lives of LGBT people. We also use artistic and cultural platforms (such as the Merlinka LGBT Film Festival) to raise awareness of the public about LGBT rights.

Find out more about the state of human rights of LGBT people in 2014 in:
Pink Report. 2014 Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBT people
available at www.soc.ba -> Publications -> Human Rights Series

Find out more about our activities and results at: www.soc.ba -> Programmes



New approach in working directly with LGBT people

We successfully intensified our work with LGBT people in 2014. In addition to legal advice we provide (online, by phone, face to face) and the specialised online medium (www.lgbt.ba), we work directly with LGBT people. At least twice a month we organise closed events for the LGBT community and we inform, educate, and empower them. Two new groups were formed in 2014 - SOC Activist Group and Trans* BiH Activist Group.

Making institutions more sensitive: police, prosecution, judiciary

Behind every change, there are people. In order for LGBT people to obtain higher level of institutional support, we have worked with police officers, prosecutors and judges from the very beginning. After the attack on Merlinka LGBT Film Festival, when the police failed to provide adequate protection, it became clear that there is a need for such work. We participated in the permanent education of police officers in Sarajevo Canton in 2014 and trained more than 1,300 persons. We also organised our first LGBT rights training for prosecutors and judges.



2014 Merlinka LGBT Film Festival

We organised a three-day weekend LGBT film festival for the second time in 2014. The high level of visibility confirmed that our work has opponents. The attack by 14 hooligans shocked everybody but affirmed that such public events are important for the wider public to get informed about LGBT rights.



LGBT in the mainstream media

We cooperated with all relevant BiH TV, radio, online, and print media in 2014. Media products (shows, series of articles, video features) that emerged from our campaigns reached more than two million BiH citizens making the rights of this minority group quite visible.

Monitoring, reporting, advocating changes

We continued our advocacy activities in 2014. We applied the well-known recipe: we monitored the developments, documented violations, published results in the Pink Report, and developed specific actions. We requested the Ombudsman Institution to draft a special report on the state of rights of LGBT people and advocated in the Federal Parliament the amendments of the Criminal Code that refer to hate crime offences.



Stronger activist movement - better human rights

As we are aware of the fact that we have to strengthen and widen the movement for LGBT rights, we worked on empowering activist groups in Banja Luka, Tuzla, and Mostar. Through seminars and a summer school, but also strategic planning and local actions, we contributed to strengthening and decentralising LGBT activism, making it more visible than ever. We intensively contributed to organisational capacity building of B.U.K.A LGBT association from Banja Luka.



Exhibition My house is your house, too, Sarajevo, October 2014

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In our work on women's rights, Sarajevo Open Centre focuses on two aspects.

Increasing the responsibility of BiH institutions to protect women's human rights

Although women represent more than 50% of the population, they are in fact the largest minority group that is being systematically excluded from the political and public life, and discriminated in the economic life. Along with the satisfactory legislative framework, there is a need for additional public policies, legislative amendments and innovation. Sarajevo Open Centre (together with its partners) is developing and advocating new proposals based on specific needs and experience, with the aim to increase its influence among decision-makers. We also work with decision-makers to raise their awareness and knowledge. Future professionals represent an important target group in our efforts.

Informing the public about women's rights and feminism

By targeted artistic, educational, and research actions, we contribute to the questioning of the position of women in BiH society but also the provision of credible information to the wider audience about the state of women's human rights and feminism.

Find out more about the state of women's human rights in 2014 in:
2014 Annual Report on the State of Women's Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina
available at www.soc.ba -> Publications -> Human Rights Papers

Find out more about our activities and results at: www.soc.ba -> Programmes



Women Documented: the feminist event of the year in BiH

Even though women greatly contributed to the development of BiH society, their actions are visible only in part or not at all. Having that in mind, as well as the need to mark the World War I centennial in an alternative manner, we conducted a broad research that resulted in a book entitled „Women Documented. Women and Public Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 20th Century“, organised an exhibition in the Historical Museum of BiH, and a regional conference. Women Documented was declared the feminist event of the year by BH DANI weekly and we are especially proud of that.



Feminist education

In 2014 we implemented a cycle of lectures „Somebody Said Feminism“, a unique BiH feminist programme comprising eight lectures and discussions. We also started intensive and participatory preparations for the new two-semester educational programme School of Feminism Žarana Papić.



Ženska mreža BiH

Monitoring, reporting, advocating changes

Last year, we were one of the most active members of Women's Network of BiH. We maintain the media presence of the network, also by administering the zenskamreza.ba web portal. We monitored the developments around general elections and participated in advocating participation of women in the executive and legislative branches. We drafted the monitoring report about women's participation in politics and the Annual Report on Women's Human Rights.



SOCplus

In our work, we mostly focus on the rights of LGBT people and women but we think that civil society organisations should focus on other issues as well. That is the way to achieve the betterment of rights of the social group with whom and on whose behalf the organisation works but also of rights of others. For that reason, Sarajevo Open Centre is an active participant of various coalitions and civil society networks, as well as an initiator of specific actions. In 2014, we worked on the following issues.

Fighting discrimination

Having recognised that fighting and prohibiting discrimination are very important issues, as well as the need to adopt public policies that would focus on prevention of discrimination, we decided to actively participate in and lead processes relating to the amendments to the anti-discrimination law and advocating the adoption of the strategy to fight and prevent discrimination. The existing court cases showed that very few citizens opt for the possibility of instituting civil proceedings. For that reason, there is a need to introduce proactive measures that the institutions should implement to prevent discrimination. In March 2014 we organised a series of consultative meetings with representatives of civil society organisation and had a study entitled „Harmonising the Anti-Discrimination Law of BiH with the EU Acquis Communautaire” developed by renowned lawyers and leaders from Croatian human rights protection institutions. We have thus prepared the scene for our advocacy work after government formation in 2015.

European integration and human rights

In 2014 Sarajevo Open Centre took over the coordination of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH, a non-formal coalition of civil society organisations aspiring to contribute to European integration monitoring, but also advocating specific solutions when it comes to the political integration criteria (human rights, rule of law, democracy). In 2014 we worked on the strengthening of the network and that resulted in the Alternative Progress Report, regular contacts with the Delegation of the European Union in Sarajevo, and preparation of the „December Requests”. Certain priorities set in the Alternative Progress Report have been included in the official Progress Report published by the European Commission in October 2014. The Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration is recognised by the media and European partners as a contributor and a corrective in the area of European integration.

-> More about the initiative at: www.eu-monitoring.ba

COMMUNICATION

Transparency is an organisational value of the Sarajevo Open Centre. We think that civil society organisations must report on their work and in that way contribute to changes in social awareness and accountability.

SOC web

Sarajevo Open Centre maintains four web platforms: organisational website www.soc.ba, the only BiH LGBT info portal www.lgbt.ba, web presentation of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH www.eu-monitoring.ba and web presentation of Women's Network of BiH www.zenskamreza.ba.

SOC on social networks



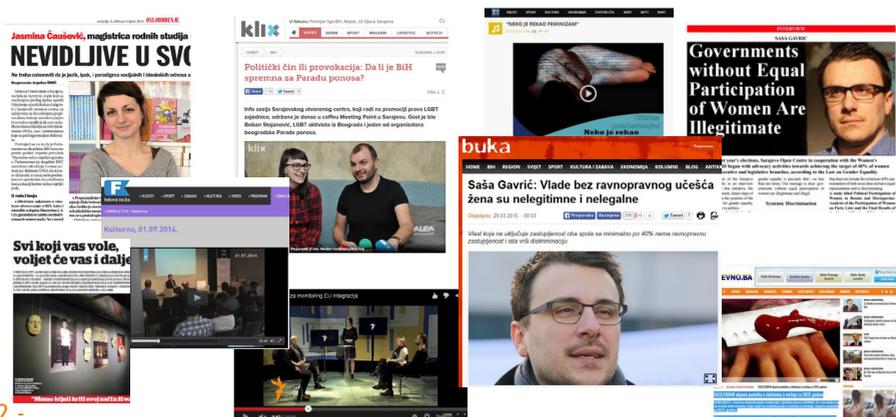
The four sites had 120,000 visitors in 2014.

SOC in the media

All relevant BiH TV, radio, online, and print media reported on our work. We appeared as guests in morning shows and central news, gave interviews, and wrote texts ourselves.

You can read the selected content at: www.soc.ba -> Press

We produced (together with partner organisations and the media) media campaigns and contents that reached more than two million citizens. You can find some of these on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sarajevskiotvorenicentar>, with more than 18,000 views.



Production of knowledge: SOC publishing

Since its establishment, Sarajevo Open Centre has been known for its intensive research and publishing activity. We believe that we contribute to social changes by producing, but also disseminating knowledge. In our editions Questioning, Human Rights, BiH Politics, Gender and Human Rights Papers we produced 13 publications in more than 10,000 copies. We are especially proud of the following three:



2014 Alternative Progress Report

The report is the civil society response to the official Progress Report of the European Commission. It aims to provide a critical and objective picture of the current state of human rights, rule of law, and democratisation in BiH. It is the result of joint effort of more than 20 civil society organisations.



Pink Report. 2014 Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBT People

For the fourth year in a row SOC is publishing the annual report on the rights of LGBT people - one of its kind in the country. The report documents violations and trends, but also presents specific proposals to improve the state of human rights of LGBT people.



2014 Annual Report on the State of Women's Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

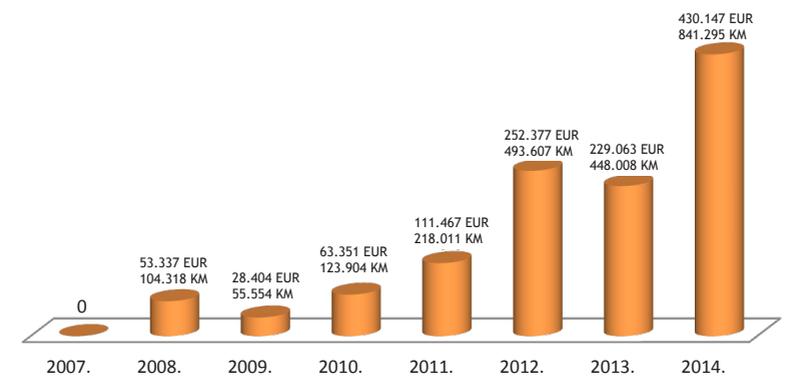
For the third year in a row SOC is publishing the report on the state of women's rights. For the first time, the report was principally drafted by SOC employees and that makes us especially proud.

All our publications can be found on www.soc.ba -> Publications

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCES

2014 has been the year of growing up in both organisational and financial terms. A lot of energy has been invested into the development and adoption of the new organisational Strategy for the period 2014-2017 and the Results Assessment Framework, which present the theory of change that our work is based on, and the 21 indicators that we use to measure our results. **The Strategy and Results Assessment Framework (RAF)** can be downloaded at www.soc.ba -> About us

Income through the years



Funds available for 2014

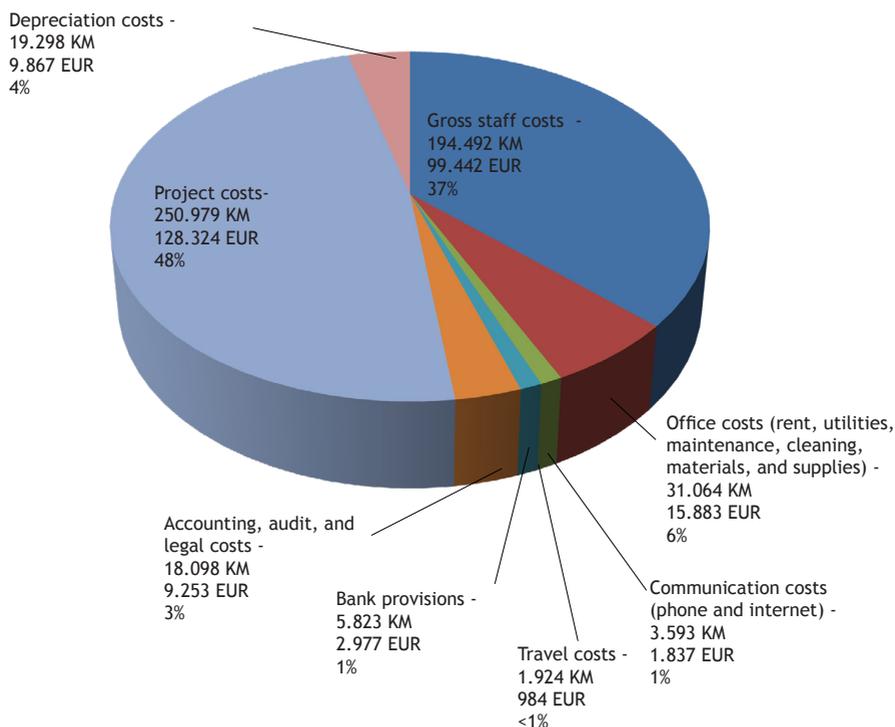
	KM	EUR
Unspent balance from 2013	41.656	21.298
Income from international partners/donors in 2014	837.560	428.238
Income from other sources in 2014	3.735	1.910
Total funds available for 2014	882.951	451.446

Our donors are divided into core funding (Open Society Fund BiH) and project-based donors. Here is a list of the main donors in 2014.

Income in 2014

Donors 2014	KM	EUR
Norwegian Embassy Sarajevo	130.113	66.526
European Commission/EIDHR	114.671	58.630
Dutch Mission to the OSCE in Vienna	97.792	50.000
Open Society Fund BiH/Human Rights Initiative	86.022	43.982
National Endowment for Democracy	58.722	30.024
Civil Rights Defenders	58.676	30.000
Dutch Embassy Sarajevo/MATRA Programme	46.323	23.685
USAID Mission BiH	46.299	23.672
Heinrich Boell Foundation - Sarajevo Office	38.395	19.631
ILGA Europe	28.146	14.391
Hedda Productions/Swedish Institute	26.498	13.548
Heinrich Boell Foundation - Sarajevo Office/EIDHR	23.539	12.035
Foundation Cure / Norwegian Embassy Sarajevo	21.150	10.814
Mama Cash	18.580	9.450
US Embassy Sarajevo - Democracy Commission	13.522	6.914
Swiss Embassy Sarajevo	12.450	6.366
Urgent Action Fund for Women	7.006	3.582
Other international donors	9.658	4.938
Subtotal - international partners/donors 2014	837.561	428.238
Other sources/private donations	3.735	1.910
TOTAL INCOME 2014	841.295	430.148

2014 Expenditures



Summary of income and expenditures for 2014

	KM	EUR
Total funds available in 2014	882.951	451.446
Total expenditures in 2014	525.271	268.567
Balance transferred to 2014	357.680	182.879

Learn more about our finances in the 2014 Audit Report, which has been produced by the independent auditor company NGO and Business Audit d.o.o. Sarajevo. Our financial statements have been assessed as fully compliant with all legislative, donor, and internal procedures.

You can download the report at www.soc.ba -> About us -> Reports.

WHAT WILL 2015 BRING US?

School of Feminism Žarana Papić

Having recognised the need for feminist training and education of the new generation of activists, Sarajevo Open Centre started the preparations in 2014 and in 2015 formally launched the School of Feminism Žarana Papić. This programme continues the tradition of Women's Studies lead by Women to Women organisation and in that way maintains the BiH feminist tradition. In the two-semester programme, participants will attend four modules on feminist theory and practice, and gender equality issues. Lecturers and trainers come from both academia and activism and the programme will end with an applied module on activism and specific actions of participants. We hope to introduce innovation into BiH activism in this manner.

Find out more about the School of Feminism

www.soc.ba -> Programmes -> Žarana Papić School of Feminism



Advocacy: rights of LGBT people and women

In 2015 Sarajevo Open Centre plans to, in cooperation with partner organisations and through the existing networks), propose a number of specific changes that refer to a) fight against discrimination (amendments to the law, drafting the anti-discrimination strategy), b) participation of women in politics (amendments to the election law, amendments to the laws on government at cantonal, entity, and state level), c) hate crime offences (amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code, changes in police academy curricula). SOC will therefore continue the existing, but also start new advocacy initiatives with the aim to increase state responsibility when it comes to human rights of minority groups.

Find out more about advocacy and advocacy activities of SOC

www.soc.ba -> Programmes

Equality Academy

Being aware that behind every change there are people, we decided to intensify our cooperation

with the newly elected, but also future leaders. Upon the initiative of our partner Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we will launch the Equality Academy in 2015. The Academy shall comprise five three-day modules and will be attended by members of parliament at state, entity, and cantonal level, and representatives of political parties and certain political bodies. In this manner we hope to build and/or strengthen cooperation between civil society organisations and decision-makers. The Academy will focus on gender equality and rights of deprived social groups (LGBT people, persons with disabilities, Roma, returnees).

Find out more about the Academy

www.soc.ba -> Programmes -> Equality Academy

Empowering the LGBT community: new approaches

We will continue our intensive work with LGBT people in 2015. In addition to community events and legal advice, Sarajevo Open Centre will ensure psychological counselling and legal representation (an attorney) to those LGBT people who need such kind of support. In this way, we will expand our services catalogue, with the hope that we are following the needs of LGBT community. In parallel, we will be developing new empowerment methods. Trans* people will be the specific focus in 2015 - we will support the Trans* BiH group and organise the first research on the needs of trans people in BiH.

Find out more about the LGBT community empowerment:

www.soc.ba -> Programmes

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT US



In a short time, Sarajevo Open Centre has become a recognisable and respectable organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The emergence of SOC in the civil society introduced some freshness in the overall activities of civil society organisations. Their work demonstrates transparency and accountability. They are one of the first organisations in BiH that introduced the topic of LGBT rights into the public discourse, providing evidence-based arguments for the unenviable position of this population, as well as proposals for improvements.

Dragana Dardić, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka

For almost five years now, we have shared with SOC the opinion that the democratisation process of BiH society demands the equality of all its citizens, including marginalised groups. In that regard, we respect and support the commitments of SOC's activists, as well as their professional approach to actions that have left visible traces in the public and initiated changes.

Vesna Andree Zaimović, RadioSarajevo.ba



Every contact with the SOC team is a pleasure. Although probably (in average) the youngest team in the BiH civil sector, their professionalism, dedication, and enthusiasm are truly appealing.

Dobriła Govedarica, Open Society Fund BiH



The experience I gained in Sarajevo Open Centre helped me a lot personally, but also helped me improve the work of the Banja Luka Association of Queer Activists. I believe that other organisations dealing with human rights can also learn much from SOC.

Jasenko Suljetović, Banja Luka Association of Queer Activist



THE TEAM (in April 2015)

Steering Board:
Aida Spahić, Elmaja Bavčić, Arijana Aganović

Executive Director:
Saša Gavrić
Programme Manager:
Emina Bošnjak

Financial and Administrative Coordinators:
Feđa Bobić, Dina Vilić

Programme Coordinators:
Jozo Blažević, Jasmina Čaušević, Inela Hadžić, Lejla Huremović,
Naida Kučukalić, Dalila Mirović, Vladana Vasić
Programme Assistant: Maida Zagorac

Volunteers:
Darko Pandurević

Contact:
Sarajevo Open Centre
Čekaluša 16
BiH-71 000 Sarajevo

Tel: + 387 (33) 551 000 (Programme Team)
+ 387 (33) 551 001 (Management, Finance and Administration)
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