

# 2016:

## THE YEAR OF CHANGES



Annual Report of the  
Sarajevo Open Centre

# ABOUT SOC

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

Sarajevo Open Centre is an independent, feminist civil society organisation aspiring to empower LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, and intersex) persons and women by strengthening the community and building an activist movement. Sarajevo Open Centre also publicly promotes human rights of LGBTI 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 European integration, Sarajevo Open Centre is improving human rights in general and encouraging further development of civil society.

Sarajevo Open Centre was founded in 2007 and its professionalization 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 civil society of Bosnia and Herzegovina when it comes to human rights

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## Acknowledging the Voices of the Marginalised Through Policies and Actions is a Great Challenge

The report before you summarises a year in the work of an organisation that is constantly changing and evolving. In 2016, we formed new partnerships, gained new collaborators, overcame new challenges and embarked on new projects. This has expanded our capacity and fortified our resolve to tackle the challenges ahead. In 2016, we also said goodbye to Saša, our executive director and closest collaborator, but we also improved and bolstered our organisational structure.

Last year we expanded our scope, adding intersex persons to our mission and vision, as well as strategic documents. The success in lobbying for changes in laws, policies and strategic documents has twice surpassed the aims set in our annual and strategic plan. The fact that we are introducing LGBTI persons into the system, making them visible in laws, strategies and policies is immensely important. Making sure that the problems of marginalised groups in BiH society are acknowledged through policies and actions is a huge challenge and we are proud to have made progress in this respect.

The annual report shows how far we have come and we hope it reflects our growing ability to meet challenges head on. None of this would be possible if it weren't for our outstanding team of employees, volunteers and collaborators.

On our team we have people who are capable of writing bills, as well as those who are always willing to take to the streets, issue a wake-up call and remind us of the importance of being visible in public space. Our passionate, tireless volunteers work hard, bravely standing shoulder to shoulder with us, helping us fight against homophobia and misogyny in our society. Their dedication and effort help us include the community, society, the media, as well as municipal, cantonal, entity and state government representatives in the fight against discrimination.

SOC is also changing thanks to the energy and passion of our beneficiaries – their support, visits and participation in community events remind us that we are not alone in our struggle. They inspire us to continue reacting against oppressive policies, practices and norms that exclude LGBTI persons from the system and the wider social community.

Our collaborators and partner organisations give us hope that there is a movement in BiH, a network of people who share our vision of a society based on equal rights and opportunities for all. Finally, we should not forget our families, partners, roommates, friends and others who stand by us in our efforts, despite the danger and disapproval.

We are proud of the achievements in 2016 and we look forward to new challenges in 2017.

**Arijana Aganović, Elmaja Bavčić i Aida Spahić**  
**Steering Board members**

## SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE IN 2016 - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

In 2015, we opened many doors and began fighting for equality on different fronts, while 2016 was the year in which we continued our efforts, increased our presence in public space and underwent changes in our staff and organisational structure. In spite, and perhaps due to this, we reached several major milestones described below.

Over the course of the year, the state parliament in BiH adopted amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Law and the Report on Occurrences of Discrimination together with the Action Plan for Implementation of Proposed

Anti-Discrimination Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the Ministry of Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated the procedure to adopt two important policy documents: the Anti-Discrimination Strategy and the Human Rights Strategy.

Since 2012, the Coalition for Combatting Hate Speech and Hate Crime, of which we are members, has worked on raising awareness among the general public, as well as representatives of institutions on the destructiveness of hate crimes and their profound consequences for BiH society. The Federation of BiH has finally amended its criminal code so as to include hate crimes, six years after the Republika Srpska and Brčko District did the same. Sexual orientation and gender identity are now listed as grounds for harsher punishment.

Three years after the proposal to produce a Special Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBT Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have seen the publication of a report that includes the results of a comprehensive research on the status and rights of LGBT persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, data and information obtained from the authorities, non-governmental organisations, academics, experts, and examples from the work of the Ombudsman Institution. The report contains numerous recommendations, including a recommendation to regulate same-sex unions and cover sex-reassignment procedure through health insurance.

This year, we did not neglect the need to fight for human rights in public space. We occupied public space not only for the sake of women's or LGBTI rights, but also out of solidarity with other civil/workers' initiatives that affect all citizens. We are particularly proud of two moments: the performance on Coming Out Day and the march that took place on International Human Rights Day under the slogan "Human Rights on the Agenda". We received immense support from other organisations, our hard-working activists as well as members of the LGBTIQ community.

We wanted to send a clear message that our organisation is a safe space for intersex persons. In addition to including intersexuality in our strategic plan, we also changed the domain of our web portal by adding the letter "I" - [lgbti.ba](http://lgbti.ba). We published and presented Council of Europe's publication titled "Human Rights and Intersex People", as a way of inspiring further research and dialogue, especially between the legal and medical community, as well as making sure that issues concerning intersexuality are equally represented in public space through human rights discourse.

All our work and achievements are made possible by our excellent team, volunteers, collaborators and other people who fight in our corner for a more equal, happier society.






**LEZBEJKE  
GEJEVI  
BISEKUALNE  
TRANSRODNE  
INTERSPOLNE  
OSOBE**

**ČINE 10%  
SVAKOG  
DROSTVA!**

17. MAJ - MEĐUNARODNI DAN BORBE  
PROTIV HOMOFBIJE I TRANSFOBIJE  
MAJ - MJESEC RAVNOPRAVNOSTI LGBTI OSOBA U BIH  
#mjesecravnopravnosti #IDAHOBTBIH2016



**ZNATE LI DA U BIH  
I GEJ DOKTORI  
SVAKODNEVNO  
SPAŠAVAJU  
LJUDSKE ŽIVOTE?  
REČIMO NE MRŽNJI!**

17. MAJ - MEĐUNARODNI DAN BORBE  
PROTIV HOMOFBIJE I TRANSFOBIJE  
MAJ - MJESEC RAVNOPRAVNOSTI LGBTI OSOBA U BIH  
#mjesecravnopravnosti #IDAHOBTBIH2016



**BEBE SE NE RADAJU  
SAMO KAO  
MUŠKE I ŽENSKE,  
VEĆ KAO I INTERSPOLNE.**

**17. MAJ - MEĐUNARODNI DAN BORBE  
PROTIV HOMOFBIJE I TRANSFOBIJE  
MAJ - MJESEC RAVNOPRAVNOSTI LGBTI OSOBA U BIH  
#mjesecravnopravnosti #IDAHOBTBIH2016**







**MRŽNJA JE BOLEST,  
NE HOMOSEKUALNOST.**

17. MAJ - MEĐUNARODNI DAN BORBE  
PROTIV HOMOFBIJE I TRANSFOBIJE  
MAJ - MJESEC RAVNOPRAVNOSTI LGBTI OSOBA U BIH  
#mjesecravnopravnosti #IDAHOBTBIH2016



**U SVAKOJ PORODICI  
POSTOJE LEZBEJKE I GEJEVI.  
NEMOJTE IH ODRACIVATI,  
VEĆ IH VOLITE.**

17. MAJ - MEĐUNARODNI DAN BORBE  
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MAJ - MJESEC RAVNOPRAVNOSTI LGBTI OSOBA U BIH  
#mjesecravnopravnosti #IDAHOBTBIH2016

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

### ***Psychosocial and legal support to LGBTI people and building the activist movement***

Because we recognise the personal needs of LGBTI people, as well as the fact that state institutions are not providing them with necessary support, we have continued with psychosocial and legal empowerment. We believe that without the empowerment of the LGBTI community, no LGBTI 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 [lgbti.ba](http://lgbti.ba)), support groups (activist group), empowerment of activist groups and associations, as well as legal advice and representation are the foundations of empowerment of individuals. Long-term outcome of these activities will be the empowered LGBTI people ready to exercise their rights by getting out on the streets, as well as before judicial and non-judicial authorities, becoming thus active fighters for human rights of this minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### ***Increasing the responsibility of BiH institutions to protect human rights of LGBTI people***

Sarajevo Open Centre has spent years advocating for issues that affect LGBTI persons and these are finally finding their way to the official agendas of institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The adoption of amendments and LGBTI-inclusive policies poses an even bigger challenge for SOC: to monitor their implementation and continue advocating in those areas where no progress has yet been made – education, health care, labour and employment, rights of trans\* persons and same-sex unions. Sarajevo Open Centre, together with its partners, will continue developing and advocating public policy proposals based on specific needs and experience. Aware that policies and legislation 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 LGBTI 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 LGBTI people***

LGBTI people and their lives are still not appropriately and sufficiently represented in the media. 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 LGBTI people. We also use artistic and cultural platforms (such as the queer film festival Merlinka) to raise awareness of the public about LGBTI rights.

Find out more about the state of human rights of LGBT people in 2016 in: Pink Report 2017. Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in BiH which is available at:

[www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Publications -> Human Rights Series

Find out more about our activities and results at [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes

## Psychosocial and legal empowerment of LGBTI community

In 2016, we successfully continued our work with LGBTI people. In addition to legal counselling (online, by phone, live) and specialised online medium for LGBTI community ([www.lgbti.ba](http://www.lgbti.ba)), we work directly with LGBTI people. Twice a month, we organised closed events for LGBTI community, educating and empowering it. We are very happy that LGBTI persons recognise these events as important, safe and empowering. As of 2015, in cooperation with a professional partner organisation, we provide free psychological counselling.

## School of LGBTI Activism

In September 2016, we organised the School of LGBTI Activism. The aim was to highlight the importance of activism, the idea that the personal is always political, that every struggle against inequality is our struggle and that our sexual/gender identity is part of it. The School was conceived as a series of lectures and practical workshops that allowed students to use their creativity, come up with new forms of activism and constantly



question their own boundaries and public engagement

## Performance "Our Lives Exist Beyond the Four Walls"

For the first time we decided to organise an LGBTI street performance, with 16 LGBTI persons and activists. The event took place on International Coming Out Day. By handing out roses and flowers, as well as holding "closets" in our hands, we wanted to send a symbolic message that the age of hiding is over - LGBTI people



are part of this society, they have the right to be out and live a life free from violence and discrimination

## Monitoring, reporting, advocating changes

We continued our intensive advocacy activities in 2016. We applied the well-known recipe: we monitored the developments, documented violations of LGBTI people, published results in the *Pink Report*, and developed specific legislative and public policy initiatives. This year we, inter alia, successfully advocated the amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Law (including sexual orientation, gender identity

and sex characteristics as grounds for prohibition of discrimination) and amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH (hate crime).

## Continuing to Raise Institutional Awareness: The Police, Prosecutor's Office and Judiciary

In order to increase the institutional support for LGBTI people, we continued to work with representatives of political parties, parliaments and the executive branch. We also continued with trainings for police officers, prosecutors and judges. As a member of the Coalition for Combatting Hate Speech and Hate Crime, together with the OSCE Mission to BiH we organised and carried out three two-day trainings for police officers of cantonal ministries of interior and members of the Police Academy in FBIH, as part of the Train the Trainer (ToT) program in 2016. Once ToT comes to an end, all cantonal ministries should work



on making hate speech part of their regular trainings, or trainings that are mandatory for any officer in the ministry of interior

## Greater Focus on the Rights of Intersex Persons

In 2016, we amped up our efforts to raise awareness on the problems and needs of intersex persons in BiH. In the second half of 2016, with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Office in BiH), we translated the publication "Human Rights and Intersex People" published by the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner and organized a discussion, thereby introducing the issue of intersexuality into public discourse for the first time. The rights of intersex persons have only recently been acknowledged in the legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the adoption of anti-discrimination provisions that prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual characteristics. Still, not enough attention is given to solving the problems that intersex persons face from birth onwards. We believe our publication titled *Tijela koja nadilaze binarnost: Preporuke za unapređenje pravnog i medicinskog pristupa interpolnim osobama u BiH* will spur new research and become the starting point for a serious examination of the medical and legal treatment of intersex babies and adults.

## Involvement in Creation of Human Rights Policies

Over the course of 2016, we participated in working groups formed by the Ministry of Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina to produce the Human Rights Strategy, Anti-Discrimination Strategy and the Action Plan for Training Journalists and Media Professionals on Human Rights. We tried to ensure that these strategic documents include the human rights of LGBTI persons, gender equality and prohibition of discrimination on all grounds listed in the current Anti-Discrimination Law of BiH.

## Presenting a Bill on Same-Sex Partnerships

Together with Mediacentar Foundation we organised a conference titled It is Time for Same-Sex Unions in BiH and presented a bill for regulating same-sex unions. The participants expressed their hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will follow in the footsteps of countries in the region, Europe and the world that have legally recognised same-sex unions and their basic human rights. We will continue focusing on this issue in the ensuing period.

## Protest in Front of the Federal Parliament and Zero Level Pride

On 17th May, before the House of Representatives of FBiH went into session, we organised a protest and handed out leaflets with demands to improve the position of LGBTI persons. We also gave out press statements, saying it was high time LGBTI persons became equal with other citizens in the society. The protest turned into a spontaneous symbolic march from the Federal Parliament to Cobanija Bridge. The media in BiH and elsewhere dubbed the occasion as zero level pride.

## Media visibility of LGBTI topics



We continued cooperating with all relevant BiH TV, radio, online, and print media in 2016. Media products (shows, series of articles, video

features) that emerged from our campaigns reached more than two million BiH citizens making LGBTI rights quite visible. We directly cooperated with the following web portals: [buka.com](http://buka.com), [bljesak.info](http://bljesak.info), [radiosarajevo.ba](http://radiosarajevo.ba) and [tacno.net](http://tacno.net). The media analyses show significant progress in the media presentation of the rights and lives of LGBTI persons.

## Media Campaigns - Oh, Why Should We Hide Love and Did You Know?

In February we organised a campaign to raise the visibility of same-sex couples in BiH and emphasise the need to regulate same-sex unions. We sent out a clear message that the state must recognise the existence of gay and lesbian couples by enacting same-sex union legislation. During May, the month of equality of LGBTI persons, we commemorated the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT)



with the campaign "Did You Know?". Since most citizens are still unfamiliar with basic issues

concerning the rights and needs of LGBTI persons and display a high level of intolerance, our goal was to clearly state that hatred, discrimination and exclusion are not welcome.

## Merlinka - 2016 queer film festival

For the fourth year now, we organised this weekend festival - the most visible LGBTI event in BiH. Despite the fear created by the attacks in 2014, Merlinka in 2016 proved that this festival has a growing audience. LGBTI people, but also their heterosexual/cisgender friends and supporters showed they can stand up to intimidation. For the second time, we supported Merlinka in Tuzla, this time organised by Tuzla Open Centre.



## Continuous cooperation in the region and Europe

Since the very beginning, we have actively cooperated with regional and international organisations on various projects. In 2016, we implemented numerous activities through the project "Using the EU Integration Process to Enhance the State of LGBT Rights in the Western Balkans", the most notable being the study visit to Brussels that enabled our partners to exchange experiences and lobby with the European Union to put greater emphasis on the improvement of LGBTI rights in the Western Balkans in its negotiation with candidate countries.

For more information about the project "Using the EU Integration Process to Enhance the State of LGBT Rights in the Western Balkans" please visit: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes -> LGBT -> Regional cooperation





**NEKO JE REKAO FEMINIZAM?**

4. ciklus predavanja i razgovora

PitchWise 2016.



**Digitalni feminizam**

Učesnice: Krajnje neuračunljive, Sve su to vještice i Dirnja  
Moderira: Benina Džemalović

Javna ustanova Centar za kulturu Kantona Sarajevo (BKČ) Bramića Sarajeva 24  
11. septembar 2016., nedjelja 11h

SARAJEVSKI OTVORENI CENTAR  
FRIEDRICH HEIST STIFUNG  
KRVA  
GURE

**NEKO JE REKAO FEMINIZAM?**

4. ciklus predavanja i razgovora



**Jezik-instrument nevidljivosti i diskriminacije žena**

Predavačice: Ismeta Dervoz i Sandra Zlotrg

Muzej književnosti i pozorišne umjetnosti BiH  
Sime Milutinovića Sarajlje 7  
4. april 2016., ponedjeljak 18h

SARAJEVSKI OTVORENI CENTAR  
FRIEDRICH HEIST STIFUNG  
KRVA

## 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 more decisive public policies, legislative amendments and innovation. Sarajevo Open Centre, together with its partners, is developing and advocating proposals of public policies based on specific needs and experience. 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 2016 in:

*2017 Orange Report*

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

available at [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Publications -> Human Rights Papers

Find out more about our activities and results at: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes

### **Equality Academy - partnership incubator**

Together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we are implementing as of 2015 a multi-module training programme for MPs, representatives of the executive and key bodies of political parties. By studying both the history and everyday life of women and feminism, gender equality policies and standards, we raise awareness of participants about the need to include gender issues in all aspects of political life. Through four three-day modules, we built cooperation with many decision-makers and started our

joint efforts on specific changes, such as use of gender sensitive language in the FBiH Parliament and strengthening of capacity mechanisms at the cantonal level.

### **Systematic cooperation with parliamentary committees and institutional mechanisms for gender equality**

In 2016, we continued the cooperation with gender equality parliamentary



AKADEMIJA

RAVNOPRAVNOSTI

zajednička inicijativa:  
FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG SARAJEVSKI  
OTVORENI  
CENTAR

committees in the parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federation of BiH, in Municipality Centar, as well as with the women members of parliament caucuses at the FBiH and Canton Sarajevo level. We continued the close cooperation with the Gender Equality Agency of BiH and Gender Centres of the Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH, which resulted in joint activities on the development of public policies and amendments to the law. We believe that in cooperation with institutions we can always achieve more than without the actors of the political system. In December 2016, we presented the publication "Towards Equality in the Cantons of the Federation of BiH. Rules, Institutions, Policies" by which we attempted to revive the discussion on a comprehensive network of gender equality mechanisms which includes also the cantonal level in FBiH. Earlier in the year, we established cooperation with the women MP caucus in the Assembly of the Canton Sarajevo with respect to these issues. After Sarajevo Open Centre and Women to Women submitted an initiative in 2015 to Municipality Centre to commence the drafting of a local Gender Action Plan, both organisations have started drafting local gender equality policies as part of the working group.

### Monitoring, reporting, advocating changes

**HUMAN RIGHTS PAPERS**  
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Prijedlog izmjena i dopuna Zakona o radu u FBiH

Za unapređenje zaštite ravnopravnosti spolova, zaštite prava povjerenih ka majčinim i očetovim i pravima djece

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We monitored the participation of women before and after 2016 local elections, as well as led and participated in advocating equal participation of women in the

executive and legislative branches. We drafted a proposal of amendments to the Labour Law of FBiH which improve gender equality protection, and maternity and paternity related rights and the rights of children. and the Annual Report on Women's Human Rights.

### Political participation and gender equality

Convinced that equal political participation of women in the legislative and executive branch, with the aim of achieving gender equality in decision-making, is a precondition for a better society, SOC is active in the promotion of gender equality in the political life. In 2016, the Gender Equality Committee of PA BiH boldly accepted two of our proposal with respect to gender equality and political participation of women in the executive and legislative branches of at least 40% and proposed amendments to the Election Law of BiH and the Law on Council of Ministers of BiH. Unfortunately, the proposals were not accepted but Sarajevo Open Centre will continue woking on this.



**Still Fighting Violence Against Women** In 2015, we focussed our attention on ensuring the unobstructed functioning of safe houses, while 2016 saw us team up with Medica Zenica, Foundation for Local Democracy Sarajevo, "Vive žene" Tuzla, "Žena BiH" Mostar, "Žene s Une" Bihac and "Žene ženama" Sarajevo to

file a complaint with the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman concerning systematic violation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in the Federation of BiH. Following the complaint, the Institution of the Ombudsman issued a recommendation containing a series of measures addressed to the competent institutions, asking them to ensure consistent implementation of the above-mentioned law and consider the possibility of regulating the functioning and founding of safe houses through the Law on Institutions, as well as the Law on Associations and Foundations of BiH and FBiH.

### **Gender-Sensitive Language in the Parliament of Federation of BiH**

Public institutions in numerous European countries use gender-sensitive language. This practice was introduced into the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH in 2013. Sarajevo Open Centre, together with Friedrich Ebert Foundation, initiated the process of amending the unified rules for legislative drafting in the Parliament of FBiH, in accordance with recommendations of linguists on using gender-sensitive language in legislation, rules of procedure, official communication, internal regulations and materials, as well as job classification and titles used in the Parliament, thereby introducing gender-sensitive language into the Parliament of FBiH and putting an end to this kind of discrimination against women.



### **High-Quality, Fair and Consistent Application of Assisted Reproductive Technology in BiH**

Through the Women's Network, Sarajevo Open Centre has repeatedly warned of inadequate legislation on assisted reproductive technology in BiH and called upon the competent authorities to adopt improved laws regulating assisted reproductive technology and infertility treatment in BiH, as well as ensure equal, fair and individualised treatment of all couples, especially women, in both private and public clinics, especially when it comes to establishing age criteria.

### **Fighting Discrimination on Grounds of Sex and Religious Affiliation**

Sarajevo Open Centre analysed the decision of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) to ban employees in the judiciary from wearing religious symbols and found it unconstitutional. Although seemingly neutral and applicable to symbols of all religious communities, at its core the decision constituted indirect discrimination, as it disproportionately affected Muslim women who wear headscarves/hijabs, since these symbols are more visible than other religious symbols. Together with other organisations and individuals, we reacted to this case of discrimination on the grounds of sex and religious affiliation through public statements, media appearances and complaints filed with HJPC, institutional gender equality mechanisms and the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH.

### **Somebody Said Feminism; 4th edition**

In 2016, in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we implemented the fourth cycle of lectures and talks Somebody Said Feminism, a unique

BiH feminist programme with regular lectures in Sarajevo, which brings feminism and women's human rights into the public sphere, always finding new audiences for topics such as AFŽ, gender sensitive language, digital feminism, the right-wing and women, and women's sexual and reproductive health.



**School of Feminism Žarana Papić**

In 2016, the second generation of the two-semester education programme School of Feminism Žarana Papić. Inheriting the Women's Studies of Women of Women, we continue the tradition established in 1998 which offers a unique informal educational program, hoping it will in the next few years give birth to a new generation of fighters for equality in BiH society.



**Exhibition "Poetry and Museum of Razija Handžić: Confiscation of Memory and Systematic Neglect of Women's Cultural, Scientific and Institutional Contributions"**

Together with TPO Foundation we organised the exhibition "Poetry and Museum of Razija Handžić: Confiscation of Memory and Systematic Neglect of Women's Cultural, Scientific and Institutional Contributions", as a way of celebrating the role of this writer in the world of arts and culture, as well as her contributions to society and her institutional work. The exhibition was organised as part of the program commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and took place in the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts. Our aim was to shed light on epistemological violence and systematic neglect of women and their contributions to BiH society and its cultural and scientific institutions





## SOC PLUS

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 human rights of other citizens. 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 2016, we worked on the following issues.

### ***Fighting discrimination: amendments to laws and strategy development***

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 of BiH and advocating the adoption of the strategy to fight and prevent discrimination. In 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Law proposed by the Council of Ministers. The amendments included our recommendation to introduce adequate terminology and list sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination. Sexual characteristics were also listed as prohibited grounds of discrimination. BiH thereby became the first country in Southeast Europe to protect intersex persons from discrimination in all areas of life through its anti-discrimination legislation. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) finally got an improved legislative anti-discrimination framework that protects lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans\* and intersex (LGBTI) persons from discrimination. Over the course of the year, members of Sarajevo Open Centre participated in the working group tasked with developing the Anti-Discrimination Strategy. Our work on this issue continues.

-> More about our activities and results at  
[www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes -> Anti-Discrimination Law

### ***Institution of the Ombudsmen for Human Rights:***

#### ***Amendments to law and appointment of ombudsmen***

During 2016, we continued monitoring the adoption of amendments to the Law on the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In March 2016, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina delivered a revised bill on the human rights ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Reacting to this development, the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH, coordinated by Sarajevo Open Centre, produced a comment on the bill and proposed amendments that would improve it. In the comment, we proposed appointing four, instead of three Ombudsmen, introducing a clearer division of labour and tasks among the Ombudsmen, clearer decision-making procedures, as well as ensuring financial independence of the Institution. The Initiative and Sarajevo Open Centre will continue working on this issue.

-> More about our activities and results at  
[www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes -> The Law on Ombudsmen for Human Rights

### ***Hate crime: final amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code***

Our persistent work on hate crime legislation finally paid off in 2016. In April, the Parliament of the Federation of BiH adopted the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of FBiH. The amendments regulate hate crimes committed in FBiH. Six years after the first initiative to regulate hate crimes, the criminal codes of both entities and Brčko District now impose harsher punishment for this type of crime, thanks to the advocacy work of Sarajevo Open Centre and others.

-> More about our activities and results at [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes -> Hate Crime

### ***European integration and human rights***

In 2016, Sarajevo Open Centre continued 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). During 2016, we continued working on the strengthening of the network of civil society organisations and that resulted in the Alternative Report and strengthening of regular contacts with the Delegation of the European Union in Sarajevo and other stakeholders. Certain priorities set in the Alternative Report, have been included in the official BiH Report published by the European Commission in the fall of 2016. The Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration is recognised by the media and European partners as a corrective in the area of European integration.

-> More about the initiative at [www.eu-monitoring.ba](http://www.eu-monitoring.ba)

## COMMUNICATION

Transparency is an organisational value of the Sarajevo Open Centre. We believe 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 three web platforms:

- Organisational website - [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba)
- The only LGBT info portal in BiH - [www.lgbti.ba](http://www.lgbti.ba)
- Web presentation of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH - [www.eu-monitoring.ba](http://www.eu-monitoring.ba)

The three sites had more than **180,000** visitors in 2016.

### SOC on social networks



7413



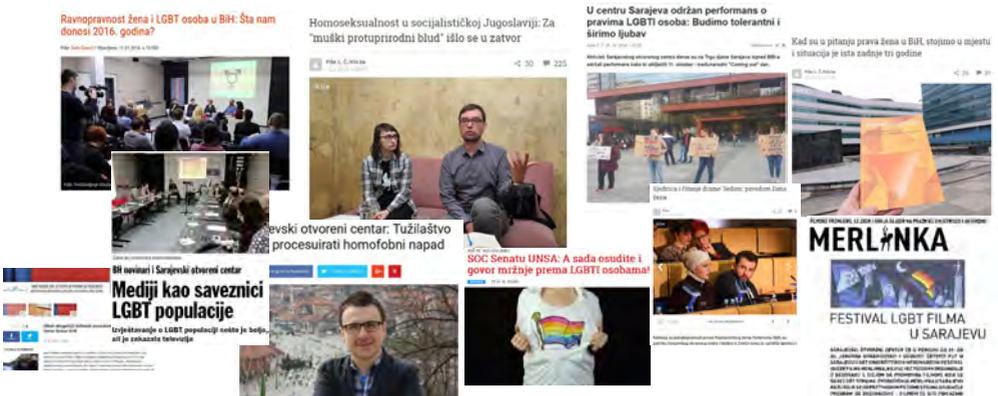
1287

### 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](http://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/sarajevskiotvorenicecentar>



## Knowledge production: 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 knowledge. In 2016, in our editions *Questioning*, *Human Rights*, *BiH Politics*, *Gender and Human Rights Papers* we published and disseminated 20 publications/studies/books in over 10,000 copies. We are especially proud of the following six:



### *Investigating Hate Crimes: A Police Guide*

The aim of this publication was to introduce police officers to hate crimes and how they relate to the social context of BiH.



### *Proposed Measures for Equality of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 2017-2019 Period*

This legal document is the first to provide a detailed analysis of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and it describes concrete mechanisms of eliminating discrimination and improving the human rights and position of LGBTI persons in the society.



### *Outside the Law: Regulating Same-Sex Unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Although LGBTI persons and same-sex couples exist and are part of the society, the current legislative framework does not regulate same-sex relationships or ensure basic rights and protection for same-sex unions. This fact prompted us to draft a bill that would be implemented on entity level.



### *2016 Alternative BiH Report: Political Criteria*

For the past four years, the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH, coordinated by Sarajevo Open Centre, has produced Alternative Reports on BiH, with the hope of influencing the final report of the European Commission. Our recommendations often find their way into the official report and we view them as an advocacy document addressed to institutions of BiH.



### *Feminist Interpretation of Social Phenomena 2*

The expanded collection of texts consists of 40 papers produced by two generations of "Zarana Papić" School of Feminism alumnae. We hope readers will find a text or a topic that inspires them to re-think their everyday life from a feminist point of view. This is immensely important, as we are witnessing constant attacks on women's labour rights, rampant neo-conservatism that is once again undermining women's right to make decisions about their own bodies, increased violence against women and discrimination in all areas, be it employment, health care or education.



### *Human Rights and Intersex People*

By translating this publication we wanted to encourage further research and dialogue, especially between medical and legal experts, as well as ensure the presence of intersexuality in public space through human rights discourse. We also wish to see the Commissioner's recommendations find their way to the agenda of decision makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who will finally undertake measures to protect the rights of intersex persons.

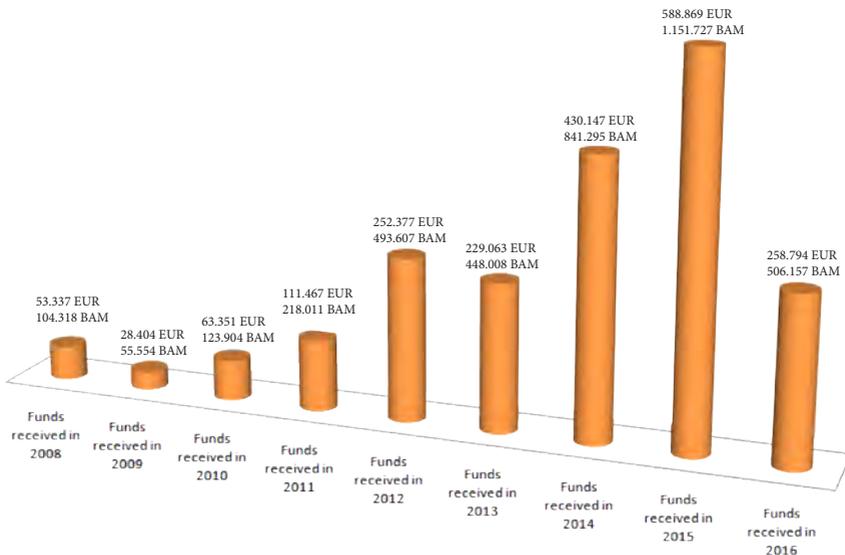
## ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE

There have been internal changes in 2016. Two members have left the team, including the executive director and finance and administration coordinator but remain involved in the work of Sarajevo Open Centre. A new systematisation of positions was introduced and, in addition to the appointment of the new executive director and programme manager, two new positions were introduced: advocacy manager and finance and administration manager. We also employed a programme assistant for the first time.

We successfully continued with the implementation of the organisational Strategy for the period 2014-2017, with a regular overview of results using the Results Assessment Framework and the 20 indicators that we use to measure our results.

*Strategy and Results Assessment Framework (RAF)* can be downloaded from [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> About us

### Growth/fall of funds through the years



### Total funds available for 2016

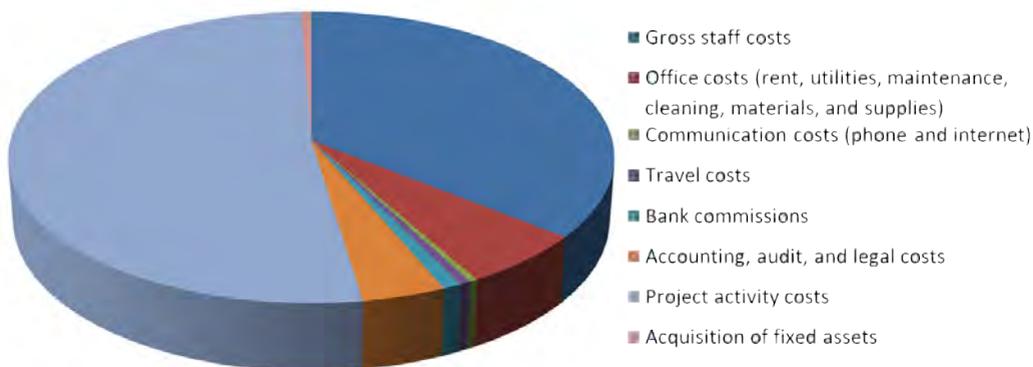
	<b>BAM</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Unspent balance from 2015	624,886	319,499
Funds received from international donors in 2016	495,548	253,369
Funds from other sources in 2016	10,609	5,425
<b>Total funds available for 2016</b>	<b>1,131,043</b>	<b>578,293</b>

Our 2016 donors are divided into core funding (Open Society Fund BiH and Swedish International Development Coordination Agency SIDA) and project-based donors. Here is a list of the main donors in 2016.

### Funds received in 2016

<b>Donors in 2015</b>	<b>BAM</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (SIDA)	204,620	104,621
Dutch Embassy in Sarajevo/MATRA Programme	99,160	50,700
Open Society Fund BiH	88,495	45,246
Dutch Mission to the OSCE in Vienna	48,424	24,758
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice	21,842	11,167
US Embassy Sarajevo	19,268	9,852
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	13,739	7,025
<b>Total funds from international donors</b>	<b>495,548</b>	<b>253,369</b>
Other sources/private donations	10,609	5,424
<b>Total funds in 2015</b>	<b>506,157</b>	<b>258,793</b>

## Expenditures in 2016



## Unspent funds in 2016

	BAM	EUR
Total available funds in 2016	1,131,043	578,293
Total expenditures in 2016	923,249	472,050
<b>2016 balance – unspent funds/ transferred to 2017</b>	<b>207,794</b>	<b>106,243</b>

*Learn more about our finances in the 2016 Audit Report, which is available on our website.*

*You can download the audit and other reports at [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> About us -> Reports.*

## WHAT WILL 2016 BRING US?

### **Continued and improved community engagement**

The recent changes in laws and policies will not produce the desired effects and improve the quality of life of lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender persons without an empowered, safe LGBTI community. We plan to improve our outreach in the LGBTI community in Sarajevo and beyond, and offer new forms of empowerment, especially in public space which belongs to all of us. We will also focus on legal representation.

### **Research on the needs and problems in the LGBTI community**

Three years after the 2013 research on the problems and needs of the LGBTI community in Bosnia and Herzegovina we once again decided to examine the state of the LGBTI community, determine if any progress has been made and obtain new data to guide our future engagement with the LGBTI community.

### **Transgender and intersex work**



Over the last two years we worked intensively on trans issues. We will continue the focus on trans issues, by provision of support to trans persons, but also by advocating better regulation of medical and legal protection and assistance through the research of administrative obstacles these persons face. We will continue working on intersex issues in 2017 through research and education.

### **Regulation of same-sex unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Following a successful advocacy for regulations in the area of combating discrimination and hate crime on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, we believe that a public discussion should be launched about the regulation of rights and duties stemming from same-sex unions. Same-sex unions are a social reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina and should be adequately regulated. It is an obligation according to the European Convention on Human Rights, but also an ethical obligation of governments in BiH.



***Improving the legislative framework and policies for human rights of LGBTI persons and women***

In 2017, Sarajevo Open Centre plans to advocate, both independently and in cooperation with partner organisations and networks, concrete changes related to: a) the adoption of an action plan for ensuring equality of LGBTI persons; b) political participation of women (amendments to the election law, amendments to the law on governments on cantonal, entity and state level), c) regulating hate crime. This is how SOC plans to continue its current advocacy initiatives with the aim of improving government's accountability when it comes to the human rights of minority groups. We will closely cooperate with parliaments and government institutions on state and entity level in order to achieve this goal.

***Gender equality on cantonal and local level***

In 2017, we will focus on gender equality on cantonal level. Education, employment and health care are under the authority of the cantons, which is why cantons are crucial for achieving gender equality in our society. We will cooperate with institutional gender equality mechanisms on these issues.

***Development of the organisation and future prospects***

In 2017, Sarajevo Open Centre plans to evaluate its two-year program (2015-2016), as well as undergo strategic planning for the next three-year period (2017-2020). The results will be published on Sarajevo Open Centre's website.

## WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT US

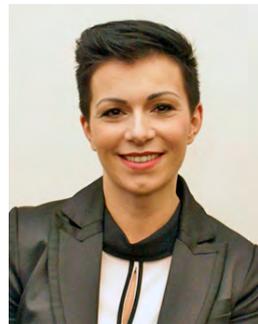


My desire to create a better society and advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ persons has only grown since I came into contact with SOC a year ago. SOC is a versatile organisation that works on improving the know-how, attitudes, abilities and skills of individuals and the society at large, thereby creating a better future and a more democratic society for all. We should never lose sight of the broad scope of the Centre's engagement and the hard work of its team. Ever since my first encounter with SOC, the organisation has stayed true to its name by being open to everyone.

*Matej Vrebac, LGBTI activist*

The cooperation with Sarajevo Open Centre has enriched my life and given me invaluable experience and knowledge on human rights. SOC is a team of young people who constantly push boundaries, fight for the rights of all marginalised groups in our society, selflessly share their knowledge and uphold the highest standards of professionalism in their work.

*Maja Gasal-Vražalica, representative in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH*



Sarajevo Open Centre exudes a special kind of power and energy that you will not see in other non-governmental organisations. It is a combination of unwavering enthusiasm, perseverance, expert knowledge and know-how in networking and advocacy. This success formula has yielded significant changes in laws and practices, as well as people's mind-set in the last few years.

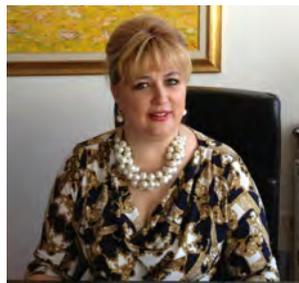
*Adrijana Hanušić-Bećirović, collaborator*

In 2016, the Gender Equality Agency continued its extremely successful cooperation with Sarajevo Open Centre. Together we worked on numerous issues related to gender equality and the rights of LGBT persons.

It must be emphasised that SOC has the capacity to advocate for and propose policies and laws. The organisation is determined to cooperate with institutions and make sure that the authorities discuss the proposed solutions.

Through the years, the cooperation between the Agency and Sarajevo Open Centre has evolved into a true partnership. Our approaches may be different, but we share the same vision of an equal, prosperous society, and we hope that a bond and synergy will continue to grow.

*Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić,  
head of the Gender Equality Agency of BiH*



## THE TEAM (In 2017)

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Aida Spahić, Elmaja Bavčić, Arijana Aganović

Assembly President:  
Damir Banović

Executive Director:  
Emina Bošnjak

Programme Manager:  
Maja Lukić-Schade

Financial and Administrative Manager:  
Marina Jovović

Advocacy Manager:  
Vladana Vasić

Administrative Coordinator:  
Dina Vilić

Programme Coordinators:  
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