



# SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE

## **STRATEGIC PLAN for the period 2014-2017**

Prepared by the Sarajevo Open Centre team, adopted by the Steering Board.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Methodology**

The strategic plan of Sarajevo Open Centre was developed based on internal and external consultations. Internal development meetings took place in the period of April-July 2013. It was the first time the organisation created a strategic plan, at that time planned for 2013-2015. All team members participated in this process, lead by an external consultant. We also organized individual consultations and two focus groups with partners and beneficiaries of our work. As a result, the first version of the strategic plan was adopted in July 2013.

Recognizing the fact that the strategic plan lacked more concrete content and a methodology of measuring performance and results of our work, we decided to go through a second consultation process (January-April 2014). Alongside organized team meetings, our steering board was involved in the consultation process. In order to identify the needs and problems of our target groups, research was conducted. The needs of the LGBT community were identified through a needs assessment study (550 interviews), while the needs of women and women's rights stakeholders were outlined based on a desk review analysis of existing data. As a result of this process, the team and the steering board adopted the updated strategic plan in October 2014.

### **Sarajevo Open Centre from 2007 till 2014**

SOC was established in 2007, registered as an association of citizens on the state level and has grown to become a respected non-governmental organization in BiH. From 2007-2011 we worked on different projects related to political science research and political education, literature, film and art promotion, and interreligious education without having clear programmes, an office or employed staff. In 2011, we opened our first office and our first three-team members worked full-time in Sarajevo Open Centre. The team has grown from three (May 2011) to eleven (October 2014) full time employees.

Recognizing the fact that the Sarajevo Open Centre needs to be more focused, professionalized and result-oriented, we decided to outsource our social science research work to a new a spin-off organisation that was founded at the beginning of 2013: the Centre for Political Studies ([www.cps.ba](http://www.cps.ba)).

For the upcominga period, Sarajevo Open Centre will focus on two programmes:

- LGBT Rights, and
- Women's Rights.

We will also continue to support other human rights and civil society initiatives that contribute to social and political change in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially initiatives related to anti-discrimination and hate crime in general, ethnic discrimination and political reforms.

## SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE FROM 2011 UNTIL 2014<sup>1</sup>

Sarajevo Open Centre has been recognized by our beneficiaries, but also by BiH civil society organisations, media, public institutions and international partners as one of the leading human rights organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2011, when our professionalization phase started, LGBT rights and LGBT people have been invisible and deemed irrelevant for BiH authorities and public<sup>2</sup>. In order to understand our objectives and programme focuses for the upcoming period, we found it important to present our main achievements since 2011.

Although our work has been dominantly *activity and output* oriented, in a span of four years we managed to give the voice for the LGBT community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the last four years we did also manage to build up a visible and relevant women's rights programme.

### **Advocacy and institutional cooperation**

- Established the only civil society-led LGBT human rights violation monitoring and documentation system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in annual LGBT rights reports for 2012 and 2013, concrete advocacy (i.a. written submissions/alternative reports, legislative and policy proposals), and lobbying actions on the national, European and international level; Representatives of the national institutions and international organizations recognized SOC as the main source of accurate information;
- Established our internal women's rights monitoring procedures, which resulted in annual women's rights reports for 2012 and 2013 (the only general annual women's rights report in Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as different advocacy and lobbying actions on European and international level;
- Led and/or actively participated in national (i.a. amendments to the BiH Anti-Discrimination Law; hate crime amendments to the FBiH and RS criminal codes; BiH Ombudsmen Institution Special Report on LGBT Rights; lobbying on the abolishment of discriminatory questionnaires at FBiH blood donation institutes), European (i.a. EU Progress Report submissions on women's and LGBT rights; EU-BiH Structural Dialogue on Justice consultations and written submissions; OSCE/ODIHR hate crime report submission; Monitoring of the implementation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' recommendation on measures of combat against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity) and international (i.a. UPR written submissions, CEDAW Alternative Report and consultations) advocacy and lobbying actions in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014;
- Introduced first ever in BiH human rights education of public officials about the infringements of human rights of LGBT people (i.a. intensive training for police inspectors in 2013; permanent education of 1500 police officers since March 2014);
- Based on our advocacy, four police stations in 2014 in Sarajevo Canton, for the

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<sup>1</sup> See also Sarajevo Open Centre Annual narrative and financial reports:  
<http://soc.ba/en/about-us/izvjestaji/>

<sup>2</sup> Learn more about the history of the LGBT activism in BiH and the developments before 2011 in our publication: <http://soc.ba/en/citanka-lgbt-ljudskih-prava-2/>

first time ever, appointed contact persons for LGBT victims of human rights violations;

- Started the only intensive informal educational programme in BiH for students of law, journalism/media sciences and pedagogy/psychology on LGBT rights, taking place in 2012 and 2013, in order to educate and influence the next generation of leaders and stakeholders;

### **Awareness-raising**

- Highly increased visibility of LGBT issues in BiH media by implementing different online, TV, radio and print media campaigns, giving a voice to the BiH LGBT community;
- Raised awareness of the public on LGBT and women's rights issues by organizing dozens of public events (i.a. Merlinka LGBT film festival in 2013 and 2014; theatrical reading of the revolutionary documentary drama *SEVEN*, film screenings, discussions, exhibitions, and film weekends) in Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla, Zenica and Banja Luka;
- Accurately informed the public about the human rights conditions of LGBT people through production of knowledge on LGBT and women's human rights issues, promoted and distributed countrywide (i.a. libraries, festivals, book presentations);
- Strengthened the feminist debate in Sarajevo by running the feminist lecture programme "Somebody Said Feminism?" (2013 and 2014);

### **Community empowerment and movement building**

- Provided accurate and relevant information on LGBT rights and everyday life to the LGBT community through the first and only BiH LGBT info portal [www.lgbt.ba](http://www.lgbt.ba). The portal has been running since March 2013 on a pro bono and voluntary basis;
- Offered the only specialized legal counselling to LGBT persons in BiH;
- Empowered and offered a safe place for the LGBT community in BiH (i.a. touring empowerment workshops, cultural events, monthly social events, community gatherings, the only gay parties in BiH);
- Supported and led women's rights movement development, by strengthening the BiH Women's Network;
- Organized community empowerment events for LGBT people in Tuzla, Mostar, Sarajevo, Zenica and Banja Luka; supported the development of activist groups in Tuzla, Banja Luka and Mostar and their street actions;

### **Organizational capacity building and networking**

- Organized, and attended different capacity building actions related to programme developments (i.a. free legal aid, documentation of human rights violations, advocacy and lobbying, trans rights) as well as organisational and financial management;

## CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND RISKS

The LGBT community<sup>3</sup> is one of the most invisible, weakest and marginalized societal groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. LGBT people are exposed to discrimination, violence and hate speech. As research showed, the majority of BiH citizens are prone to stereotypes and prejudices towards LGBT people. Beside informal activist groups, there is no strategic and focused LGBT human rights movement working on institutional changes, public awareness and community empowerment. The BiH federal structure allows only limited and very slow developments in the improvement of the state of human rights of LGBT people.

The following *external risks* have been identified:

- Governments and political party representatives do not perceive human rights of LGBT people as relevant and as a priority. There is a lack of political will to engage in a dialogue with civil society in order to improve the human rights situation of LGBT people. Change is not a result of a systematic approach but more of an individual responsibility;
- Widespread homophobia together with the existence of extremist groups in BiH could lead to extreme violence against LGBT people, including the personnel involved in the organization;
- Reluctance and fear of the LGBT community to report and fight against human rights violation and get involved.

Although women<sup>4</sup> constitute more than half of the BiH population, women's rights are still treated as a minority group issue. Women face discrimination and violence in their family surroundings; they are exposed to discriminatory treatment in labour relations and have a limited access to political life and decision-making processes. Intersectional discrimination (i.a. ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic background), which is often overlooked, is a serious problem.

The following *external risks* have been identified:

- Political stakeholders demonstrate little interest in working on gender equality and women's rights issues;
- The women's rights movement lacks cohesion and capacities to monitor women's rights violations and doesn't have a clear and united advocacy strategy towards public institutions.

*Internal Development:* Sarajevo Open Centre developed from a grassroots initiative without a consistent organisational structure with ad-hoc, project-based work into a stable organization. The *risks* we might face in the future include:

- Lack of periodical and structural funding for our programmes/office/personnel;
- Insufficient level of knowledge transfer from the management to the staff;
- Inadequate strategies to reach out to our target groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Learn more in the Annual LGBT Rights Report for 2013: <http://soc.ba/en/pink-report-annual-report-on-the-state-of-the-human-rights-of-lgbt-persons-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-in-2013-2/>

<sup>4</sup> Learn more in the Annual Women's Rights Report for 2013: <http://soc.ba/en/annual-report-on-the-state-of-womens-rights-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-in-2013-2/>

## DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR 2014-2017

### **Vision**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a society based on equal rights and opportunities for everyone, built on active and engaged citizens and an accountable state.

### **Mission**

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

Sarajevo Open Centre is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization that empowers LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans\*) people and women through community and movement building. SOC also promotes the human rights of LGBT people and women publically and advocates on national, European and international level for improved legislation and policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **Values**

*Diversity:* we respect and take into consideration intersectionalities, fighting multiple discrimination, especially those on the grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity;

*Integrity:* we are committed to transparency and accountability in our procedures and work, guided by professional standards, results we want to achieve and broad involvement of different stakeholders;

*Proactivity:* we identify challenges and find solutions before problems arise;

*Innovation and creativity:* we introduce new methods, approaches and working areas, and are prepared for constant learning in order to respond to new challenges;

*Collaboration and solidarity:* we invest in long term partners and networks on national and international level, using these synergies to further our goals and strengthen our position within civil society;

*Communicative:* we have established successful channels of communications with stakeholders and our target groups;

### **Target groups**

*LGBT people* in need of unique social and legal empowerment in order to claim their rights, or to become human rights activists themselves.

*Public officials* on all governance levels in charge for human rights, including those in crucial sectors (i.a. justice, health, education) whose knowledge on LGBT human rights violation issues is non-existent or insufficient.

*Civil society organisations* active in rule of law and human rights matters.

*Media representatives*, journalists and editors of online, electronic, and print media who are transferring information to the citizens and influencing public debate.

*International partners* (governmental and non-governmental) actively supporting our advocacy and lobbying efforts.

### **Beneficiaries**

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\* people and LGBT activists* proactively participating in our actions, but also benefiting from our services, awareness raising, advocacy and institutional capacity building actions.

*Women* active in political, social and cultural life, interested in taking part in social change.

## OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES 2014-2017

### Overall objective

*Our overall objective is to improve the human rights situation of LGBT people and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

To achieve this we work towards the following goals:

### **Outcome 1: LGBT people are socially and legally empowered**

By recognizing the special needs of LGBT people and the fact that state institutions are not providing needed support, we will invest into social and legal empowerment. Without an empowered LGBT community, there won't be anyone claiming their rights or becoming a human rights advocate. Community activities, psychological counselling, media content production targeted for the community, support groups and legal counselling are the basis for individual empowerment. As a result, we will empower LGBT people through our activist group and those who are ready to claim their rights in front of judicial and non-judicial authorities, being pioneers in the fight for human rights of LGBT people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **Outcome 2: BiH authorities have increased responsiveness to guarantee human rights of LGBT people and women**

LGBT people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the only social group whose problems and needs are not recognized in public policies. That is the reason why policy, legislative changes and innovation are needed. SOC (and partners) will develop and advocate new proposals, based on concrete needs and experience, aiming to increase the influence on decision makers. Having in mind that legislation and policy are not enough, we will also work with public officials (i.a. police officers, judges, prosecutors) by raising their awareness and knowledge on violations of human rights of LGBT people. Future professionals can contribute to this change and they will be an important target of our work. Their skills will be strengthened, resulting in concrete proposals for policies or legislation related to the rights of LGBT people and women. Together with our partners from the women's rights movement we will develop and advocate policy and legal solutions.

### **Outcome 3: LGBT and women's rights are mainstreamed in public**

LGBT people are still a taboo in BiH society. Through targeting mainstream media, we believe that we can contribute in providing accurate information on the human rights situation for LGBT people to the general public. We will also use arts and culture platforms to sensitize public on LGBT and women's rights.

In order to measure our results and the achievement of our goal we will develop a **Result Assessment Framework (Annex 1)**, measuring our progress twice per year.

### **Strategies and working methods**

In order to achieve our goals, we will use the following strategies in our work:

- **Advocacy and lobbying:** Human rights of LGBT people and women can only be strengthened if there is an accountable, responsible and proactive state. By implementing national, European and international advocacy and lobbying actions (based on monitoring and watchdog activities), in partnership or alone,

we will positively influence the implementation of existing legislation and policies and ask for the adoption of needed new ones;

- **Capacity building:** Building upon existing experience from the region and other European countries, we will implement capacity building activities for public institutions, their representatives, future professionals, as well as for other relevant stakeholders;
- **Awareness-raising:** based on feminist values and international human rights standards, we recognize the necessity of awareness raising. By informing the broader public – citizens in general and also targeted audiences – we aim to bring a change in attitude towards the needs and problems of LGBT people and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- **Movement and community building:** by recognizing the importance of diversity within the human rights movement, we will invest in the strengthening of the BiH women's movement and the development of the LGBT movement; our experience will be shared with partners from the Balkan region;
- **Organizational development:** in order to maintain the current level of development and to increase our transparency and accountability, we will implement concrete measures; organizational development is a precondition for stability as well as for more efficient, result-oriented work.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Priorities 2014-2017

From 2011 to 2014, Sarajevo Open Centre developed from a grassroots initiative without a consistent organisational structure with ad-hoc, project-based work to a stable organization. Today, we have an office that is run by an Executive Director and an Administrative Board (3). Programmes are implemented by Programme Coordinators (7), under the supervision of a Programme Manager (1). Administrative and financial tasks are implemented by Coordinators (2). Sarajevo Open Centre managed to increase its finances from 50.000 EUR in 2008 to 300.000 EUR in 2013<sup>5</sup>.

Sarajevo Open Centre will focus on the following measures in order to improve its organizational development:

- Appointment of a new Steering Board, with three new, independent members, with a proactive approach (during 2014);
- Introducing clear procedures, manuals and rules of conduct in order to have clear working guidelines (during 2014);
- Introducing result-based management in order to measure the results and impact of our work (during 2014);
- Investing into individual and team capacity building (i.a. financial and organisational management, fundraising – logical frameworks, budgets, project writing, monitoring, evaluation, PC skills, foreign languages) (from 2014 to 2017)

In order to achieve our

### **Organisational outcome:**

#### **Professional and organisational capacities are strengthened**

an institutional index, covering 20 major areas of development, will be introduced. We will measure organisational development on annual basis.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Sarajevo Open Centre annual financial and narrative reports: <http://soc.ba/en/about-us/izvjestaji/>

## IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The strategic plan is delivered through the development of **Annual Work Plans** to cover all objectives. This forms the basis for the various funding applications the organisation submits. The Annual Work Plan of the organisation incorporates unique activities to each objective/outcome. Annual Work Plans will be developed from 2015 onwards.

The progress of our work will be monitored through the **Result Assessment Framework (Annex 1)**, covering the period 2015-2017. RAF shall form the basis of SOC annual reports. The Result Assessment Framework will be developed by the organisational team and its implementation shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director. Progress will be measured twice per year and the results will be presented in the organisational annual report. Monitoring and evaluation forms will be developed.

In addition, an external consultant will work with the staff and the Board to evaluate the progress on the strategic plan in 2017 (for the period 2014-2016). This evaluation will include consultation with the team, external stakeholders such as donors, policy makers and other civil society organisations. This final evaluation will feed into the development of the next strategic plan.

Sarajevo Open Centre will strengthen its internal and external evaluation processes with the aim of becoming more accountable and sustainable. This will include a qualitative evaluation that will not only assess the results/outcomes but also try to establish connections to reports referring to different projects and actions.

Based on experiences within these processes, new goals/evaluation criteria/indicators can always be defined. Reasons and arguments are given why these changes were considered meaningful. This approach will allow all those involved to participate and give an open assessment to summarise their conclusion of the changes that have occurred in practice. These descriptions, any changes and the final assessment will then be integrate to a final qualitative evaluation by the evaluator.

The initial objectives will be compared to the final outcomes, taking into account all necessary changes. It will also allow for a certain level of flexibility by taking into account that the objectives can vary due to circumstances (risks). This would also allow Sarajevo Open Centre to record “unintended” effects and outcomes of our work.

## FINANCIAL PLAN

In order to implement the foreseen programmes and to reach the goals, it is important to secure the long-term financial stability of the organisation. Beside the funds that can be secured by projects for full dedication towards the programmes, of high importance is also the fact that we need to achieve collaborations that will result with core/institutional funding, providing us with funds for staff and overheads/office.

It is a fact that working on LGBT rights is high-risk work. People who are associated with the organization (i.a. team members, board members, external collaborators, activists) and the office might be the target of attacks by radical groups. The attack on the Merlinka LGBT Film Festival on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 confirms that. Therefore, it is very important that the office of Sarajevo Open Centre is in a safe, central location and that it implements security measures (i.a. a security agency, an alarm system). This also means that the overhead costs of the Sarajevo Open Centre might be higher than is the case with other civil society organisations that do not have offices in the city centre.

In order to implement the foreseen programmes and programme objectives, we will need the following staff:

- One Executive Director and one Programme Manager for overall management, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation and performance management;
- Five full-time Programme Coordinators for the LGBT Rights Programme activities;
- Two full time Programme Coordinators for the Women's Rights Programme activities; and
- Two Financial Coordinators for administration and financial management.

Financial plans will be developed on an annual basis, and used as a basis for fundraising and financial reporting.