

# 2017.



## THE YEAR OF CHALLENGES

Annual Report of Sarajevo Open Centre

# ABOUT SOC

Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) advocates full respect of human rights and social inclusion of LGBTI persons 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 persons 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 11 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 participants in the civil society of Bosnia and Herzegovina when it comes to human rights.

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## FOREWORD

SOC continued its partnership with those government institutions that showed true willingness to cooperate, but we also took to the streets when necessary. Together with the Gender Equality Agency and the entity-level gender centres we produced the first draft of the Action Plan for the Rights of LGBTI Persons as another way of institutionalising equal rights and opportunities. We continued working with police officers, social workers, members of parliament, psychiatrists, nurses and other professionals. Unfortunately, this was also the year in which administrative silence led us to cancel the march scheduled for 17th May. The march was supposed to commemorate the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) and direct public attention to hate speech and hate crimes committed against LGBTI persons. Together with our friends we organised a protest in front of the building of the Sarajevo Canton government in order to show that our right to free assembly had been violated. The protest had a strong impact and the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman concluded that the lack of response from the Ministry of Transport of Sarajevo Canton constituted a violation of the freedom of assembly as a fundamental human right. Furthermore, we continued using the process of monitoring EU integration as a way of ensuring that our priorities also become the priorities of the European Union. Numerous issues advocated by SOC have found their way into the EU Questionnaire. Therefore, government institutions had to respond to questions concerning same-sex unions, sex reassignment, freedom of assembly, the legislative framework for prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of, inter alia, sexual orientation and gender identity, protection of victims of gender-based violence, and many other things. Consequently, we expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to assume a number of obligations in the EU integration process that are important for our mission.

The year behind us was a year of social gatherings, some organised with a clear purpose in mind, while others took place for no particular reason. The fifth Merlinka took place, in addition to the new series of Somebody Said Feminism lectures, the Equality Academy and the Feminist School. We also celebrated New Year's, as well as other holidays and birthdays. At times we also had to bid farewells. Throughout the year we socialised with the LGBTI community and strengthened it. The number of our friends and allies grows every day, and we are particularly glad that some of them have been working with us for years on topics that interest us. In 2017, we continued focusing on the lives and experiences of those whose rights and freedoms are not guaranteed, whose dignity and physical integrity are often endangered, and who need support in order to become equal members of the society.

**Elma Bavčić, Aida Spahić, Adnan Kadribašić, Adriana Hanušić-Bećirović, Midhat Izmirlija**  
**Steering Board members**

## SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE IN 2017 - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

In 2017, we managed to implement a number of activities and close out our three-year strategy, but also look back and assess our work from 2015, as well as look to the future, up to 2020.

We pressed forward vigorously: on the local level we replicated our success in advocating the rights of LGBTI persons on state and entity level. For the first time in Sarajevo Canton, we established cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees, and its corresponding institutions: social protection centres, employment services, family counselling services, and others. For the first time, these institutions had the opportunity to learn more about the human rights of LGBTI persons. Thanks to our newly-established cooperation with the Ministry, in 2018 we will work together on developing the draft of the cantonal plan of measures for achieving equality of LGBTI persons and women in Sarajevo Canton, with the support of other stakeholders: civil society organisations, institutional gender mechanisms and international organisations.

We have also been successful in advocating the appointment of a contact person at the cantonal Prosecutor's Office of Sarajevo Canton for incidents and hate crimes against LGBTI persons. We believe this will result in faster prosecution of hate crimes committed on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Our work on women's rights was no less successful. In March 2017, with as many as 70 YES votes, the Parliament of the Federation of BiH adopted the Initiative to Introduce Gender-Sensitive Language, proposed by Jasna Duraković, the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee of the House of Representatives of FBiH Parliament, at the proposal that we submitted together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The initiative to name the airport in Tuzla after Fatima Mušić, the first woman pilot in BiH, was incredibly well-received by the public, and we also submitted the initiative to the Assembly of Tuzla Canton.

In 2017 we were also more present and visible in the streets. We did not give up after being de facto prevented from marching the streets of Sarajevo and attracting public attention to domestic violence and peer violence committed against LGBTI students. Together with the LGBTI community, allies and supporters we organised a protest in front of the building of the institutions of Sarajevo Canton.

Our efforts to fight discrimination through legal and institutional mechanisms hit fever pitch in 2017: from lodging complaints with the Institution of the Ombudsman - which adopted important recommendations concerning transgender persons and freedom of assembly - to lodging complaints with institutional gender mechanisms over unequal treatment of women. This way of fighting led us to the first case of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services being tried at court.

Behind us is a three-year period in which we managed to achieve significant results, especially in changing laws and public policies related to LGBTI persons and women. We now face the challenge of bringing about cultural and social change that will ensure the long-term effects of our results.



**Emina Bošnjak**  
**Executive Director**





## THE RIGHTS OF LGBTI PERSONS

In our work on the rights of LGBTI persons, Sarajevo Open Centre focuses on three aspects.

### ***Psychosocial and Legal Support to LGBTI Persons and Building the Activist Movement***

Because we recognise the personal needs of LGBTI persons, as well as the fact that state institutions do not provide 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. The long-term outcome of these activities will be empowered LGBTI persons ready to exercise their rights by getting out on the streets, as well as before judicial and non-judicial authorities.

### ***Increasing the Responsibility of BiH Institutions to Protect Human Rights of LGBTI Persons***

Sarajevo Open Centre has spent years advocating issues that affect LGBTI persons and these are finally finding their way into 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. Knowing that policies and legislation are not sufficient, we also work with civil servants (police officers, judges, prosecutors, health care and social workers) to raise their awareness and knowledge on violations of human rights of LGBTI persons. Future professionals, particularly young lawyers and journalists, can contribute to these changes and therefore are an important target group for us.

### ***Informing the Public about the Rights of LGBTI Persons***

LGBTI persons 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 the dissemination of credible information among the wider public about the state of human rights and lives of LGBTI persons. We also use artistic and cultural platforms (such as the queer film festival Merlinka) to raise public awareness on LGBTI rights.

Find out more about the state of human rights of LGBTI persons in 2017 in:

*2018 Pink Report. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI Persons in BiH*, which will be available at: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Publications -> Human Rights Series

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

## COMMUNITY EVENTS FOR THE LGBTI COMMUNITY

Throughout the year we organised several events in a safe space for the LGBTI community. In addition to workshops on coming out and sexually transmitted infections, we also held workshops for gay men, as well as a workshop on healthy emotional relationships in same-sex partnerships. We held various talks on the experiences of trans persons, hosted representatives of the association *Dugine obitelji*, organised various film screenings, book events, barbecues and parties. We also founded a brass band and we hope it will live on and soon feature in our street actions



### MERLINKA - QUEER FILM FESTIVAL 2017

The Queer Film Festival Merlinka was organised in Sarajevo for the fifth year running, and this time the attendance reached a record high. More than 500 people attended the two-day festival. In addition to film screenings and discussions we also

had a rich evening programme. Drag divas from the group House of Flamingo from Croatia closed the festival. The proceeds from the sale of promotional material were used to support the work of the informal group qSport Sarajevo.

## "VIOLENCE IS NOT NORMAL" PROTEST

Through the provision of psychological and legal counselling services, we became aware of increasing violence perpetrated against LGBTI persons at the family home, in schools, as well as the streets, which is why we decided to organise a protest march in order to speak up against the rising violence and emphasise the need to fight it. However, the Ministry of Transport of Sarajevo Canton failed to issue the permit on time, thereby



prompting us to organise a protest gathering in front of the building of the Canton where the Ministry is located. We did not want administrative silence to be the sole focus of the protest, so we also held speeches on violence and combatting violence originally planned for the march. A little over 200 people joined in the resistance.

## "LOVE MAKES A FAMILY" CAMPAIGN



We used billboards and social networks to emphasise the need to provide support to LGBTI persons and send a message that love makes a family, be it love from family members or our partners and friends. The billboard campaign

featured 24 people who sent a message that love is what makes a family, in all its different forms. This was the first time a campaign in BiH included LGBTI persons, together with their friends and families.

## VIDEO CAMPAIGN FOR INTERNATIONAL COMING OUT DAY "LEMME OUT"

In October we organised a media campaign called "Lemme Out". In the creative video campaign, the claustrophobic interior of a car was used as the backdrop to talk about the liberating and vital moment of coming out. Nine LGBTI persons participated in the campaign. In a gesture of solidarity, these brave individuals decided to share bits and pieces of their everyday coming out, in order to emphasise the importance of coming out and the importance of support from loved ones. Every year, on 11th October we emphasise the importance of a safe environment for LGBTI persons, in which they can live out their authentic lives openly and without fear.





## **RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF LGBTI PERSONS IN BiH**

The research included 366 LGBTI persons from our country. It serves as a starting point of all our work and provides insight into the state of rights of LGBTI persons on all levels, including coming out, support from family members, the state of the judicial system, the police and other state instruments that are supposed to serve LGBTI persons as equal members of the society, consideration of same-sex unions, trans and intersex issues, the need to organise Pride, etc.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “IT IS TIME FOR EQUALITY”**

The conference was organised with the aim of reminding BiH institutions of their obligation to ensure equality of LGBTI persons in the BiH society. The panel featured European, regional and local experts on the protection of human rights of LGBTI persons, representatives



of the Institution of the Ombudsman in BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, the Council of Europe, as well as civil society representatives from Serbia, Croatia and BiH. *Regulating same-sex unions, legal recognition of gender identity and the rights of intersex persons were among the topics discussed on the panel.*

### **REGIONAL CONFERENCE “SUPPORT, PROTECTION, VISIBILITY”**

We organised a regional conference in order to discuss social inclusion of LGBTI persons, the need for support from family members/parents, institutional protection, and the organisation of Pride. These topics came out of the research on the problems and needs of LGBTI persons in BiH conducted in 2017. Participants from BiH, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia and Turkey took part in the conference. Two mothers spoke about their experiences and the problems they encountered when fighting for their trans children to be recognised by the system and the society at large. Their speeches were the most moving part of the conference.

## **TRAININGS AND OTHER PROGRAMMES FOR THE POLICE, PROSECUTORS, EXPERT ASSOCIATES IN PROSECUTOR'S OFFICES, PSYCHIATRISTS, INSTITUTIONAL GENDER MECHANISMS**

Throughout the year we organised trainings for various groups of professionals that we identified as needing to be educated on the rights of LGBTI persons so they could provide better services and protection for LGBTI persons. For the first time ever, a judicial institution sent a large number of its representatives to a training on human rights of LGBTI persons and recognised the importance of such trainings for its work in the future. Gender centres in both entities, as well as the Gender Equality Agency, had a training on the rights of intersex persons, with the aim of devoting more attention to this issue in the upcoming period.



### **TRAINING FOR JOURNALISM STUDENTS AND WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

In 2017, we once again organised a training for journalism students and young journalists on responsible journalism and reporting on LGBTI topics. In addition to training the new generation of journalists,



we also continued our partnership with web portals 6yka.com, radiosarajevo.ba and klix.ba. Together with us, these media outlets covered topics related to civil unions and the gender identity law during the course of the year – topics that are still not sufficiently or adequately written about.



## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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

### ***Increasing the Responsibility of Institutions Toward Protecting Women's Human Rights***

Although they make up more than 50% of the population, women are de facto the largest minority group, experiencing exclusion from political and public affairs, and discrimination in economic life. Although the legislative framework is good, we need stronger public policies, changes in legislation and innovations. Together with its partners, Sarajevo Open Centre develops and advocates public policy proposals based on concrete needs and experience. We also work with decision makers to raise their awareness and improve their knowledge. Future professionals are an important target group for us.

### ***Informing the Public about Women's Rights and Feminism***

Through targeted artistic, educational and research activities we investigate the position of women in BiH society and provide credible information to the general public about the state of women's human rights and feminism.

Find out more about the state of women's human rights in 2017 in:

*2018 Orange Report*

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

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

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

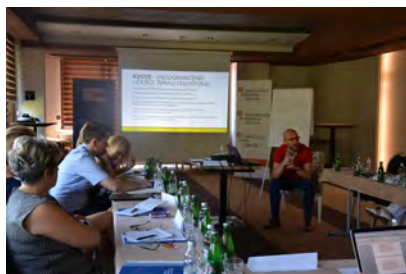
### **THIRD GENERATION OF EQUALITY ACADEMY**

Since 2015, together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we have implemented a training programme for members of parliament, council members, prefects, representatives of the executive branch, as well as key bodies of political parties. In 2017, the third generation of participants completed the Equality Academy. This generation was made up of members of municipal/city councils in BiH, prefects of municipalities in BiH and members of BiH political parties who were interested in improving their capacities, as well as identifying and implementing concrete solutions that would enhance gender equality and improve the position of deprived groups both in the local

community and the society at large. As part of the programme, the participants had the opportunity to hear about our achievements so far and what developments we can expect when it comes to policies on gender equality in BiH, the Gender Equality Law in BiH, the Gender Action Plan, the election process, feminism, the human rights of LGBTI persons, pa-



triarchal attitudes toward women, the role of men in achieving true gender equality, gender responsive budgeting and gender responsive policies adjusted for the local level. In each module this generation learned about gender analysis and got to practice its application in concrete cases, but it also had the opportunity to test its prejudice and stereotypes through the human library and conversations with a lesbian, a gay man and a bisexual person. There was also a workshop on presentation skills, in which the participants could work on their media appearance.



#### **SYSTEMATIC COOPERATION WITH PARLIAMENT COMMITTEES AND INSTITUTIONAL GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISMS**

In 2017, we continued our cooperation with parliament gender equality committees at parliaments of Bosnia and Herzego-

vina and the Federation of BiH. We also continued our close cooperation with the BiH Gender Equality Agency and gender centres of Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH. Practice has shown that cooperating with the institutions yields better results than ignoring actors in the political system. In June 2017, together with relevant political actors, we revisited the issue of women's participation in the executive branch. By the end of 2017, several consultation meetings were held in order to establish the best course of action and formulate amendments to the Law on the Council of Ministers of BiH and the Law on the Government of FBiH. In December 2017, we organised a roundtable with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of Sarajevo Canton, the Assembly of Sarajevo Canton, the Gender Equality Agency, the FBiH Gender Centre and gender equality experts, in order to discuss future activities related to gender equality issues in Sarajevo Canton. We also reopened the discussion on creating a comprehensive network

of gender equality mechanisms, including the cantonal level in FBiH.

#### **RIGHTS OF WOMEN WORKERS**

Women's human rights and gender equality have improved significantly in the past 20 years, but women still face frequent discrimination and find themselves in a disadvantaged position. This is particularly evident in the area of labour and labour relations. This is why, on 8th March, we brought this issue to the parliament, the place where decisions are made. Together



with the Gender Equality Committee of the House of Representatives at the Parliament of FBiH, we organised a thematic session on the issue of motherhood and fatherhood in the context of the Labour Law of the Federation of BiH and EU integration. Last year we dealt with the issue of discriminatory provisions in the FBiH Labour Law, i.e. the Labour Law of Brčko District BiH, that prohibited women from working underground (in mines). Therefore, we sent a request to the FBiH Gender Centre and the Gender Equality Agency, asking them to investigate potential violation of the Gender Equality Law, and we also lodged a complaint with the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH. Through these legal channels we demanded that BiH institutions remove the provision that prohibits women from working underground and therefore remove ungrounded gender discrimination in the labour laws of FBiH and Brčko District. Furthermore, we asked the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Government of Brčko District to propose amendments to the Labour Law that would do away with the discriminatory provision.

#### **STRENGTHENING AND RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS THROUGH CAMPAIGNS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

From 8th to 21st March 2017, Sarajevo Open Centre led a billboard campaign under the symbolic slogan: *Protect Women Workers!* The





billboards could be seen in several locations in Sarajevo and the focus was on labour and labour relations, the employers' treatment of women workers, and the current problems related to pregnancy, motherhood and planning a family that many women workers face. The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness among women on their rights and prompt the authorities to put an end to such practices and start proac-

tively seeking a resolution to this problem. Women are often victims of sexual harassment from a very early age. The harassment takes place in school, in the streets, at the workplace, in public transportation, at home, during concerts, in the theatre. From 29th November to 13th December 2017, as part of the Global Campaign for 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Sarajevo Open centre ran a campaign in public space under the symbolic slogan: *Recognise Sexual Harassment*. The campaign could be seen in various locations in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar and Banjaluka. The goal of the campaign was to send a message to the perpetrators on what kind of behaviour constituted sexual harassment and clearly show that the law prohibits sexual harassment. We also wanted to emphasise the fear, humiliation and discomfort experienced by women as the result of such actions.

### MONITORING, REPORTING, ADVOCATING CHANGES

In 2017, we continued monitoring the number of women in decision-making positions. We also led and/or participated in advocating equal representation of women in the legislative and executive branch of government. We also produced the document *Why are There no Women in Governments? Women in the Executive Branch in BiH – Participation and Representation*, as well as the *Annual Report on the State of Women's Human Rights*.

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ALWAYS ON OUR AGENDA

In 2016, together with organisations *Medica Zenica*, the *Local Democracy Foundation Sarajevo*, *Vive žene Tuzla*, *Žena BiH Mostar*, *Žene s Une Bihać* and *Žene ženama Sarajevo*, we lodged a complaint to the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman, asking for an investigation into the systematic violation of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in FBiH. Following our complaint, the Institution of the Ombudsman issued a recommendation containing a series of measures and demanding, among other things, that the authorities ensure consistent implementation of the abovementioned law and consider a solution whereby the establishment and operation of safe houses would be regulated by the Law on Institutions, as well as the Law on Associations and Foundations of BiH and FBiH. The Institution of the Ombudsman forwarded our complaint to the FBiH Ministry of Justice. In December 2017 we received a response from the FBiH Ministry of Justice stating that two cantons did not approve of the problematic bill produced by the main working group during 2015, which brought the entire process to a halt. This did not stop us. Together with *Medica Zenica* we organised a press conference under the symbolic slogan: *What is Happening with the FBiH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence*. Our goal was to inform the public of the answer we received from the Ministry, remind everyone of the duties defined in the Istanbul Convention and raise public awareness on the problem of gender-based violence.

### GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE IN FBiH PARLIAMENT

Gender-sensitive language is a way of eliminating discrimination against women carried out through language. It is also important for greater visibility of women in all spheres of the society. The Anti-Discrimination Law of BiH and the Gender Equality Law of BiH prohibit discrimination against women, including discrimination perpetrated through language. On the 19th regular session of the House of





Representatives of FBiH Parliament (HRFBiHP) held on 14th March 2017, the Initiative to Introduce Gender-Sensitive Language into the FBiH Parliament was adopted with as many as 70 YES votes. Jasna Duraković, the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee of HRFBiHP, proposed the Initiative on behalf of the Committee and following the proposal of Sarajevo Open Centre and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

### FIFTH SERIES OF SOMEONE SAID FEMINISM LECTURES

During 2017, together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we organised the fifth series of lectures and talks *Someone Said Feminism*, a one-of-a-kind BiH feminist programme that offers frequent lectures to audiences in Sarajevo. The programme ensures that feminism and women's human rights are present in public space and it attracts a number of different people thanks to a wide selection of topics such as pornography, poverty, the position of rural women, cyber violence, the relationship between feminism and trans\* women, as well as the relationship between feminism and female rapers.



### THIRD GENERATION OF THE ŽARANA PAPIĆ FEMINIST SCHOOL

In 2017, the third generation of candidates managed to enrol in the *Žarana Papić* Feminist School education programme. Continuing the tradition of Women's Studies started by the *Žene ženama* Foundation in 1998, we offer a unique, informal education programme, with the hope of bringing forth in the next few years a new generation of people who will fight for a more equal BiH society. Last year, the *Žarana Papić* Feminist School offered three theoretical and practical modules and one seminar, with



the aim of providing a feminist education on the practices, theories and concepts necessary for knowledgeable and critical public action. Special emphasis was placed on sexual violence and rape. This generation of the Feminist School produced the research *Criminal Offences of Rape and other Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

### LAURA PAPO BOHORETA: SEPHARDIC WOMEN IN BIH EXHIBITION

In June we organised the exhibition *Laura Papo Bohoreta: Sephardic Women in Bosnia*, together with the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts. The cultural work of Laura Papo Bohoreta between the two world wars left a powerful trace among the Sephardic Jews. She gained her reputation and fame not just through her role as an enlightenment figure, but also thanks to the plays she wrote in Spanish Ladino spoken in Bosnia. Through her writing, Laura Papo sought to preserve and salvage from oblivion the cultural heritage of the Spanish settlers that lived, died and disappeared with them.



### THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

As part of the global One Billion Rising campaign, participants of several generations of the *Žarana Papić* Feminist School organised a reading of *The Vagina Monologues* in February 2017. Before a full house at the Art Cinema Kriterion, activists and students of the feminist school read women's stories that make up Eve Ensler's text. All proceeds from ticket sales went to the safe house in Sarajevo, i.e. women survivors of violence.





Sarajevo Open Centre actively participates in the work of civil society coalitions and networks, but also initiates activities that are important for citizens of BiH. Our primary focus lies in human rights of LGBTI persons and women, as well as gender equality, but we believe joint action and cooperation between civil society organisations contributes to achieving common goals, and should therefore not shy away from other social issues and needs. In 2017, we worked on the following:

### ***Regulating Incitement to Hate and Violence***

Amendments to the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska proposed by the Coalition for Combatting Hate Speech and Hate Crime (of which Sarajevo Open Centre is a member) were adopted. Sarajevo Open Centre worked together with the RS Gender Centre and on behalf of the Coalition delivered amendments to the working group entrusted with the task of producing the Criminal Code. The amendments concerned the criminal offence of incitement to hate and violence. The Criminal Code was adopted in July 2017, but the Coalition continues to advocate that the same changes be made to the FBiH Criminal Code and the Criminal Code of Brčko District. The Coalition for Combatting Hate Speech and Hate Crime has worked on these issues since 2012 and successfully initiated amendments to the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska in 2013 and the FBiH Criminal Code in 2016 concerning the regulation of hate crimes.

To find out more about our activities and results go to: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Programmes -> Hate Crime

### ***Human Rights of Foreign Nationals and Asylum Seekers in BiH***

In 2017, Sarajevo Open centre continued working on amendments to the BiH Law on Asylum. In 2016, some of the amendments to the BiH Law on Asylum proposed by Sarajevo Open Centre were adopted. However, amendments regulating the rights of LGBTI asylum seekers were not adopted. In 2017, with mentorship from Croatian experts, we developed comprehensive amendments to the BiH Law on Asylum, as well as the BiH Law on Foreign Nationals, the purpose of which was to protect the rights of LGBTI persons and women, as well as other marginalised groups, and provide adequate legal assistance to all categories of foreign nationals in BiH. In the upcoming period we will focus more on advocating the adoption of these amendments.

To find out more about our activities and results go to [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> Publications -> Human Rights Papers

### ***Alternative Answers to the European Commission's Questionnaire***

Through the Initiative for Monitoring European Integration, Sarajevo Open Centre coordinated efforts to provide alternative answers from civil society organisations to the European Commission's Questionnaire. The document itself relies heavily on the four-year-long work of the Initiative. From 2013, the Initiative has produced alternative reports, giving an overview of BiH's progress on the path to the European Union. Civil society organisations that are members of the Initiative provided answers to the questions, giving their own view of issues concerning primarily democracy, human rights and the rule of law in BiH. The answers are firmly rooted in knowledge of the subject matter, analyses and direct experiences of civil society organisations.

To find out more about the work of the Initiative visit: [na www.eu-monitoring.ba](http://na.www.eu-monitoring.ba).

## COMMUNICATION

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

*SOC web*

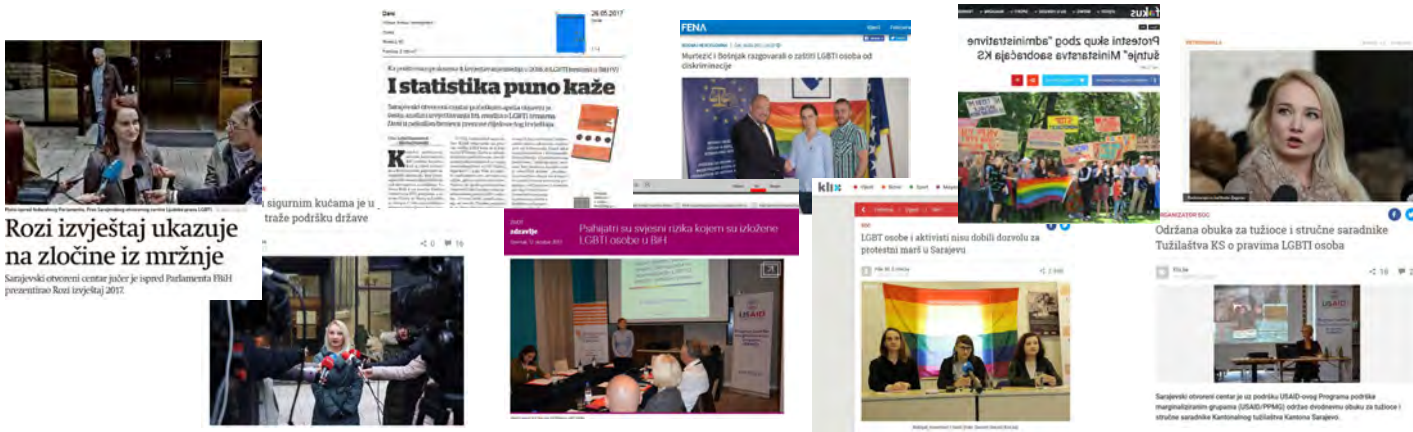
Sarajevo Open Centre maintains three web platforms:  
 Organisation's website - [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba),  
 The only LGBT info portal in BiH - [www.lgbti.ba](http://www.lgbti.ba),  
 Web presentation of the Initiative for  
 Monitoring European Integration of BiH - [www.eu-monitoring.ba](http://www.eu-monitoring.ba)  
 The three sites had more than 230,000 visitors in 2017.

## SOC in the Media

All relevant BiH TV, radio, online, and print media outlets 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 content that reached more than two million citizens. You can find some of these on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sarajevskiotvorenicecenter>.

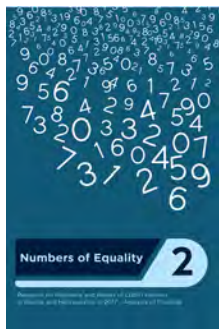
## SOC on Social Networks





## 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 2017, in our editions Questioning, Human Rights, BiH Politics, Gender and Human Rights Papers we published and disseminated 17 publications/studies/books in over 10,000 copies. We are especially proud of the following six:

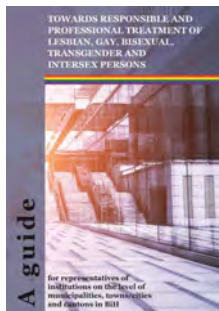


### ***Numbers of Equality 2. Research on Problems and Needs of LGBTI Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017 - Analysis of Findings***

The research included 366 LGBTI persons in BiH, and focused on different aspects of legislation and the lives of LGBTI persons. The main goal of the research was to obtain a thorough, fact-based insight into the problems, needs and the state of human rights of the LGBTI community in BiH, and analyse and present the findings using basic empirical indicators. Therefore, we tried to collect empirical data and findings that will guide our future advocacy efforts toward BiH authorities and improve the position and rights of the LGBTI community.

### ***Women Leaders Up Close. A Contribution to the Investigation of Women's Leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina***

The book *Women Leaders Up Close*, by Jelena Milinović, investigates leadership theory and practice from the point of view of gender policies. Perhaps the best way to describe the book is to cite the words of the reviewer Slobodanka Markov: Jelena Milinović made a pioneering step forward in researching women's leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the country does not have a tradition of women's leadership and cultivates an extremely conservative attitude toward women in the public sphere. She shows how personal, familial and social circumstances affect the emergence and growth of women leaders on the European semi-periphery.



### ***Toward Responsible and Professional Treatment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Persons: Guide for Representatives of Institutions on the Level of Municipalities, Towns/Cities and Cantons in BiH***

In order to improve the treatment of LGBTI persons, we produced a guide for representatives of institutions on municipal, city/town and cantonal level in BiH. It is important to integrate LGBTI persons in all aspects of the society, and recognise their needs, so they could also enjoy basic, guaranteed human rights.





HUMAN RIGHTS PAPERS	
AS IF I WERE IN A ZOO VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBT STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN BIH	
Autori: Zvezdana Čurković Izdati: 2019. godine ISBN: 978-9958-00-000-0	
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## As if I Were in a Zoo: Violence against LGBTI students in High Schools in BiH

The publication provides an overview of existing standards and current problems in this area and contains concrete guidelines on how to improve the current situation and create a safe space for everyone in the education system of BiH. Some of the guidelines include reviewing textbooks and removing discriminatory content, educating the teaching staff on how to work with LGBTI persons and other marginalised groups, cooperating with the civil society and creating LGBTI-inclusive support programmes for students who have experienced violence.

## Criminal Offence of Rape and Other Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Through the Žarana Papić Feminist School, Sarajevo Open Centre conducted this research in order to map the current situation and obtain a wide range of data on reported cases of rape and sexual violence, investigation procedures, verdicts, penal policy, the attitudes and actions of officials who work on prosecuting these criminal offences, as well as the attitudes of the public.



HUMAN RIGHTS PAPERS	
ZAŠTO NEMA ŽENA U VLADAMA? Žene u izvršnoj vlasti u BiH: zastupljenost i reprezentativnost	
Autori: Zvezdana Čurković Izdati: 2019. godine ISBN: 978-9958-00-000-0	
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## Why are There no Women in Governments? Women in the Executive Branch in BiH: Participation and Representation

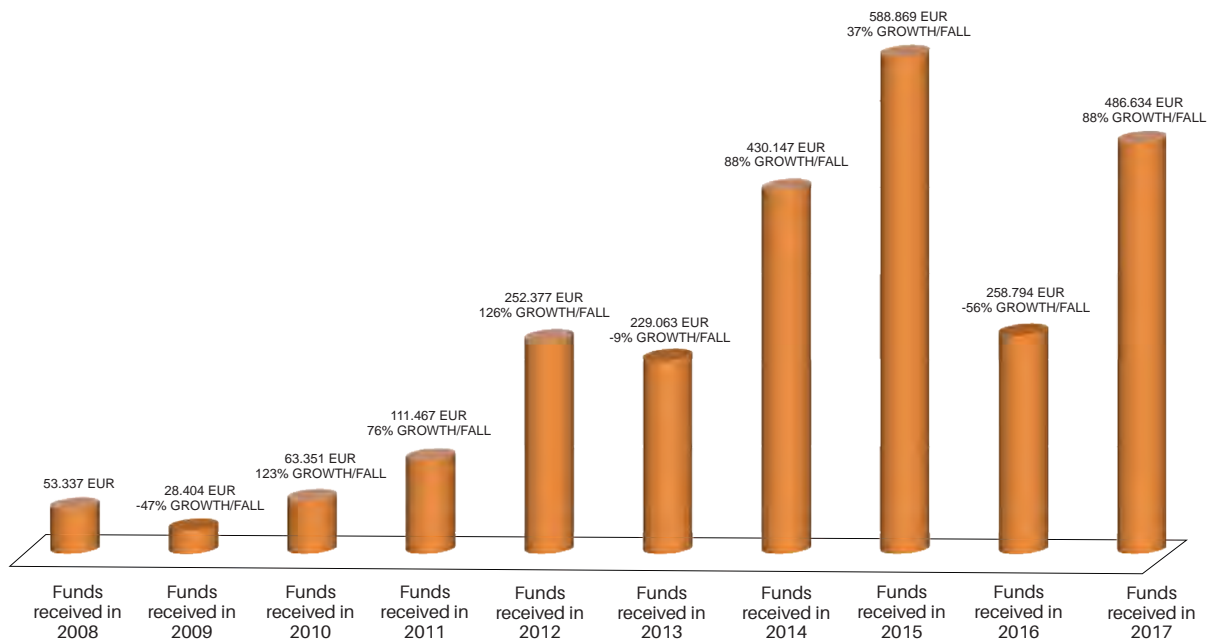
The analysis provides a possible solution on how to regulate this problem through provisions on government formation. It also contains proposals on how to formulate provisions regulating quotas for both sexes. We will demand from the newly-formed governments and legislative bodies to ensure the introduction of this special measure into the abovementioned documents.

## ORGANISATION'S FINANCE

In 2017, we successfully wrapped up the implementation of our 2014-2017 organisational strategy. We regularly assessed our results using the Results Assessment Framework and measured them through twenty-one indicators.

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

Table: Growth/fall of funds received through the years



**Table: Total funds available for 2017**

	<b>BAM</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Unspent balance from 2016	209.998	107.370
Funds received from international donors in 2017	941.957	481.615
Funds from other sources in 2017	9.816	5.019
<b>Total funds available for 2017</b>	<b>1.161.771</b>	<b>594.004</b>

Our 2017 donors include both core funding (Open Society Foundations BiH and Swedish International Development Coordination Agency – SIDA) and project donors. The list below contains the main donors in 2017.

**Table: Funds received in 2017**

<b>Donors in 2017</b>	<b>BAM</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (SIDA)	424.187	216.883
Open Society Foundations BiH	124.087	63.445
The United States Department of State	107.334	54.879
Dutch Embassy in Sarajevo/MATRA Programme	71.136	36.371
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	60.965	31.171
Institute for Youth Development KULT	60.000	30.678
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice	39.634	20.265
Heinrich Böll Foundation – Sarajevo Office	22.248	11.375
Norwegian Embassy Sarajevo	12.517	6.400
German Embassy	539	276
Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the OSCE in Vienna	293	150
Open Society Foundations – FOSI	164	84
Other donors	18.852	9.639
<b>Total funds from international donors</b>	<b>941.957</b>	<b>481.614</b>
Other sources/private donations	9.816	5.019
<b>Total funds in 2017</b>	<b>951.773</b>	<b>486.634</b>

Table: Expenditure in 2017

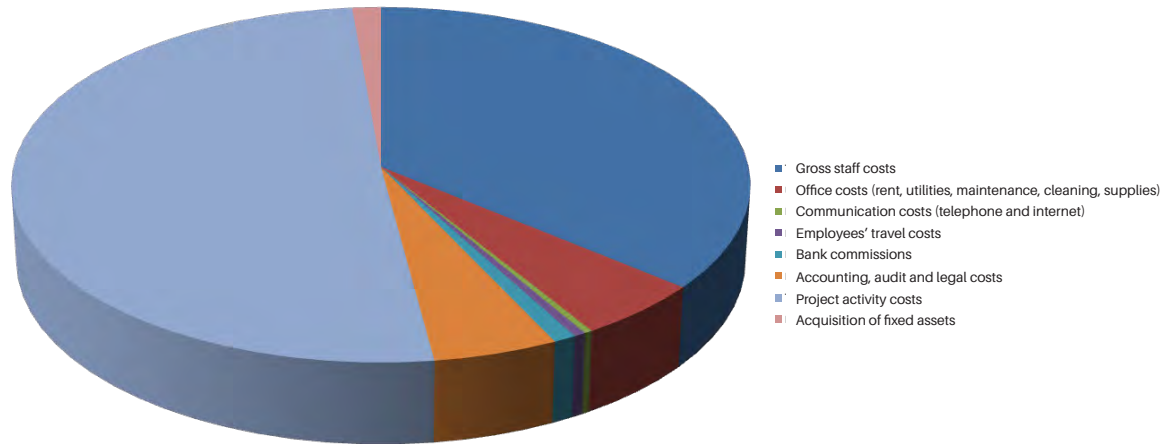


Table: Unspent funds in 2017

	BAM	EUR
Total available funds in 2017	1.161.771	594.004
Total expenditure in 2017	942.116	481.696
<b>2017 Balance – unspent funds</b>	<b>219.655</b>	<b>112.308</b>
<b>Transferred to 2018</b>		

Learn more about our finances in the 2017 Audit Report, available on our website from April/May 2018.

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

## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2017, Sarajevo Open Centre evaluated the programme implemented since 2015. The evaluation revealed six factors that contributed to our success: our approach to working with individuals and institutions, recognising and supporting “advocacy champions”, empowering other actors so they could assume responsibility, knowledge production, internal organisation and way of working, as well as increased visibility. We grew into an organisation with the capacity to advocate and bring about institutional and legislative changes of public policies that are significant and sustainable.

Evaluation results and other elements were used as a starting point for creating the new 2018–2020 Strategic Plan adopted by the Steering Board in December 2017. The new strategic plan contains several changes, the most important being the splitting of LGBTI rights and women’s rights into two separate programmes, each with a separate set of clear goals and indicators to measure results, the introduction of the so-called outcome mapping as a new progress measurement tool, in addition to the *Results Assessment Framework*, and the orientation toward cultural and social change that would ensure the long-term effects of changes in legislation and public policies. For more information about our strategic plans, read the section *What is in Store for Us?*

Members of Sarajevo Open Centre participated in a series of internal and external trainings. The most important ones include courses of business English for a great number of our team members, a training on gender responsive budgeting, trainings on video editing and seminars on the election process.

In addition to adopting the new strategic plan, we also changed our statute. The biggest change was increasing the number of Steering Board members from three to five. In addition to old members Aida Spahić and Elmaja Bavčić, we appointed three new members presented below:







**Adnan Kadribašić**, LLB and MA, is a legal adviser and expert in monitoring and evaluation. He has participated in numerous research projects on discrimination and human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is one of the authors of the Comments on the Anti-Discrimination Law and has published many analyses and research papers. He has also helped create public policies and laws, organised trainings and provided other services related to anti-discrimination legislation.



**Midhat Izmirlija** is an assistant professor at the Department for State and International Public Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo. He holds a master's degree from the European Regional Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights from the University of Bologna. Midhat is interested in non-discrimination and human rights. His research interest lies in human rights, theory of state, theory of law and transitional justice. He co-authored the Comments on the Anti-Discrimination Law and the study *Legal Protection from Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.



**Adrijana Hanušić-Bećirović** graduated cum laude in 2009 from the master's programme in international public law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Strasbourg, as a recipient of a stipend from the French government. In 2008, she attended the summer programme at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and in 2007 she graduated from the University of Sarajevo. She has practised law and worked at the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, the German Bundestag, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, and as a legal expert of UNDP BiH at the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman BiH. She currently works as a senior legal adviser in the non-governmental organisation TRIAL. She also works as a consultant, holds lectures, conducts research for other non-governmental organisations and publishes papers on international human rights protection standards, transitional justice, constitutional and anti-discrimination law.

You can find out more about our new 2018–2020 Strategic Plan, available at our website: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba) -> About us.

## WHAT IS IN STORE FOR US?

In 2017, Sarajevo Open Centre produced its 2018–2020 Strategic Plan that builds on our work so far and our successes in the area of human rights of LGBTI persons and women, as well as gender equality. In the next three years, Sarajevo Open Centre will strive to create sustainable changes in the following areas: **equality before the law, social inclusion and acceptance of LGBTI persons and the enhancement of women's human rights in BiH through the application of feminist and gender equality principles.** We will focus on the following:

### **Empowering the LGBTI Community in BiH**

Only a strong and visible LGBTI community can build a movement that would serve as a support network for individual members, affect public attitudes and bring about important changes in the society. In the upcoming period, we will work more with family members of LGBTI persons in order to improve their understanding and support, as well as LGBTI persons, in order to encourage them to actively participate in activism and exercise their human rights, especially when it comes to freedom of assembly.

### **The Improvement of Legislative and Institutional Framework for Protecting the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons in BiH**

Important and visible legislative changes and the adoption of new laws and policies regulating human rights protection in BiH have taken place so far, but the issue of same-sex unions and human rights of intersex and trans\* persons remain unaddressed. Furthermore, the implementation of these laws and policies is inconsistent and inadequate. We will have to work very hard on advocating the regulation of same-sex unions, introduction of the right to bodily integrity and self-determination of trans\* and intersex persons and adequate protection of freedom of assembly. We will also continue trying to improve the implementation of existing legislation and enhance the institutional protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons. Encouraging political parties to take a clear stance and show support for LGBTI citizens and the protection of their human rights will be another challenge for us.

### **Improving the Legislative and Institutional Gender Equality Framework in BiH**

Thanks to the efforts of a huge number of people, women's political participation showed signs of improvement and an institutional gender equality protection framework was introduced. Through our own work, and our cooperation with current partners in this area, we will focus on improving the implementation of the BiH Gender Equality Law, especially when it comes to the political participation of women. We will also work on strengthening the existing institutional gender equality protection by cooperating with institutional gender mechanisms.

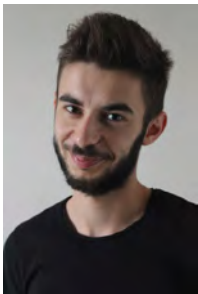
### **Integrating Feminism and Gender Equality into Public Discourse**

Women's human rights cannot advance if feminism and gender equality are not part of political and social debates and discourse. By adding to the base of feminist advocates (public figures, collaborators, alumni/alumnae of the feminist school and other gender equality programmes) and encouraging politicians (members of parliament, elected officials, members of political parties) to become actively involved and advocate these issues, we will achieve greater and more sustainable progress in gender equality and women's human rights, especially in the areas of: gender-based violence, women's sexual and reproductive rights, parental leave, etc.

### **Professionalization of Organisational Capacities, Knowledge and Skills**

In order to achieve the set goals, we will work on professionalising our institutional systems, and the knowledge and skills we need in order to create the changes we want to see and ensure the advancement of human rights and equality of women and LGBTI persons in BiH, as well as build a decentralised LGBTI movement connected to the feminist and other social movements in BiH that will contribute to strengthening the civil society in BiH and achieving common goals.

## OTHERS ABOUT US



It is always important to have a context, a social, political, even a regional one, if you'd like, and use it to set a standard. The work of Sarajevo Open Centre is relatively organic, tactical, rooted in the awareness of both its own needs and capacities, as well as those of others. Personally, I believe validating the work of others, giving credibility to the people around you and seeking feedback is very important, as it is the only way to move toward a mutual lightness of being.

*Mirza Halilčević, activist*



Through its effort, work and championing of positive changes in the society, SOC has shown and proved that a lot can be done within a relatively short period of time. It is important to have a goal and people who work together as a team to achieve that goal. That is what SOC has – rich diversity in its team. It also has to be said that SOC is one of the most professional and responsible organisations that operate in the Federation of BiH, an organisation that works tirelessly on advocating equal human rights and gender equality. Their initiatives, proposals of amendments, as well as proposals to change existing laws are admirable. I greatly appreciate their on-going cooperation and support to the Gender Equality Committee of HRFBIHP. They have made our work much easier and together we have managed to move mountains when it seemed impossible to do so. Thank you for being there as a safe haven for all of us who think outside the established, imposed matrix.

*Jasna Duraković,  
member of FBiH Parliament*

For years, Sarajevo Open Centre has been a crucial partner to the “Udružene žene” Foundation in implementing all activities related to improving women’s human rights, be it through raising public awareness on standards in this area, advocating improvements in legislation and public policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations, activist networking, cooperating with parliament committees and gender equality mechanisms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, feminist activism... The values of Sarajevo Open Centre’s team, their dedication, motivation, professionalism and courage to push boundaries and address issues that probe into and question deeply entrenched stereotypes, all of it is primarily an act of civic responsibility and respect for diversity. I am proud to know them!

*Nada Golubović,  
“Udružene žene” Foundation, President of the  
Steering Board*



Seeking new challenges in the area of gender equality, women’s rights and the rights of LGBT persons led me to SOC. I believe SOC is a relevant factor in ensuring human rights and freedoms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The effort of members of SOC to change society and public policies is certainly worthwhile. They do their job very well and they make sure others know it.

*Belma Trajkov,  
Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy,  
Displaced Persons and Refugees of Sarajevo  
Canton*



## THE TEAM (March 2018)

### *Steering Board*

Aida Spahić, Elmaja Bavčić, Adrijana Hanušić-Bećirović, Adnan Kadribašić, Midhat Izmirlija

### *Assembly President*

Damir Banović

### *Executive Director*

Emina Bošnjak

### *Advocacy Manager*

Vladana Vasić

### *Financial and Administrative Manager*

Marina Jovović

### *Financial and Administrative Coordinator*

Dina Vilić

### *Programme Coordinators*

Jasmina Čaušević, Jozo Blažević, Lejla Huremović, Maida Zagorac, Delila Hasanbegović, Inela Hadžimešić

### *Project Assistant*

Darko Pandurević

### *Volunteers*

Liam Isić, Izudin Karić, Asja Kunto, Andrea Djaković, Amina Dizdar

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*The publication of this  
report was supported by  
the MATRA programme  
of the Embassy of  
the Kingdom of the  
Netherlands*



Kingdom of the Netherlands