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ANNUAL REPORT
SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE

2022 Annual Report
Sarajevo Open Centre

Sarajevo, 2023

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ABOUT SOC

Sarajevo Open Centre works on advancing human rights, particularly the status and human rights of LGBTI persons and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) by interpreting, presenting, and representing authentic experiences of persons who suffer violation of human rights and discrimination as well as advocating for legal, political, economic, social and cultural changes in all areas of life.

For the last 15 years, Sarajevo Open Centre has been successfully working on protecting the rights of women and LGBTI persons. The focus of our activities is the provision of legal and psychosocial support and counselling for LGBTIQ persons; cooperation with government institutions at all government levels aimed at advancing public policies and legislations relating to protection, promotion and implementation of human rights of LGBTI persons and women; assistance and support with education and information programs and activities for the representatives of institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), media and citizens regarding issues protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI individuals and women; support of capacity building and further development of civil society organizations and informal groups that focus on protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI persons and women, but also other minorities; research, publishing print and digital publications, media campaigns as well as artistic activities related to the protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI persons and women.

Moreover, Sarajevo Open Centre coordinates the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina - an informal coalition comprising of more over 20 civil society organizations, which contributes to the monitoring of reforms and oversees the application of EU policies, rights and standards by focusing on democratization, rule of law, and human and minority rights.

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INTRODUCTION

Report on the activities of Sarajevo Open Centre in 2022 includes core information on the organization itself, key achievements structured in accordance with the 2021-2023 SOC's strategic framework: its strategic goals and subgoals as well as its financial information, information on communications, organization's development and future plans and focuses.

Only key achievements and performances achieved by the organization during 2022 are laid out in the report.

We hope that the report offers an overview of the activities of Sarajevo Open Centre as well as its position within the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



KEY ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

**ESTABLISHED LEGAL FRAMEWORK
AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS ACROSS BiH**

01

THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE AND FAMILY LIFE ADVOCATED BEFORE RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE BODIES

- 14 representatives in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina support the adoption of a special law regulating issues related to same-sex partnerships
- Continued institutional dialogue on the legal status of same-sex partnerships in the Republika Srpska
- Completed and successfully presented a comprehensive study on the obstacles to taking parental leave for fathers; the study is actively used by the SOC, other organizations, and experts as a resource for advocacy and other activities

Our activities in 2022, after four years of constant advocacy and work on the legal regulation of same-sex unions, resulted in the support of 14 representatives in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) (mandate 2018–2022) for the introduction of a special law regulating same-sex partnerships. This represents approximately 8% of the total 178 representatives in both houses of the FBiH Parliament, with supporting representatives coming from the following parties: Our Party (NS), Democratic Front (DF), Social Democratic Party (SDP), and For New Generations (ZNG). This is a long-term, strategic approach to adopting a special law on same-sex partnerships. It aims to ensure that, when legal solutions reach the parliamentary procedure and the topic becomes a subject of a public debate, parliamentarians can engage in an informed discussion that will not be tainted by prevailing homophobic views that could result in restricting the rights of individuals in same-sex partnerships. The long-term nature of this work is based on the assumption that the composition within the FBiH Parliament will not significantly change, and that through continuous work that SOC will continue in the future, it can attract new representatives within the Parliament to better understand the issue, address the problems of the citizens in long-term, stable same-sex relationships, and fulfill the legal obligation to regulate same-sex partnerships arising from Bosnia and Herzegovina's international legal obligations.

Meanwhile, concrete progress in this area has been achieved through SOC's participation in the bodies of the FBiH Government during 2022, continuing the process initiated in 2018. In October, SOC successfully advocated for the FBiH Government's Intersectoral Working Group

to adopt a conclusion on the regulation of same-sex partnerships in the Federation of BiH. The special significance and role of SOC in this process lie in arguing for the adoption of a conclusion on the need to adopt a special law as opposed to individually addressing socio-economic rights through separate laws (e.g., inheritance laws, health laws, etc.). Given the performance of Bosnian-Herzegovinian lawmakers, another approach would have meant waiting decades for the equality of same-sex unions, and same-sex couples would likely face problems similar to those faced by unmarried couples in accessing and exercising rights that would be nominally guaranteed to them.

However, in addition to the adopted conclusion, the FBiH Government decided to take another step in the development and adoption of legislation regulating same-sex partnerships. It entrusted the organization of a public hearing to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the FBiH and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of the FBiH to achieve a broader consensus and understanding of the issues of same-sex partnerships. In early December 2022, with the support of the Council of Europe, a public hearing was held, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the FBiH prepared a report on the conclusions of the hearing, which was submitted to the Government of the Federation of BiH.

As of the completion of this report, another important step toward the legal regulation of same-sex partnerships in the FBiH has occurred. At the fifth session of the FBiH Government held on June 14, 2023, at the proposal of the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, the FBiH Government adopted a Report on the public hearing, and according to the conclusion of the FBiH Government from October 2022, it made another conclusion for the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Federal Ministry of Health to propose members of the expert working group responsible for preparing a legal document that would serve as the basis for the Law on Same-Sex Partnerships for the next government session. This brings the delayed and prolonged process of legal regulation of same-sex partnerships to a significantly more serious stage of drafting the text of the law. In the meantime, SOC continues with strategic legal cases related to the rights of same-sex partners, putting additional pressure on decision-makers to legally recognize same-sex partners.

Our future steps include preparing elected officials and ensuring their understanding of same-sex partnership regulations for future legal adoption, as well as further mapping, contacting, and collaborating with partners in Republika Srpska to continue the institutional dialogue on the legal status of same-sex partnerships. During 2022, we managed to meet with three individuals from the Ministry of European Integration and International Cooperation of Republika Srpska (Nada Pejnović, Expert Associate, Goran Vučić, Chief of Cabinet of the Minister, and Nemanja Kovačević, Adviser to the Minister). However, there is still no openness to start institutional work on same-sex partnerships, but it is important to maintain these contacts and keep communication open, especially considering the current situation regarding the work of civil society and activists for the rights of LGBTI persons in Republika Srpska.

Our unique study on paternity leave was completed in October 2022 and presented together with developed policy briefs to various stakeholders, with data and recommendations from the report generating public interest in this topic. The results of the study were presented through various channels: during an event organized by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly from Banja Luka, in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Gender Equality Agency, on the occasion of International Men's Day in the Parliamentary Assembly of

BiH, and in a webinar on "Regulating Maternity and Paternity Leave – Impact on Costs and Changing Gender-Specific Norms." An official presentation organized by SOC took place in December 2022. Mainstream media and those focused on reporting on issues related to the work of civil society organizations, such as discrimination.ba, covered this issue. All of this laid the groundwork for collaboration with UNFPA as part of awareness-raising activities planned for 2023, as well as for our advocacy activities.

As the research was concluding, we successfully advocated for the inclusion of initiatives that remove barriers and create necessary conditions for enabling fathers to take parental leave in the draft texts of Cantonal Gender Action Plans (GAPs) in BPC, HNC, and Tuzla Canton. Two GAPs with proposed measures were adopted in BPC and Tuzla Canton during 2021 and 2022. At the same time, two municipalities changed their forms and documents related to parental leave to make them inclusive for fathers (Centar Municipality and Novo Sarajevo), during 2022 and the first half of 2023.

RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, BODILY AWARENESS, INTEGRITY, AND AUTONOMY ARE EXPLORED AND PRESENTED TO RELEVANT PARTIES WITH CONCRETE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PROPOSALS

- A group of trans individuals and their parents have been empowered and directly involved in advocating for the legal recognition of gender identity and coverage of gender affirmation medical procedures' costs
- Collaboration has been established with key stakeholders: ministries of health, healthcare institutions, ministries of internal affairs, and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH

One of the most successful areas of our work has been in the field of trans rights, both in terms of legal gender recognition and ensuring that gender affirmation processes are covered by health insurance, which brings us one step closer to achieving our strategic efforts related to the right to self-determination.

As part of the project supported through the INSPIRE program, we focused on adequate regulation of the legal recognition of gender change and coverage of the costs of gender affirmation medical procedures through public health insurance in BiH. These processes included trans individuals/community and their parents in active advocacy and public awareness-raising in communities, and jointly, we have achieved the following:

- A group of trans individuals and their parents have been empowered and directly involved in advocating for the legal recognition of gender change and coverage of the costs of gender affirmation medical procedures.
- A legal document covering issues of legal recognition of gender change has been developed, in line with the current legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, becoming the basis and resource for relevant institutions to address this issue.
- Active collaboration has been established with key stakeholders: ministries of health, healthcare institutions, ministries of internal affairs, and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH on the issue of legal gender recognition, involving a group of trans individuals and their parents.

As a result of advocacy and collaboration with relevant healthcare institutions, the following initiatives have been launched:

- Amendments to the laws on health and health insurance of entities/cantons.
- Amendments to decisions determining the basic package of rights in the health sector of entities/cantons.
- Amendments to regulations on conditions and procedures for referring insured persons for treatment abroad.
- Revision of the Decree on health standards and norms within mandatory health insurance in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Development of professional guidelines that should include an assessment of the financial impact of introducing specific health services for transgender individuals into the mandatory health insurance system. This includes elaborating on current regulations regarding administrative changes of gender marker in personal documents, especially regarding medical documentation and its interpretation. This initiative was launched by the Ministry of Health of Tuzla Canton to the Federal Ministry of Health in September 2022.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS ARE EXPLORED AND PRESENTED TO RELEVANT PARTIES IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Inclusion and advocacy for addressing gender inequality and the rights of LGBTI individuals from a socio-economic perspective through CGAPs
- Establishment of collaboration with the Employment Service in the Sarajevo Canton

As part of the work on the development and adoption of Cantonal Gender Action Plans (CGAPs), SOC continues to advocate for plans and proposals that include measures related to women's rights, gender equality, and the rights of LGBTI individuals from a socio-economic perspective. In addition to the Cantonal GAPs with proposed measures that have been adopted in BPC and TC, we have continued to contribute to and monitor the adoption of other cantonal gender equality plans during 2022 and tracked their implementation in this area.

SOC has established collaboration with the Employment Service in the Sarajevo Canton, which has expressed interest in improving the knowledge of its employees about the socio-economic status of LGBTIQ individuals in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, EXPRESSION, AND ASSEMBLY ARE PROTECTED AND PROMOTED THROUGH TARGETED AND COORDINATED ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

- We provided comments on the Draft Law on Peaceful Assembly of Canton 10 in response to the invitation from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Canton 10
- We signed memorandums of understanding and collaboration with the Historical Museum of BiH and the Academy of Performing Arts

SOC continues to address issues related to the freedom of assembly for LGBTI individuals, activists, and organizations across Bosnia and Herzegovina through numerous reports and submissions.

During 2021, proposals for amendments to the Draft Law on Freedom of Assembly in the Sarajevo Canton were submitted, with a specific focus on aligning with international standards and removing obstacles for (LGBTI) protest and assembly organizers. However, due to a stalemate in the process and the refusal of cantonal institutions to allow civil society, especially SOC, to participate in supporting the legislative process, in 2022 we continued to monitor and report on the situation in this area and communicate with institutions, as well as with the international community. This work will continue by bringing this issue back to the agenda of institutional actors. In addition, SOC provided comments on the Draft Law on Peaceful Assembly of Canton 10 in response to the invitation from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Canton 10.

As the number and availability of safe spaces for gatherings of LGBTIQ individuals continue to be a challenge, we initiated formal collaboration with various public institutions and venues. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SOC and the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, expressing the Museum's willingness to use its premises for organizing LGBTIQ events. A Memorandum of Cooperation was also signed with the Academy of Performing Arts. In addition to these formal partnerships, SOC collaborated with the Sarajevo Film Center, the Bosnian Cultural Center, the Sarajevo Youth Theater, and the Youth Center Skenderija through event organization.

PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE, INEQUALITY, AND DISCRIMINATION IS ENSURED, AND THE FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL INDIVIDUALS IS ESTABLISHED THROUGH CONCRETE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PROPOSALS ADVOCATED BEFORE RELEVANT PARTIES

- Developed and adopted Guidelines for dealing with cases of harassment and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity at the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo used for student education
- Actively advocated for developed amendments to the Criminal Code of FBiH that align the Code with the Istanbul Convention and regulate hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity

In collaboration with the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo, in December 2021, SOC developed Guidelines for dealing with cases of harassment and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which are based on a document prepared by the Atlantic Initiative. The guidelines served as the basis for a workshop for students at the Academy organized by SOC in 2022, addressing gender-based sexual violence as well as violence and abuse motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity.

After amendments were developed for the Criminal Code of FBiH, aligning it with the Istanbul Convention and regulating hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and further providing coordinated regulation on issues of consent, criminalization of psychological violence, stalking, genital mutilation, and sexual harassment, advocacy efforts were launched to address these issues in FBiH. In addition, collaboration was initiated with the Government of Brčko District regarding the amendment and revision of the Criminal Code of BD Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in 2023 contacted SOC for comments on official amendments, which were provided and delivered.

**CHANGE AGENTS EMPOWERED
THROUGHOUT BiH**

02

MEMBERS OF THE LGBTI COMMUNITY, WOMEN AND MEN, ARE INFORMED, EMPOWERED, AND ENGAGED AND ADVOCATE THEMSELVES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY BASED ON FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

- 55 individuals from the LGBTI community received some form of legal advice, and out of this number, 18 individuals took further institutional steps to address violations of their human rights
- In addition to the existing 4 strategic lawsuits, we initiated 4 new ones to protect the rights of LGBTI individuals
- 44 LGBTI individuals received support through peer counseling services
- 67 LGBTI individuals received support through psychosocial counseling
- SOC invested 70,000 BAM over 2 years for regional psychosocial support to LGBTI individuals in Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar, Zenica through an EU-supported project
- 7 trans individuals publicly spoke about their experiences, and 7 individuals in same-sex relationships participated in public campaigns and events
- 910 LGBTIQ individuals participated or attended various events
- 6 different types of events were organized for families of LGBTIQ individuals
- Series of guest lectures and presentations organized for students at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), Faculty of Law, Faculty of Political Sciences at UNSA, and Burch University

SOC continues to provide support to LGBTIQ individuals and the community by responding to identified needs and empowering them in the field of advocacy and human rights protection. Long-term work continues by providing legal assistance and representation for LGBTI individuals before institutions and judicial authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

55 individuals from the LGBTI community received some form of legal advice, and 18 individuals took further institutional steps to address violations of their human rights. Currently, legal proceedings are ongoing at the courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with SOC handling 4 cases related to the inability to inherit from partners, as well as other socio-economic rights related to the inability to enter into partnerships in Bosnia and Herzegovina, discrimination in the provision of services, and the incitement to discrimination. Additional 4 cases were initiated during 2022 and the first half of 2023.

44 individuals from the LGBTI community received counseling services from their peers, while 67 individuals received psychosocial support and counseling through therapy sessions that were rated as extremely helpful, and were directly supported and organized by SOC. This number is significantly higher when we include the number of LGBTIQ individuals who had access to peer support and psychosocial support through our regionalization project, in which SOC invested 70,000 BAM over 2 years for regional psychosocial support in Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar, Zenica, as part of an EU-supported project.

By organizing various public events, SOC creates a space for socializing, support, and freedom for LGBTIQ individuals, their families, and all those who support or question established norms regarding gender, sexuality, and identity. 910 LGBTIQ individuals participated or attended various events, including queer events, workshops with local activists, educational sessions for the LGBTIQ community on the importance of mental health protection, and socializing with same-sex couples. 6 different types of events were organized for families of LGBTIQ individuals, including advocacy meetings, camps, workshops with activists, and family picnics. Seven trans individuals spoke publicly about their experiences, and 7 individuals in same-sex relationships participated in public campaigns and events addressing issues related to the legal regulation of same-sex partnerships.

In collaboration with the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, SOC organized lectures on human rights, gender equality, and feminism for 32 students. Throughout 2022, and especially in 2023, SOC members participated in a series of guest lectures and presentations at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), Faculty of Law, and Burch University, with the potential for ongoing collaboration with various universities.

ORGANIZATIONS, INITIATIVES, AND ACTIVISTS DEALING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS, LGBTI ISSUES, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACROSS BiH ARE EMPOWERED TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND ADVOCATE AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL LEVEL

- SOC participated in the work of 7 advocacy subthematic groups organized within existing networks/coalitions
- Strengthened the work of the Initiative for Monitoring European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina by building the capacity of 11 members
- Informal network of civil society organizations providing psychological counseling and psychosocial support called the LGBTInclusive Network has been established
- 11 organizations across various parts of BiH offer psychosocial services and support in Tuzla, Prijedor, Mostar, Bijeljina, Zenica, Sarajevo, Goražde, and Banja Luka
- Oqueerno, an informal group of LGBTIQ activists in Banja Luka, continues its work and successfully organizes events for the LGBTIQ community in Banja Luka and its surroundings
- 6 youth organizations from Zenica, Jajce, Kalesija, Milići, Mostar, and Konjic started incorporating LGBTIQ issues and gender equality into their work
- Monitoring the implementation of Gender Action Plans for gender equality adopted in three cantons (Bosnian-Podrinje, Tuzla, and Zenica-Doboj Canton) in cooperation with partner organizations

Since the beginning of this strategic period, SOC has participated in the work of 7 subthematic advocacy groups organized within existing networks/coalitions in accordance with SOC's work program. In addition to the already active Initiative „Podijelimo odgovornost“

for amendments to the Election Law, subthematic group for amendments to the Draft Law on Protection from Harassment at Work in Republika Srpska, subthematic group for electoral reforms, subthematic group for amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Initiative for Monitoring European Integration of BiH) in 2021, SOC joined or led subthematic groups for the CEDAW report, subthematic groups for the selection of the Ombudsman for Human Rights in BiH, and the trans advocacy group in order to strengthen its own advocacy efforts and advocacy efforts of its civil society partners.

SOC continues to work on empowering civil society to more efficiently and effectively advocate for the improvement of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. In 2022, we strengthened the work of the Initiative for Monitoring European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, building the capacity of 11 members through annual planned activities and training.

SOC continues to work on the regionalization of psychosocial support involving LGBTI individuals and access to mental health protection services. An informal network of civil society organizations providing psychological counseling and psychosocial support called the LGBTInclusive Network has been established. Organizations are empowered to provide peer and psychosocial support to LGBTI individuals. Eleven organizations across various parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina offer these services and support in Tuzla, Prijedor, Mostar, Bijeljina, Zenica, Sarajevo, Goražde, and Banja Luka.

With SOC's support, Oqueerno, an informal group of LGBTIQ activists in Banja Luka, continues its activities and successfully organizes events for the LGBTIQ community in Banja Luka and its surroundings.

LGBTIQ groups, with SOC's support, initiate projects in their local communities. Three initiatives were implemented in Zenica, Kalesija, and Mostar. Six youth organizations from Zenica, Jajce, Kalesija, Milići, Mostar, and Konjic started incorporating LGBTIQ issues and gender equality into their work.

Previously adopted Gender Action Plans for gender equality in three cantons (Bosnian-Podrinje, Tuzla, and Zenica-Doboj Canton), which include measures to establish gender equality and guidelines for working with transgender and intersex individuals for healthcare professionals, as well as guidelines for regulating medical and legal procedures in the case of intersex individuals, have been closely monitored and reported on through SOC's submissions or our annual reporting on the state of human rights, gender equality, and women's rights. Through our previously established cooperation with the Tuzla Open Center, the Center for Women's Rights Zenica, and the organization Seka from Goražde, which were involved in working groups responsible for developing these documents and advocating for the above guidelines, we closely monitor the implementation of these cantonal policies to advocate for their implementation and improvement in the future.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH PROMINENT ACTORS IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE

- Team training on practical aspects of waste reduction through SOC's work, in collaboration with Echo Bee
- Commencement of work on a publication addressing issues that could help bridge the gap between popular understanding of religious attitudes towards LGBTIQ individuals

In the earlier strategic period, SOC initiated collaborations with and secured public support from several organizations/companies/institutions openly advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ individuals, women's rights, or issues of diversity and inclusion. However, during 2022, this work slowed down due to a temporary lack of capacity to act in this area. Nevertheless, this field is recognized as having significant potential for SOC's active role and will be considered one of the segments of work in the new strategic considerations.

By signing a Cooperation Agreement, SOC established formal collaboration with the Academy of Performing Arts at the University of Sarajevo and continued to implement the agreed terms of collaboration, including the use of space for SOC events and the above-mentioned workshops for students. Alongside Marijana Kandić (Echo Bee), an activist in the field of ecology and zero waste, we initiated a collaboration that resulted in team training on making SOC more environmentally conscious, producing less waste, as well as incorporating this perspective into SOC's work.

Our collaboration with religious communities slowed down in 2022, but based on our previous work, SOC began developing a publication addressing issues that could help bridge the gap between popular understanding of religious attitudes towards LGBTIQ individuals and the inclusivity that organized religions can offer.

OFFICIALS AND RELEVANT PROFESSIONALS INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND EQUIPPED WITH NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE OF AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA'S INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY

- Contact persons appointed in all 10 cantonal prosecutor's offices in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 17 prosecutors, judges, and lawyers underwent training on the human rights of LGBTI persons and mechanisms for their protection
- 6 politicians were educated and engaged in issues related to women's rights, gender equality, and the rights of LGBTI persons through the alumni program of the Academy of Equality
- 32 experts from public institutions (mental health centers and social welfare centers) who provide psychosocial protection underwent training on providing inclusive psychosocial support
- 19 public officials were educated on the importance of legal recognition of gender identity and trans-inclusive healthcare

To educate politicians, experts, and professionals in relevant fields, SOC organized a series of events and conducted training seminars addressing various issues in the field of human rights for LGBTI individuals and women:

- 17 prosecutors, judges, and lawyers underwent training on the human rights of LGBTI persons and mechanisms for their protection.
- 6 politicians were educated and engaged in issues related to women's rights, gender equality, and the rights of LGBTI persons through the alumni program of the Academy of Equality.
- 32 experts from public institutions (mental health centers and social welfare centers) who provide psychosocial protection in the Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and Republika Srpska underwent training on providing inclusive psychosocial support and access to mental health services for LGBTI persons in their communities.

- 19 public officials were educated on the importance of legal recognition of gender identity and trans-inclusive healthcare for transgender individuals.

LGBTIQ individuals who have experienced violence due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation can now directly contact prosecutors - contact persons in all cantonal prosecutor's offices. This significant achievement for the Sarajevo Open Centre is the result of years of direct collaboration with prosecutor offices. Five new contact persons in prosecutor's offices were appointed after a two-day training on LGBTI human rights organized for prosecutors from five cantonal prosecutor's offices in October 2022 in the Una-Sana Canton, Central Bosnia Canton, Posavina Canton, Canton 10 and Canton Sarajevo.

One of the main strategic and long-term goals of the Sarajevo Open Centre was to educate and sensitize police officers, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers about the human rights of LGBTI individuals, as well as to build and increase the trust of LGBTI individuals in the police and judiciary. Since 2013, we have been continuously working on educating representatives from different institutions responsible for criminal prosecution because increasing the knowledge of legal professionals leads to increased effectiveness of the existing legal mechanism for the protection of human rights of LGBTI and other minority groups.

From 2018 to 2022, there was direct cooperation with all cantonal prosecutor's offices in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During 2023, we successfully replicated this approach in Republika Srpska.

**STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS
VALUES, EQUALITY, AND INCLUSION
IN BiH SOCIETY AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE**

03

THE PUBLIC IS INFORMED AND ENGAGED IN PROMOTING VALUES, STANDARDS, AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

— Executed 7 awareness campaigns reaching 11 million people

The SOC organized and executed 7 campaigns that reached a total of 11,679,283 people and were covered by leading media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The campaigns were as follows:

- #EqualBeforeThe Law Campaign, advocating for equality for all couples in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Campaign for Harmonizing the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence
- Campaign on the Rights of Transgender Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Campaign on the Importance of Mental Health Care for LGBTI Persons
- "Even When You Look Carefully, Women Are Invisible!" Campaign, focusing on strengthening the political participation of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Campaign for Appropriate Regulation of Gender Change in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including coverage of the costs of gender reassignment through health insurance
- "Another 4 Years?" Campaign, addressing the issue of European integration and pre-election campaigns, highlighting the insufficient awareness of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the state of reforms on the European path.

ORGANIZED AND COORDINATED JOINT ACTIONS AND RESPONSES OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACTIVISTS TO CHANGES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

- Throughout 2022, SOC actively participated in 7 networks, initiating and supporting campaigns, initiatives, protests, coordinating efforts, and monitoring activities
- Published Alternative Report for 2022 on the Application and Progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards EU Membership
- Organized and conducted joint actions with partner organizations: Tuzla Open Centre, Youth Center Kwart Prijedor, BiH Pride Parade, and activists to mark significant dates for LGBTI Individuals and activism
- SOC engaged with 22 Members of the European Parliament, discussing matters related to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. During these interactions, the organization presented the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the European integration process

During 2022, the Sarajevo Open Centre was an active member of 7 networks, initiating/supporting campaigns, initiatives, actions/protests, coordinating activities and publishing of reports:

- Coordinating Committee of the Civic Initiative for Constitutional Changes
- Initiative for Monitoring European Integrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Civil Society Initiative for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Coalition Against Hate Speech and Hate Crimes
- Action Coalition Against Violence Against Women in BiH
- ASTRA Network
- ILGA Europe (European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association)

The Initiative for Monitoring European Integrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued its activities, contributing to monitoring reforms, policy implementation, laws, and standards set by the EU for Bosnia and Herzegovina. An Alternative Report for 2022 was published on Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress toward EU membership, providing civil society's perspective to the EU Delegation and the European Commission on the integration progress in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. The Initiative members also addressed the issue of non-transparency and the exclusion of civil society organizations from the process of appointing three ombudspersons for human rights.

SOC actively participated and contributed to the activities of others through involvement in initiatives such as "Podijelimo odgovornost ravnopravno" (Let's Share Responsibility Equally). In collaboration with partner organizations such as the Tuzla Open Centre, the Youth Center Kwart Prijedor, the BiH Pride Parade, and other activists, joint actions were organized and carried out to mark significant dates such as March 31 - Transgender Day of Visibility and May 17 - International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). The goal of these actions was to raise awareness about the violation of the rights of LGBTI individuals and promote dignity, equal rights, and the lives and culture of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer persons. On May 17, in collaboration with the Tuzla Open Centre, a protest was organized to draw attention to the issues faced by same-sex partners. During Pride Month in 2022, a joint event was organized with the Pride Parade for the LGBTI community. Coordination was also maintained with several other women's organizations during events for International Women's Day on March 8, including the campaign to prevent sexual harassment and violence in public transportation, with the long-term idea of institutionalizing this effort and strengthening joint public action and activism of the women's and feminist movements on International Women's Day.

Throughout 2022, contact was made with 22 Members of the European Parliament on issues related to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, presenting the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the EU integration process. SOC provided support to the Women's Network BiH, which supported SOC's initiative to abolish the tax on hygiene products (for women and children).

RELEVANT, EVIDENCE-BASED, AND ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, EXISTING LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS, AS WELL AS AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES OF LGBTI PERSONS, WOMEN, AND MEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS COLLECTED, PROCESSED, AND PUBLISHED

- Conducted and Published the Research "Father on Parental Leave."
- Published 8 Reports/Publications in areas of monitoring the human rights situation of women and LGBTI persons

Our unique research on paternal leave was completed in October 2022. As a direct result of the research, two policy briefs were created: "How to Facilitate Fathers' Easier Access to the Right to Parental Leave?" and "Proposals for Amendments to Labor Laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Enhance Gender Equality and Protect Rights Related to Motherhood, Fatherhood, and Parenthood." The research aimed to analyze existing practices and develop new ones to facilitate fathers' easier access to the legally guaranteed right to parental leave. We analyzed existing laws in this area, surveyed 500 fathers who had a child between 2016 and 2021, and conducted interviews with six fathers who used parental leave to gather firsthand information about their experiences in exercising this right. The policy briefs will serve as a basis for evidence-based advocacy for administrative and legal changes in the field of gender equality.

Additionally, we developed and published eight reports/publications in the areas of monitoring the human rights situation of women and LGBTI persons (Orange and Pink Reports), constitutional reforms, civil society, psychosocial and legal support, gender marker changes, and European integration. These publications serve the purpose of informing and building the capacity of responsible structures and various professionals in the public, private, and civil sectors to promote an inclusive approach to human rights.



COMMUNICATIONS

Sarajevo Open Centre manages, creates content, and communicates through three websites: the organizational website www.soc.ba; www.lgbti.ba as the first news portal primarily dedicated to the LGBTI community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing information on events, activities, and issues related to LGBTI rights and culture; and the website of the Initiative for Monitoring European Integration: www.eu-monitoring.ba.

Throughout 2022, these three websites recorded a total of:



Number of followers:

	 Facebook	 Instagram	 Twitter
SOC	10 928	2587	1992
lgbti.ba	5509	/	/
Initiative	4304	/	768

The topics addressed and worked on by the Sarajevo Open Centre have gained visibility through media coverage. According to the press clipping system, the key phrase "Sarajevo Open Centre" was mentioned in 247 media reports. Additionally, 9 team members were recorded as appearing in a total of 82 reports.

The following is a list of the top 10 media outlets that reported the most on the Sarajevo Open Centre during 2022:



Sarajevo Open Centre was covered in the media 296 times across various outlets. Over 150 articles were published on the lgbti.ba and soc.ba portals, and members of the SOC team made 59 media appearances.

The Sarajevo Open Centre continues its media work by creating unique content on the lgbti.ba portal, offering that content to other media outlets, conducting media campaigns, press releases, appearances, as well as strategic partnerships with key TV, radio, print, and online media.



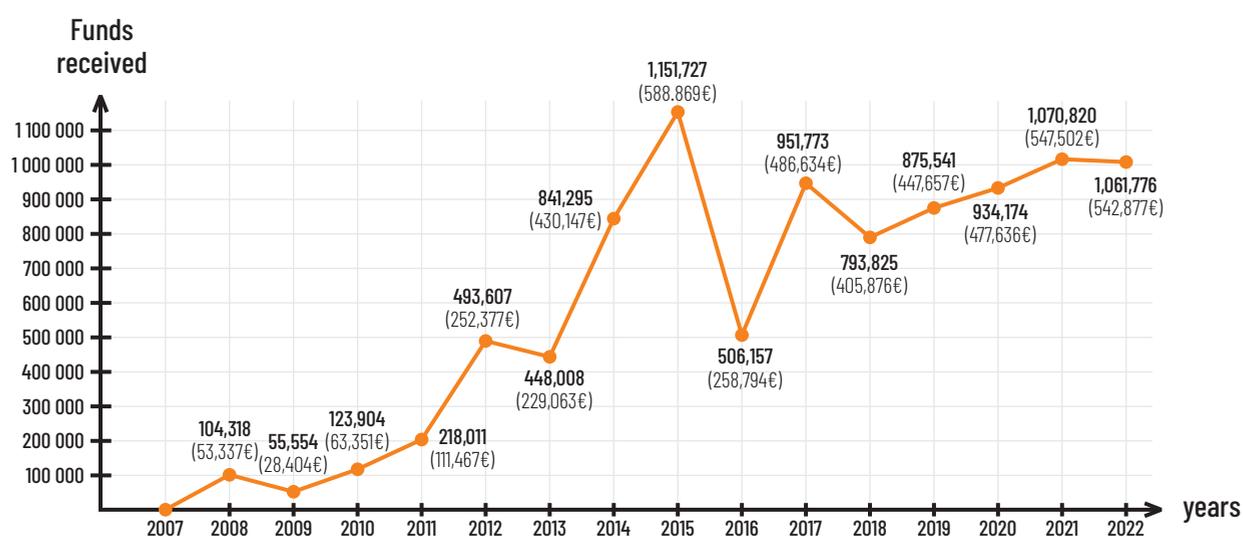
FINANCES

In the year 2021, we began the implementation of the organizational strategy for the period 2021-2023, with regular annual result assessments through the Results Assessment Framework, tracking 60 indicators to measure our results and outcomes.

During 2020 and 2021, funds were secured for planned expenses in 2022, and the inflows over the years can be tracked in the table below.

Received funds	BAM	EUR	Increase/decrease (%)	Comments
Received funds in 2007	-	-		No funds received
Received funds in 2008	104,318	53,337		
Received funds in 2009	55,554	28,404	-47%	
Received funds in 2010	123,904	63,351	123%	
Received funds in 2011	218,011	111,467	76%	
Received funds in 2012	493,607	252,377	126%	
Received funds in 2013	448,008	229,063	-9%	
Received funds in 2014	841,295	430,147	88%	
Received funds in 2015	1,151,727	588.869	37%	
Received funds in 2016	506,157	258,794	-56%	
Received funds in 2017	951,773	486,634	88%	
Received funds in 2018	793,825	405,876	-17%	
Received funds in 2019	875,541	447,657	10%	
Received funds in 2020	934,174	477,636	7%	
Received funds in 2021	1,070,820	547,502	15%	
Received funds in 2022	1,061,776	542,877	-1%	
Total funds received for the period 2007-2022	9,630,491	4,923,992		

Table: Increase/decrease of funds received broken down by years



Visualization of table «Increase/decrease of funds received broken down by years»

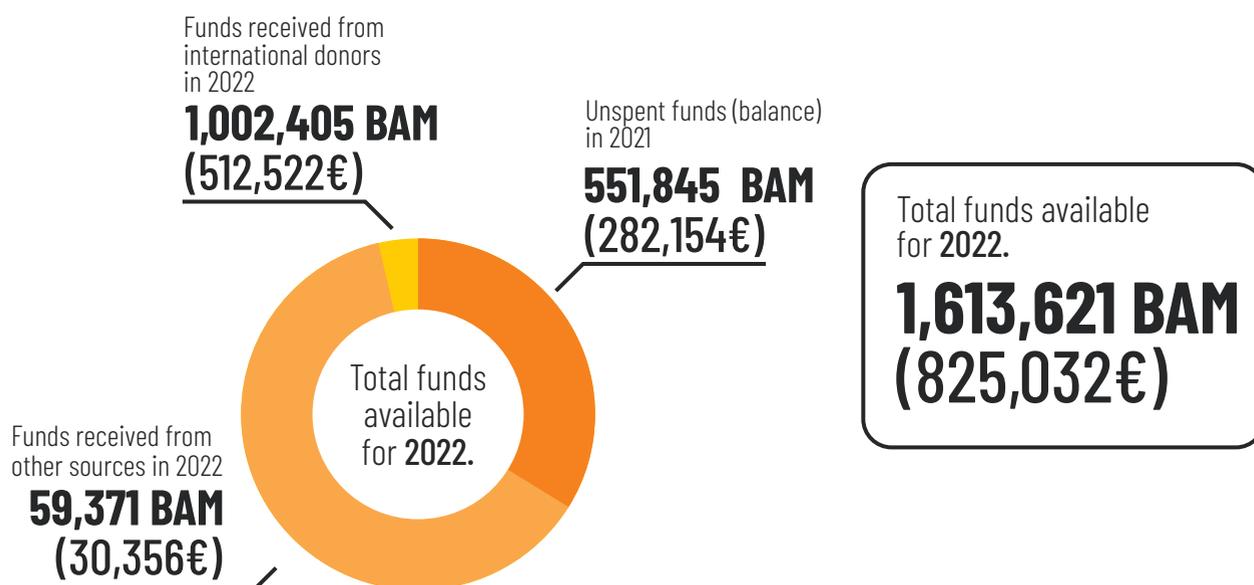


Table: Total funds available for 2022

Throughout the year, we managed to increase the share of core funding in the organizational budget, which amounted to 63% in 2022. Although slightly lower than in 2021 (72%), we continue to move towards those and other donors who provide flexible financing in the long term. The list below outlines the most important donors in 2022.

DONORS IN 2022	BAM/EUR
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	372,079 (190,241€)
Sigrid Rausing Trust	180,607 (92,343€)
USAID Inspire	153,071 (78,264€)
EIDHR	125,090 (63,958€)
Equality Fund (Kanada)	115,430 (59,018€)
The National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	42,291 (21,623€)
Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina	8,111 (4,147€)
Heinrich Boell Stiftung BiH	3,198 (1,635€)
Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF)	1,845 (943€)
Other donors	9,727 (4,972€)
Total funds from international donors:	1,011,449 (517,146€)
Donations and memberships:	10,712 (5,477€)
Funds from commercial activities:	48,659 (24,879€)
TOTAL INFLOWS IN 2022.:	1,070,820 (547,501€)

Table: Funds received in 2022

Since the introduction of the fiscal cash register in October 2020 and the provision of commercial services in accordance with SOC's statute, in 2022, we generated revenue of 48,659 BAM, which is 5,000 KM more than in 2021, thus still remaining below the threshold for entering the VAT system.

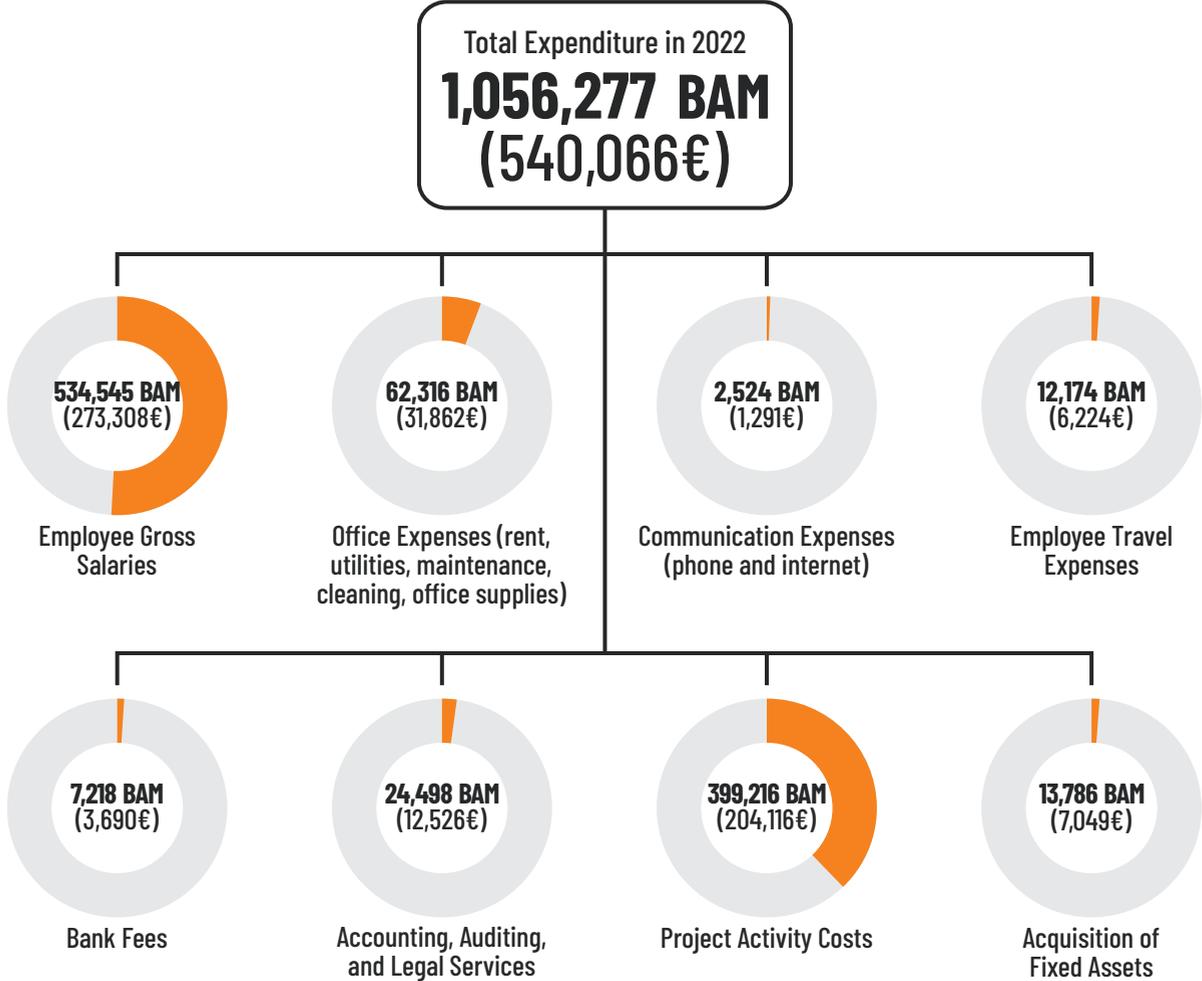


Table: Expenditure in 2022



Table: Unspent balance for 2022

The overall share of expenses for gross employee salaries increased by 6% in 2022 compared to the organizational budget. Sarajevo Open Centre has a policy of annual salary increases, and we took the opportunity to implement this policy, resulting in a visible increase in the absolute amounts of gross salary costs. However, a significant portion of this increase relative to the overall budget is that advocacy activities, which are mainly covered by employee salaries and incur little additional costs, took a central role among the activities in 2022. This fact is reflected in a 19% reduction in the costs of activities.

Due to inflation, the share of office expenses (rent, utilities, maintenance, cleaning, office supplies) in the organizational budget increased from 4% to 6%, with an absolute amount increase of 50%. Employee travel expenses increased by a factor of ten compared to 2021, mainly as a result of a greater focus on working with communities, activists, partners, and institutions outside Sarajevo, partially due to inflation and rising travel-related costs.

The unspent balance for 2022 will be carried over to the 2023 budget and appropriately allocated to salaries, activities, and other organizational expenses.

Find out more about our finances in the Audit Report for 2022, available on our website since May 2023. The Audit Report, along with other reports, can be downloaded at:

<https://soc.ba/about-us/reports/>



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After significant team changes in 2021, 2022 was marked by the consolidation of human resources, and there were no additional hirings or changes within the team during this year.

With the expiration of the mandates of the members of the Association's Board, the Assembly elected new Steering Board members for the next four-year term. The current Board consists of: Adnan Kadribašić, Midhat Izmirlija, Kristina Ljevak, Dragana Dardić, and Amila Ždralović. The new board confirmed the executive director, Emina Bošnjak, for a new term in 2022.

The program aimed at building and improving the skills and knowledge of SOC team members, which is in line with the organization's strategic goal 2.2 Organizations, initiatives and activists working on human rights, LGBTI issues, and women's rights throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina were equipped to provide services and advocate at the local, regional, and national levels, continued in 2022. This was achieved through allocated funds in the organizational budget and through partners' and donors' programs. An innovation introduced in 2022 was the creation of a structure and tools to monitor attended education, aligning identified areas for improving individual skills and knowledge through an annual assessment of SOC members' work, paid and free educational opportunities, and the available organizational budget. The upcoming period will be marked by more effective monitoring and measurement in this area.

Several procedures, rules, and policies requiring adoption to improve the management, control, and transparency of the Sarajevo Open Centre's work were recognized. In addition to the need to align the rules of operation with legal changes, aligning salary grades with realistic salary amounts due to constant increases over the years, amending procurement regulations, and creating an internal document as guidelines for planning, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects, the organization plans to adopt the following regulations, policies, and procedures in the next period:

- Conflict of Interest Rule book
- Code of Conduct
- Policies against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Personal Data Protection Rule book
- Whistleblower Protection Rule book
- Physical and Digital Security Rule book
- Health and Safety Rule book
- Document on the Risk Analysis Process.

Sarajevo Open Centre remains committed to developing the personal capacities and skills of team members, developing policies and procedures in line with best practices in NGO management, and introducing innovations that help in daily work.



**LOOKING
AHEAD**

In 2023, SOC will continue to generate knowledge in the field of LGBTI persons and women's human rights, utilizing this knowledge in advocacy processes, particularly in the area of reconciling private and professional life. Two key research projects will focus on examining the attitudes of the Bosnian public toward LGBTIQ persons, LGBTI rights and activism, as well as the issues and needs of the LGBTIQ community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Work on gathering material for mapping queer history will continue in 2023, including data collection from relevant court records and archives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following the research on "Fathers on Parental Leave," policies will be developed to facilitate fathers' access to parental leave by analyzing existing challenges and proposing changes to labor laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recommendations derived from research on the obstacles fathers face when using parental leave address legislative, administrative, economic, and social barriers, with the aim of informing the public and improving fathers' ability to exercise this right. Additionally, SOC will conduct a comprehensive study on the regulation, accessibility, approaches, and practices of abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This research includes exploring the experiences of individuals who have had abortions in health institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study also examines relevant health public and private institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is medical professionals who work on abortion procedures – termination of pregnancy, to gain a clear overview of legal regulations and medical practices used.

The Kvirhana Festival, in collaboration with the Tuzla Open Centre, will celebrate its third edition in June 2023. It provides a space where queer individuals can be authentic and celebrate their identities, welcoming all who support LGBTIQ+ persons or question social norms related to gender, sexuality, and sexual identity.

Efforts will be made to strengthen institutional collaboration by expanding the network of contacts, including with prosecutors receiving reports of hate crimes against LGBTI persons. The goal is to build the trust of LGBTI individuals in judicial institutions, increase the number of reported and prosecuted cases of such crimes, and replicate the successful model from the Federation.

In 2023, a new initiative involves questioning gender binaries through language and culture. The plan is to connect experts, activists, and the LGBTIQ+ community in joint efforts to adapt language to be more inclusive.

After years of collaboration with medical professionals, and in collaboration with the Medical Chamber of FBiH, SOC plans to develop and launch an education program for healthcare workers on the health of transgender individuals and gender-affirming medical procedures on the e-medikacija.ba platform. This innovative approach in educating medical staff covers psychologists, endocrinologists, gynecologists, urologists, pediatricians, and plastic and reconstructive surgeons. Additionally, 2023 will see the continuation of SOC's recognizable education programs: the 7th generation of the Žarana Papić Feminist School and the 6th generation of the Equality Academy in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, focusing on feminism and public policies related to gender equality.

Equally important are key organizational processes that will assess the effectiveness and relevance of SOC's programs through the evaluation of the strategic program implemented in 2021 and 2022. The strategic planning that follows will guide the organization's actions in the upcoming medium-term period.

TEAM, ASSEMBLY, AND STEERING BOARD*

Emina Bošnjak

Executive Director

Dajana Bakić

Operational Manager

Darko Pandurević

Program and Advocacy Manager

Marina Jovović

Finance and Administration Manager

Program Team

Amina Imamović

Program Coordinator

Edo Kanlić

Program Coordinator

Amil Brković

Program Coordinator

Amina Dizdar

Program Coordinator

Delila Hasanbegović-Vukas

Program Coordinator

Matej Vrebac

Program Coordinator

Nejra Agić

Communications Coordinator

Administration and Finances

Dina Vilić

Senior Finance and
Administrative Coordinator

Andrea Djaković

Administrative-Operational
Coordinator

Assembly

Vladana Vasić

Aida Malkić

Lejla Huremović

Rasim Ibrahimagić

Steering Board

Amila Ždralović

Dragana Dardić

Kristina Ljevak

Adnan Kadribašić

Midhat Izmirlija

**Team members, Assembly, and Steering Board are as of the report's publication date.*