

**Sarajevo Open Centre
2021-2023 Strategic Plan**

Finalised in November 2020

Adopted by SOC Steering Board in December 2020

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In 2020, Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) began the process of developing its next strategic plan for the period 2021 – 2023. This included commissioning of an external evaluation of its work at the beginning of the year and engaging an organisational development consultant to work with the team in autumn of 2020.

A plan of actions to develop the Strategic Plan was developed and it included the following:

- a. Full staff team workshop on learning and reflection on SOC's work and experience;
- b. Interviews with 13 external stakeholders undertaken by the consultant;
- c. PESTLE and SWOT workshop with full staff team;
- d. Theory of Change workshop with full staff team;
- e. Analyses of the 2020 Evaluation Report, 2020 Pink Report, 2016-2019 Orange Reports, 2017 Numbers of Equality 2, 2018-2020 Strategic Plan and Theory of Change documents;
- f. Data compilation;
- g. Draft Theory of Change as basis for the draft Strategic Plan;
- h. Steering Board and staff team workshops to generate final proposals for the draft strategic plan;
- i. Development of this final document.

This approach emphasises two key elements of organisational development;

- Learning and reflection – with respect to data obtained from trends observation and from monitoring and evaluation.
- Inclusion and participation – of internal stakeholders implementing the annual work plan, and members and external stakeholders/partners of the organisation.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the process was undertaken off-site using virtual meeting tools. Given the challenges of facilitating a virtual dialogue, it was agreed that step h) will be facilitated internally within SOC.

This provided a much-appreciated opportunity for all internal stakeholders to discuss, question, debate and agree on the final strategic objectives and work processes for the next phase of SOC's development. In this way, a stronger sense of ownership and user-engagement with the Strategic Plan was ensured, following the recommendation from the Evaluation Report.

The next section outlines the changes to the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan and their impact on the operation of the organisation as it implements its annual work plan to achieve the set objectives and goals.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR 2021-2023

New facets compared to previous plans:

- It is simpler, facilitating communication with different stakeholders, such as the community, media, funders.
- It allows for greater cross-programme cooperation and integration of different strategies to achieve the identified changes and developments. The annual work plan designed to incorporate the contributions and expertise from different teams will support the implementation of the Plan.
- It brings coherence to SOC's work, by bringing the three different SOC programmes – LGBTI, Women's Programme and General Human Rights/EU Integration – under a unique threefold strategic framework.
- The focus of SOC's work will be on issues framed as rights/freedoms with threefold targets: institutions, communities and society.

Implementation process towards achieving the objectives of the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan

All the strategic objectives will serve as strategic guidance in developing annual work plan during annual operational planning sessions. This means that SOC team will plan and decide on the strategic focuses for every subsequent year within this framework during the last quarter of an ongoing year.

The annual work plan will be framed by the strategic objectives and honed by the priorities emerging from the socio-political-economic environment, data analyses and SOC resources. While not all strategic objectives will be in focus during a given year, the full inclusion and input of Programme Coordinators will allow for active participation in and shaping of the programme. The annual detailed planning within the Strategic Framework will enhance SOC's flexibility and responsiveness to take advantage of opportunities and situations that may advance human rights and equality of people in BiH.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Results Assessment Framework) will be used as a basis for internal Learning and Reflection workshops prior to last quarter planning each year, further embedding data analysis, environmental analysis, learning from practice and reflection on strategic opportunities in the work of SOC. It is a more dynamic monitoring and evaluation process, which makes a shift towards organising the work and its evaluation on the basis of what is meaningful to Programme Coordinators, i.e., what success looks like for them. The Management Team will ensure maintenance of high M&E standards, while ensuring that the targets and indicators reflect the individual Programme Coordinators' and teams' vision of successful work.

This purposeful measurement of organisation's work, achievements and successes will become a tool for motivation, communication, as well as for planning.

SOC WORKING METHODS

SOC applies a range of approaches and mechanisms to make progress towards its objectives and goals. These include:

- Data collection;
- Creation of knowledge;
- Using international reporting mechanisms;
- Capacity development within LGBTIQ community;
- Capacity development with particular professions;
- Coalition building;
- Advocacy;
- Drafting legislation;
- Engaging with political processes;
- Awareness raising;
- Community engagement;
- Media communication and campaigns;
- Representation of the lived realities of people experiencing violations of human rights and equality.

A key innovation and change in the new approach is that Programme Coordinators will now build their work towards a common goal – same-sex partnership, for example – using different methods. Work plan must include impact/change activity at the levels of a) community, including individuals, b) society, and c) state legal and policy framework, including the institutions.

The programmes are not implemented through the prism of identity groups, but through specific problems – issues faced by people in everyday lives, related to civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.

Secondly, there will be additional emphasis on how the three strategic goals build on and reinforce each other, so that strengthened agents for change and a more inclusive public discourse about human rights values contribute to the work on specific issues related to rights and equality.

A model of engagement with community members and allies, politicians, as well as other target groups, will be developed to be more proactive and to include different stages of engagement, from initial contact, meetings, educational activities, to regular follow-through actions once the planned activities are finalised. For example, this entails sending targeted and regular e-mails, phone calls, and invitations to other events SOC implements, in order to establish and nurture the individual relationship with target group actors who are equipped with knowledge and motivation to contribute to SOC goals and objectives. A new model of work will also include actions that further a multiplier impact – through training, capacity development for target group actors to become agents of change, and furthering the messages and knowledge to those that SOC cannot reach, limited by its financial, human and time resources. One of the examples is train-the-trainer model, a framework for training potential instructors or subject matter experts to enable them to train other people in their organisations and communities.

In order to efficiently and effectively strengthen agents of change throughout BiH and enhance relationship-building with target group actors, SOC will reinforce and develop its own capacities. SOC remains committed to internal processes that further the capacity and development of staff members, the Steering Board and learning from work.

An example of change in framing the strategic goals and objectives, as they relate to work plan, targets and indicators of success.

Working on the topic of same sex partnership:

This activity is envisaged under Strategic Goal 1 as part of the Robust legal and policy human rights based framework throughout BiH, specifically the right to private and family life. Activities will target the three levels: institutions, community and society, and will include actions such as:

- Completing and perfecting model legislation;
- Aligning the model with the needs of the community;
- Lobbying meetings with MPs, government representatives, participating and contributing to the Working Group, conferences, etc.;
- LGBTIQ community engagement and campaigning;
- Communication strategy with different media channels;
- Involvement of allies and supportive stakeholders.

A mini team of Programme Coordinators will be working together on the topic, liaising with each other, and covering all the bases.

The revised framework for the operation of SOC may have impact on funding. Currently, SOC's funding is typically project-based. There will be a need to communicate the benefits and strengths of this approach in developing relationships with and making applications to donors.

As with the more integrated and participative planning and evaluation, the future funding opportunities will be designed in a joint effort of team members and Programme Coordinators.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEXT 2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SOC

SOC has been a very successful organisation with multiple achievements and an acknowledged impact in BiH. It has reached a point where a paradigm shift would be useful to manage the tensions emerging from the environment and leverage even a greater impact.

It became clear from the process of developing this strategic plan that a solution to a number of tension continuums needs to be found. The staff and external stakeholders of SOC had articulated a clear desire for SOC:

- *to continue with what it does do so well AND to extend its work;*
- *to maintain its focus on LGBTI and Women's Rights AND to embrace other issues;*
- *to support the LGBTI initiative advocacy and support groups and organisations AND to extend its coordination of civil society organisations' work;*
- *to focus on specific legal changes and to get current laws and policies implemented systematically throughout BiH;*
- *to maintain high standards of its outputs and ensure development of next generation of professionals and activists.*

This is a complex set of seemingly divergent needs for SOC to address in BiH. For the upcoming years, SOC proposes to engage with this complexity through the following framework.

VISION

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

MISSION

SOC works to advance human rights, especially the position and human rights of LGBTI people and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through representation of their realities and advocacy for legal, policy, economic, social and cultural changes in all areas of life.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Key organisational values remain the same:

We aspire to achieve high degree of **professionalism and quality** in our work, which would reflect an exemplary, inspiring, and effective organisation of people sharing joint vision and values.

We believe in and promote **intersectionality and diversity** of ideas and people: we respect and take into consideration people and their perspectives stemming from their different identities and backgrounds. We also actively fight multiple discrimination, especially on the grounds of sex, sex characteristics, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

We promote **integrity**: we stick to our values and principles, and are committed to fairness, transparency and accountability in our procedures and work, guided by professional standards and results we want to achieve as well as broad involvement of different stakeholders.

We believe in **proactivity and activism** as we constantly monitor the relevant local, regional and worldwide political and social currents in order to identify challenges and find solutions before problems arise. This anticipatory, change-oriented and self-initiated behaviour enables us to act timely and to use our competences to prevent social backlashes and to set foundations for future advancements of human rights and equality of all BiH citizens.

Innovation and creativity: we introduce new methods, approaches and focus areas, encourage openness and are prepared for continuous learning in order to be able to respond to new challenges.

Collaboration and solidarity: we invest in long term partnerships and networks on national and international levels, using these synergies to further our goals and strengthen our position within civil society. We believe that we can achieve more by combining partnerships, when they favour our strategic goals, and a critical approach towards the performance of the state institutions.

Communication: we have established successful channels of communication with stakeholders and our target groups, which are used regularly, and are two-way.

STRATEGIC GOALS OF SOC

1. Robust legal and policy human rights-based framework throughout BiH
2. Strengthened agents for change throughout BiH
3. Strengthening human rights values, equality and inclusion in BH society and public discourse

Below are **strategic objectives** for each strategic goal. These are stepping stones to the strategic goals and they represent **interim/bridging impacts**.

Strategic Goal 1

ROBUST LEGAL AND POLICY HUMAN RIGHTS BASED FRAMEWORK THROUGHOUT BiH

Strategic Objectives:

1.1. Right to private and family life is advocated for with the relevant legislative stakeholders.

This strategic objective will tackle issues that both women and LGBTIQ people face in this area: same-sex partnership, work-life balance, and gender equality within family life.

1.2. Right to self-determination, bodily awareness, integrity and autonomy are researched and presented to stakeholders with concrete legislative and policy proposals.

This strategic objective will tackle issues that both women and LGBTIQ people face in this area: legal gender recognition (trans rights), intersex rights, sexual, health and reproductive rights of women.

1.3. Socio-economic rights are explored and presented within the human rights framework to relevant stakeholders.

This strategic objective will tackle issues that both women and LGBTIQ people face in this area: labour laws, education, employment, access to employment.

1.4. Freedom of association, expression and assembly are safeguarded and advanced through targeted and coordinated advocacy actions.

This strategic objective will tackle issues that both women and LGBTIQ people (and many others) face in this area regarding: protests, pride, shrinking space for civil society.

1.5. Protection from violence, inequality and discrimination is ensured and foundations for equal treatment of all are laid out through concrete legislative and policy proposals and advocated to relevant stakeholders.

This strategic objective will tackle issues that both women and LGBTIQ people face in the area of protection from violence/discrimination and persecution, asylum.

Strategic Goal 2

STRENGTHENED AGENTS FOR CHANGE THROUGHOUT BiH

Strategic Objectives:

2.1. Members of the LGBTIQ community, women and men are informed, empowered, engaged and self-advocate for human rights and equality based on feminist principles.

As feminist principles of organising in the communities include taking action and practising solidarity, this will include community work focused on LGBTIQ people (psychosocial support, legal and other services to the community), but also other educational and empowerment programmes that might tackle other target groups/communities.

2.2. Human rights, LGBTI and women's organisations, initiatives and activists throughout BiH are equipped to provide services and advocacy at local, regional and national levels.

This will include strengthening of other groups and initiatives in BiH through capacity building, sub-granting, different kinds of support to initiatives and organisations outside of Sarajevo (technical, advisory, knowledge-sharing, etc.). Actions to support the ongoing development, maintenance and strengthening of SOC are also included.

2.3. Strategic partnerships established with prominent actors across different sectors of public and private spheres

To make sure that BiH moves in the direction of progress towards LGBTIQ and gender equality, the network of our partnerships will extend and become capillary. This means that we are now looking for partners and target groups that can have a big impact in the implementation of laws and policies, and on public opinion, such as people/institutions/organisations within areas of academia, research, science, sports, culture, businesses, religious communities, etc.

2.4. Duty bearers and relevant professionals are informed, engaged and equipped with necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to building and maintaining the inclusive human rights approach within the BH institutions and society.

Training and educational and similar programmes targeted to ensure the implementation of existing international standards, recommendations and relevant national legislation and policies related to human rights, rights of women and LGBTIQ people. These are intended for politicians and public servants, and different professionals in order to strengthen the capacity of people in institutions, or close to institutions, to advance the issues. This can include public servants, as well as practising lawyers, medical and legal professionals.

Strategic Goal 3

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

Strategic Objectives:

3.1. The public is informed and engaged in the promotion of values, standards and concrete actions for the advancement of human rights and freedoms.

This will include different public campaigns, media appearances, web presence and content creation focused on strengthening the values of equality, inclusion and human

rights making it harder for the anti-gender movement to find welcoming ground in BiH society.

3.2. Organised and coordinated joint actions and responses of the civil society and activists to the changes in the field of human rights and freedoms in BiH.

This will include protests, press releases, mobilising activists, and other public forms of dissent, coalition building, participating and coordinating Initiative for monitoring of European integration, Coalition for combat against hate speech and hate crime, Women's network, etc.

3.3. Relevant, evidence-based and accurate information on the state of human rights, existing legal and institutional framework, as well as lived realities of LGBTI persons, women and men in BiH, collected, produced and published.

This will include research, monitoring and knowledge creation to boost and lead SOC's work, but to also be a beacon and source of knowledge for other groups and individuals/activists.

CAPACITY BUILDING, RISK ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION

Although capacity building is not stated as one of the strategic goals, Sarajevo Open Centre will continue to invest into the development of its procedures, policies and individual team members' knowledge and skills. These processes will be defined and budgeted on annual level, through the annual performance evaluation of team members and through part of internal Learning and Reflection workshops and last quarter planning in each year to better reflect rising and urgent needs.

To maintain the vigilant and inclusive approach, risk analysis and mitigation plans will also be operationalised through annual risk assessment and mitigation plans, created by the management team, following the internal Learning and Reflection workshops and Annual Planning sessions.

This approach is based on lessons learned from the previous strategic period of 2018-2020, especially the need to be more flexible and to respond to changing and emerging organisational needs, as well as to the unexpected COVID-19 situation. Strategic framework is a tool which guides our general approach and work, therefore, annual planning of capacity building and risk analysis and mitigation allows for a tailored response to those emerging needs in a constantly changing social, political, economic environment.

2021-2023 FINANCIAL PLAN

Sarajevo Open Centre currently receives and expects most of its revenue from a number of international donors and foundations.

This financial support is twofold and is awarded to SOC on project and core funding bases (expected from SIDA and Sigrid Rausing Trust until the end of 2023).

To make sure that most of our resources are focused on achieving our results and prevent them getting exhausted on administration of a number of smaller scale projects, SOC has strategically evolved and moved to a more core-based funding. We still fundraise with different donors for project-based funding to avoid being dependent on few sources of funding.

The expected costs for the three-year period include:

- Staff salaries (Executive Director, 3 Managers and Programme, Media, and Administration and Finance Coordinators);
- Office costs (rent, utilities, security, office material/supply, phone and internet costs, equipment and maintenance, furniture, vehicle, cleaning and representation costs, communications, press clipping, and unknown costs);
- Programme costs (supported either through core funding or project-based funding)
- Capacity building costs (monthly team meetings, annual operational/team building meeting, all capacity building sessions, both for the individual team members, based on the annual assessment of team members, and for the groups of two or more team members, based on urgent organisational needs);

- Other costs (including external accounting agency services, bank transaction costs, supervision for SOC team members, health insurance/programmes, general audit and M&E costs).