

2023

ANNUAL REPORT SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE



2023 Annual Report Sarajevo Open Centre

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ABOUT SOC

Sarajevo Open Centre is a civil society organisation that works on advancing human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We initiate and create systemic social changes, emphasising gender equality and position of LGBTI+ people. Our vision is fair, democratic and inclusive society, based on equal rights and opportunities for all.

For the last 16 years, Sarajevo Open Centre has been successfully working on protecting the rights of women and LGBTI people. The focus of our activities is the provision of legal and psychosocial support counselling for LGBTIQ people; 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 people and women; assistance and support with education and information programmes and activities for the representatives of institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), media and citizens regarding protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI people and women; support capacity building and further development of civil society organisations and informal groups that focus on

protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI people and women, but also other vulnerable and minority groups; research, publishing print and digital publications, media campaigns as well as artistic activities related to the protection and advancement of human rights of LGBTI people and women.

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

Sarajevo Open Centre Podgaj 14 71 000 Sarajevo

Phone: +387 (33) 551 000 Fax: +387 (33) 551 002 www.soc.ba – office@soc.ba www.lgbti.ba www.eu-monitoring.ba

INTRODUCTION

Report on the activities of Sarajevo Open Centre in 2023 includes core information on the organisation 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, organisation's development and future plans and focuses.

Only key achievements and performances achieved by the organisation during 2023 are laid out in the report, while comprehensive results are available in the Results Assessment Document.

We hope that the report offers an overview of the activities of Sarajevo Open Centre in 2023 as well as its position within the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.





Established legal framework and policy framework for human rights across BiH

1.1. The right to private and family life advocated before relevant legislative bodies

- 16 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
- Cooperation established with three actors from the Assembly and Government of Brčko District on regulation of same-sex partnerships
- SOC's participation ensured in the development of the new 2024-2028 Gender Action Plan of Sarajevo Canton

Our activities in 2023, after five years of continuous advocacy and work regulation same-sex partnerships, resulted in the support representatives in the Parliament of **Federation** of Bosnia Herzegovina (FBiH) for the introduction of a special law regulating same-sex partnerships.

178

This represents approximately **9%** of the total of 178 representatives in both houses of the FBiH Parliament

Supporting representatives coming from the following parties:

- Naša stranka (NS) (Our Party
- Demokratska fronta (DF) (Democratic Front)
- Socijaldemokratska partija (SDP) (Social Democratic Party) and
- Za nove generacije (ZNG) (For New Generations)

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 public debate, MPs 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.

Meanwhile, concrete progress in this area was achieved in 2023 as a result of SOC's pressure and advocacy towards the FBiH Government, building on the process that began in 2018. Such efforts resulted in another significant step towards regulation of same-sex partnerships in FBiH. At the fifth session of the FBiH Government held on 14 June 2023, upon proposal of the FBiH Ministry of the Interior, the FBiH Government adopted the Report on the Public Debate and, according to the FBiH Government's conclusion from October 2022, adopted another conclusion stating that the FBiH Ministry of Justice, the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the FBiH Ministry of the Interior and the FBiH Ministry of Health should propose members of the expert working group in charge of preparing the legal document that will serve as the basis for the law on same-sex partnership for the next government session. Furthermore, the FBiH Ministry of Justice accepted our request that SOC representatives join the expert group tasked with drafting the law.

Unfortunately, we paused the institutional dialogue with the relevant authorities in the Republika Srpska on the regulation of samesex partnerships in 2023. This stems not only from the attitude of the RS authorities, but also from the general atmosphere of homophobia and transphobia in the Republika Srpska, which resulted in the attack on LGBTI activists and supporters of the BH Pride March in Banja Luka in March 2023; announcements of the adoption of laws that would prohibit LGBTI activists from working in the education system; and

specific moves such as the entry into force of amendments to the Law on Mandatory Health Insurance which explicitly prevent and hinder systemic support for the healthcare of transgender people by removing healthcare that includes health services, medicines, and medical devices related to gender reassignment.

We focused our efforts on further advocating for the regulation of same-sex partnership in Brčko District, since family relations are also regulated at this level. We met with representatives of the Assembly and the Government of Brčko District and received support from two local organisations for this type of advocacy.

Our unique research on paternity leave, combined with the developed policy briefs, served as the foundation for us to contact all municipalities in Sarajevo Canton with a request to change the form for submitting a request for salary compensation during maternity leave. None of the forms were gender sensitive and only referred to the mother/woman, although fathers are entitled to same right. Following our initiative, two municipalities, Novi Grad and Centar, changed their forms and adopted the neutral term "parent".

SOC organised a meeting with Vildana Bešlija, representative of the Cantonal Assembly of Sarajevo Canton, to discuss the possibility of adopting a new cantonal action plan for gender equality. Following our conversations, the representative introduced us to the Minister of Labour,

Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of Sarajevo Canton. We then met with the Minister, who confirmed that necessary steps will be taken to develop a new cantonal action plan for gender equality, with our active participation in the working group. In May 2023, Sarajevo Canton Government tasked the Ministry with forming a working group and submitted a list of members, indicating progress towards our joint objectives.

1.2. Rights to self-determination, bodily awareness, integrity, and autonomy are explored and presented to relevant parties with concrete legislative and policy proposals

- Three institutional initiatives launched to improve legal recognition of gender identity in FBiH
- A policy brief developed on relevant aspects of gender reassignment and gender identity recognition for decision makers, which institutions actively use in their work
- In cooperation with the World Health Organisation and the FBiH Institute for Public Health, SOC produced and published an educational video about monkeypox.

We have achieved significant results through advocacy efforts, including the following initiatives directed at the FBiH Ministry of Health to assist in the adequate regulation of transgender issues and the process of legal recognition of gender identity, in accordance with binding international legal standards and the needs of trans people in BiH.

On our initiative and proposal:

• The FBiH Ministry of the Interior initiated an action towards the FBiH Government to improve regulations on the legal recognition of gender identity.

- The Ministry of the Interior advocated to the FBiH Ministry of Health to define the necessary medical documentation for the legal recognition of gender identity, particularly in relation to sex marker change in personal documents.
- The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees advocated to the FBiH Ministry of Health for the adoption of the Ordinance on the Method of Collecting Medical Documentation and Determining Conditions for Legal Recognition of Gender Identity or Life in Another Gender Identity.

These initiatives represent significant progress in our efforts to ensure fair and inclusive legal gender recognition processes, as well as to promote the rights and dignity of transgender people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

processes, Prior to these legal document (policy brief) on the relevant aspects of gender reassignment and gender identity recognition was created, which served as the foundation for all subsequent advocacy efforts. A document that identifies key problems in the field of legal gender recognition in the regulations and practices of Bosnia and Herzegovina and briefly outlines their possible solutions, both through regulations that need to be amended/adopted and practical solutions for requests for sex marker change, was presented to the Gender Equality Agency of BiH and representatives of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees.

While the process of legal recognition of gender identity has taken some, although slow, institutional steps, Sarajevo Open Centre's proposals and initiatives in the field of providing trans inclusive care and healthcare in 2023 did not draw attention of the relevant institutions (cantonal and FBiH ministries of health, health insurance institute). This is one of the areas that SOC will focus on in the coming period and find new ways and opportunities for effective advocacy.

Based on requests from the LGBTIQ community in 2022, SOC conducted a series of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease-related activities in 2023. In cooperation with the World Health Organisation and the FBiH Institute for Public Health. SOC produced educational video about monkeypox, with the goal of using scientifically based information about the disease to break prejudice in the BiH public against men who have sex with men, as well as gay and bisexual men. Furthermore, SOC provided relevant information about HIV/AIDS testing opportunities through methods and articles and infographics, and in June 2023, it joined the Aids Action Europe network, which operates at the European level.

A special and relatively new field for SOC is work on ensuring access and the right to abortion, as one of the key sexual and reproductive rights. During 2023, SOC published the results of research conducted among competent public and private health institutions in BiH (clinical centres/clinics, hospitals, physician offices), that is, among health and medical professionals who work on the development implementation and policies and regulations in this field, and on the performance of abortions – termination of pregnancy, in order to get a clear overview of the regulation and medical practices used. The goal of the research is to establish informed cooperation with leading health facilities and institutions -

clinical centres, hospitals, and their professionals, to share information and raise awareness and sensibility for the issues of limited availability of abortion health services, as well as to contribute to a better understanding of abortion as a human right of women and fundamental healthcare. The research was presented to

decision makers, law and policy makers working on health access and sexual and reproductive rights. The ultimate goal is to inspire a broader awareness of abortion as a women's human right and fundamental healthcare, ensuring that it is available to all people who need it. The project and further advocacy will be continued in 2024.

1.3. Socio-economic rights are explored and presented to relevant parties

- Promotion of paternity leave proposed as one of the measures in the 2024-2028 Gender Action Plan of Sarajevo Canton.
- Initial cooperation established with the Brčko District Trade Union on LGBTI socio-economic rights
- An increase in scholarships for female students in SC proposed as one of the measures in the 2024-2028 FBiH Gender Action Plan.

A representative of Sarajevo Open Centre was appointed as a member of the working group responsible for developing the new 2024-2028 Gender Action Plan of Sarajevo Canton. Among the various measures that we have proposed, the promotion of paternity leave is emphasised to provide mothers with easier access to the labour market. Relevant SOC research in this field, as well as specific amendments to the Labour Law regarding parental leave, were presented to the FBiH Minister of Labour, who confirmed that they will be considered and that the Labour Law will be subject to amendments in 2024.

In August 2023, we met with Igor Babić, president of the Brčko District Trade Union, and discussed the socio-economic challenges and inequality faced by LGBTIQ people.

In the context of menstrual poverty, a SOC member proposed, at the invitation of the FBiH Gender Centre, a measure to increase scholarships for female students for the development of the new 2023-2027 FBiH Gender Action Plan – which would amortise the monthly costs of hygiene products as a measure against menstrual

poverty – as well as a number of other measures concerning gender equality and LGBTI rights. However, until the time of this report, we have received no updates on the progress of the FBiH Gender Action Plan's adoption, or whether our measures have been included in the text, however, we will continue to monitor and participate in this process. We also proposed a measure requiring all public institutions to ensure that girls and women have access to hygiene products.

1.4. Freedom of association, expression, and assembly are protected and promoted through targeted and coordinated advocacy activities

- Cooperation established with the History Museum of BiH through the organisation of Kvirhana
- Cooperation established with Club Frka

Because there was no progress in regulation of freedom of assembly in Sarajevo Canton or at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2023, SOC did not conduct significant activities in this field, and we strategically focused on other areas and activities where we can have a greater impact. Nonetheless, SOC will continue to monitor and report on the human rights situation through a variety of reports and submissions to local and international actors.

Given the ongoing challenge of finding and providing safe venues for LGBTI persons to gather, we have initiated formal cooperation with a number of public institutions and venues. SOC and the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a Memorandum of Understanding, expressing the Museum's willingness to offer its

premises for LGBTI events, and Kvirhana was hosted there in June 2023. Prior to the Kvirhana, the History Museum and its director were subjected to pressure and attacks in the media (Stav), as well as on social networks, especially through the activities and announcements of the Anti-Dayton group. Despite this, the History Museum continued to support SOC in organising this key LGBTI+ event and cultural and artistic programme that challenges gender and sexuality norms, demonstrating a strong commitment to offering free space to members of the community.

In addition to the History Museum, we also established cooperation with the new club Frka, where we had an LGBTIQ community gathering in May 2023, making another place LGBTI+ friendly.

1.5. 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

- Sarajevo Open Centre participated in the workshop for the preparation of the Gender Action Plan of Canton Sarajevo and proposed concrete measures and activities in the fields of gender equality and LGBTI rights
- SOC drafted amendments to the Criminal Code of the Brčko District, addressing consent, criminalisation of psychological violence, persecution, genital mutilation and sexual harassment and hate speech based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. The amendments were submitted to the Government and the Legislative Committee of Brčko District

SOC has comprehensively advocated for the adoption of the new 2024-2028 Gender Action Plan of Sarajevo Canton, which has opened the door to the inclusion of a number of gender equality measures in areas such as the labour market, education, violence against women and domestic violence, public life, and healthcare. As previously noted in the report, with the support of representative Vildana Bešlija, we established cooperation with the Minister of Labour, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of Sarajevo Canton. As a result of this cooperation, in May 2023, Sarajevo Canton Government authorised the Ministry to form a working group, whose list of members included SOC. Already in 2023, at SOC's initiative, the same representative submitted an initiative to hang leaflets and educational materials in public transport vehicles to provide information on how to prevent and report sexual harassment in public transport. This initiative was neither implemented nor included in the now-expired cantonal action plan for gender equality, but it will be one of the measures that we will propose as part of the newly formed working group for developing the new GAP.

After amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code were developed to harmonise it with the Istanbul Convention and regulate hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as to harmonise the regulation of consent, criminalisation of psychological violence, persecution, genital mutilation, and sexual harassment, we

began advocacy efforts to address these issues in FBiH. Furthermore, cooperation with the Brčko District Government was initiated to amend and revise the Criminal Code of Brčko District of BiH. In 2023, the government contacted SOC for comments on the formal revisions, which were completed. SOC's amendments proposals were then forwarded to the Legislative Committee of Brčko District. Among these amendments regulation of hate speech based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which now protects both women and LGBTIQ people from hate speech.

In the context of mapping the possibility of using the FBiH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence for the protection of LGBTI people facing domestic violence, Sarajevo Open Centre started a two-year project in cooperation with Tuzla Open Centre in early 2024 to indicate the seriousness of domestic violence faced by LGBTI people through work with relevant institutions, so that this issue could be addressed through the law, as well as other regulations and mechanisms to be developed.



Empowered agents of change across BiH

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

- 810 LGBTI people participated in or attended various events organised by SOC
- Informal trans group of 10 people was founded and started its activities, 14 people in same-sex partnerships participated in events and networking, as well as 19 members of GRID Zagrljaj
- 65 people from the LGBTI community received some form of legal advice, and 16 of them took further institutional steps to address violations of their human rights
- In addition to the existing 13 strategic lawsuits, we initiated 4 new ones to protect the rights of LGBTI people
- 73 LGBTI people received support through peer counselling services
- 75 LGBTI people received support through psychosocial counselling
- More than 300 cis men and women were informed and empowered through two events
- 175 students were informed and empowered through sessions and lectures on EU integration of BiH and on prevention of sexual harassment.

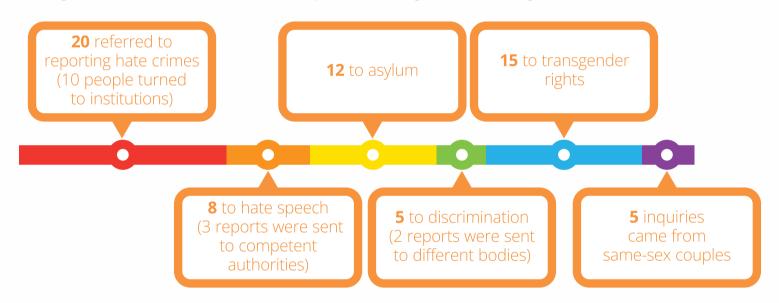
SOC continues to support LGBTI people and the community by responding to identified needs and empowering the community through advocacy and protection of human rights and freedoms.

Long-term work continues, with LGBTI people receiving legal support and representation before BiH institutions and judicial bodies.

SOC creates a space for connection, support, and freedom for LGBTI people, their families, and all those who support or question existing gender, sexuality, and identity norms through the organisation of numerous public events. Up to 810 LGBTI people participated in or attended a variety queer of events, including events. educational sessions for the LGBTI community, and same-sex couple

gatherings. By the end of 2023, the informal group GRID Zagrljaj (group of parents and LGBTIQ children) expanded to 19 members. In the same year, SOC assisted with the development of the groups' visual identity, which is visible on Facebook and during Pride March, and connected them with parents of LGBTIQ children from Serbia through a workshop to exchange experiences and connect.

During 2023, we assisted with 65 inquiries for legal counselling.



Sarajevo Open Centre is currently involved in 17 active strategic litigations, 4 of which for discrimination, 3 for family life of same-sex partners, 2 for trans rights, and 8 for hate crimes and hate speech. Four of these 17 cases were initiated in 2023.

73 people from the LGBTI community received peer counselling services through counselling direct and e-mail communication, while 75 received and counselling psychosocial support through therapy sessions, which were evaluated as extremely useful. In general,

beneficiaries of all types of psychosocial support organised and provided by SOC expressed high levels of satisfaction with the support provided.

SOC provided support in the formation and activities of the newly founded informal group of transgender people. Currently, the group is active on the online platform DISCORD, plans its own events, and organises them with the assistance of SOC. By the end of 2023, the group consisted of 10 people, with a tendency to grow and attract new members.

In addition to direct engagement with LGBTIQ people, SOC also carries out activities for cisgender women and men. Thus, we gathered over 100 men and women by promoting the publication Women of BiH for Children, which was created in December in collaboration with the informal initiative Women of BiH. In July, we collaborated with the UNFPA Fund and the company Violeta to organise an event for fathers and children to promote the right to paternal leave. The event was open to the public, and about 200 people

attended. We continued to work with students, and SOC held a series of lectures as part of the European Classroom programme on relevant topics related to the EU integration process for over 100 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, as well as 75 students from the Faculty of Law in Sarajevo and members of the Bohemsa association, which brings together students from faculties medicine, $\circ f$ the topic sexual on harassment and labour rights.

2.2. Organisations, 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 worked with oQUEERno group and Tuzla Open Centre to further build their capacities for providing services to LGBTIQ people and advocacy
- 6 initiatives were realised in cooperation with other organisations that received mentoring and financial support from SOC
- We supported the informal group GRID Zagrljaj (group of parents and LGBTIQ children) through three initiatives
- We supported our LGBTI inclusive network through meetings and supervision
- We strengthened the work of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the informal UPR Coalition, by increasing the capacity of 23 members through 5 annual planned activities and trainings
- SOC participated in the work of 6 sub-thematic advocacy groups organised within existing networks/coalitions
- An informal group of organisations and individuals related to the right to abortion was formed and started working

We worked on the regionalisation of LGBTIQ activism in BiH by providing support to the informal group oQUEERno and Tuzla Open Centre organisation through work counselling and mentorship, programme-related both administrative-financial, to contribute to their sustainability and growth. In working with youth and other organisations and groups that are not directly focused on working with and for LGBTIQ people, and with the help of oQUEERno group and Tuzla Open Centre, we implemented 6 initiatives in Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Mostar, Tuzla and Zenica, through various formats such as workshops, festivals and focus groups.

We supported the informal group GRID Zagrljaj (group of parents and LGBTIQ children) by ensuring their visibility (banners, promotional material) at the 2023 Pride March, connecting and ensuring their participation at the Living Library, and celebrating World Mental Health Day, organised by the Mentis Institute.

through the project of In 2022, regionalising LGBTI inclusive psychosocial support, SOC established an informal network with 11 organisations that provide psychosocial support in regional centres. In 2023, and upon completion of the project, SOC continued to support the network by organising gatherings and supervisory processes for network members October 2023, ensuring its long-term sustainability and stability.

SOC continued to work on strengthening civil society so that it could more efficiently and effectively monitor, report and advocate for the improvement of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. In 2023, we strengthened the work of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the informal UPR Coalition by increasing the capacity of 23 members through 5 annual planned activities and trainings.

SOC also connects local civil society organisations with key actors, advocating for and/or cooperating with them in the implementation of cantonal action plans for gender equality in 3 targeted cantons. In 2023, we organised a meeting with representatives of institutions from Tuzla Canton, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton, and Sarajevo Canton. Organisations from these cantons and the Zenica-Doboj Canton were also invited, but unfortunately, only the representative of the SEKA Goražde association took part in the meeting.

SOC engaged in the work of 6 subthematic groups for advocacy organised within existing networks/coalitions in accordance with SOC's work programme. We jointly advocated for amendments to the FBiH Criminal Code to harmonise it with the Istanbul Convention through the Women's Network BiH, establishing a joint set of amendments on behalf of the Women's Network, which were then sent to the working body working on amendments to this law. We worked within three

sub-thematic groups through the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH on free access to information in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska regarding the criminalisation of defamation, and the drafting of the 2022 Commission Report on Bosnia (2022/2200(INI)) Herzegovina $\circ f$ the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament. The UPR initiative and another subgroup collaborated to create a loint Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Through the Let's Share Responsibility Equally initiative, we advocated that the amendments to the Election Law, which during 2023, include current were amendments that would increase the quota in the BiH Election Law to 50% resulting in an even distribution on the lists, one man one woman, and providing at least 40% of elected women in BiH parliaments in such a missing way that the number supplemented from compensatory party lists.

In 2023, we contacted a number of civil society actors, feminist and women's rights organisations, as well as individuals from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina who want to and/or have expressed an interest in advocating for the right to abortion.

An informal network was created including

- CURE Foundation
- Association for Culture and Art CRVENA

- Oštra nula,
- Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka
- Baby Steps Association
- Centre of Women's Rights Zenica
- Centre for Education, Therapy, and Democratic Development House "SEKA" Goražde
- UN Population Fund (UNFPA) BiH
- Jelena Kalinić, as an individual

Throughout the project's implementation in 2024, this group will continue to advocate and collaborate on the issues of access to abortion.

2.3. Strategic partnerships established with prominent actors in various sectors of public and private life

- 9 joint initiatives (lectures) implemented in cooperation with the academic community across BiH
- Cooperation continued with the Mojposao.ba company regarding the Most Inclusive Employer award and established cooperation with the Glovo company
- Cooperation with the Association Balans School of Sports organised by the League for Equality
- Voices of LGBTIQ+ Believers Invitation to a Dialogue between Religious Communities and the LGBTIQ+ Community published
- Workshop on zero waste with Marijana Kandić (Echo Bee)

In 2023, we had 9 joint initiatives with the academia on key human rights issues that SOC addresses. Delila Hasanbegović Vukas and Amina Dizdar gave a lecture to secondyear students of the first cycle of studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo, as part of the elective course "Legal clinic on human rights" on the topic "Women's rights - selected topics", and Emina Bošnjak presented SOC's work at SSST on gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence under 16 days of activism. Through the work of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH, 5 European Classrooms were held at:

- Social Sciences Research Centre of the Burch International University
- Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo

- Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo
- Faculty of Economics of the University of Sarajevo

Through the publication Towards Gender Non-Binary Language Practices in which we started a conversation about the language practices of people who do not identify and refuse to be classified as exclusively male or female, we established cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo, the Language Institute of the University of Sarajevo and the Faculty of Philology of the University of Banja Luka.

During the previous strategic period, SOC established cooperation with and gained public support from several organisations/companies/institutions that publicly support LGBTI rights, women's

rights or diversity and inclusion. In 2023, we cooperated with two companies, Mojposao.ba and Glovo. In cooperation with Mojposao.ba, we agreed on a common methodology for awarding the Most Inclusive Employer award, and we held a one-day workshop on LGBTI rights and inclusion in the workplace for Glovo employees.

During January and February 2023, SOC cooperated with the Association Balans -School of Sports, which was founded with mission of enabling everyone, the particularly children, to engage in sports and entertainment activities that promote an active and healthy lifestyle while respecting gender equality. We supported this Association through the League for Equality project, which aims to empower students in the area of gender equality and prevention of sexual and gender-based harassment through sports activities.

Our cooperation with religious communities was slow also in 2023. However, based on our prior work, a publication was released on issues that could help bridge the gap between common perceptions of religious views towards LGBTI people and the inclusivity that religions can offer. The publication Voices of LGBTIQ+ Believers - Invitation to a Dialogue between Religious Communities and the LGBTIQ+ Community involved a number of theologians. Furthermore, we used our contacts to include a Catholic priest in counselling a gay man who is struggling to reconcile his sexual orientation and religious identity.

In April 2023, we collaborated with Marijana Kandić (Echo Bee), an eco-activist who promotes the zero waste principle, to hold a training for SOC team on environmental awareness, waste reduction, and how to incorporate this perspective into daily work. For Lesbian Visibility Day, we collaborated with Instagram influencer captain_bosnica to create Instagram posts.

2.4. 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 BiH institutions and society

- 173 health workers completed SOC training
- 7 civil servants attended training on trans rights and legal recognition of gender identity
- 22 politicians educated on key issues relevant to gender equality and LGBTI rights
- 12 lawyers completed the alumni programme of the Informal Law Academy on the topic of same-sex partnerships and trans rights
- 4 new contact persons were appointed in the prosecutor's offices in the Republika Srpska and Brčko District
- In cooperation with the FBiH Police Academy, 347 police cadets were educated on hate crimes and hate speech.

SOC improves the knowledge and capacities of medical professionals involved reproductive and sexual health (psychologists, psychiatrists, endocrinologists, gynaecologists, etc.). We trained 6 medical doctors 2023 (specialties: general medicine, family medicine, and primary healthcare). In Press cooperation with the Pharma company, we organised training for health workers on transgender people's health and medical gender reassignment procedures on the e-medikacija.ba platform. The goal was to empower the medical staff to provide trans-specific healthcare, with a focus on incorporating inclusive procedures into the

mandatory health insurance system. Lectures and materials on the platform medical cover various aspects of the transgender transition and people's experiences in the healthcare system. A total of 167 health workers received online training (144 medical doctors, 3 practicing pharmacists, 6 medical and laboratory technicians, 4 students of medicine, and 10 others).

SOC builds the capacity and sensitises civil servants who deal with administration (change of personal documents, etc.) and have the authority to make decisions about transgender rights. In 2023, 7 civil servants

from the FBiH Ministry of Health, the FBiH Ministry of the Interior, the FBiH Government, the BiH Agency for Gender Equality, and the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees received SOC training on the subject.

In order to educate politicians, SOC organised a series of events and held 2 trainings/schools on various LGBTI and women's human rights topics. Nineteen politicians participated in the Equality Academy organised in three modules, in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. Three politicians participated in the Training for Cantonal Representatives on Human Rights and the Position of LGBTIQ People in BiH.

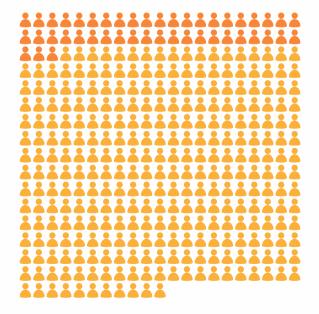
One of the key strategic and long-term goals of Sarajevo Open Centre was to educate and sensitise police officers, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers about LGBTI human rights, as well as to build and increase LGBTI people's trust in the police and the judiciary. Since 2013, we have been continuously working on educating representatives from the entire criminal prosecution chain, because increasing the knowledge of legal experts leads to an increase in the efficiency of the existing legal mechanism for protecting the human rights of LGBTI people and other minority groups.

In 2023, 12 lawyers completed the alumni programme at SOC's Informal Law Academy on representing the rights emerging from same-sex partnerships, as well as cases involving transgender rights. These are

lawyers who represent SOC strategic cases before relevant judicial and other bodies, as well as lawyers who can represent LGBTIQ people before those bodies.

LGBTI people who have been subjected to violence due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation can still directly contact prosecutors – contact persons in cantonal prosecutor's offices. significant victory for Sarajevo Open Centre stems from years of direct cooperation with the prosecutor's offices. Four new contact persons were appointed in the prosecutor's offices in Republika Srpska and Brčko District following a two-day training on LGBTI human rights for prosecutors in March 2023. Four contact persons were appointed in Bijeljina, Banja Luka, East Sarajevo, and Doboj.

Through cooperation with the FBiH Police Academy, 347 police officers received training on hate crime and hate speech



45 for the rank of junior inspector and 302 for police officer.



Strengthening human rights values, equality, and inclusion in BiH society and public discourse

3.1. The public is informed and engaged in promoting values, standards, and specific actions to advance human rights and freedoms

• 5 information and awareness raising campaigns implemented reaching 6 million people

SOC organised and implemented five campaigns, reaching a total of 6,130,660 people. The campaigns were covered by leading media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina and made available online on SOC platforms. The campaigns included the following:

- Parenthood Has no Gender: A Campaign to Raise Awareness of Fathers' Right to Maternity Leave;
- #uvijekPODRŠKA IDAHOBIT Campaign;
- Video Campaign on Coming Out Day;
- Media campaign to present the results of Research on Regulation, Availability and Practice of Abortion in BiH;
- Video campaign promoting two research studies: on the problems and

needs of the LGBTI community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and public opinion about homosexual, bisexual, transgender and intersex people; resources for political parties and parliamentarians and a network of politicians who support **LGBTIO** people's rights and improve their position in BiH.

SOC also monitors the number of republications of campaigns in the top 5 major media outlets, as well as the number of major online media outlets in regional centres that publish our campaigns. There were 8 releases in five major online media outlets in regional centres: Klix.ba, portal N1, Bljesak info, Tuzlanski.ba, and Nezavisne novine.

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

- Joint presentation of research findings from the publication Father on Maternity Leave: Research on Legislative and Administrative Barriers to the Use of Maternity Leave in Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of BiH
- 3 joint activities with other LGBTIQ organisations and groups
- 3 public reactions initiated through the action of the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH, and 3 reactions in the public space
- SOC actively participated in the work of 6 networks
- In 2023, SOC proposed 6 initiatives at meetings of networks/coalitions of which we are members
- 17 key contacts made at the European level

SOC has strategically focused on joint initiatives and/or its own initiatives towards trade unions pertaining to human rights issues, particularly women's and LGBTI rights. In 2023, the publication Father on Maternity Leave: Research on Legislative and Administrative Barriers to the Use of Maternity Leave in Bosnia and Herzegovina was presented to trade union members in cooperation with the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of BiH, in order to ensure information about this problem, present potential solutions, and gain the trade union's support for further advocacy.

We initiated, coordinated, and organised actions in 2023 in collaboration with other organisations, including the BH Pride March Organising Committee, TOC, Kvart,

and oQueerno. The BH Pride March actively contributed to SOC's IDAHOBIT campaign by sharing collected data and helping to create the campaign's slogan. SOC assisted in the organisation of the BH Pride March by providing accommodation and food to participants in the official Pride March programme (drummers, members of the Organising Committee, musicians), and Tuzla Open Centre (TOC) and SOC jointly organised the Tuzla edition of the "Kvirhana" festival of queer art and activism.

SOC reacts through the media and publicly (press releases, conferences, etc.) to relevant current violations of human rights and national obligations, as well as other issues that the network is working on. SOC initiated 3 reactions through EU

initiatives (1 press conference and two press releases). In addition, we launched 3 public reactions. On 8 March, SOC launched an anti-sexual harassment campaign in public transport at bus stops, with activists distributing leaflets and hangers in public transport throughout the day. SOC, in collaboration with the UNPFA Fund and the company Violeta, organised an open public event in July to promote engaged fatherhood and initiate a discussion about the barriers that fathers in Bosnia and Herzegovina face when exercising their right to parental leave, which is guaranteed by law at all levels of government. In addition, on 26 August, we organised a public performance and a public campaign Sarajevo shooting using rainbowin coloured umbrellas, which was published on SOC's social networks.

In 2023, SOC actively participated in 6 networks and initiated/supported campaigns, initiatives, actions/protests, coordinated work and publication of reports:

- Coordination Committee of the Initiative Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform
- Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Aids Action Europe Network
- ASTRA Network
- Coalition for Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in BiH
- Human Rights House Network

In 2023, SOC proposed 6 initiatives at meetings of networks/coalitions of which we are members. The following initiatives were developed and coordinated through the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of BiH and the UPR Coalition:

- Amendments to the Draft Law on Freedom of Access to Information of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Cooperation with the Joint Committee on European Integration of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Remarks on the 2022 Commission Draft Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022/2200(INI)) of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament;
- Joint submission of the Shadow Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Monitoring Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, developed by the UPR Coalition;
- Initiative to the Joint Committee on European Integration of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Joint Organisation of a Conference on the Role of Parliaments and Civil Society in the Integration Process;
- Initiative to the EU Delegation in BiH for the Establishment of a Structured Dialogue on the Role of Civil Society in Negotiations on EU Membership.

Furthermore, we took part in the initiative of non-governmental organisations and

organisations and members of the initiative from Banja Luka to amend the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska (criminalisation of defamation and insults).

Through our work within the Initiative for Monitoring the European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we also advocate at the level of the European Parliament for representatives from EU member states to be active and in contact with non-governmental organisations in order to exert pressure on local decision makers in accordance with BiH's EU integration process (opinion, 14 priorities, etc.). We made key contacts with 17 people (13 new contacts), including 6 representatives of the European Parliament (3 new contacts) and 11 national representatives (10 new contacts).

3.3. Relevant, evidence-based, and accurate information on the state of human rights, existing legal and institutional frameworks, as well as authentic experiences of LGBTI people, women, and men in BiH are collected, processed, and published

- Work on publications and release of 5 key publications with detailed research analyses presented within SOC's scope of work
- 17 reports/publications on monitoring the state of women's and LGBTI human rights developed and published
- SOC organised and supported 3 major art events: Kvirhana, the hosting of Queer City Cinema in Sarajevo, and the student performance Your Love is King

In 2023, SOC worked on and/or published 5 key publications presenting detailed research analyses within SOC's scope of work. These publications include:

- Research on Problems and Needs of LGBTI Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2023;
- Research on Attitudes towards Homosexual, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- · Research on Regulation, Availability and

- Practice of Abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Conducted Research on Gender-Neutral Language among People from Non-Binary Communities;
- The third year of research on queer history in BiH is currently ongoing.

Furthermore, 17 reports/publications were developed and published on monitoring the state of women's and LGBTI human rights, as well as on relevant topics for the EU integration process.

- 2023 Pink Report Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Numbers of Equality 3: Research on Problems and Needs of LGBTI Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2023 – Analysis of Findings;
- Acceptance from a Distance Attitudes towards Homosexual, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Research on Regulation, Availability and Practice of Abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Gender Reassignment and Legal Gender Recognition – Key Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina (POLICY BRIEF);
- Guide for the Institutionalisation of Inclusive and Affirming Health Care for Transgender and Gender Variant Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- FATHER ON MATERNITY LEAVE: Research on Legislative and Administrative Barriers to the Use of Maternity Leave in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Proposals for Amendments to Labour Laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the improvement of gender equality and the protection of rights related to motherhood, fatherhood and parenthood;
- Potemkin's Candidacy: 2022 Alternative Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina Progress on the Road to the European Union Membership Political Criteria;
- Leaders in Equality: What can Political Parties do for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- Representation of LGBTI+ Rights in Parliaments: Guide for Members of Parliament;
- Voices of LGBTIQ+ Believers: Invitation to a Dialogue between Religious Communities and the LGBTIQ+ Community - Collection of Papers;
- #WomenofBiH for Children An Illustrated Journey with Exceptional Women from the Past;
- Coming out from Understanding to Acceptance: A Relational Approach;
- Towards Gender Non-Binary Language Practices – Collection of Papers;
- GUIDE: Inclusive Business Communication;
- Gender-related Issues in the Urban Mobility Sector in the Canton of Sarajevo – Study and Recommendations for Improvements.

These publications aim to inform and build the capacity of responsible structures and various experts from the public, private and civil sectors, with the goal of promoting an inclusive approach to human rights. A total of 26 institutional representatives, politicians, academic staff, and media representatives used SOC's research, policy documents, analyses, studies, and reports.

SOC organised and supported 3 major public art events aimed at promoting LGBTI rights, gender equality, and women's rights: the Kvirhana festival, the hosting of Queer City Cinema in Sarajevo, and the student performance Your Love is King.



Sarajevo Open Centre manages, creates content, and communicates through three websites: the organisational 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 the European Integration: www.eu-monitoring.ba.

Throughout 2023, these three websites recorded a total of 132,000 unique visits, and 163 articles were published on relevant SOC topics.



The topics that SOC addresses and works on gained visibility through media coverage as well. The key phrase "Sarajevo Open Centre" was mentioned in 75 media reports, i.e., articles, and ten team members

appeared in a total of 112 media reports. Seven team members appeared in 25 shows and/or gave statements on key topics addressed by SOC.



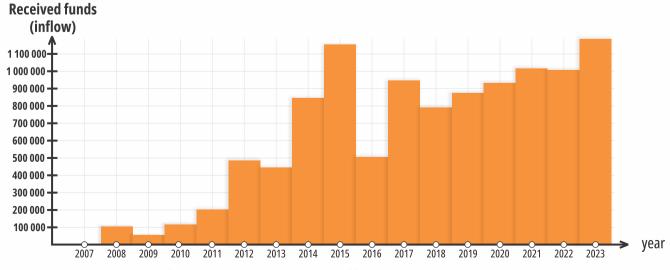
Sarajevo Open Centre continues its media work by creating unique content on the lgbti.ba portal, offering that content to other media outlets, conducting media campaigns, press releases, appearances, as well as strategic partnerships with key TV, radio, print, and online media.



In 2021, we began the implementation of the organisational 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 2021 and 2022, funds were secured for planned expenses in 2023, and the inflows over the years can be tracked in the table below.

Received funds (inflow)	1	BAM	1	EUR		Increase/Decrease (%)	Comments
Received funds in 2007.	1	-	1	-	1		no inflow
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%	
Received funds in 2023 .		1,187,337		607,076		12%	
Total funds received for the period 2007–2023 .	1	0,817,828		5,531,068			

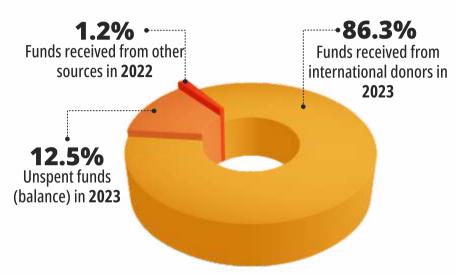
Table: Increase/decrease of funds received (inflow) broken



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

	BAM	EUR
Unspent funds (balance) in 2022.	169,440	86,633
Funds received from international donors in 2023.	1,170,488	598,461
Funds received from other sources in 2023.	16,849	8,615
Total funds available for 2023.	1,356,778	693,709

Table: Total funds available for 2023



Visualization of table: Total funds available for 2023

The list below outlines the most important donors in 2023.



Total inflow from international donors: 1.170.488 (598.461€)

Other sources: 16.849 (8.615€)

TOTAL INFLOW IN 2023: 1.187.337 (607.076€)

Table: Funds received (inflow) in 2023

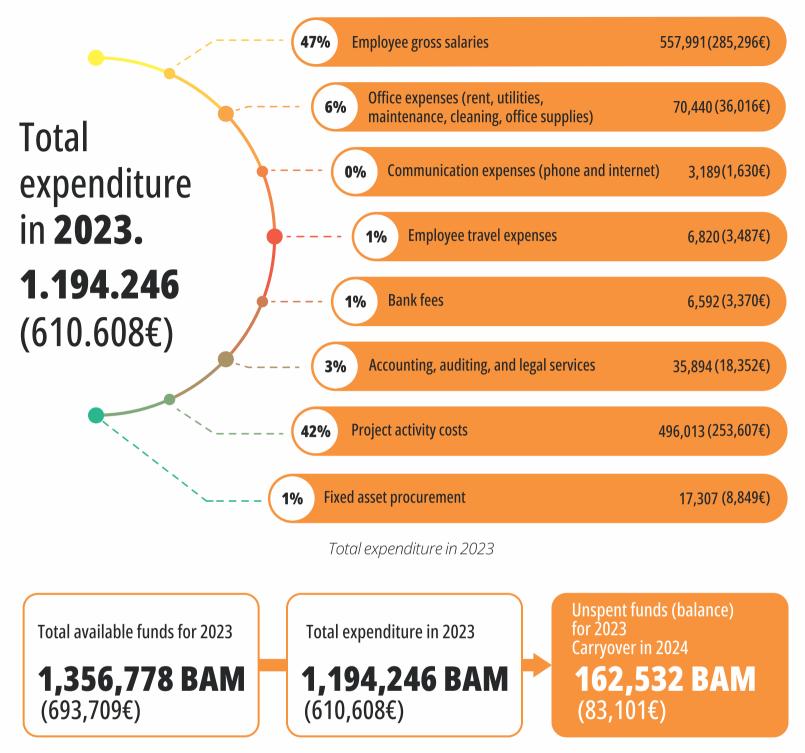


Table: Unspent balance for 2023

The unspent balance for 2023 will be carried over to the 2024 budget and appropriately allocated to salaries, activities, and other organisational expenses.

Find out more about our finances in the Audit Report for 2023, available on our website since May 2023.

The Audit Report, along with other reports, can be downloaded at: https://soc.ba/en/about-us/izvjestaji/



Aiming to evaluate the effectiveness of Sarajevo Open Centre's performance in the 2021-2023 strategic planning timeframe, an external evaluation was conducted in May-July 2023. The evaluation report was finalised in August 2023 with recommendations to: a. strengthen the existing and establish new partnerships, b. strengthen visibility and participation, c. ensure long-term support for civil society organisations that defend democracy and human rights, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups, including LGBTI+ people, and d. continue investing organisation's development and capacity building.

Following the evaluation process, the new cycle of strategic planning was set to take place from September until the end of October 2023. The work officially began in September 2023, when Sarajevo Open Centre teamed up with an external strategic planning expert, Jasna Kovačević. The strategic planning process was designed and based upon feminist principles of participative data collection and decision making. The process of collecting primary data was based on compiling data from surveys, interviews and focus groups, while secondary data was compiled from relevant documents. Surveys internal were conducted online for external stakeholders and employees, and resulted in collecting feedback from 48 respondents. The collected data was processed using the SPSS and Atlas.ti programmes and used to conduct the analysis of the mission, vision, and values; SWOT analysis; importanceperformance analysis and organisational culture analysis. The data analysis findings

were presented to management and staff in workshops, where they identified challenges such as weaknesses and a lack of communication inadequate strategy, infrastructure, and financial sustainability issues. Recommendations include adopting more innovative and collaborative organisational culture. The expert advised using the Objectives-and-Key Results (OKR) methodology for strategic planning, which is based on principles of agile management.

In addition to the OKR approach to strategic planning, the new areas of impact build on earlier efforts from 2021-2023. In the next 5 years, Sarajevo Open Centre plans to:

I. Maximise strengths to make use of opportunities:

- **a.** Position SOC as a regional leader in innovation through partnerships
- **b.** Empower local CSOs while simultaneously contributing to improvement of functionality of the CSO sector.
- **c.** Commercialise its services in the private sector, focusing on gender mainstreaming and inclusive cultures

II. Use opportunities for overcoming weaknesses.

- **a.** Improve internal and external communication for better visibility.
- **b.** Develop sustainable initiatives such as community centres and commercial ventures.
- **c.** Optimise organisational processes using technology to drive innovation.



With the new five-year strategic plan, Sarajevo Open Centre identifies four strategic planning pillars that support its mission and vision.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT BiH – revisited pillar

As violations of human rights of women and LGBTI+ people in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain to persist, the establishment of the legal framework and policy framework for human rights throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a vital strategic pillar. It reflects a continuous commitment of Sarajevo Open Centre to upholding universal human rights principles and ensuring the protection of these rights for all citizens. This goal involves continuation of implementing activities for comprehensive legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and a strong focus on marginalised and vulnerable populations to create a just and inclusive society. In the upcoming period, SOC aims to focus on matters of same-sex partnership regulation, adoption rights, improvement of administrative and medical procedures for legal gender recognition, and to place emphasis on the position of intersex and nonbinary persons.

STRENGTHENING OF AGENTS OF CHANGE THROUGHOUT BiH – revisited pillar

In the upcoming strategic cycle (2024-2028), SOC will take a modified approach to strengthening agents of change throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of nurturing a new generation of leaders, activists, and community advocates who can drive positive social change. By empowering individuals and communities, this goal contributes to a more just, inclusive, and equitable society. Within this strategic pillar, SOC aims to shift its focus towards regionalisation and decentralisation of its activities. In such a way, SOC will create more opportunities to expand its activities in BiH and regionally, hence improving its reach to wider audiences.

STRENGTHENING THE VALUES OF HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY, AND INCLUSION IN BIH SOCIETY AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE – revisited

The strategic pillar of strengthening the values of human rights, equality, and inclusion in BiH society and public discourse is aimed at creating a more equitable and inclusive society where human rights are respected and protected. It involves multi-faceted efforts, including awareness, advocacy, and communication activities to change societal norms and attitudes and promote the core values of human rights, equality, and inclusion. Focus will be placed on creating positive narratives that encourage social acceptance of LGBTI+ people, and intensifying efforts in promoting and utilising accumulated knowledge.

CONTINUOUS ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – new pillar

The strategic pillar of continuous organisational development is a commitment to growth and adaptability of Sarajevo Open Centre. By investing in our own capacity, resources, and strategies, we can more effectively advance our mission and navigate the dynamic landscape of equality for women and LGBTI+ people. We will strive to improve capacities in strategic communication, establish sustainable formats of work and optimise organisational processes by accepting technological and scientific innovations and methodologies.

TEAM, ASSEMBLY, AND STEERING BOARD*

Emina Bošnjak

Executive Director

Dajana Bakić

Operational Manager

Darko Pandurević

Programme and Advocacy Manager

Marina Jovović

Finance and Administration Manager

Programme Team

Amina Imamović

Programme Coordinator

Amina Dizdar

Programme Coordinator

Alen Gudalo

Programme Coordinator

Delila Hasanbegović-Vukas

Programme Coordinator

Nejra Agić

Communications Coordinator

Amil Brković

Programme Coordinator

Matej Vrebac

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



SARAJEVSKI OTVORENI CENTAR