

SERBIA

ASYLUM

Civil society organisations held a series of training events for state institutions on supporting LGBTI+ asylum seekers and refugees.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, the Belgrade City Library cancelled a discussion upon the request of Da se zna, which would have featured gender-critical anti-trans speakers.

The Public Prosecutor's Office filed a request with the Constitutional Court to ban the far-right paramilitary political group Leviathan, which regularly incites hatred against LGBT people, migrants, and the Roma.

In July, Geten filed two complaints to the Ombudsman against the head of the Enough is Enough association and also against Ninoslav Jovanović, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, for sharing transphobic posts about the trans competitor who won Miss Netherlands. Civil society filed a criminal complaint against Dr. Alek Račić for publicly advocating and inciting hatred towards LGBT+ people in a new book (see under Education).

In August, People's Party MP Ivana Parlić made derogatory remarks about men wearing lipstick. In September, President Vučić made anti-trans comments about gender fluidity and non-binary genders, saying "all that craziness" will not exist in Serbia.

Throughout the year, several other politicians made anti-LGBTI statements (see here) on TV, during parliamentary debates, or on social media.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes continued to take place on a regular basis and largely with impunity. Da se zna! shared that close to 90% of victims, who reported an anti-LGBT attack to the authorities, do not have any information about the steps the police took. Between August and March 2023, Da se zna! documented 94 hate crimes .

In late February, a man was stabbed and two others were attacked with a bottle in a park in Belgrade by a group of young men. All three victims were hospitalised. A few days later, a man was assaulted at a club by the security guards. Brankica Jankovic, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, condemned the attacks and called for an effective police response. The perpetrators are being investigated

and the Prosecutor filed charges. Following the attacks, civil society organisations held a protest with the slogan 'Hate Kills' in March and called on the police to find and sanction the perpetrators and on institutions to protect and support victims. The organisers also demanded an emergency meeting with the Minister of Interior. Riot police were present to protect the participants, but no incidents were recorded.

In June, singer Ema Radujko was harassed, pelted with bottles and kicked off the stage for her support for LGBT+ rights.

Noa Milivojev, an 18-year-old trans woman, was murdered in June. Her body was found three weeks after she disappeared. A vigil was held in her memory, but the memorial site was later vandalised and trans flags were violently removed from it. A protest was organised as part of "Serbia against violence" protest, and an opposition leader holding a trans flag was verbally attacked by two men, who were promptly removed by organisers. CSOs filed a criminal complaint, but the police have not taken action. 29 civil society organisations demanded the harshest sentence - the suspect faces aggravated murder charges. Civil society reiterated its urgent call for effective police protection and sanctions against perpetrators. In its annual hate crime report, Da se zna! documented the highest number of anti-LGBT incidents since 2017.

The Belgrade Pride Info Centre was attacked and vandalised in May and August. This brings the total number of attacks on the Centre to 19 over the past few years. Police have only sanctioned two of the attacks. The rainbow flag outside the Centre was removed several times this year (see here and here for instance).

A sculpture commemorating Serbian queer artist Merlinka was vandalised in October, three days after it was installed.

Two police officers were acquitted despite assaulting a gay man in 2022.

EDUCATION

Da se zna filed a complaint with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality against the Kragujevac Faculty of Medical Sciences for promoting Alek Račić's new book with harmful anti-LGBT content (see under Bias-motivated speech).

EMPLOYMENT

A conference on Discrimination of LGBTI people on the labour market in Serbia brought together key stakeholders, including the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The general situation of LGBT people significantly worsened since the escalation of anti-LGBT attacks and speech targeting the 2022 EuroPride in Belgrade.

The Council to monitor the implementation of Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and its related Action Plan, adopted in 2022, was set up this year. It includes three representatives of LGBTIQ organisations. On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, Serbia's Ombudsperson Zoran Pašalić called for sanctions against anti-LGBTI hate crimes and for providing free legal aid to LGBT victims of discrimination and violence. The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue called for inclusion and equality. The Democratic Party issued a statement of support.

This year's conference during Belgrade Pride focused on the need for legal protection of trans, intersex and gender-variant communities.

FAMILY

A study released in May by the IDEAS Center for Research and Development of Societies found that 86% of LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia believe that the issue of same-sex partnership is the most important or very important for them. 77% want to get married one day and 51% want to have children.

The draft Law on Same-Sex Partnerships, which was presented in 2021, continued to be stalled. In June, Belgrade Pride submitted a freedom of information request to the government to request an update about the process.

In September, the Green-Left Front tabled a civil partnership bill in parliament.

Also in September, President Aleksandar Vučić said that regardless of the Prime Minister's stance, he would always veto any legislative attempts to provide legal recognition to same-sex couples and defy criticism from the EU. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, expressed support for legal recognition, but said it cannot be an overnight change. The Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue Tomislav Žigmanov echoed a similar stance saying such decisions required 'consensus'.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Pride Week was held between 4-10 September under the slogan "We're not even close". On the eve of Pride Week, a few dozen far-right protesters gathered in Belgrade "for the defence of family and traditional values" and for a ban on Pride.

The Pride march was held on 9 September and was protected by riot police. This was the biggest march to date and went safely. About 50 ultraconservative protesters and Orthodox priests showed up. The President refused to raise the rainbow flag in the capital, which civil society has asked for. One person was assaulted after the Pride march, after refusing to take off rainbow symbols.

HEALTH

Da Se Zna's study found that only 16% of 91 health centres surveyed provided services to trans people. In February, Geten sent a freedom of information request to the Ministry of Health, inquiring about care provision and the Ministry's plans to implement ICD-11. The Ministry answered that it would, for now, continue using ICD-10. Kolektiv Talas TIRV together with the Ombudsperson initiated intersectoral discussions on the topic of depathologising transgender identities at which it was agreed to initiate the official implementation of ICD-11. No further progress has been reported.

Although the government adopted a new list of medicines covered by insurance which includes female hormones for trans women, the dosage stated is not available on the pharmaceutical market in Europe. Republic insurance fund did not respond positively to the request for available dosage (5mg) to be covered.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, Geten published a report based on research between 2019-2021, finding that there was no uniform practice among registry offices about handling LGR requests; that on average 7-10 people apply each year; those working in the registries wish to undergo further training.

The Council formed to monitor the implementation of Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and its related Action Plan agreed at its first session that it would consider the preconditions for the drafting of legal gender recognition legislation. The Strategy and Action Plan specifically mention the drafting and adoption of an LGR law.

In September, President Vučić said he would not sign a law that introduces a "third gender".

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

A short film was released celebrating the contributions of lesbians to the LGBT movement in Serbia.



Enough with the silence, a comic book based on an intersex person's life was [published](#) in October. *Vrhunac*, written by Aleksandra Bojanića about a queer young person, was [published](#) this year.

Serbian *Eurovision Song Contest* runner-up contestant, [openly gay performer](#), Luke Black [spoke up](#) for LGBTQ+ rights.

Rainbow Ignite opened the first LGBTIQ+ archive in the Balkan region and the exhibition “Arkadija - Where we were”: about Serbian LGBTI heritage and cultural history was [held](#) in September in Belgrade.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In 2022, President Aleksandar Vučić [announced](#) that medically assisted reproduction will be available from December onwards. It is [available](#) to all women, and it has been reported that lesbian couples have had good experiences of the process this year.



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