



SERBIA

ASYLUM

In March, a gay man from Iran was granted refugee status due to persecution on the basis of his sexual orientation.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Belgrade's Pride Information Centre was attacked four times since December 2018. Although the police were informed of the possibility of one of the attacks in October, they did nothing to prevent it. The Serbian authorities said they would not investigate the attack since no one was injured and the property was not damaged.

Hate crimes against LGBT people continue to be a serious issue in Serbia. Da se zna! documented 51 anti-LGBT+ cases of discrimination, harassment, and violence between January and October, of which 22 were physical attacks.

On 24 June, a lesbian couple was harassed at the Engineering Students' Club (KST). The security staff refused to protect them, saying they were to blame and should not have kissed. Shortly after, one of the women was denied entry to the club. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality established that the club discriminated, but KST refused to implement the recommendations. Later, KST published an apology.

EDUCATION

Following last year's positive developments, thanks to NGO Labris's advocacy efforts, all textbooks with homophobic content were successfully withdrawn by the Institute of Textbooks. The amended textbooks will not yet be included in the 2019/2020 curriculum.

Labris held two trainings for 40 teachers and school psychologists in high schools this year. On a positive note, many joined from outside Belgrade.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urged Serbia to address discrimination on the basis of SOGI in the new gender equality legislation, and to speedily adopt it.

FAMILY

In February, Prime Minister Ana Brnabic and her partner had a baby. The news sparked mixed reactions. Some local activists criticised Brnabic and her government for not having done enough for LGBT people, especially regarding family rights.

A lesbian couple in Novi Sad and two lesbian couples in Belgrade went to the Registrar to get married. As the Constitution defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, they were refused. They all turned to the Administrative Court and will bring the case to the European Court if necessary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The director of Da se zna!, Dragoslava Barzut was harassed and spat on several times during the Women's March on 8 March. The police refused to intervene and did not follow up with Barzut to make a statement. Barzut filed a criminal lawsuit against the attackers in June. The perpetrators failed to show up at the court hearings.

The first Pride gathering in Novi Sad took place on IDAHOT, 17 May, and no incidents or threats were reported. Even though this was a gathering, and not a march, it was the first Pride event to take place outside the capital. Following the Pride, the director of ERA (LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey) and her partner were threatened by a group of men and found refuge in a cafe. The attack was reported to the police.

The Pride of Serbia took place on 29 June. Brankica Janković, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, congratulated the community and reminded the authorities of their duties to protect the rights of LGBT people. In particular, she highlighted that Serbia needs to legally recognise same-sex relationships and improve trans specific healthcare services.

Leading up to Pride, several parents joined Da se zna!'s campaign and stood in support of their LGBT children by posting under #NeOdricemSe ("I will never disown my child") and speaking in mainstream media.

"The first thing that came to mind when I heard [my daughter come out to me] was - how brave my child is. I have long suspected that my daughter is gay and was glad she included me in her life." - Gordana Paunovic in Vecernje Novosti



Belgrade Pride took place on 15 September with roughly 2,000 participants. Prime Minister Ana Brnabić and her partner also attended, as well as Fredd E. 'Tree' Sequoia from the Stonewall Inn in New York. The event was preceded by 'The Pride Caravan', which consisted of unannounced 'flash' marches in ten cities all around Serbia, to show support to the LGBTI community. The march was interrupted in Valjevo and banned in Novi Pazar.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In June, the Gay Lesbian Info Centre reported that the number of articles featuring LGBT-related topics significantly decreased last year, as compared to previous years.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The new legislation on legal gender recognition, adopted in December 2018, entered into force on 1 January. The law sets out that surgeries and sterilisation will no longer be required, but a diagnosis and hormonal therapy continue to be mandatory. Civil society warned that the remaining requirements violate trans people's fundamental rights.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Labris convened two national conferences for LGBTI liaison officers in July, in Belgrade and Borkovac, to build their capacity in handling anti-LGBT hate crimes. Labris also held three meetings, bringing together liaison officers and the LGBTI community in Belgrade in April, and in Novi Sad and Niš in July. The meetings helped build trust in the community, and increase the knowledge of liaison officers about the needs of LGBT people.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In August, the Ministry of Health imposed a ban on artificial insemination and IVF, for anyone who has a "history of homosexual relations during the last five years." Many NGOs are challenging the law as it violates the Constitution and the anti-discrimination law.

In August, the Gay Lesbian Info Centre requested the Ministry of Health to amend regulations currently imposing a blanket ban on LGB people donating reproductive cells and embryos. Complaints were launched with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality as well.

Earlier in March, the CEDAW urged Serbia to enhance access to family planning services and artificial insemination for LGBTI persons.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

On 30 January, Da se zna!, the Belgrade Municipality of Vračar and the Institution of Culture, Božidarac launched a Counseling Centre for LGBT+ people. It currently opens for three hours every week.

The City of Belgrade offered a space in the city center to five LGBTIQ organisations free of charge. The space can be used for gatherings, conferences, counseling - the scope of activities will be decided by the five NGOs, members of the "Local Network for prevention of discrimination and providing support for LGBT persons in Belgrade".