



Serbia

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Labris delivered 50-100 relief packages including food, hygiene products and disinfectant during the COVID-19 pandemic, to LGBTQ people most in need.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In October, Ratko Dmitrović was appointed Minister of Demographic Development and Family Care in the newly formed government. Dmitrović's past misogynistic and homophobic statements, i.e. calling the Pride march "a parade of shame, shamelessness and hidden Satanism" left civil society deeply concerned about the appointment.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

On 28 February, a group of masked extremists attacked the Pride Info Centre in Belgrade, damaging the door and exterior. The Centre was the first LGBTI safe space in Serbia. Complaints were launched, and a case is pending.

On 2 March, extremists gathered in the town of Leskovac to protest against a Pride march that was falsely rumoured to take place, chanting "kill gays" and assaulting two journalists, threatening to "slaughter" them.

DATA COLLECTION

Despite numerous recommendations from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe, and the EU, Serbia still does not gather data on anti-LGBTI hate crimes.

In its annual hate crime report, NGO Da se zna! documented 63 anti-LGBT hate crimes in 2019, marking a 50% increase compared to 2018.

EDUCATION

Labris conducted a legal analysis of school protocols and rulebooks, and published an advocacy tool to support LGBTI students in June.

EMPLOYMENT

In September, Labris held an online training for 40 employees of the National Employment Service on LGBTI issues, the first event of its kind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit LGBTI people hard, with many losing their jobs and others reporting more hardship finding employment.

The joint meeting of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs with LGBTIQ civil society organisations was postponed in February. The Ministry however stated it would finance training courses for trans persons on starting their own business.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, Serbia failed to re-elect the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, which has left the country without an authoritative body to implement the anti-discrimination law, and current or ongoing complaints are effectively blocked. 52 CSOs signed a joint statement calling for the urgent re-election of the Commissioner. Regional LGBTI organisation ERA published a similar call. Following the June elections and the formation of the new government in October, Brankica Janković, the former Commissioner, was nominated as the sole candidate. After five months without a Commissioner, she was elected on 26 November, in a process lacking transparency. The Coalition against Discrimination condemned this, and called for future elections to be transparent and inclusive of civil society.

There continued to be no progress on amendments to the anti-discrimination law, despite the discussion having started back in 2019. Civil society has not been meaningfully involved in consultations and remains concerned about the process.

The new Anti-discrimination strategy, due to be adopted in 2019 after the expiration of the previous one in 2018, has still not been adopted. The National Working Group tasked with drafting the new strategy has not held any meetings to date. Labris published an analysis of the process so far.

FAMILY

Court cases on legal recognition for same-sex couples, launched by two lesbian couples in 2019, were stalled at the Administrative Court this year - mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with legal experts, Labris presented a Model Law on Civil Unions in April, covering the rights of both registered and non-registered same-sex unions. Labris submitted it to the cabinet of Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, the Ministry of Labor, the Anti-discrimination group within the Ministry of Labor, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality, and other relevant bodies. Labris has not received a response so far.

On 30 November, the new Minister of Human Rights and Social Dialogue, Gordana Čomić, announced that a draft law on same-sex partnerships should come before parliament by the spring



of 2021. In December, LGBTI organisations had a number of meetings with Čomić, who affirmed that the bill should be before the parliament by April 2021.

Meanwhile, on 15 December, the Ombudsperson published a recommendation to the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue to adopt legislation that would recognise same-sex partnerships and regulate legal gender recognition. The Ministry was given 60 days to act upon the recommendation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Pride events were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Belgrade Pride held an online Pride week between 14 and 20 September.

HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on the trans community. Doctors appointments were cancelled this year and many had to suspend their medical transition process. Similar to other countries in the region, Serbia also reported a shortage of hormones this year, due to lockdowns. Many trans people reported a loss of their income, and enduring harassment in family homes they were forced to move back to.

Several parents of intersex children have contacted XY Spectrum for support since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, about difficulties in accessing medical treatment for their children.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Organisations have experienced numerous funding problems since March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many funders withdrew or put their funds on hold.

NGOs had to find new ways of functioning, adjusting activities to online spaces, finding new channels of communication with communities, and creating new forms of activities and support.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 24 November, the Ombudsperson confirmed that Serbian citizens, who live and have undergone surgical and medical interventions abroad can present medical certificates at their local consulates or embassies and have their legal gender changed. Surgery and hormonal treatment are mandatory requirements for legal gender recognition in Serbia. The Ombudsperson's statement was a response to a case, where a Serbian trans woman living in Sweden tried to have these

procedures recognised in Serbia without success. The local healthcare authorities refused to provide a certificate to her, as they were not the ones overseeing the medical process and the person was not registered with the local healthcare system, being a resident abroad. The Ombudsperson's solution should provide for a quicker process for those living abroad.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Labris did not hold any police trainings this year, but asked the police to help promote the Local Networks for prevention of Discrimination and Support to LGBTI people. The Networks already exist in seven cities, and include the police, local civil society, local ombudspersons, health institutes, social welfare centers. The police refused.



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