

MONTENEGRO

ASYLUM

A lesbian couple from Russia reported that they were experiencing psychological abuse on a daily basis and had also been physically assaulted while waiting for a decision in their case at the asylum centre in Spuz.

Spectra supported two trans asylum seekers this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT and misogynistic political rhetoric continued to be a serious issue. In January, civil society called on the President of the Parliament to remove the President of the Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms, Jovan Vučurović, for violating the Code of Ethics and speaking about LGBTIQ people in a hateful manner.

The outgoing Vice Prime Minister, Vladimir Joković made hostile statements against those who do not have children.

Religious leaders also made hateful statements this year. Before Pride, the Head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro called for a salvation prayer and called the event “immorality and debauchery”.

LGBT Forum Progress reported 220 online hate speech cases to the police.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The LGBTI Drop-in Centre in Podgorica was vandalised with fascist and anti-LGBTI messages in July. President Đukanović, then Prime Minister Abradžević, the Ombudsman’s Office, the Council of Europe, and others condemned the violence and called for investigations. The Prosecutor’s Office launched an investigation and the police have identified the perpetrators. On 21 December, Juventas’ LGBTIQ Centre in Podgorica was attacked. Police responded quickly in identifying the attackers. Civil society called for a proper investigation and prompt prosecution.

After Pride, the apartment of two trans activists was attacked and vandalised. The perpetrators were identified. One of them took full responsibility, and

was sentenced to one-month prison.

Spectra supported four trans people who experienced violence and reported the cases only to Spectra, not to institutions.

BODILY INTEGRITY

LGBT Forum Progress co-published a documentary on so-called ‘conversion therapies’ in Montenegro.

EDUCATION

No positive changes were implemented in the education sector this year. Civil society called on the government to ensure that LGBTIQ+ topics are covered in schools and that LGBTIQ+ young people are protected from bullying and harassment. There were several reports from high-school students that some schools are not open anymore to informal education about LGBTI human rights, after the change of directors, which occurred after elections in 2020.

The LGBTQ Social Centre published a study on the attitudes of teachers and staff on LGBTI topics in high schools in Northern Montenegro, trained teachers, and released a manual for schools.

EMPLOYMENT

Spectra reported continued high unemployment rates among trans women, in part due to a mismatch between their gender expression and legal documents, and violence and discrimination at work. Spectra highlighted the high numbers of trans women engaging in the informal labour market or in sex work, which further increases their vulnerability. Trans people in general, have been gravely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, which further exacerbated their social and economic exclusion.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Civil society reports that due to political tensions, human rights issues remained difficult to put on the government’s agenda and progress on LGBTIQ+ equality remains extremely slow. The implementation of Montenegro’s 2019-2023 LGBTI Strategy was discussed at a conference, co-organised by CSOs. The anti-discrimination law was open for



public discussion this year and an analysis of its compatibility with EU law is ongoing. CSOs advocated for SOGI inclusion.

Lawyer Velibor Marković, known for homophobic and misogynist hate speech, was appointed to the Commission examining the compliance of the Basic Agreement between the State and the Serbian Orthodox Church with Montenegrin legislation. Coalition “Equaly”, gathering more than 40 CSOs, including the coordinating Queer Montenegro, and also Spectra, Stana and Juventas, requested his removal. The Centre for Women’s Rights filed complaints to the Bar Association. At least two members of the Commission announced they would step down if Marković stays. Then Prime Minister Abazović said he would not remove Marković. Marković resumed his hateful rhetoric later.

Juventas, Queer Montenegro and Spectra continued supporting local municipalities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. There are no signs that the municipality of Mojkovac will adopt a local LGBTI action plan soon. Pljevlja incorporated LGBTI-related activities within their local plan on social and child protection, and Cetinje and Bar are expected to adopt action plans soon.

FAMILY

Due to the fall of the government in August and a cyber attack on government institutions, many legislative processes remained stalled, including the amendment process of roughly 20 by-laws that are necessary for the implementation of the 2020 same-sex partnership law. Civil society continued to lobby for the necessary legal changes. LGBT Forum Progres launched a lawsuit against the state for the ongoing discrimination against same-gender couples.

Two couples formed a civil union in 2021 and four in 2022.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 10th Montenegro Pride was successfully held on 8 October, attended by almost 3,000 people and several government representatives. The Pride motto was ‘Nema više ali/No more butts’, a reference to the government’s often passive stance on LGBTIQ+ equality. Pride Week featured a range of events and

was joined by several politicians.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A study found decreased reporting about trans people in the media, which civil society has interpreted as a negative trend. No articles were published about intersex issues.

HEALTH

CSOs continued responding to the growing need for mental health support in the community. Their resources are stretched too thin and many remain without support. CSOs have called for targeted funding.

Spectra provided over 400 individual peer consultations and organised 35 self-support groups for 25 people.

The LGBTQ Social Centre provided psychological support to 58 people, psychiatric support to 61, and social support to 162. The Centre also held workshops on mental health and safety.

Hormone shortages remained a serious issue, with a detrimental impact on trans people’s well-being. Many have turned to self-medicating, jeopardising their own health. Spectra and others have repeatedly called on the authorities, including the Ministry of Health, the Public Health Centre, the Health Insurance Fund, and others, to remedy the shortages, but no tangible change has followed.

HOUSING

Spectra provided support to two trans people at risk of homelessness.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

LGBTI activists were again targeted by hate speech throughout the year. Following the attack on the Drop-in Centre, LGBTI activist Danijel Kalezić received death threats. Kalezić’s car was also vandalised in September in Belgrade, during EuroPride. Activists Nikola Ilić and Hana Konatar’s home was attacked in September.

LGBTI civil society faced huge issues with the

continuation of their work due to lack of funding, particularly since the end of 2021. Several donors shifted their priorities. Queer Montenegro for instance, had to reduce its staff from nine to four. Litigation and legal gender recognition advocacy have been worst impacted.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The government launched an open call for membership in the Working Group for drafting a legal gender recognition law. The Working Group was set up in July and Spectra and Juventas are members. The new law was planned to be adopted in 2023, but it is feared that the fall of the government in August will further stall the process. In December, the Working Group wrote the Law and now it is in process of finalisation.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Muslim and out artist, Dante Buu presented his art at the Venice Biennale this year.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The LGBTQ Social Centre and Youth Initiative for Human Rights trained 40 prison staff and published a manual.

PUBLIC OPINION

A study on public opinions highlighted this year that while the public acceptance of LGBT people is improving, due to radicalisation, progress is extremely slow.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A debate on the Public Broadcaster centred on abortion rights featured a priest from the Serbian Orthodox Church as a speaker.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Due to a lack of funding, the LGBTI shelter was closed in January.

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