



# **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE POSITION OF THE LGBTIQ POPULATION IN SERBIA FOR 2014**

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Publisher :

**Labris - lesbian human rights organization**

Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: + 381 11 3227 480, 064/ 700 8293

email:labris@labris.org.rs

**www.labris.org.rs**

Author:

**Jovanka Todorovic**

Design:

**BENUSSI DESIGN**

Editing and proofreading:

**Dragoslava Barzut, Alex Cooper**

Translation:

**Nataša Stanojević**

Printing:

**Standard 2**, Belgrade

Circulation: 300

Belgrade, 2015

Printing of this report was made possible with support from

**Center for Advanced Legal Studies**



Sva prava zadržava izdavač. Za svako korišćenje, umnožavanje i stavljanje u promet dela teksta ili teksta u celini potrebna je saglasnost Labrisa

CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

342.7

GODIŠNJI izveštaj o položaju LGBT populacije u Srbiji  
= Annual Report on the Position of LGBT Population in Serbia /  
glavna i odgovorna urednica Jovanka Todorović. - 2005- . -  
Beograd : Labris - organizacija za lezbejska ljudska prava, 2006-  
(Beograd : Standard 2). - 24 cm

Godišnje. - Varijantni naslov: Godišnji izveštaj o položaju  
LGBTIQ populacije u Srbiji. - Tekst na srp. i engl. jeziku.  
ISSN 1452-8568 = Godišnji izveštaj o položaju LGBT  
populacije u Srbiji  
COBISS.SR-ID 131070732

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Parada ponosa Beograd  
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# INTRO DUCTION

This is 10<sup>th</sup> Annual report on the position of the LGBTIQ population<sup>1</sup> in Serbia issued by Labris - Lesbian Human Rights organization from Belgrade<sup>2</sup>. The report is designed based on the contents of the adopted Strategy of prevention and protection from discrimination<sup>3</sup> and includes:

#### THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF THE STRATEGY:

- Freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and the political and social participation of LGBT people

#### UNIFIED FIELD OF STRATEGY:

- Civil administration and prohibition of discrimination
- Safety, Internal Affairs and Justice

#### SPECIAL AREAS OF THE STRATEGY:

1. Education and professional trainings
2. Health, social care and housing
3. Youth, sport, culture and media
4. Regional Development and Local Government

The report includes an overview of the most significant events for the LGBT population in Serbia in 2014 and is written from available information from Labris' archives as well as from information gathered from other LGBT organizations in Serbia.

We are extending our gratitude to Phd. Zorica Mrsevic, Alex Cooper, Natasa Stanojevic, Association Rainbow, Gayten LGBT, Gay Straight Alliance and Faculty of Media and Communications for their contribution to this report.

*Special thanks to Center for advanced legal studies that supported this report*

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1 LGBT acronym will be used

2 Labris

3 Strategy



**THE MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS FOR  
POPULATION  
SERBIA IN**

# NT OR LGBT ON IN 2014

## FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF LGBT PEOPLE:

- Pride March was held through Belgrade's downtown in September 2014
- International Pride day was marked by a ceremonial walk under the slogan "Hate-free zone" in June 2014
- During IDAHO cultural program realized between 18th and 23rd of May 2014, organized in occasion of marking the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, IDAHO Belgrade collected money and support for flood affected areas
- Many other LGBT organizations in Serbia (Assotiation Rainbow, Labris, Pride Parade Belgrade, Gay Straight Alliance and other) participated in humanitarian actions for people and animals in flood affected areas
- "Pride week" was held for the fifth time in September 2014
- A two-day conference entitled "Future belongs to us – LGBT Rights on the Road to European Union" was held with more than 180 participants from all over the world taking part in September 2014
- Because of an attack on participant of that International Conference, a protest in the center of Belgrade was organized
- A non-formal feminist group called "The Witches" was formed in October 2014
- International Transgender Remembrance Day marked by tribune in Belgrade and street performance in Novi Sad on November 20th, 2014
- Cooperating with Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, National Democratic Institute and Heinrich Boell Foundation, Labris organized five two-day trainings for the future leaders from 6 Balkan countries – Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina – with the participation of 22 LGBT people in the period of May-November 2014
- Upon the announcement of the republican elections, GSA launches campaign "Your voice, your tomorrow" aiming to present the attitudes of the political parties and groups that participate in national elections towards LGBT rights
- SOS consultation for lesbians issued a report on their work

## CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION:

- Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy of the prevention and protection from discrimination for the period 2014-2018 was adopted in October 2014
- In April, Labris created monitoring instruments for the above mentioned Strategy and Action plan which helped create first shadow report for the first year of the implementation of the Strategy
- In april 2014 a meeting organized by the Office for Human and Minority Rights was held under the title „Improvement of LGBT people's position, part of Action Plan and Strategy of prevention and protection from discrimination“ attended by relevant ministry representatives
- In 2014, Commissioner for the protection of equality received 18 complaints for discrimination based on sexual orientation, which is 2.6% of all received complaints (In 2013 this institution received 25 complaints following this personal characteristic). Comissioner ruled in 6 cases, identifying existance of discrimination in four cases and non-existence in two cases. Majority of complaints came from LGBT people themselves, due to discrimination in employment
- In January 2014 Comissioner for protection of Equality found that Bosko Buha Theatre denied to the editor of the „Optimist“ magazine acces to press materials for „Lady Minister“

(Gospodja Ministarka) performance, claiming that it would give a performance an „unwanted context“ – which Commissioner defined as an act of direct discrimination

- It was found by the Commissioner for Protection of Equality in March 2014, that Ivica Dacic, Serbian Prime Minister in resignation, discriminated and disturbed LGBT people, as well as hurt their dignity while giving his opinion on Pride March to media on September 23rd, 2013. *[...]Homosexuals have the same rights as everyone else, but they can not set rules. I do not hate them, but I can not accept it as being normal, because it is not natural. If it is an exception and minority, it's on them not to hurt the majority. If that exists in European Union, it does not mean we will support that. That is not the sample we want to raise our kids on. They have right to gather, but I would like them not to, due to safety concerns. [...]* Due to this statement, Dacic was advised to meet representatives of Labris to learn about the issues LGBT people in Serbia are facing
- Law on media and public information was adopted<sup>4</sup>  
Article 59 of the law relates to ban of distribution of information or media content: *„Court can ban material from passing on Public prosecutor's request if it calls on direct crush of constitutional order or discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, political and sexual orientation, being disabled or other personal characteristics, which can lead to consequences if the information is released „*  
Article 75 on Ban of Hate Speech: *„Ideas, opinions and information being in media can not support discrimination against a person or a group due to (not) belonging to a race, religion, nation, sex, or due to their sexual orientation, no matter if it triggered a criminal act.“*
- Law on Execution of Non-institutional Measures<sup>5</sup> was adopted and it states in article 4 on Position of a person included in execution: *“While executing measures, it is expected to respect the dignity of person on which measure is executed, not putting that person in an unjustifiable situation due to his or her race, religion, nationality, sex or sexual orientation, political orientation, social position, education and other personal characteristics“*
- Law on Cinematography<sup>6</sup> was changed, including Article 28 that states: *“It is “forbidden to publically present cinematographic contents speaking for and voicing out discrimination hate and violence against a person or a group due to race, nation, religion, ethnic group, sex and sexual orientation as well as other personal characteristics“.*
- Labris, along with other, mostly women's groups, protested upon decision to revoke Gender Equality Directorate in April
- Inside IPA project „Implementation of anti-discriminational policies in Serbia“ and supporting Office for Human and Minority Rights and Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Zorica Mršević held 10 speeches on the topic „Hate graffiti, hate speech, hate crime, relations, causes and reactions that need to follow“. Meetings were held in Odzaci, Bor, Jagodina, Loznica, Kosjerić, Vranje, Leskovac, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Ivanjica in the period of February – June 2014
- Between July and October, on Zlatibor, as well as in Zrenjanin and Belgrade, Labris organized seminars „Monitoring and documenting the application of strategy of prevention and protection from discrimination for period 2013 to 2018 and the related Action Plan“
- In May, a Model of Law on Gender Identity was presented by Commissioner for Protection of Equality and Republican Ombudsman
- Joint working group of the Ombudsman and Commissioner for protection of equality gave the Government recommendations on how to improve the legal position of trans people

4 [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_javnom\\_informisanju\\_i\\_medijima.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_javnom_informisanju_i_medijima.html)

5 [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_izvršenju\\_vanzavodskih\\_sankcija\\_i\\_mera.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_izvršenju_vanzavodskih_sankcija_i_mera.html)

6 [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_kinematografiji.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_kinematografiji.html)

- A meeting at the office of the Republican Ombudsman called „Realization of trans people's rights – difficulties they face in exercising the rights and experiences of government officials with trans people“ was held in May 2014. It dealt with the need to redefine the position of Republic commission for trans medicine, canceling the obligatory sterilization of trans people; raising consciousness among high school students on trans existence; analysis of school books content and tuition materials in regards to LGBT issues; adoption of a by-law, pursuant to the provisions of the foundations of education and upbringing, on detailed criteria for the recognition of forms of discrimination by an employee, student or third party in an institution of education
- In March, a round table called „Don't turn your head from trans person, understand his/her problems“ was organized by Gayten LGBT, Labris and SPY. Round table aimed to discuss transgender issues through history, culture, literature and other places where trans people are visible, including an interactive part with 2 trans persons telling their stories. Event was part of the campaign „Find a place for the community“
- Radio Television Serbia had discriminatory comments toward Eurosong winner, Conchita Wurst and after the protest of Gay Lesbian Info Center, department of entertainment program claimed that „RTS is sorry for disturbing members of LGBT population“
- Within the same campaign „Find a place for community“ in June, in Rex, Gayten LGBT, Labris and SPY, organized another round table called „Psychological and legal difficulties LGBTIQ community in Serbia is facing - reality and recommendations“
- In August, Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Inclusion Roadmaps for Civil Society Organizations about active participation in law creation and state institution work
- Faculty of Philosophy organized a gathering called „Policies of Parenthood“ on which Zorica Mrsevic spoke on the topic „Parents of LGBT children, support and protection instead of violence and abandonment“ in September 2014
- A joint session was held between Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee and European Integrations Committee at the Serbian Parliament in September 2014 during the Pride week. Upcoming Pride march and status of human rights of LGBT people were the main topics
- Numerous civil society organizations signed an agreement for closer cooperation with Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee of the Serbian Parliament in October 2014
- During 2014 a group of LGBT organizations and human rights organizations created public policies considering protection of rights and improvement to the quality of life of LGBT citizens of Serbia related to the following: Access to the justice and Rule of law; Safety, protection from violence, and fight against violence; Prohibition of discrimination; Education and socio-economic stability; LGBT culture and identities
- 2014 Progress Report on Serbia positively reported that the situation for LGBT people in Serbia is improving, but criticized the inconsistencies in execution of decisions, for the period of October 2013 to September 2014. Serbia was complimented for naming an officer for contact with LGBT community and organizing Pride March in Belgrade, but was criticized for discrimination when it comes to employment, as well as threats to security of LGBT people and hate speech
- In July, Labris presented Analysis „Same sex orientation presented in the high school textbooks“ (focusing on Psychology, Medicine and Biology) and recommended how to change the targeted discriminatory parts, while by the end of the year Labris started a preparatory activities for the campaign - a website for reporting discriminatory content in high school textbooks pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity
- In October, Assistant to Commissioner for protection of Equality, Kosana Beker was elected member of the Executive board of the EQUINET
- Gayten-LGBT held a meeting with Women's Parliamentary Network to promote Model Law on Gender Identity, as well as a meeting to promote the Model Law at Vojvodina Parliament in December 2014



- In 2014, work on the *Platform for strengthening the role of civil society in order to effectively protect and improve the quality of life of citizens of different sexual orientation and gender identity* began. The primary objective of the project is to define a framework for cooperation and collaboration with other organizations whose work is focused on the protection of human rights. This platform appreciated the contributions of organizations in the field of achieving LGBT rights, recognize facilities that may act jointly and achieving maximum potential cooperation. The platform contains four strategic pillars: 1. Ensuring sustainable and lasting cooperation with state authorities and institutions for the protection of human rights as a fundamental guarantor of rights and mechanism of action; 2. Continuous monitoring and improving the work of state institutions in the field of protection of the rights of LGBT people, as well as cooperation with relevant institutions in order to multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to problem solving; 3. Continued work on building and strengthening the LGBT community and increase its visibility and inclusion in social life and decision-making processes; 4. Work with the general population in order to establish a dialogue, reduce social distance, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination
- The first regional office of the Commissioner for protection of Equality was opened in the city of Novi Pazar
- In December, Commissioner for protection of Equality along with Judicial Academy and supported by Fund for an open society and USAID, organized a “Moot Court” in the field of protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation
- International Human Rights Day marked by a list of activities – Office for Human and Minority Rights of Serbian Government presented three new systems of following the condition of human rights which should, once established, provide further progress in securing equality and protection of human rights; Republican Ombudsman presented the draft of Gender Equality Law which includes sexual orientation and gender identity

## SAFETY, INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE:

- In february 2014 Ministry of Internal Affairs adopted the Action Plan for improvement of the work and cooperation between Police and LGBT organisations, foreseeing training and cooperation with LGBT organizations, fight against hooliganism, extremism and family violence, as well as manual on work with LGBT population
- In March 2014 Ministry of Internal Affairs presented National Officer/Contact person with LGBTI community. Contact persons within the police were elected in city of Nis, Novi Sad and Kragujevac as well
- In 2014, Ministry of Internal Affairs had 7 physical and 12 verbal attacks toward LGBT people reported; 10 reports were sent to the Prosecution and 11 people were processed; 66 threats via social networks to LGBT people were reported and 25 people were processed; 45 criminal reports were sent due to threats
- During March and April, Gay Straight Alliance received death threats via email and mobile phone
- In June, a lawsuit was filed against Dragan Markovic – Palma, leader of “Jedinstvena Srbija” party, outspokenly discriminative politician
- In July murderers of trans woman Minja Kocis were convicted
- Higher Court in Belgrade – department for underage criminals (Juvenile Division), sentenced 2 people for a stronger parental supervision because of attack with a knife to a person due to supposed sexual orientation
- Leader of right-wing movement “Obraz”, Mladen Obradovic, started serving his 4-month home-prison sentence in July 2014

## EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS

- Labris (which performs trainings in high schools since 2011) organized a 2 day seminar for teachers and education experts in April 2014, called „ Same-sex orientation and gender identity in education and counseling“. It's goal was to raise consciousness on specific needs of LGBT students and improvement of communication with members of this marginalized group. Topics of terminology, human rights, mechanisms of homophobia, trans existence stereotypes and prejudices were part of the seminar.
- A cooperation agreement was made between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Labris, resulting in five two-day trainings that were held in 27 Police headquarters, from October-November 2014, educating police officers how to work with the victims of trans/homophobic violence
- Association Rainbow along with the Governmental Office for Human and Minority Rights continued to work with the Social care centers all around Serbia

## HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING:

- In March, the Office for Human and Minority Rights and Council of Europe presented „Road-maps for work with sexual minorities in the social care system“
- In December a gathering called „Promotion of Standards of Society of World's experts in Transgender Health ” was organized by Gayten LGBT where Zorica Mršević spoke about „Presentation of Danish Law on Change of Personal Identity Status ”
- In December center for social work in Kovin, supported by experts from Association Rainbow organized first supervision meeting of social protection system devoted to LGBT people and their families
- The publication „Standards of health care for trans people - 7th version“, by WPATH - World Professional Association for Transgender Health, was published and presented by Gayten-LGBT in December

## YOUTH, SPORT, CULTURE, MEDIA:

- FemSlam sports group participated in „Media tournament of women's baloon soccer“; score was 1-1 with communal police team
- First gathering of PFLAG<sup>7</sup> was held in Labris HQ at the beginning of 2014
- International Human Rights Day on December 10<sup>th</sup> was marked by a various activities: Labris handed the Certificate of Appreciation to its partners in 2014 and celebrated it's 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Numerous human rights organizations ran a campaign named “Down with the Rule of the Fear” in Belgrade downtown; The Dutch Embassy organized a projection of a film named “Child 404” which deals with problems of LGBT youth in Russia
- Tanja Mišćević, chief of the negotiation team for EU accession, was awarded with the Rainbow award provided by GSA in June 2014
- A book by Vera Kurtić, describing life of Roma lesbians was published in September 2014
- Following the exhibition called “Equality Snapshot” which was made out of photos of same sex couples getting married in New York, a public discussion on the law considering registration of same sex couples in Serbia occurred in December 2014

7 PFLAG (P – parents, F – families, friends, L – lesbian, A – and, G – gays) support group

- BEFEM – Festival of the feminist culture and action was held in December
- In December, Queer film festival “Merlinka” (named after Vjeran Miladinovic – Merlinka, brutally murdered trans woman and an urban legend of Belgrade) was held for the 6<sup>th</sup> time, and during it’s programme, 65 short, documentary and fictional movies were shown to the public
- In December, City of Zaječar and Gay Straight Alliance signed the memorandum of cooperation following which they agreed to organize the Festival of Tolerance
- Center for Queer Studies held a lecture on LGBT families, and analyzed queer characters in family cartoons in March
- Zorica Mršević issued the following articles: „IDAHO - against allowed hatred“<sup>8</sup>, „Broken windows“<sup>9</sup>, Broken windows and grafitti of hate ( „Politika“)<sup>10</sup>
- Association Rainbow celebrated 10 years of existence and continued their 5 year plan on social protection, which started in 2011 with financial support of (then) Directorate for Human and Minority Rights
- The first social enterprise, the hostel „Moonrise“ was open in city of Sabac
- Transgender Remembrance Day was marked by the tribute „Trans existence, trans discrimination and trans rights in Serbia“ organized by Gayten-LGBT and Egal in November
- Although media reports on LGBT topics were mostly positive, accusations on account of actor Goran Jevtic due to an alleged homosexual affair with an under-age boy published on October 23rd and 24th 2014, in contrast with a codex that a press person must respect someone as innocent until the opposite has been proved. Dispute was launched after teen-age boy’s parent reported Jevtic to authorities for trying to rape their son. The newspaper that published the articles, „Blic“ was given an order to publish the decision of Comission for Complaints at most 3 days later.

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- For the first time, Association Rainbow received the financial support from 5 Local Governments – Sabac, Raska, Tutin, Trstenik and Arilje.

The holding of the Pride Parade in Belgrade on 28 September without major incident marked a substantial step towards the effective exercise in Serbia of human rights in general and LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) rights in particular. Notwithstanding the government’s good preparatory work for this event, enhanced political support for the promotion of fundamental freedoms is needed. There is also a need for a consistent and visible political commitment to promoting a culture of respect towards the LGBTI community. Discriminatory statements, intimidation and violence still occur without substantial political reaction nor appropriate follow-up by authorities. An action plan for the implementation of the anti-discrimination strategy has been adopted in October 2014. A national mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the UN human rights bodies’ recommendations remains to be adopted

*(2.2. Human rights and the protection of minorities).*

8 [http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/Protiv\\_dozvoljene\\_mrnje.pdf](http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/Protiv_dozvoljene_mrnje.pdf)

9 [http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/20141009-Razbijeni\\_prozori.pdf](http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/20141009-Razbijeni_prozori.pdf)

10 [http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/20141114Razbijeni\\_prozori\\_i\\_grafiti\\_mrnje.pdf](http://zoricamrsevic.in.rs/mediji/20141114Razbijeni_prozori_i_grafiti_mrnje.pdf)

In the field of **anti-discrimination** policy, the Equality Protection Commissioner's office continued its awareness-raising activities on discrimination and mechanisms for protection against discrimination. However, the capacity of the Office still needs to improve. An action plan for the implementation of the strategy for the fight against discrimination was adopted in October 2014. The anti-discrimination law remains to be further aligned with the *acquis*. The groups most discriminated against remain Roma people, sexual minorities, and persons with HIV/AIDS. Notwithstanding the government's good preparatory work for the pride parade, a more visible political commitment to promoting a culture of respect towards the LGBTI community and raising awareness is needed. Training has been provided for the police on anti-discrimination and equality issues

*(4.19. Chapter 19: Social policy and employment).*

In relation to the **promotion and enforcement of human rights**, the government's Office for Human and Minority Rights, but also relevant parliamentary committees, independent bodies and civil society organizations, have carried out various activities to promote respect for human rights, tolerance and anti-discrimination. The Office continued with training courses for legal practitioners, police officers and social workers on the rights of the LGBTI population. However, the implementation of relevant international instruments is still insufficient, particularly at the local level. The role and the position of the Office need to be strengthened. A national mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the UN Human Rights Bodies' recommendations, enabling an overview on recommendations still to be met, remains to be established

*(4.23. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights).*

**Freedom of assembly and association** is generally upheld. The holding of the pride parade without major incident and the government's good preparatory work in this respect marked a substantial step towards the effective exercise of freedom of assembly. The activities of extreme right-wing organisations and violent groups of so-called sports fans continued to be a cause of concern. Public officials should publicly and more systematically condemn or react to threats, physical assaults and cases of incitement to violence and hate speech from extremist groups against non-governmental organisations (NGOs), prominent human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers or individual citizens. A track record of investigation and convictions has yet to be established. The public assembly law has yet to be fully aligned with the Constitution.

*(4.23. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights)*

Awareness and protection of the rights of **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)** persons have started to improve, but this needs to be sustained. The Ministry of Interior appointed a liaison officer for the LGBTI community, with whom dialogue improved. This contributed to the pride parade being held in Belgrade on 28 September without major incident. Discriminatory statements in Serbian society still prevail, however. A continued and more visible political commitment to promoting a culture of respect and raising awareness is needed. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is still regularly reported in employment. LGBTI activists continue to be subject to threats and hate speech, and a track record of investigations and convictions where appropriate remains to be established.

*(4.23. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights)*

..The holding of the pride parade in Belgrade on 28 September without major incident, following good preparatory work by the government, marked a substantial step towards the effective exercise of human rights in general and LGBTI rights in particular.

*(4.23. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights)*

The consciousness of existence of the LGBTI population and the conditions they face started to improve, but that process needs to be more consistent. The Ministry of Internal Affairs named an officer for contact with LGBTI community, which improved the dialogue between these two sides. That made Pride March in Belgrade possible, which happened on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and for the first time, it went without major incidents.

A lasting and more visible political devotion is needed to promote culture of respect and raising consciousness. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is still regular when it comes to employment. LGBT activists are still targets of threats and hate speech, and an improvement is needed in the field of investigations of hate crimes and convictions.

*(chapter 23, Justice and basic rights)*

“The fact that Pride March happened in Belgrade, on September 28, without major incidents, following the good preparations of the Government, and is an essential step toward effective implementation of human rights, especially rights of LGBTI.”

*(4.23, Chapter 23, Justice and basic rights)*

*(Summary of findings of the 2014 Progress Report on Serbia)<sup>11</sup>*

## FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF LGBT PEOPLE

### PRIDE MARCH



Incident na Paradi ponosa  
© Screenshot Youtube



Parada ponosa  
© Z. Lončarev

After 3 years of being banned time and again, Pride March in Belgrade happened on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

A walk through the Kneza Milosa street, from the Government building to the square at City Parliament lasted about half an hour, and the support to LGBT community was given by a number of politicians and public figures, among whom were Belgrade Mayor Sinisa Mali, vice-president of the Democracy Party, Borislav Stefanovic, president of the Liberal-Democracy Party Cedomir Jovanovic, minister of local self-government Kori Udovicki, minister without portfolio, Jadranka Joksimovic, minister of culture and information Ivan Tasovac, ambassador of USA in Serbia, Michael Kirby, as well as movie directors Srdjan Dragojevic and Srdan Golubovic and other public figures.

<sup>11</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report_en.pdf)



During the walk, protest signs were carried, reading: “Pride. Normal.” and “Stop breaking the human rights”, as well as “Justice for all victims of violence in Serbia”. It lasted until 14h, and it was finished by speeches of President of European Union Delegation in Serbia, Michael Davenport, activist of Belgrade Pride and Queeria, Slobodan Stojanovic, representative of Women in Black Stasa Zajovic and representative of Labris, Dragoslava Barzut, amongst else.

The gathering was protected by a large number of police officials. Surrounding Nemanjina street, participants of Pride march were protected by the 3 levels of security, armored vehicles, water cannons and according to media, 6000 police officials.

It was stated that all people taken to the Magistrates Court that day will be processed urgently, and that was publicized in “Statement on a high-risk gathering” titled “Urgent Verdicts”. Although Report of European Union stated that Pride March happened without major incidents, about 50 people were arrested, while the Judges on the duty that day, punished 15 people with a 25 000 dinar fine, mostly for owning pyrotechnical and other illegal equipment. Nine people were fined for not having their documents by their side, with one of them being additionally found guilty for owning illegal pyrotechnical equipment (two firecrackers).

From the Magistrates Court judge in Despotova street police HQ, came an report on six people for owning explosive materials and baseball bats, and one for having a knife. 17 Judges were on the duty that day, besides the regular sentry judge in Despota Stefana street and the one for traffic violations in Savska street.

Among other reported incidents for the day, there was an arson with the burning tires in Novi Beograd, a bus set on fire by the group of hooligans in Juzni Bulevar and a lower intensity fight between protesters against Pride and the police.

About 50 young men wearing symbols of Serbian Chetnik movement were throwing rocks on police, shouting “Go, defend Kosovo instead of defending Queers”, and “Queers will not walk our city!”, trying to reach Slavija Square, but they were stopped by police forces in Njegoseva street.

About 20 opposers of LGBT rights tried to reach Republic square from Knez Mihajlova street, but they were also stopped by police. A group of 20 hooligans attacked the building of B92 radio and television, as well as the police securing the object, injuring one cop in their way. They were throwing smoke bombs, torches and pyrotechnical equipment on the cops.

Not actually related to Pride, police arrested also, two people in Svetozara Markovica street, one with an automatic rifle, and another with severe head injuries.

Huge media attention was paid to the incident in which Prime Minister’s brother took part.

At the Pride march itself, in front of the Government building, an incident happened when a man took protest signs with pictures of Patriarch Pavle and Serbian church mitropolit Amfilohije from the hands of an activist and threw them on the ground.

Being unsatisfied because of the fact that Pride march happened, people of the Dveri right-wing group had a protest walk later the same day.

As said in Report of the European Commission on the Advancement of Serbia, the fact that Pride march happened without major incidents is a big and essential step toward effective establishment of LGBT rights culture in Serbia, but a lasting dedication to the issue is needed to be devoted to promoting LGBT rights culture, which could be seen in years to come.



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THE SITUATION OF THE LGBTIQ POPULATION  
IN SERBIA FOR 2014

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, FREEDOM OF  
PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND SOCIAL  
PARTICIPATION OF LGBT PEOPLE

On June 27th, 2014 in Belgrade, a short walk through the central streets of Belgrade marked a beginning of the action called “Hate-free zone”. The action was planned and performed by Women in Black, Gay Straight Alliance, IDAHO Belgrade, Gay Lesbian Info Center, association Rainbow, Novi Sad Lesbian Organization, Center for Queer Studies, Hestija society and the Committee of the Human Rights Lawyers, all together.

A gathering of about 200 participants, among whom the representatives of the institutions, international organizations and embassies was also supported by a number of civil society organizations - Labris - Lesbian human rights organization, Egal, JAZAS, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, Altea, and a lot of organizations from the whole Serbia and region - Center for the Girls (Nis), Female Protester (Nis), Alternative Girl's Center (Krusevac), European Movement (Nis), Women of the South (Piot), Independent Women's center (Dimitrovgrad), Bonafide (Pljevlja), Esperanca (Novi Sad), Women for Peace (Leskovac), SOS Line for women and children - victims of violence (Vlasotince), Romani people network of Banat, Hourglass Female Society (Krusevac), Multi-ethnic center for development of Dunav 21 Region (Bor), Generator (Vranje), LGBTIQ Social Center (Podgorica), Sarajevo Open Center, and Society for social explorations and communications (Sarajevo, Zenica). Action was also supported by Vice-President of the Serbian Government and a minister of Government and Local Self-Government Kori Udovicki, Office for the Human and Minority Rights of Serbian Government, Office of the European Council in Belgrade, Antje Rotemund who was at the place of the event, Delegation of EU in Serbia, OEBS, embassies of USA, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Canada, Austria and Croatia. Written support to the “Hate-free zone” action was also sent from LGBT inter-parliamentary group of European Parliament, as well as Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBT organization in USA.

Commissioner for Protection of Equality Nevena Petrusic and deputy ombudsman Gordana Stevanovic, as well as coordinator of Women in Black, Stasa Zajovic and president of the Gay Straight Alliance Lazar Pavlovic, spoke to the people at the event.

Participants carried rainbow flags and protest signs of solidarity with the people from the flooded areas, as they headed through the Svetozara Markovica and Njegoseva street, up to the place of murder of a Romani boy Dusan Jovanovic which happened in 1997 in Beogradska street, where a minute of silence was held and flowers put on the plate.

The gathering was protected by police, and no incidents happened. “Hate-free zone” happens for the second time, with a goal of showing the amount of intolerance toward LGBT people and other minorities, as well as symbolical “liberation” of the city from the hate. In 2013, this action was held in memory of a murdered French citizen Brice Taton.

<sup>12</sup> <http://en.gsa.org.rs/2014/06/action-hate-free-zone-marked-pride-day-in-belgrade/>

## HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBT POPULATION AT THE AGENDA OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES<sup>13</sup>

As republic elections were about to happen and political campaigns were started, an action titled “You vote for your tomorrow” began, with the goal to find out what are opinions of political parties on issues of LGBT rights, as well as giving them an opportunity to include LGBT rights issue into their campaigns.

Results were published in a publication called “2014 Republic Elections and LGBT Issues” by Gay Straight Alliance, stating that, with a set of categories and criterias, they hashed through their campaign plans to discover what their opinions and ideas on LGBT issues are. They also stated that, following the advancement on LGBT rights in last years, rhetorical support is simply not enough anymore.

As a result, several political parties began supporting the LGBT population and to see their issues as important, as well as seeing them (the LGBT population) as a part of the electorate – thus having serious plan on how to improve position of LGBT population in Serbia.

Democracy party (DS), New Democracy Party (NDS), Liberal Democracy Party (LDP) and Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) have been rated positively, with DS making the biggest advancement on the way they see LGBT issues. List of politicians called “It’s been *enough* – Restart”, was also reported positive, but entering the campaign a bit late and louder, but less strategically. Serbian Advanced Party (SNS) started well, due to results between elections, but fell down due to lack of clear statements on LGBT issues later in campaign.

### TABELARNI PREGLED STAVOVA POLITIČKIH STRANAK I KOALICIJA PO KATEGORIJAMA:

#TvojGlas										
STRANKE KOALICIJE	START	KVALITET	KVANTITET	DOSLEDNOST	PRINCIPIJELNOST	ODGOVORNOST	INICIJATIVA	ZAKONODAVSTVO	AUTOVANJE	FINIŠ
SNS (1)	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
SPS (2)	1	1	2	1	-1	1	2	1	0	8
LDP (4)	1	1	3	1	-1	2	2	1	0	10
DS (8)	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	0	13
NDS (11)	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	10
DOSTA JE BILO (15)	/	1	1	/	/	1	1	1	0	5

To be clearer for the electors to see, focus was put on the parties that lead the coalitions, with coalition partners sometimes being valued separately. Thus, LDP and SPS were marked negatively in “principles” category, due to homophobic statements of their partners Muamer Zukorlic and Dragan Markovic Palma.

Through this, Gay Straight Alliance wanted to expend the issue of LGBT rights in policies, taking it further from just issue of the Pride march (although this was, of course, included into questionnaire), and also expand the number of political parties with affirmative ideas on LGBT issues.

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.gsa.org.rs/2014/02/gsa-in-campaign-your-vote-your-tomorrow/>

They started with what was done since last elections in 2012, and went through all their statements checking if they are also shy to voice their opinions out. As it became visible, we are not speaking anymore about one or two supportive parties, as often thought of, but about a group of supportive parties with actual concrete ideas on how to improve things for LGBT population.

## CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION

### ACTION PLAN OF THE STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION FOR THE PERIOD 2013-2018

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CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION

When a Strategy for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination for period 2013-2018 was created in June 2013, Serbia showed being ready to face and fight discrimination systematically and institutionally.

On October 2nd, a session was held to adopt a Plan of Actions for Application of the Strategy. It was created to suit Plans of Actions for Joining European Union as well as Chapters 23 and 24.

The Plan precized goals and ways of facing discrimination and also made review of results systematical. The plan defines concrete and unavoidable measures, goals, people in charge and resources. It was defined what the indicators are on how the Plan is being fulfilled. Although many organizations will follow the application of the Plan, a coordinating group was formed, as well as Office for Human and Minority Rights being put in charge of following the realization of the Plan. Adoption of the Plan is an important step in European integrations of Serbia.

A year of intensive work of independent experts led by Office for Human and Minority rights was spent on creating the Plan.

Discussion about it was held on several occasions, in Belgrade as well as in Novi sad and Nis. Financies for the creation of the Plan were secured by Profid, UK embassy, European Council and IPA 2011 program of Anti-discriminational policies.

Labris created a monitoring instruments and started a implementation process, while conducting 4 trainings for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and Action plan provided to civil society and institutions. In that regard, 4 trainings about monitoring of implementation for civil sector and institutions were held in 2014.

A group of LGBT organizations and human rights organisations created policies and plans for improvement of the position and the quality of life of LGBT people in Serbia, concerning five aspects of life – Rule of law and access to justice; Safety, prevention of violence and fight against violence; Education and socio-economical stability; and LGBT culture and identities. Those policies were created to detect problems and offer solutions, and they will be presented in front of Serbian Parliament in 2015.

### JOINT MEETING OF THE HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY COMMITTEE AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATIONS COMMITTEE

Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee and European Integrations Committee of the Serbian Parliament held a joint session on 23rd of September 2014, with a goal to contribute to discussion on human rights which started by Pride week - a week before Pride March. At the sitting, representatives of the diplomatic core, Delegation of European Union in Serbia, members of the Parliament and LGBT activists were present.

The meeting was organized and led by Meho Omerovic, president of Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee, while president of the Office for human and minority rights of Serbia, Suzana Paunovic and Commissioner for Protection of Equality Nevena Petrusic were spe-

aking to the present people, as well as the leader of the Coordination Team of Serbia for Enlistment into European Union and a number of LGBT activists.

The topic of the meeting were problems of LGBT people in Serbia, especially in rural areas. Most active members of Parliament were vice-president of the Parliament Gordana Comic and members of the Parliament Sasa Mirkovic and Dragan Sormaz. They gave full support to LGBT organizations, population and Pride march, and invited representatives of LGBT organizations to intensify the communication with members of the Parliament. Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee and European Integrations Committee invited relevant institutions to take measures in their line of duty, and according to safety assessments, to secure rights and freedom of gathering of LGBT population. At the same time, they appealed to all citizens to enable all activities to happen in the spirit of tolerance. Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee and European Integrations Committee will, as soon as possible start the procedure to vote out a declaration against violence, hate speech and hate crime.

"We don't want discussions like this to happen just before Pride march. It is an obligation of the State to enable happening of the Pride march, sending a message that all citizens have equal rights", said Meho Omerovic, president of the Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality Committee, while opening the meeting. He also noted that all present members of the Parliament support Pride march.

"Pride march should happen because of LGBT population, not because of inclusion into European Union", said Tanja Miscevic, speaking about the fact that happening of the Pride march is often put into context of integrations into European Union.

Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Milorad Todorovic, said that the police protects all citizens and that cooperation with LGBT population was recently intensified.

## MONITORING MECHANISM FOR THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Marking December 10th, International day of Human Rights, Office for Human and Minority Rights presented 3 new mechanisms of following the state of human rights in Serbia, which would, once established, secure further advancement on the issue of protection of human rights.

Related to that, Government established a national mechanism for following the executions of the UN's recommendations, which would enable better execution of the international duties of Serbia, taken by signing the international conventions, as well as duties on the issue of Euro-Atlantic Integrations. The foundation session of those involved in that mechanism should occur in 2015.

Establishment of the Government's mechanism for execution of the Plan of Actions for Strategies to prevent and protect from discrimination for period 2014-2018 has yet to happen. That plan should follow the advancement in execution of the measures taken, as well as respecting the deadlines and warn the participants of the program about the challenges that they could face.

Labris started a project of monitoring the implementation of the Strategy of Prevention and Protection from Discrimination and the related Action Plan.

## ANALYSIS ON DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

In July 2014, Labris presented a publication titled "Same-sex orientation in high school textbooks", where the results of analysis of the school book contents regarding homosexual orientation were presented. In the same publication, guidelines were given on how to change discriminatory contents, finally giving the publication to the Ministry of education, science and technological development.



Results of the analysis show inappropriate treatment of homosexual orientation in high school books, and discrimination is placed through pathologization of any non-heterosexual orientation, as well as supporting negative prejudice in schoolbooks on biology, medicine and psychology. Basic goals of the analysis were to detect discriminatory content related to same-sex orientation in high school books in Serbia, and also making a request to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Institute for updating quality of education to remove those discriminatory contents and treat homosexual people affirmatively.

The need for the analysis like this showed itself due to general social state in Serbia, where homosexuals still suffer huge amount of social stigma, discrimination and non-tolerance. Basis of the analysis is in the relation to the importance of science based education for the development of the society, but also to note out that contents of high school books violate Constitutional law of Serbia and even six other laws - Law on the ban of discrimination, Law on school books and didactic materials, Law on education and upbringing, Law on high schools, Law on youth and Law on the equality of genders.

**Mina Damjanovic**, the author of the final report, said: “ Formal education is important due to being official, institutional, and itself representing good and bad in one society, ideas of moral and immoral, sick and healthy and desired and undesired. Related to that, content of the school books and it’s treatment by the teachers is an important part of education system. In such a context, it came as important how homosexual orientation is treated in high school books, in which case this analysis would be a start in tracking the problem and changing policies of education.

**Dr. Zorica Mrsevic**: “While the school books treat homosexuality as a social deviation, same as prostitution, under-age pregnancies, and similar, we have a problem of new generation being “educated” in non-scientific, homophobic way”.

General recommendation to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is to remove discriminatory contents from school books and didactic materials and school practice, as well as promoting culture of human rights by fitting school book contents to what modern science has proved.

# SAFETY, INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

## COURT OF APPEAL GAVE THE FINAL VERDICT – DRAGAN MARKOVIĆ PALMA GUILTY FOR DISCRIMINATION OF LGBT POPULATION<sup>14</sup>

Gay Straight Alliance (GSA; Alliance) announced that the Court of Appeal in Belgrade (Serbia) reversed the decision of First Basic Court in Belgrade and issued a final verdict upholding the appeal of GSA and confirms the discriminatory behavior, i.e. that Dragan Marković Palma, MP and President of the political party United Serbia (JS), committed a serious form of discrimination of the LGBT population. In addition, the Court of Appeal ordered him to pay court costs to the plaintiff, i.e. Alliance in the amount of 57,300 dinars within 15 days of receipt of the verdict, under threat of execution.

Gay Straight Alliance welcomed this final decision of the Court of Appeal in Belgrade and expresses great satisfaction that the court has accepted the appeal of its Litigation Service in judicial proceeding which has run from 2011, and which had to start the process two times from the beginning. Also, GSA believes that this decision from the Court of Appeal substantially restores confidence in the court system by the LGBT population but all other people too, because the convicted Dragan Marković Palma is been considered a long time as one of the most homophobic politicians in Serbia, who has used the public and media space for hate speech against LGBT population without any sanction numerous times.

Explaining its decision, the Court of Appeal led by president judge Zorica Jašarević said that the First Basic Court in Belgrade in its first instance brought the decision – which was acquittal to defendant (Dragan Marković) – by erroneously applying Substantive Law, and quoting of Constitution, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination on the basis of which an action is brought, concluding that “it is clear that the statement that the defendant gave journalists of print and electronic media represents discrimination against the LGBT population” and that “as the statement was made in media, it represents the propagation of discrimination”.

Also, the Court of Appeal pointed out that “the defendant as a prominent political figure, and as a president of the political party, is entitled to his own opinion, but that he also has a duty not to propagate discrimination in his public appearances. Special obligation of politicians, and therefore the defendant, is to promote the values of a democratic society such as pluralism, tolerance and the right to be different.”

“Protecting the plaintiff (GSA) does not represent a censorship or restriction of freedom of speech of a defendant, or the right to his opinion and expression of the negative comments also, but a ban of speech that spreads the ideas that incite discrimination, which may have a harmful impact on the democratic process in society and the development of society as a whole”, the Court said in verdict reasoning.

To remind, the Litigation Service of GSA filed a complaint against Dragan Marković Palma in August 2011, on the basis of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination because a different sexual orientation was presented as disease by him and as something abnormal through media, i.e. for his statement for the media on August 15th 2011 wherein he said “the position of United Serbia and my personal view is – we are against any gathering where homosexuals demonstrate on the streets of Belgrade and want to show a disease as something normal.” The First Basic Court adopted a lawsuit of GSA in November that year and made the first instance verdict in which it found that Marković committed a serious form of discrimination based on sexual orientation on the basis of Articles 11, 12, 13 and 21 of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination and banned him from repeating discrimination. However the Court of Appeal revoked the first instance verdict in September 2012 by the appeal of Marković’s attorney for violation of civil proceedings, i.e. because it found that the complaint was not duly submitted by the First Basic Court to the defendant

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Marković and returned the process for retrial. The retrial began again in February 2013 in the First Basic Court in Belgrade, but after a delayed one and two hearings, court issued a new first instance verdict and rejected GSA's claim as unfounded, after which GSA filed complaint to the Court of Appeal.

Dragan Marković Palma's verdict is sixth final verdict on the basis of sexual orientation, which the GSA's lawyers managed to get on the courts since 2009 when the Litigation Service of GSA was founded, and which have a decisive role in a creation of court practice in this area in Serbia.

## FINAL VERDICT FOR THE MURDERERS OF MINJA KOCIS

Ivica Mihajlovic, age 34, from Vladicin Han, the murderer of transsexual woman Minja Kocis from Kikinda was sentenced to 35 years in prison in July 2014, while for taking part in the crime, his accomplice Novica Radosavljevic, age 41, from Pozarevac was sentenced to eight years in prison. Minja Kocis was found dead in a rented apartment in Sezanova Street 88 in Belgrade, on January 8th, 2009.

During the process, it was discovered that Radisavljevic knew Minja from before, using her services as a prostitute. His accomplice, Mihajlovic, thought that Minja had a bigger amount of money by her side, so he called her, allegedly asking her for sex services. When he entered her apartment, he tried to take her money immediately, but she resisted. He stabbed her twice in the heart, taking her wallet with 2500 Serbian Dinar and 10 Euros. Then he got away. Mihajlovic was on the run after he got away from prison in 2002, where he was placed for the murder he committed in 1998, when he stabbed his victim and set her body on fire, also during a robbery. He was hidden in a rented apartment owned by Radosavljevic, whom he met in prison, where Radosavljevic spent 15 years, also for a murder.

## FINAL VERDICT FOR THE LEADER OF THE MOVEMENT "OBRAZ"

Leader of the Obratz right-wing organization, Mladen Obradovic started his home prison sentence on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, ordered by Court of Appeals for spreading of hate, and discrimination based on race and other personal characteristics, activities he committed before Pride march in 2013, which was banned due to such treats. The court declared that he was guilty, because he committed the act of provoking hate based on personal characteristics, by discriminatory statements in public and writing graffiti saying "Blood will stop Pride march from happening!", "Death to queers!" and "We are waiting for you!"

After being convicted, he stated that he was "Proud for being convicted by a system that is protecting queers, and that it will just empower me to further fight". The Judge, Ivana Ramic, confiscated his computer, USB, 100 CDs, 5 posters and 13 flyers, besides ordering him to pay 15 000 Serbian Dinar for the cost of the process. His lawyer stated the plan to file a complaint, because the trial was not fair – it was according to him, a trial to Obratz, not to Obradovic, and it was overall politicized – but that it would all make Obratz just stronger.

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 the Court of Appeals in Belgrade freed Obradovic from 10 month prison sentence for discrimination, and the case was given back to the First Elementary Court for a new trial, with a new trial chamber, because Court of Appeals could not give enough evidence for exact things Obradovic did.

It's been stated that the Court of First Instance could not give reasons why Obradovic himself, not somebody else, organized graffiti writing. It was on the court to define what was "Spreading of discriminatory ideas based on personal characteristics". Due to being unspecific and thus hurting the procedure of the trial, process was canceled by the Court of Appeals, claiming it's impossible to actually prove the guilt of Mladen Obradovic.

On 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2012, the case was open again, under a new case number – K-7561/2012. Criminal act: Racial and other discrimination, Article 387, paragraph 4 of the Criminal Law of Ser-

bia. The trial set on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 was not held, but on the next trial, held on March 26, 2013, Obradovic claimed he was not guilty.

On the next trial, held on April 26, 2013, Marija Savic from NGO Labris and Lazar Pavlovic of Gay Straight Alliance repeated their testimonies given during the last process. On the trial held on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, witness of the defense, Milos Popovic gave his testimony. On that same trial, Prosecution asked for the indictment to be revisited, adding – “He thus, organizing discriminative activities, stands against basic human right of free and peaceful gathering of LGBT” adding word “people” instead of “population”. The next trial was said to happen 18. July 2013, but Mladen Obradovic, Obraz leader was sentenced later, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, by the First Elementary Court, for 8 months in prison due to causing racial and other types of discrimination before the banned Pride march in 2009. The Verdict of the First degree by Court of First Instance in Belgrade from September 6<sup>th</sup>, Mladen Obradovic, Obraz leader was sentenced to 8 months in prison due to causing hate and discriminating homosexual population before banned Pride March in 2009. Crime of racial and other discrimination, article 317, Criminal Law of Serbia, item K.23953/10

However, Court of Appeals overruled the earlier verdict of the Court of First Instance from September 2013 and cut Obradovic’s sentence in half from the first ruling, claiming that purpose of the sentence would be fulfilled by just four months under house arrest, taking Obradovic’s family situation as a part of reason for that – namely, he was a student who had a wife and a child.

Obradovic was sentenced for conscious provocation of hate and discrimination toward members of Labris – Lesbian Human Rights Organization and Gay Straight Alliance members, as well as LGBT population in general in period since 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2009 by writing the discriminatory content graffiti (“Faggots, we are waiting for you!”, “Death to Faggots”, “Through Belgrade blood will float, Belgrade Pride would be no more!”), as well as creating discriminatory material such as flyers, posters and stickers on his computer, and publically inviting people and organizing them against the Pride March, as well as giving discriminatory and threatening statements about the LGBT population.

Just a few days before the verdict on previous accusations, on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 his indictment was changed, due to causing hate and publically threatening LGBT population before banned Pride in 2009. It was dropped from the charges – the part that Mladen Obradovic and Obraz with their activities – had any role in Pride March 2009 being banned. The first indictment stated that Mladen Obradovic The original indictment read that “Mladen Obradović is accused of writing graffiti containing hate speech (“Through Belgrade blood will flow, there will be no gay parade”, “Fagots we are waiting for you,” “Death to fagots”), spread hate speech through newspaper articles and advocated ideas that support violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, all of which have contributed to the Pride Parade not being held in 2009.” However, according to the changed indictment from 3rd February 2012, at the very end of the proceedings, it was concluded that these activities did not contribute to preventing LGBT persons from exercising their right to freedom of assembly, which is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. By amending the indictment, the prosecutor omitted the result of the criminal act, even though representatives of the police and judiciary force clearly emphasized that the activities of “Obraz” and its leaders had a stake in the organizing of violence against the citizens of Serbia. Although this change caused a lot of public attention, such a drastic amendment to the indictment at the very end of the proceedings against Obradović was not explained.

Instead of explanation, Mladen Obradovic was sentenced to 10 months in prison by the Court of the First Instance on March 27, 2012, for causing hate and threats to LGBT population before banned Pride March in 2009. (Criminal Act of Causing Hate, Racial and other Discrimination, article 317 of Serbian Criminal Law) It has been said that the sentence is due to discriminatory statements and spreading of the ideas that cause hate based on person’s characteristics – sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as causing violence – toward members of Labris and Gay Straight alliance, as well as LGBT population in general.

Since July 22, 2014, Obradovic has been serving his home prison sentence.

## PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CONTACT PERSON/OFFICER FOR THE COMMUNICATION WITH LGBT POPULATION

In March 2014, a meeting was held to present to the public a plan of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to improve the safety situation for LGBT population. Presented at the meeting were introduced to a newly positioned officer for the communication with LGBT population, Aleksandar Stojmenovic. That was the first meeting between of the institutions of the Government of the Republic of Serbia with civil society organizations working on protection and promotion of the position of the LGBT population. Meeting was held in the building of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, March 24, 2014.

The head of the negotiating team for negotiations on the accession of Serbia to the EU, Tanja Miscevic, announced that the State has recognized the importance of the issue of protection and improvement of the position of the LGBT population. At the meeting it was pointed out that in this regard, an informal working group was formed with two aims - the Pride Parade and the promotion of European values, including non-discrimination and the right to free assembly of citizens. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Labor, Employment, Social and Veterans' Affairs and the Parliament joined that group.

At the end of the meeting it was decided that this was the first in a series of working meetings of this kind whose main objective is the improvement of the situation of the LGBT community. At a meeting with initiatives to organize separate meetings with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, presented a liaison officer with the LGBT community at the Ministry of Interior through which civil society organizations will receive more information and to include in further activities such as defining the manual, providing suggestions Selection of officers at the local level etc.

## DEATH THREATS TO GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE ACTIVISTS AND MEMBERS

In March and April 2014, Gay Straight Alliance received multiple death treats by phone and e-mail of the organization, including invitations to „murder and slaughter their members“. In April, two of the most brutal messages were sent, calling people to „murder anyone connected to Gay Straight Alliance“ and „clean Serbia from this organization“.

An anonymous man called GSA on the phone, threatening the female director of the organization, cursing her as the „damn queer mother“ and saying that GSA members „should all be killed“, on which she said to him that he (all together with his unhidden phone number) will be reported to police – which was done later.

The most brutal treats came from the members of Serbian Radical Party and right wing groups „Obraz“ and „Nasi“, calling for the slaughter of GSA members, finished with „happy slaughtering“ and signed with names of Ratko Mladic and Mladen Obradovic.

All this was reported to police, but it's still being processed by prosecutor at the time of this report, due to “changes in the criminal law”.



# EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS

## MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

After years of attempts to create a continuum in cooperation between Ministry of Internal Affairs and LGBT organizations, that way improving situation when it comes to safety and protection of LGBT people from the homophobic attacks, and in October 2014, finally, a cooperation between Ministry of Internal Affairs and Labris was established.

This first-time-undertaking is the first step in creating cooperation between LGBT population and the police, but also a step toward breaking stereotypes and prejudices amongst these two sides. An intensive two-day training had a first goal to point out the problems LGBT people face when attacked and how to make Police stations places of trust, where LGBT people would feel safe and protected from violence and discrimination. Training lasted from 20th of October until 20th of November, with 120 police officials present, coming from 27 police stations all over Serbia.

During program, police officials learned the terminology and rights that LGBT people need protection of, but there was also word on how to notice social mechanisms of homophobia, as well as what are usual prejudices on non-heterosexual population. They also created simulations of real life situations, and a living library-hearing real life stories of gays and lesbians.

Aleksandar Vasiljevic, chief of the Organization, prevention and community work sector of police: "This is a pioneering undertaking in the field of extension of police education, especially when it comes to things as important as relation of the police to LGBT population, as well as making their rights fulfilled, and working with their community, toward advancement of security. Everybody asks why has the training happened just now, but I have to notice that Ministry of Internal Affairs started working with minorities back in 2006. Labris has now finally made it to get similar NGOs around the idea and from their position, and they started working with Ministry of Internal Affairs together."

Ana Zrnic, representative of the Criminalist Police: "I would say that the topic of the training was not "is homosexuality good or bad", just that there are problems that this part of the community faces and that we need to accept these people as a part of community."

Coordinators of Labris told the attendees: "We are not there to change your positions and beliefs, we are there to give you a set of practical facts, like reasons why a lot of attacks go unnoticed and unreported, as well as problems of discrimination, violence and social stigma that LGBT people face."

Trainings were realized in cooperation with Ministry of Internal Affairs and Police directorate, and with assistance of embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands.

Cooperation through the educational trainings and study visits will continue in 2015 attempting to improve the level of security of LGBT people in Serbia.

## HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING

Association Rainbow along with the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia continued trainings for social work centers.

In 2014 Rainbow Association continues its five-year program in the field of social protection, which began in 2011 with the financial support of the Directorate for Human and Minority Rights. In cooperation with the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, with the approval of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, Veterans and financial support of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the British Embassy in Belgrade and the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Belgrade, a total of 44 basic training were educated for 983 skilled workers from 146 centers for social work in Serbia and 3 centers for family shelter and adoption. The system of monitoring and evaluation of the Association Rainbow and centers for social work as well as mutual referral system users began operating. In 2014 Rainbow Association and Centers for Social Work had 11 common cases, of which there were three adults and 8 minors LGBT people. Of the total number of minors 50% , meaning 4 of them have attempted suicide, for fear of being rejected because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the Palace of Serbia on 21 March 2014, in the presence of 183 participants from 82 centers for social work and many national and international organizations and institutions, presented "Recommendations for a more adequate response to the social protection system to the needs of LGBT people and their families" by Aleksandar Price, President of the Association Rainbow. The conference was working and the participants gave their comments on the whole document recommendations. In May 2014, the final version of the recommendations was released. The preparation of these recommendations was commissioned by the Office for Human and Minority Rights, and were made on the basis of processing 789 questionnaires before and after the 39 basic training.

In November 2014, the Republic Institute for Social Protection, accredited and advanced training in working with sexual minorities in the system of social protection, submitted for accreditation by the Association Rainbow. This training is designed based on the recommendations of experts from the social welfare system who participated in basic training, and was piloted with the support of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

In 2014, with support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Rainbow Association began piloting health / social services through outreach activities for LGBT people and their families and did "an analysis of the social protection system in terms of civil society organizations engaged in improving the position of LGBT people and LGBT persons as beneficiaries of social services, the author of this analysis is Vladan Jovanovic.

Center for Social Work in Kovin with expert support of the Association Rainbow organized in December 2014, the first meeting of the supervisory system of social protection dedicated to working with LGBT individuals and their families. The meeting covered the themes: the problems of LGBT adolescents and their families, gender identity / transgender, why LGBT people avoid seeking help in state institutions, what social work centers can do to LGBT people and their families to a greater extent use the services of the Centers for social work when they are needed. At this meeting, they also presented the study and a qualitative case realized with transsexuals.

During 2014, multi-year funding for HIV / AIDS in Serbia by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria stopped. Although the "Research among populations at increased risk of HIV infection among people living with HIV" which is implemented by the Institute of Public Health of Serbia "BATUT" from 2013, showed that the prevalence of HIV in population men who have sex with men (MSM) in Belgrade 8.3% in Novi Sad, Kragujevac 5.3% and 6 , 3%. Most HIV prevention programs for this population ceased in October 2014 and since the Serbian Ministry of Health did not provide any sustainability of HIV prevention programs in the MSM population, the course of infection is very uncertain and beyond our control.

## YOUTH, SPORT, CULTURE, MEDIA

For the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, and 19th year of its establishment, Labris symbolically awarded their partners and cooperators with the thank-you-notes for the year 2014, as well awarding those people who, with their work and effort, made an advancement of the position of LGBT people.

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ANNUAL REPORT  
THE POSITION OF THE LGBTIQ POPULATION  
IN SERBIA FOR 2014

YOUTH, SPORT,  
CULTURE AND MEDIA



Žarko Šunderić Menadžer Tima za socijalno uključivanje i smanjenje siromaštva sa aktivistkinjama Labrisa Draganom Todorović i Jovankom Todorović na dodeli zahvalnica  
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Aktivistkinje Labrisa  
Jelena Vasiljević i  
Aleksandra Gavrilovića  
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Dobitnica nagrade „Duga”: Tanja Mišćević  
šefica pregovaračkog tima za vođenje  
pregovora o pristupanju Srbije EU  
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### THANK-YOU-NOTES WERE GIVEN TO:

1. Ministry of Internal Affairs - Police Directorate
2. Directorate of the Police in Belgrade, Department of Public Order
3. Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany in Belgrade
4. Embassy of Kingdom of Norway
5. USAID Mission in Serbia
6. Terry Reintke, Member of the European Parliament
7. Meho Omerovic, president of the Board for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality of Serbian Parliament
8. Office for Human and Minority Rights of Serbian Government
9. Commissioner for Protection of Equality
10. Team for the Social Inclusion and Poverty Decrease of Serbian Government
11. Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability
12. Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute from USA
13. Lesbian and gay federation of Germany
14. Un-formal lesbian group "Vjestice" (The Witches)
15. Dr. Dusica Zigic-Markovic, psychiatrist of the "Dr. Dragisa Misovic" clinic
16. Dragana Ilic and Biljana Popovic from the psychotherapy and education center "Prostori"
17. Kristina Kastelac, Labris volunteer
18. Alex Cooper, international conference volunteer
19. Marija Sabanovic, founder of the LBT women's sports group FemSlam

International Human Rights Day is marked on December the 10<sup>th</sup>, each year since 1950, marking the day of the signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, for the first time in the history of man-kind guaranteed equal rights to life and freedom to all people around the globe. Labris chose this day for its day of foundation, 19 years ago, as the day that symbolizes the basic ideas that Labris is fighting for, almost two decades.

In June 2014 in the City Parliament of Belgrade, "Rainbow" Award was given for the second time by the Gay Straight Alliance. It is being given for one's part in fight against homophobia and transphobia, as well as making advancement in human rights of LGBT people in Serbia.

The award was given to Tanja Miscevic, leader of the negotiating team for accession to the European Union, who systematically and enthusiastically devoted herself to the topic of LGBT rights in Serbia. Tanja Miscevic initialised and realised a lot of activities toward improvement of the position of LGBT people in Serbia, among else, preparation of the plan for improvement of the position of LGBT people in Serbia and coordination of a lot of ministries and institutions to realize this plan and start a dialogue with non-government sector defending LGBT rights.

Winner of the "Rainbow" Award started by the cooperation with a lot of ministries and institutions motivating them to work together, toward goals important for Serbia's European integration, as well as society itself. She often publically stated out the importance of fighting against discrimination and raising tolerance toward LGBT population, speaking always in affirmative sense. She supported the Pride March without hesitation, back in 2013, and promised her presence at the Pride March, together with ministers without portfolio at the time – whose duties were among else, European integrations.

Golub Gacevic, assistant chief of Police Directory, representative of the last year's winner, Department of Community Work of the Police gave the award to Tanja Miscevic.

## SNAPSHOT OF EQUALITY

Talks and guidance through the exhibition called Snapshot of Equality were organized by IDAHO of Belgrade cooperating with organizations YUCOM Belgrade and Labris. During the exhibition in the Human Rights and Democracy House in Belgrade, on 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2014, visitors could learn more on the proposed law on same sex partnerships in Serbia, as well as positive social changes that it could bring into Serbian society.

### *Taken from the exhibition catalogue:*

“Photographs show touching moments of same sex wedding ceremonies in New York, and their author is Goran Veljic, contemporary and witness of social and anthropological change caused in the city by marriage equality. This exhibition was first presented in June 2014 in cultural center Rex, as a part of the festival “Culture and Arts Fighting for Equality”, in the occasion of International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, organized by IDAHO Belgrade, supported by Cultural Center Parobrod and Netherlands Embassy in Belgrade. It was performed in pop-up form to resemble the wedding ceremony. Part of the exhibition and photographs from the exhibition are now in the Human Rights House. Goran Veljic was born in Smederevska Palanka and devotes his life to documentary and political photography. Veljic is one of the first photographers to catch the photos of legal weddings of LGBTIQ people, since Marriage Equality Act of 2011.

### *Author's words:*

“First, we can fight for better society, not only in Serbia, but everywhere, through education. Culture and arts follow closely. Those two are a language everyone understands, tool that actually works in changing society. Seen from a better perspective, bringing marriage equality to New York improved not only state of basic human rights, but also tourism, and economy with it”, author Goran Veljic.

“In one minute, as long as one (same sex) wedding lasts a whole life of those who dedicated it to fight for human rights flies in front of one's eyes. In his photographs Goran Veljic makes it to capture all those lives in one moment of equality - in front of marriage registrar. Through the “snapshots” of wedding rings exchange, first kisses, or marriage vows exchanges...emotional storm transfers to the viewer. But that is not the point. The point is that marriage equality is a civilization's battle that is still not won in many countries, like here in Serbia.”

In 2014, a book titled “Dzuvljarko – Lesbian existence of Romani women” was published, telling fifteen touching life stories of discriminated, lesbian Romani women for the first time.

Vera Kurtic, activist of the Female Space organization from Nis, wrote the work. The book tells about the specifically difficult place Romani lesbian women have, due to Romani communities being closed, and racism growing.

Through this book, Romani lesbian women's voices were heard “that needed to go out into the world”.



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ANNUAL REPORT ON  
THE STATUS OF THE  
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YOUTH, SPORT,  
CULTURE AND MEDIA



## INTERNATIONAL QUEER FILM FESTIVAL “MERLINKA”

The queer film festival “Merlinka”, was held in Belgrade 9-16th of December 2014, for the sixth time, offering 65 movies of short and long meter, both fictional films as well as documentaries. It was organized for the first time in 2009, to promote gay, lesbian and transgender movies that rarely find their way to the mainstream public in Serbia. The festival, organized together by Home of the Youth and Gay Lesbian Info Center was named after Vjeran Miladinovic - Merlinka, a murdered transgender person and legend of Belgrade’s underground world. In 2015, festival Merlinka was organized in Sarajevo for the second time between January 31 – February 2, 2015.

## FESTIVAL OF TOLERANCE<sup>15</sup>

Late in October 2014, City Government of Zajecar and Gay Straight Alliance signed a Cooperation memorandum stating that music festival “Zone of Tolerance” will be held on May 1st and 2nd 2015, on the archeological locality Felix Romuliana, near Zajecar, with a rich following program. The idea of organization of such a festival came from a member of the Parliament, Sasa Mirkovic on a debate about LGBT rights in Serbian Parliament, during Pride Week.

### It has been said about the festival:

**Ivana Cirkovic**, Director of the Government’s Office for Cooperation with Civil Society said that Festival has great capacity, adding that it is necessary to have cooperation between municipalities and NGOs on LGBT rights, congratulating town of Zajecar on trusting Gay Straight Alliance.

Director of Gay Straight Alliance, **Lazar Pavlovic**: “It’s very important to us that a local self-government is making a very concrete step, and for the first time, thus giving advice to others, the whole system and the whole country when it comes to promotion of human rights”. Further on, he said that other LGBT organizations would be included in organization, as well as that local network of promotion is being organized.

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.gsa.org.rs/2014/10/city-of-zajecar-and-gsa-festival-tolerance-zone-next-april-at-felix-romuliana/>



Main goals of the festival are promotion of human rights, tolerance and equality of all Zajecar and Serbia citizens, and the promotion of Zajecar to be open and tolerant community receptive of difference and promoting equality for LGBT community and other minorities, as well as promoting cultural and historical heritage and tourist potential of the town. Decentralization is as well important, moving question of tolerance and it's promotion to a local self-government like it is a case with Zajecar.

## RESEARCH: "PRIDE PARADE AND LGBT POPULATION"

"Center for Queer Studies" conducted a research in early 2014, related to opinions of LGBT population on Pride March. It lasted 4 months and it was titled "LGBT population and Pride March"<sup>16</sup> – the quantitative part was conducted through a questionnaire, while the qualitative part was conducted through focus groups. The questionnaire was also available online, while there were four focus groups – one each in Novi Sad and Nis, and two in Belgrade. Their intention was to show what are the main tendencies among LGBT population in thinking about the Pride March, as a way of a political fight for LGBT rights, but also about other questions on activism and everyday life of LGBT people. It's goal was also to make a complete picture on opinions of the LGBT population, and help activists agree on possibilities of organization of the Pride March and its alternatives and to help the LGBT population understand different politics of LGBT organizations.

On 20<sup>th</sup> of December, the research was published in Rex, a cultural center in Belgrade.

As the main source of data, the data obtained from the electronic questionnaire poll of the period from 10 January 2014 to 10 April 2014. Respondents anonymously filled electronic questionnaires, in which they are seeking a variety of self-assessment and evaluation. The study gathered 416 participants, which brought some interesting findings:

- 77% believe that LGBT organizations should agree on the basic objectives for advocating
- 87% believe that the activities of LGBT organizations should expand outside of Belgrade in other cities
- 70% support the aims pursued by the LGBT organizations
- 64% support the work of LGBT organizations in Serbia
- 69% think it should be more LGBT persons in LGBT activism
- 97% prefer a main objective of LGBT organizations to be protection from violence
- 96% believe that a main goal should be to fight for economic and social rights of LGBT persons and protection from discrimination in the workplace

Followed by "cooperation with state institutions" (86%), "the fight for the legalization of same-sex partner communities" (80%), "increasing the visibility / media campaign" (77%), "Pride Parade (47%)", "cooperation with political parties" (59%) and "large number of parties" (42%).

When asked if the respondents / will submit another goal which they consider important, and that is not among the listed as important was the need for public education about LGBT people and their rights (15%) and the need for students to be educated about tolerance and the rights and position of LGBT people (10%).

One part of the objectives referred to concerns access to LGBT organizations in advocating for the rights of LGBT people and improving their position, such as "associating with other minority groups" (10%) and "better cooperation LGBT organizations and create a common platform" (6

<sup>16</sup> [http://issuu.com/centarzakvirstudije/docs/parada\\_ponosna\\_i\\_lgbt\\_populacija/1](http://issuu.com/centarzakvirstudije/docs/parada_ponosna_i_lgbt_populacija/1)



%). Some of the above-stated goals are positioning as an especially important goals, those that could be subsumed into broader categories listed in the previous question: “organizing lectures, workshops, exhibitions, sport events “(6%),” media promotion through emissions to deal with LGBT themes “(6%),” safe houses for LGBT people “(3%); or are too general, such as, for example: “psycho-social support” (8%), “protection from discrimination” (7%), “reducing prejudice and stereotypes” (3%) and “empowering LGBTpopulation “(3%).

## RESEARCH: PERCEPTIONS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBTIQ CITIZENS”

In 2014 a research was performed with a title „Public perception of LGBTTIQ rights in Serbia“ showing that only 10% of people know an LGBT person and only 6% recognize LGBT people as the most discriminated group in Serbia – only 1 out of 8 people in Serbia concider same-sex marriage acceptable.

*The research was performed by Ipsos Strategic Marketing with National Democratic Institute support.*

*Taken from the Commissioner for protection of Equality -Annual Report for 2014:*

## RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES OF THE CITIZENS TOWARD DISCRIMINATION IN SERBIA<sup>17</sup>

The key findings of the research that Commissioner is conducting every year, showed that the LGBT people are most likely to be discriminated, followed by ethnic and religious minorities. Interviewed citizens believe that the most discriminated groups are women (42%), Roma people (41.5%), and people with disabilities (28.4%)

## RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY’S REPRESENTATIVES TOWARD DISCRIMINATION IN SERBIA<sup>18</sup>

Research showed that public authority’s representatives have a prejudices toward various groups, especially toward LGBT population, small religious groups and HIV+ people.

## RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES OF THE POLICE REPRESENTATIVES TOWARD DISCRIMINATION

This research that a great majority, 79% think that discrimination exist, and that LGBT population and HIV+ population are the most likely to be discriminated. <sup>19</sup>

17 <http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/sr/istra%C5%BEivanja/istra-C5%BEivanje-javnog-mnenja-odnos-gra%C4%91ana-prema-diskriminaciji-u-srbiji>

18 <http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/sr/istra%C5%BEivanja/istra-C5%BEivanje-odnos-predstavnika-organa-javne-vlasti-prema-diskriminaciji-u-srbiji>

19 Office for Human and Minority Rights and Commissioner for protection of Equality jointly conducted the research on the attitudes of the police representatives about discrimination within IPA 2011 supported by EU

## PRESENTATION OF THE LGBT POPULATION IN MEDIA

Taken from the project: “Representation of Gender Minority Groups in Media: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia”<sup>20</sup> which is realized by the Faculty for Media and Communications in Belgrade in cooperation with regional partners (Faculty for Dramatic Arts in Cetinje and the Coalition for Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities in Skopje) with the support of the *RRPP Western Balkans* program of the University of Fribourg and the Swiss Development Agency. The project is the result of a partnership between three institutions as well as the work of five individual researchers from the three countries. The partner institution of the project is the School for Slavistic and Eastern European Studies of the University College of London (SSEES, UCL) which holds the twentieth place on the Shanghai ranking list. The project is focused on scientific and comparative analysis of discursive practices by way of which the media represent and treat gender minority groups and the LGBT community in the three countries.

Within the regional research project “Representation of Gender Minority Groups in Media: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia” we have analyzed the social and cultural practices of inclusion and exclusion of marginalized communities in the Western Balkans. A special focus for the research is on the role of the media in the process of protecting human rights of gender minority groups and representatives of the LGBT community as well as other doubly marginalized and especially vulnerable gender groups. Fundamental goals of the project research are: indicating the key role played by the media in the process of shaping public discourse on the LGBT population and doubly marginalized gender groups in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia; mapping the media mechanisms of representation of the LGBT population which fulfill the function of excluding gender minority groups from the community; analysis of the type of argumentation within the media discourse which creates an image of the LGBT population as a social threat, which secures an alibi for banning the Pride Parade and similar events in the name of alleged concern for social safety. The research will feature a comparative analysis of media materials from 2013 and 2014 (relating to key events such as the Pride Parade in Serbia and Montenegro or Pride Week in Macedonia) in order to offer insight into the possibilities for advancing media reporting on the LGBT population and a more efficient application of legal regulations already in existence, as well as establishing new ones.

The goal of the project in the broader sense is therefore encouraging critical forms of media thinking and the culture of public dialog in the Western Balkans.

## QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE MEDIA ANALYSIS

Quantitative research indicates a rise in the number of texts and increased media attention given to Pride when compared to 2013. Qualitative research, however, shows that the mode of media reporting during 2014 was, despite the increased media attention, confused and contradictory, and critically left much to be desired. The most significant topics reported on during 2014 – present in the majority of print media as well as most TV contents informative in nature (RTS, B92, Studio B, Pink) – indicate an asymmetry between representing gender minority groups as a threat to the community and representing gender minority groups as truly integrated in the community:

The security situation related to the organization of the Pride; The EU accession process; views of local and foreign politicians on the holding of the Parade; Description of incidents indirectly making the organization of the Pride Parade impossible or difficult: the strike of the police and the attorneys, statements from church dignitaries, warnings about media censorship, statements from concerned citizens, reports on the “Family walk” organized by Dveri before but also after the Pride Parade; Description of the event itself (reports from the field and interpretations of certain events that took place during the Parade); Attitude towards LGBT activism and representation of the LGBT community

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.genderminoritygroups.org/about-us/research/>

The research also shows the print, electronic and new media on the national level have different roles in media reporting on the Parade as well as in the process of forming the public discourse on the representatives of gender minority groups. The electronic and new media, faster than the print media, have a more significant role in the mobilization of citizens, forming the public discourse and preparing/sensitizing the public opinion for a certain type of reaction to the Pride Parade. TV contents show a high degree of uniformity in reporting all the while: analysis shows that reporting on the Parade in central informative shows in the three TV programs analyzed so far (RTS, B92, Studio B) was conceived in more or less similar ways, which leads to a similar type of mobilizing/sensitizing the citizens. The following tendencies in media reporting on the day before the event, the day of the event, and the day after the event have been noticed:

- The total significance of the event is reduced to the security issue, which puts the state institutions in the center of the event, as the ones to whom acknowledgment is due for the successful holding of the Parade, and the prime minister directly stressed that he was thanking the citizens of Serbia as well for enabling this event with their decency;
- LGBT activists and population are pushed into the background by way of this type of reporting, i.e. their messages remain in the shadow of the state's engagement
- There is a tendency in reporting to ascribe a statesmanship significance to this event, i.e. a major part of reporting refers to statements by heads of the EU mission, ambassadors, representatives of the European Parliament, ministers, politicians, and the like, who comment primarily on the behavior of the state and its organs in their statements, and only marginally address the position and existence of the LGBT population in Belgrade and Serbia.

The issue of integration of gender minority identities into the real life of the community remains open: TV media still represent the life of LGBT populations and gender minorities in the context of riots, threat and chaos which, TV stories suggest, were prevented but were also caused by defending gender minority rights during the Pride Parade in 2014.

## THE NEW MEDIA

The new media, have an advantage in the situation of premeditatively informing and sensitizing the citizens for a specific political reaction to the Pride. Analysis of LGBT sites as well as sites by church and right-wing organizations shows that the new media demonstrate a variety of politics of representing gender minority groups and their interests, just as they confirm the radicalism, but also the variety in the political interests of the opponents to the Pride Parade.

## LGBT WEB PAGES

LGBT sites in Serbia primarily address the LGBT population, offering information, educational content, entertainment, communication possibilities (forums, chat-communication, commercial and personal ads and the like). The sites were chosen for analysis on the basis of the following criteria: reputation of the magazine among the members of the LGBT population and other interested users, level of informational quality of the site, and, finally, the importance of the site in interaction between activist groups and interested members of the LGBT population, human rights defenders, interested intellectuals, and others.

Research in Serbia was based on four key LGBT sites. These are:

1. **www.gay-serbia.com**, the oldest website, offering various intellectual, informative and communication contents.
2. **www.labris.org.rs**, the site of the largest lesbian organization in Serbia, offering a plethora of educational and informative contents, and often also addresses the public via its Facebook page.
3. **www.GayEcho.com**, a site which offers a large amount of various information in the fields of health, politics, law, entertainment, and others, and is aimed at users from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia.
4. **Optimist**, the internet edition of the magazine dealing with issues related to gay culture, politics and activism.

Regarding these sites what is analyzed is modes of informing the users on holding the Pride Parade, the entire Pride Week, as well as all topics relevant to this event and the issues surrounding it. Especially researched are contents related to the Parade held in 2014 and which are presented on the site [www.parada.rs](http://www.parada.rs) by a civil organization Belgrade Pride Parade, charged with organizing the Pride Parade in Belgrade.





# CONCLU SION

State of media reporting on gender minority groups and the LGBT community is in fact a reflection of set sociological and cultural practices which have been functionalized and politicized and within which a great deal of burning social issues is being resolved.

Type of the media discourse and the way how gender minority groups are represented in the media are closely connected to the level of real inclusion LGBT population to the society.

Cyber space for presenting the gender identities in Serbia is wide open for the cultural and political debate.





# CLOSING REMARKS

A year 2014 was very turbulent, marked with significant, mostly positive developments that reflected greatly on work of the LGBT organisations but on the society as well. Peaceful Pride took place, strategic documents started to be prepared and adopted. It seems that approach to human rights became more systematic. State institutions are opening the doors that were closed for decades. In 2014, LGBT organizations met Government representatives for the first time in the Government building, National contact person /National Officer for LGBT community was appointed, joint session of the two Parliamentary Committee took place. It could have been done more if terrible floods didn't occurred in spring 2014.

Due to the natural disaster caused by the floods, public hearing for the same-sex partnership draft law in the Assembly of Vojvodina was cancelled.

Therefore a lot of work still need to be done in 2015.

Insisting on continuity of Pride marches and fulfilling the political and legal demands of the Pride, continue to work at the joint platform that will unite the work of LGBT organisations and presentations of the public policies in the National Assembly are just some of the activities that are to be implemented in 2015 through the institutions that can bring a change.

