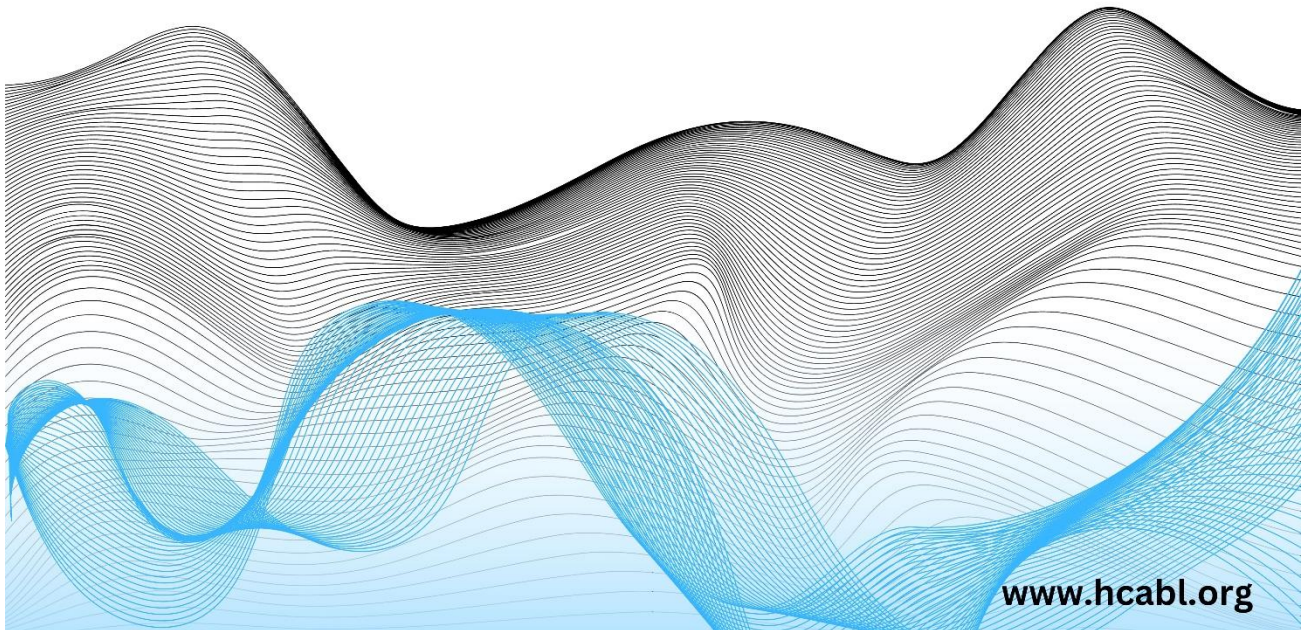


# ANNUAL REPORT

2023



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## *Introduction*

We will remember the year 2023 as very turbulent and difficult for civil society and the media in the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Already at the end of last year, after the end of the general elections in BiH, the President of the RS Milorad Dodik announced the adoption of a set of restrictive laws, from the recriminalization of defamation, and endangering the constitutional order of the RS, to the announcement of the law on the so-called "foreign agents", with which he intended to limit first of all the freedom of speech, but also the rights to freedom of association and freedom of assembly. Unfortunately, these announcements came true and the announced laws emerged in the parliamentary procedure during 2023.

But let's start in order. First, an orchestrated attack on LGBT activists and journalists took place in Banja Luka, as well as an attack on the offices of the GETO and Basoc organizations. This was preceded by the statements of the highest officials in the Republic of Srpska, the president of the RS Milorad Dodik and the mayor of Banja Luka, Draško Stanivuković, where they clearly supported the already announced harangue against BH Pride parade, by several pro-government organizations. The attacks happened, and Dodik and Stanivuković, instead of calling on the institutions to do their job and bring the rioters to justice, justified the attack and actually expelled the activists from Banja Luka (although some live in Banja Luka), saying that they have nothing to look for in Banja Luka, and that the institutions will not protect them.

A few days after that, the National Assembly of Republic of Srpska adopted the Draft of Amendments to the Criminal Code, which again criminalizes defamation and prescribes huge fines for rioters. And the rioters, we do not need to guess, are journalists, activists and careless citizens. The adoption of the Draft worried, first of all, the journalist community, civil society organizations, but also the international community. And everyone expressed doubt and disapproval, and asked the Government to withdraw the Draft, which in a country of weak democracy, incomplete institutions, enormous corruption and nepotism, simply leads to single-mindedness and dictatorship, where one man is asked about everything.

The year continued with the adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code of the RS in August, and already in September the Government of the RS adopted the Draft Law on "Foreign Agents", more precisely the Draft Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Profit Organizations. The Draft prescribes that all organizations that are financed from abroad, will be placed in a special register and have additional reports to the Ministry of Justice, as well as additional inspections, which clearly discriminates against these organizations in comparison to organizations that are financed from public budgets. Also, for the first time in our legislation, the pejorative term "agent of foreign influence" is introduced, which aims to disparage and additionally target organizations. The Draft also prescribes a ban on political activity, which dangerously encroaches on the constitutional rights of citizens. In short, organizations will not be able to send initiatives, amendments, initiate the adoption of laws, because this will be considered as political action. Even more briefly, organizations in Republic of Srpska should engage in humanitarian work and perform services that institutions cannot or do not want to do. And such organizations are desirable, that is the position of the government.

However, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly did a lot in 2023, regardless of all the threats and challenges. In March, the Human Rights House Banjaluka was accepted into the international network of Human Rights Houses. We did several dozen activities such as Living Libraries, round tables and conferences, and organized a series of street actions and protests against restrictive laws. We should definitely single out the second Srđan Aleksić Regional Journalist Award and the Srđan Aleksić Days event, where, among other things, we also organized a Revue of Short Films about Human Rights for the first time.

*Aleksandar Žolja*

## **ABOUT US**

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka (HCA) was registered on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1996, as a local NGO in Republic of Srpska/Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since that time, HCA Banja Luka has been actively involved in promoting, strengthening and networking civil initiatives at local and regional level, and it has been working on reconciliation and empowerment of marginalized social groups for political activism.

**Our mission:** Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka is an organization that supports and encourages autonomy, equality and freedom for all citizens by initiating and supporting different democratic and peace initiatives and by including marginalized social groups in democratic processes.

Our vision: *A society of equal opportunities for all.*

### **Priorities of activism of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka:**

- Empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women, youth and minority groups for political activities and improvement of their position in society;
- Influencing the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to improve legislation and public policy towards these groups;
- Increased representation and better presentation of women, youth and minorities in the media;
- Raising awareness of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina on discrimination of marginalized groups and mechanisms to protect their rights;
- Strengthening cooperation with other organizations and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also at international level;
- Convergence of educational programs, literature, knowledge and skills related to peace-building by developing civil society and human rights of BH citizens;
- Continuous training of the staff of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and efforts to maintain sustainability of the organization.

In 2024 HCA Banja Luka has been conducting its activities in four program areas:

- Strengthening Civil Society and the Transformation of Public Authorities into Citizens' Service
- Advocating for Gender Equality
- Culture of Dialogue and Building Trust in the Society
- Strengthening Capacities of the Organization

**Educational programs** – HCA Banja Luka gathers trainers that for its own and other organizations' needs conduct training sessions in the following areas: strengthening the capacities of nongovernmental organizations (strategic planning, fundraising, campaigns, public relations, etc.), non-violent communication, conflict resolution, human rights and gender equality. In this way, HCA Banja Luka promotes its goals and policies to other social groups that are not directly covered by the projects, and contributes to its financial sustainability.

***THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF HELSINKI CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY BANJA LUKA  
1996 – 2023***

Since its establishment in 1996 to this date, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly implemented more than 80 projects at a local and regional level targeted at empowerment of various marginalized groups for more active engagement in public and political life. We would like to stress out our most significant achievements:

1. Organizing the first post-war youth gathering in BiH and establishing Youth Network of BiH which is still active with over 1000 members, youth organizations and individuals;
2. Establishing an Academy for Young Political Leaders, men and women (the Academy is nowadays in charge of “Perpetuum Mobile”, a Banjaluka-based NGO);
3. Supporting registration of Alliance of National Minorities of Republic of Srpska and successful advocating for the Law on the Rights of National Minorities in RS;
4. Initiating special shows on RTRS public broadcaster (we had initiated show called Bono Home which is not broadcasted anymore on RTRS while the show “Korijeni“, dedicated to national minorities issues, is still broadcasted once a month on Radio of Republic of Srpska);
5. Raising an issue and discussion about discriminatory item “Others“ in the Constitution of BiH;
6. Advocating and supporting the establishment of Alliance of National Minorities as a special advisory body of National Assembly of Republic of Srpska;
7. Initiating and signing the Memorandum on cooperation between Banja Luka and Pula (Memorandum was signed on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011) with the aim of promoting multiculturalism, intercultural dialogue and improvement of trans-border cooperation between national minorities);
8. Youth campaign “Give Us Back our Spaces“ in which we took an active participation and which resulted in allocating the space to youth organizations in 11 municipalities in BiH (2000);
9. In cooperation with City Administration of Banja Luka, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka set up a Bulletin of City of Banja Luka which is nowadays printed once a month;
10. Participation in advocating actions regarding the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality 2003;
11. Analysis of enforcement of the Law on Gender Equality from the aspect of court practice and initiation of changes and amendments to the Law on Gender Equality based on analysis in 2009 ( our most important amendment that was adopted and fitted into changes and amendments of the Law refers to obligatory of state bodies at all levels of authorities and bodies of local self-management to ensure the representation of 40% of less represented gender in management, decision-making and representation);
12. Participating in preparation of Gender Action Plan for BiH;
13. Coordination and creation of the Alternative Report on CEDAW Implementation and the state of women's human rights in BiH for the year 2010 (the report was presented to CEDAW Committee in Geneva in July 2013) following 2016 and 2023;
14. Initiating and creating (in cooperation with women's NGOs in BiH) the Platform of Women’s Priorities for constitutional changes with amendments to the BiH Constitution from gender perspective (2013). Amendments were sent to the Board of the House of Representation of Parliamentary Assembly of BiH for consideration;

15. Delivery of amendments to the RS Family Law with the aim of defining the category single “parent“ in legal text in accordance with real situation on ground and needs of single parents; initiating the foundation of Alimony Fund in RS (changes and amendments to the Family Law have not been on agenda of parliament's procedure);
16. Signing the Memorandum on Cooperating with RS Employment Bureau aimed to empower position of single mothers at market of labour (signed in June 2012);
17. Participation in “Global Media Monitoring 2005 (GMMP)””; BiH was one of the 75 countries that took part in;
18. As a member of BH Coalition of NGOs “Working and Succeeding Together“ we worked on creating the Agreement on Cooperation between the Council of Ministers of BiH and NGO sector in BiH“, “Strategy of BiH NGO Sector Development“, “Code for BiH NGO Sector“ and “Standards of Service Quality between the Council of Ministers of BiH and NGO sector in BiH“;
19. Establishing the Journalist Award “Srđan Aleksić” for professional and engaged reporting on marginalized groups in BiH. The award was given in BiH for ten years, and in 2021 we raised the award to the regional level (BiH, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro).;
20. Establishing the Women's Political Academy for young women from political parties and civil society organizations (in the beginning of 2014 the second generation of the Academy's attendees was enrolled);
21. Initiating and establishing the Women's Alternative Government of BiH as an informal body on political scene of BiH (the government was officially promoted in the fall of 2012, but ceased to be active after two years);
22. Nominating Slađana Ujić, a member of the BH Women's Alternative Government and president of the SNOP association, for “Award for Women's Creativity in Rural Life“ (Slađana Ujić is the first woman from BiH who received this important award and recognition);
23. Networking and strengthening capacities of at the least 100 civil society organizations in BiH through education and small grants allocation;
24. Selection to perform the function of Network for Building Peace Secretariat;
25. We were the Coordinating Organization of the Initiative “Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform” 2014-2024 which gathers 36 organizations and individuals;
26. As our achievements we would also like to mention many researches and analysis we have conducted resulting in 35 publications available at our web site. According to available server data, the greatest number of visits refers to section Publications and downloading available publications;
27. Owning a library with over 2000 books in fields of women's human rights, violence/non-violence, philosophy, political sciences, LGBT, human rights, which all can be borrowed and served as resources for analysis and writing scientific papers in humanities;
28. Through informal coalition of NGOs, we supported the preparation and writing of Shadow Report on BiH Progress since 2013;
29. Established a web platform [www.ukljuci.in](http://www.ukljuci.in) dedicated to persons with disabilities which at the end of the project became the property of the Organization of Amputees UDAS;
30. Established a web site <http://ukljuciseu.org/> regarding process of EU integration from the

perspective of gender;

31. The Srđan Aleksić Regional Journalism Award has been launched;

32. Human Rights House Banja Luka recognized and accepted into the international network of Human Rights Houses.

## **Program Area:**

### **Strengthening Civil Society and the Transformation of Public Authorities into Citizens' Service**

*The objectives of this program area are building civil society and strengthening democracy through raising public awareness about democratic principles and processes, encouraging citizens to run various initiatives and participate in decision making at all levels of government. Through various activities under this program area we strive to establish better cooperation between citizens and government institutions.*

*Within the program area in 2023, we worked on following projects: "Support to Civic Activism", "Strengthening of Legal Aid Providers to Fight against Gender-Based Discrimination in the Field of Labour in BiH", " Pay Your Workers - Respect Labour Rights", "Increasing Public Awareness of SLAPP Lawsuits in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina", "Citizens in the Fight against Silent Corruption" and "The Right to Activism". In addition, we also worked on the establishment and organizational strengthening of **the Human Rights House Banjaluka**.*

## **SUPPORT TO CIVIC ACTIVISM**

Thanks to the French organization CCFD - Terre solidaire, in 2023 we were also able to implement activities aimed at consolidating the Human Rights House Banjaluka, but also to support other actions and initiatives of activists in BiH.

Therefore we contributed to the organization of another cultural-activist event at "Građa", an improvised and only playground in the Banja Luka neighborhood Centar 1, in which the residents' struggle to prevent this playground from being turned into a parking lot continues. The two-day event "Atomic gathering#" was held in April 2023, and included the construction of baskets and benches, tree planting, workshops for children and youth, graffiti making, skater performances, music. In addition, we supported our partners from the organization Hi Neighbour and their event Creative August, which is intended for children and young people in Banja Luka and beyond. The creative August program, which lasted from August 1 to 12, included: animation film workshops, percussion workshops and guitar schools; painting workshops for young people and adults, comic drawing, creative microphone, Zumba, trade vinyl (record exchange and DJing), and a self-defense course.

At the invitation of the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka, and as part of the "Introduction to Clinical Psychology" course, in November we held a "Living Library" session for about 40 students of this study program. Students listened to the life stories of four "living books", after which they had the task of writing their reflections on what they heard.

Through "Support to Civic Activism", we also organized several events as part of the Srđan Aleksić Days event, which was held in Banja Luka in December 2022 and 2023. In addition to the giving of the "Srđan Aleksić" regional journalist awards, the event also included the organization of various panels, the promotion of a book and a Revue of short documentaries on human rights.



## Pay Your Workers - Respect Labour Rights

"Pay Your Workers" is a two-year project (2022-2023) implemented in cooperation with the regional Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) coalition, which consists of partner organizations from Croatia (Novi Sindikat and RIS) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (HCA BL and Zora). In the period of 2023, HCA BL implemented several activities that resulted in:

- ▶ participation in a joint campaign called #PayYourWorkers on social networks with a total reach of more than 800,000 people in BiH and Croatia, where the campaign was conducted. The aim of the campaign was to highlight labor rights violations by major textile companies and to force brands and retailers to sign a legally binding agreement to settle unpaid wages to workers in their supply chain, ensure that workers never run out of money again if their factory goes bankrupt, by signing a contract fund for severance pay and that it will protect the right of workers to organize and collective negotiating.
- ▶ support and participation in the campaign launched by the New Union in order to provide severance pay to the workers of the Orļjava textile factory, Croatia.
- ▶ participation in a joint meeting of the coalition and presentation of project results to the Trade Union of Textiles, Footwear and Leather of the Republic of Srpska. The meeting was attended by 13 members of the Trade Union, including their president Danko Ružićić.
- ▶ promotion of the #Payyourworkers campaign also during March 8 in Banja Luka, organized under the slogan "We Are Not Cheap Labour Force".



March 8, Banja Luka, Source: HCA archive

► representation of the regional coalition in ELAC (European Lobby and Advocacy Committee) and participation in monthly ELAC online meetings. The most important activities of ELAC for 2023 were:

- various advocacy activities and actions aimed at the adoption of the EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability (EU due diligence), which was adopted on June 1, 2023.
- advocacy activities and participation in consultations in order to advance the proposal for a regulation banning products produced using forced labor, including child labor, on the internal market of the European Union (EU forced labor ban regulation proposal).
- various advocacy actions - European citizens' initiative "Good Clothes - Fair Pay", participation in consultations regarding the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, advocacy activities to reduce unfair trading/purchasing practices, etc.)

## **Strengthening of Legal Aid Providers to Fight against Gender-Based Discrimination in the Field of Labour in BiH**

In the period July 2022 - August 2023, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banjaluka implemented the project "Strengthening of Legal Aid Providers to Fight against Gender-Based Discrimination in the Field of Labour in BiH", which included networking meetings and specialized training for institutional and non-institutional providers of free legal aid on the subject of gender-based discrimination (GBD) in the labour market. The project is financially supported by the Embassy of the United States of America in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At least 39 providers of free legal aid acquired and expanded their understanding and knowledge of how to support and help citizens to protect their rights, especially those related to GBD in the field of labour. At the same time, within the #radbeznasilja campaign, over 1,500,000 citizens became familiar with the existence and possibilities provided by the free legal aid service (the online campaign alone reached 870,512 citizens of BiH). During the implementation of the project, three networking meetings were held, which resulted in the creation of an informal Network of Free Legal Aid Providers, which brings together more than 14 providers.



Networking meeting, Zenica, April 20, 2023, Source: HCA archive

During the implementation of the project, a [Manual for lawyers and associates in legal matters in the field of gender-based discrimination in the field of labour in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) was created, which should serve as a guide for all those interested in how they can legally protect rights in the field of gender-based discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The manual is intended for lawyers who work in centers for the provision of free legal aid, lawyers, activists in human rights organizations, women fighters for gender equality, members of organizations engaged in various activities related to anti-discrimination regulations, groups which are aimed at gender equality, public officials or just interested citizens. More than 50 service providers are using the resources in the Manual to improve their work on GBD and labour relations.

The good cooperation with the OSCE Mission in BiH, started through the project "Education of Judges and Prosecutors on Gender Discrimination at Work" (2021), continued in 2023 and resulted in a joint conference entitled "Gender-Based Discrimination in the Field of Labour in BiH". The conference was

organized on December 11, 2023, on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, and was intended for institutional and non-institutional actors who provide free legal aid, including lawyers, associates of associations that manage legal aid services.

## **Increasing Public Awareness of SLAPP Lawsuits in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In the period from September to December 2023, in cooperation with the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, we produced a series of texts on the topic of SLAPP lawsuits, which are increasingly used as a means of intimidating and silencing journalists and activists in the region.

Nebojša Šatara, Vesna Iliktarević, Uglješa Vuković, Jelena Jevđenić, Andrijana Pisarević and Dragana Dardić wrote about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the *Autonomija* portal. The [Analysis](#) of previous cases of SLAPP lawsuits in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed:

- that the prosecutors are, in general, those who have enough resources to be able to afford to prolong court processes;
- that the defendants are, as a rule, investigative journalists and activists, most often environmentalists, who deal with "sensitive" social issues. These topics, most often, concern the protection of the environment, the spending of public money or public procurement, that is, issues of general and public interest;
- that the claim for defamation as a legal remedy is misused, because the claims are mostly unfounded, they do not dispute the accuracy of what was written, but only the context or way of writing;
- that these processes take an unreasonably long time, up to 12 years each, which entails high court fees and attorney's fees;
- that their motive is not to prove the alleged defamation, but to create pressure, intimidate and dissuade journalists and activists from working or writing about the prosecutor's disputed affairs;
- that they reflect very negatively on the emotional, physical and psychological health of the defendant journalists and activists, who, instead of their work, are forced to deal with themselves and proving their professional and personal credibility;
- and finally, that SLAPP lawsuits, as such, are not recognized in the legal system of the country.

The general observation of the interviewees, both journalists and activists, as well as their lawyers, whose statements were published in a series of articles on the [Autonomija portal](#), is that "the defensive power of journalists and the media must be strengthened in order to amortize an attack on an individual and transferred the attack to the defense system", but also that support networks must be built, because "it is very important that there is that safety net and that you know that you will not be alone". Everyone also agrees that work must be done on new legal solutions that would, even in the preparatory phase of the procedure, enable the dismissal of lawsuits that are estimated to have SLAPP characteristics. Currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such an initiative is advocated by the Aarhus Center, which prepared the Draft Law on Citizen Initiative and Protection of Citizens and Activists of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also contains anti-SLAPP provisions.

*"There is no number, threat, or any kind of pressure that will stop us. Our mission and vision are such that what we do, as well as our colleagues in the same situation, must not be stopped. If that were to happen, total darkness would really reign in our country. Just imagine what all this would look like if there were no journalists pointing out corruption and abuses".*

*Eldin Karić, editor of the Žurnal portal and director of the Center for Media Development and Analysis from Sarajevo*

## Citizens in the Fight against Silent Corruption

On June 15, 2023, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka started the implementation of the twelve-month project "Citizens in the Fight against Silent Corruption", which is part of the wider program "Support to Citizens in the Fight against Corruption" implemented by the CCI with financial support of USAID.

As part of the project, until the end of December 2023, activities were conducted to raise public awareness of the occurrence of sexual extortion and advocacy activities to change legal regulations that do not recognize sexual extortion. The implementation of the campaign on social networks "Sexual Extortion is Corruption" Let's Break the Silence" has started and so far over a million citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been introduced to the term sexual extortion and the factors that determine this phenomenon through an online and billboard campaign.

Three videos related to sextortion were published, and one was also in several world languages, which enabled greater visibility of this campaign outside the territory of BiH.



Basic visual of the campaign, source: HCA

As part of cooperation with the media, four investigative stories about sexual extortion were published on Interview.ba: "[Sexual Extortion in BiH. Corruption for Sex, Which Is Little Talked About](#)", Capital.ba: "[Sexual Extortion Most Common In the Public Sector of Srpska](#)", Nezavisne novine: "[Victims of Sexual Extortion Fight a Double Battle](#)", and Fokus.ba: "[Sexual Extortion In BiH: Do You Need a Man to Show You What Power Is?](#)".

In cooperation with Prof. Dr. Milo Šikman and Gorica Ivić (Foundation United Women Banja Luka) conducted and published pioneering research on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the private and public sector. Research available at [www.hcabl.org](http://www.hcabl.org): [Research](#).

The first [Analysis on Possible Models for Integrating the Concept of Sextortion](#) was also published. The analysis was done by Prof. Dr. Ivanka Marković (professor of criminal and procedural law at the University of Banja Luka, vice-president of the Constitutional Court of the RS) and Natalija Petrić, doctor of gender studies. The analysis contains proposals for amendments to the relevant regulations at the level of BiH, FBiH and RS and represents the first analysis of this kind done in the Western Balkans. So far, parts of the research and analysis have been presented in various media articles, as well as through social networks, with a total reach of up to 100,000 citizens. As a result of advocacy, the member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska, Zaga Grahovac, at the session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska held on November 2, 2023, as part of the discussion on the Draft Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in the Republic of Srpska, requested that sexual extortion be recognized as an act violence and that the term be integrated into the new Law.

Two political documents (Policy briefs) were also published. The first political document on the topic of integrating sexual extortion into the [Law on Gender Equality in BiH](#) was published on November 27 on the HCA website, and the second political document was on the topic of integrating sexual extortion into the "[Draft Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women of the Republic of Srpska](#)" was published on December 26, 2023.

In cooperation with partner organizations - CURE Foundation, Lara Foundation, Center of Women's Rights Zenica, Citizens' Association Future Modriča, street actions were held in Sarajevo (August 16), Bijeljina (August 17), Zenica (November 8), Modriča ( November 29) and Banja Luka (October 18).



Street action in Zenica, November 8, 2023

On September 2, a campaign presentation and two advocacy meetings with members Confederation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Srpska were held in Teslić. Also, recommendations were made in the area of sexual extortion<sup>1</sup> for further strengthening of the Gender Strategy of the World Bank, based on the recommendations and analyzes of the Kvinne till Kvinna Foundation (KtK) and partner organizations. The recommendations were ultimately adopted by the KtK and sent to the World Bank for adoption.

## **The Right to Activism**

The "Right to Activism" project was implemented from June to December 2023 and was aimed at preventing the adoption of a restrictive law against civil society organizations in the Republic of Srpska.

The intention was to stop the further narrowing of the space for the work of civil society organizations as correctives and critics of the authorities in the RS, and to work on creating a stimulating environment in which CSOs are recognized as credible actors in the protection of human rights, the fight against corruption and the promotion of democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation states: Awareness of the existence of sextortin as a gender-based form of corruption<sup>1</sup> is extremely low, and the engagement of all relevant actors is needed to recognize this phenomenon. As sextortion is not legally defined in most WB countries, poor documentation on the practice of proof and institutional mechanisms for determining sextortion further complicates the recognition and punishment of this form of a corruption.

<sup>1</sup> Research on the prevalence of sexual extortion in society (Bosnia and Herzegovina) showed that over 93% of respondents believe that women and girls are mostly victims of sexual extortion. Available on: <https://hcabl.org/istrazivanje-o-rasprostrajenosti-seksualne-iznude-u-drustvu/>



Conference "Civil society in the Republic of Srpska - Challenges and Perspectives",  
Banja Luka, September 22 and 23, 2023

In less than six months, the project managed to gather and coordinate the activities of a dozen civil society organizations in the RS, which took a common position not to participate in the public debate on the Draft Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Profit Organizations in the RS and to strongly advocate the rejection of the proposed of the draft, and which clearly showed their disagreement with the proposed legal solution by participating in the protest walk that was organized in Banja Luka on October 24, on the eve of the Public Hearing.

In addition, the key messages that were designed and placed through the campaign "Everything On the List" reached more than 500,000 citizens of BiH, as well as representatives of international organizations who, through their announcements and/or comments, supported the requests of CSOs from the RS that the controversial and harmful Draft be withdrawn from the parliamentary procedure.

## **Enhancing the FreeDOM**

The two-year project "Enhancing the FreeDOM", which is supported by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands through the MATRA program, started its implementation in September 2023, as a response to the years-long narrowing of the space for activism and the work of human rights defenders and independent media in BiH.

The activities of the project are intended, first of all, to further strengthen the capacity of the Human Rights



House Banjaluka, whose founding group consists of five organizations with many years of experience in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms: the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka, the Center for Environment, the Banja Luka Centre for Human Rights, Hi Neighbour, and Transparency International BiH, as well as to the positioning of the Human Rights House Banjaluka as an important actor on the political and public scene in BiH that clearly articulates the needs and critical voices of civil society.

In the first four months of project implementation, several activities were implemented:

- A legal team was formed to help activists in crisis situations, which is currently managed by Transparency International BiH.
- The website of the [Human Rights House Banjaluka](#) was established, with accompanying profiles on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).
- A Revue of Short Documentaries on the topic of human rights was organized. The revue was held on December 9 in Banja Luka, and as part of the revue, 5 documentaries by authors from the entire region were shown. The documentary "Brother", by Ajdin Kamber and Vanja Stokić, had its premiere at the show, and which investigates the tragic deaths of people in the movement who drowned in the waters of the Sava and Drina and were buried as unidentified persons, about whose fate their closest relatives, probably, will never know anything about. After the screening of the films, there was a discussion with the authors of the films.



A Revue of Short Documentaries about Human Rights, Banja Luka, December 9, 2023

- The first national report on human rights defenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina was published and presented. The report showed that there is a lack of public support for human rights defenders from the officials of governments and parliaments in BiH, and that activists are exposed to various types of pressure, intimidation and slanderous campaigns.



Presentation of the Report on Human Rights Defenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Srđan Aleksić Day, December 10, 2023, Banjaluka

- We opened the doors of the Human Rights House Banjaluka to citizens in order to bring them closer to the work of human rights organizations and encourage them to get involved and support their activities and initiatives. The first of the planned eight events, which we called Open Door Days, was held on December 28 in the space of the Human Rights House in Banja Luka, where we talked with citizens about what the Human Rights House is, who makes it and how they too can use the space or educational and other services offered by House members.

## Human Rights House Banjaluka

- At the end of October, the Human Rights House, i.e. its members, submitted an initiative to the Government and the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska for free and free of charge access to the Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska for all citizens, thus continuing the initiative that was started in 2020.
- At the beginning of November 2023, members of the Human Rights House, together with the Foundation United Women, AC "MUDAR" and the Organization of Amputees UDAS of the Republic of Srpska launched an initiative to establish a stem cell donor of the Republic of Srpska towards the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Srpska. With this initiative, we wanted to make it easier and increase the chance of success for those suffering from various diseases whose salvation lies in stem cell treatment, by establishing a stem cell donor base on the territory of the Republic of Srpska, and patients from the Republic of Srpska would then be able to use both donor base from Serbia, Croatia and other European countries.
- The first workshop was held in the Human Rights House entitled Digital Activism, Media and Short Video Format - organized by the Banja Luka Centre for Human Rights and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Program area:

### Culture of Dialogue and Building Trust in the Society

*Since its establishment, HCA Banja Luka has been working on reconciliation through active involvement in the promotion of trust and strengthening and connecting peace initiatives at the local and regional level. The goal of this program area is to work on building peace and a culture of dialogue within and between communities in BiH. Special focus is on young people, women, marginalized groups and the media, through involvement in trainings, peace camps, conferences and other events, in order to empower them to initiate social change and create lasting peace.*

*Within this program area, in 2023, we implemented activities within the project "PRO Future II", we organized **Srđan Aleksić Days** and started implementation of the project "Don't Judge a Book by its Cover".*

### Srđan Aleksić Days and announcing regional journalist award

For the second time, together with our partners, the Network for Building Peace, the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina, the Media Institute of Montenegro and the Association for the Promotion of Media Culture, Art and Tolerance "Lupiga - the world through ordinary eyes" from Croatia, we announced the Srđan Aleksić Regional Journalist Award.

Awards for the year 2023 were given to Bojana Jovanović from KRIK from Serbia, Haris Rovčanin, a journalist from Detektor/BIRN BiH and the portal "Novosti" from Croatia. 41 nominations came to the contest, 31 for journalists and 10 for the media.

The regional journalist award "Srđan Aleksić" is given for professional and socially responsible media reporting that results in concrete benefits for people and communities (contributes to reconciliation, protection of human rights, inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups, gender equality, rule of law, culture of dialogue, fight against hate speech and fake news), and for journalist courage.



Winners of the Srđan Aleksić Journalist Award for 2023

As part of the "Srđan Aleksić Days" event, in addition to the journalist award ceremony, we organized a Revue of Short Documentaries on Human Rights, presented the "National and Regional Report on Human Rights Defenders" on the panel, and organized a regional conference on SLAPP lawsuits, as well as promotion of the collection of papers "Imagining a Woman".

Over 150 participants, activists, journalists, representatives of the academy from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro took part in the two-day event.

## **PRO-FUTURE – Reconciliation, Understanding, Responsibility for the Future**

During the past year, we organized two round tables with the intention of bringing together experts from the field of upbringing and education to answer the questions about violence that happened in Serbia (Elementary School Ribnikar in Belgrade and Mladenovac) and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Lukavac near Tuzla.

We organized round tables in Doboј and Bijeljina, where attended psychologists, psychiatrists, representatives of centers for social work, representatives of the police, parents, teachers.

The aim of the round table was to exchange the opinions of the professional public on the challenges of the modern era in the upbringing and education of children and young people, with a special focus on peer violence and alienation, as well as the lack of empathy among children and young people, especially after the tragic murders committed in schools by minors.

Some of the conclusions and recommendations from the round tables were: greater investment in education and preventive response, greater investment and increase in the work capacity of professional services, strengthening the social function of education, and hiring non-partisan personnel.



Round table "Challenges of Upbringing and Education in Contemporary Society"  
Bijeljina, June 19, 2023

## Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly started the implementation of the project "Don't Judge a Book by its Cover" at the beginning of September, which aims to use the concept of a human library to build a framework for dialogue among young people that can expose prejudices, oppose hate speech against marginalized groups, and challenge existing stereotypes and prejudices in inter-ethnic communities in the country, while promoting reconciliation among young people. In the first quarter of the project, a training for Living Books (young people aged 18 to 24) was held on Mount Borja on October 13, and after the training session, experienced psychologists held individual interviews with potential books and selected 10 young people (living books) from the entire area of BiH (Banja Luka, Ribnik, Bugojno, Maglaj, Tuzla, Zenica, etc.) that make up the collection of the Living Library. After the training, two Living Libraries were held (Jajce, November 6), in cooperation with the Center for Education and Socializing in Jajce, and in Modriča (November 29), in cooperation with AC Future Modriča, which brought together over 30 high school students who, for the first time, were introduced to the concept of a living library.



Living library in Modriča, Gymnasium Modriča,  
November 30, 2023

Also, consultative meetings were held with representatives of the associations, where the methodology and benefits of living libraries were presented in detail.

As part of the project, on December 20, in the crowded online classroom of the Zoom platform, an online Living Library was held for about 30 second-year students of the Faculty of Philology of the University of Banja Luka. Students were presented with five living books from four BH cities, and the reactions of the students left in the chat were extremely positive ("Very interesting and instructive"; "Really all praise for the courage and fighting spirit of all of you who shared your story, I believe that they can only have a positive effect on us as listeners").

Also, in cooperation with the Buđenje Movement from Tuzla (Cardboard Revolution), the online community @ŽivabibliotekaBiH was launched, which aims to present positive examples of reconciliation, progress and coexistence in the country. The content published by the community so far has over a million individual views on social networks (Facebook and Instagram).

The collection of the Living Library consists of the following books: "Choose Your Way", "Childhood with

Broken Wings", "Without Control", "From Doboj to Brussels", "Face to Face", "The Boy in the Shadow", "Crutches", "Stress, Hormones, Suppression and Cancer", "When the Silence Screams" and "School harassment".

The project is financially supported by the Embassy of the United States of America in BiH.

## **Program area:**

### **Advocacy for Gender Equality**

*The overall goal of the program area is to reduce all forms of gender discrimination and create an environment in which women and men have equal opportunities. We implement it through networking and support for initiatives related to gender issues, empowerment of women who are currently the largest marginalized group for participation in public and political life, education of women and men on gender equality issues, training for women in developing various skills, campaigns, research and public policy analysis.*

*Within the program area in 2023 we have been working on the projects: “Engendering Constitutional Reform IV”, “Women’s Human Rights in BiH and EU Integration IV”, “Academy for Women”. We also continued cooperation on the partner project “Peace with Women’s Face”.*

### **Engendering Constitutional Reform**

The previous years were not at all easy for the work of civil society organizations and their efforts to build sustainable peace and improve the protection of human rights in BiH. This year, the three-year project "Engendering Constitutional Reform IV" entered its final phase with the continuation of the implementation of activities aimed at increasing the visibility of the [Platform of Women's Priorities with Amendments to the Constitution from a Gender Perspective](#), as well as pointing out the importance and significance of incorporating the gender component into the Constitution of BiH. All activities were aimed at citizens of BiH, but also representatives of domestic and international institutions and organizations, to whom we pointed out the importance of constitutional changes from a gender perspective at numerous meetings.

Despite the unstimulating environment and the difficulties of working on sensitive issues, such as advocating changes to the constitution from a gender perspective, the Initiative still succeeded in the period 2021-2023:

- To introduce more than 200 representatives of the EU and international bodies and organizations with the requirements of the Initiative to change the Constitution of BiH from a gender perspective.
- To present the "Platform of Women's Priority with Amendments to the Constitution of BiH from a Gender Perspective" to numerous representatives of the state and entity parliaments, including attendance at the joint thematic session of four parliamentary commissions where we presented the gender amendments to the Constitution of BiH.
- The Gender Center of the Federation of BiH created gender amendments to the Constitution of the FBiH based on the gender amendments of the Initiative, which are part of the document called the Initiative for introducing amendments to the Constitution of the Federation of BiH from the aspect of gender equality and equal opportunities.
- To improve the visibility of the Initiative's work and its priorities, with a reach of over 2.5 million on the Initiative's Facebook page.
- To conduct a survey filled out by 1,931 people from BiH, on the basis of which the first research of this kind was conducted, entitled "What Do Citizens Think about the Constitution of BiH", and introduce 57 parliamentarians at the state level with the findings and results of the research.

- To implement 83 activities across BiH organized by members of the Initiative's working groups, in which 7,900 direct participants took part.



Presentation of the Initiative to the participants of the  
Online academy "Gender equality in the Process of EU Integration"  
June 21, 2023, Banja Luka

- Reaching almost a million people through the online campaign "What Is the Gender of the Constitution?" which was supported by influential and well-known BH personalities.
- To organize an online conference "Gender Equality in the Constitution - Obstacles and Opportunities" which conclusions and recommendations were sent to the addresses of more than 500 representatives of international and domestic officials, international organizations and the academic community.
- Through the Online Master Class program, 24 students, representatives of civil society organizations and political parties were educated about the importance of the gender-responsive constitution and international obligations of BiH regarding the promotion of women's human rights.
- Inputs were sent regarding the adaptation of the Constitution of BiH for all important documents and policies such as the EU Country Report, CLIP, the Alternative Report on BiH's Application for Membership in the European Union, the Alternative CEDAW Report, the draft Gender Action Plan BiH 2023-2027 and Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, Security - for the period 2023-2027.
- The importance of introducing gender-responsive language in the Constitution and pointing out the problems of men and women citizens related to the lack of health, social and family protection in the Constitution of BiH was the subject of two animated video contents (2022) and five Tik Tok video clips (2023). The animated video had a total of 37,000 views and a reach of more than 400,000, while the content on Tik Tok, which was published on the @konstitucionalista account and shared on the Initiative's Facebook page, was viewed by more than 78,000 people. Animated video content and Tik Tok video clips were one of the ways to get young people interested in constitutional issues.



Peer to peer workshop on the importance of engendering the Constitution of BiH  
May 22, 2023, Bijeljina

- By regularly publishing media content on the [Initiative's blog](#) (182 published content – 129 original and 53 transferred from other media) and the [Initiative's Facebook page](#) (289 published content), we increased the number of people who follow our work.
- 6 Newsletters of the Initiative (published every 6 months) containing information about the Initiative's activities were published and were sent to more than 500 addresses of the Initiative's supporters via a google group that was created for easier and faster communication and sharing of information about the Initiative's work towards supporters.
- Information about the constitutional issue and its impact on the lives of citizens of BiH reached the wider public through 116 announcements from other media (Press Clipping) and 13 appearances by members of the Initiative on radio, TV and print/online media.

During the coming year 2024, we will continue to work towards the implementation of our vision - *A gender-just Constitution of BiH for a society with equal rights and opportunities*, through the implementation of new and the continuation of the implementation of existing activities.

## **Women's Human Rights and EU Integration**

The main goal of the project "Women's Human Rights and EU Integration IV" is to integrate women's human rights and gender equality in the process of accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union. The project is financed by the Swedish foundation Kvinna till Kvinna.

As part of the project, during 2023, we implemented the following activities:

- In the reporting period, hCa BL participated in over 25 consultation meetings, mainly with representatives of the EU and international institutions and organizations, to whom/which we presented the situation, needs and priorities of women in BiH, as well as the situation regarding



the political crisis and the conditions in which women and women's CSOs find themselves. During these consultations, more than 30 representatives of the EU and the international community were directly informed about the situation in the field. In addition to this, hCa sent written contributions/comments to 13 different EU, UN and local documents. Some of the inputs have, to a certain extent, been incorporated into documents such as, for example, the EU Country Report 2023. The report includes two official recommendations related to gender equality, and we praise the section in which, as reasons for decrease in the number of women in elected positions, is stated non-respect of gender quotas and toxic party culture. Also, in several places, the report refers to the situation in Republic of Srpska in the context of creating a difficult environment for civil society.

- In July, an alternative CEDAW report was finalized, which provides an overview of the actual state of gender equality in BiH and identifies obstacles in exercising women's human rights in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. The report was coordinated in partnership with hCa BL and Rights for All from Sarajevo with 16 authors which participated in the process of writing the report. In November, a presentation of the report was organized for CSOs, media and institutions.
- In May 2023, as a continuation of education for students, we organized a study visit where we met with the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia, the Agency for Electronic Media, representatives of the Human Rights House in Zagreb, the Croatian Parliament (meeting with the club "Možemo"), and visited the memorial apartment of Marija Jurić Zagorka.



Study visit to the Memorial Apartment of Marija Jurić Zagorka,  
May 2023, Zagreb

- hCa BL also continues to include a gender perspective in the area of crisis management. The activities are based on the research "Gender Analysis of the Response to Crises in BiH", which

was also recognized by the Ministry of Security of BiH, with which we met twice during 2023. hCa BL also participated in the "Women and Security" conference organized by the Ministry of Security in December, where we contributed with several ideas for further cooperation and work in the civil protection sector. According to the representatives Mirnesa Softić and Ermin Pešto, hCa BL is currently the only civil society organization that helps the integration of the gender perspective in Civil Protection, because all other initiatives relate to the Police and Army of BiH.

- Two Ecofeminist conferences were held, and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly hosted one, which was held in Banja Luka, in October 2023. The conference, was attended by 25 activists who exchanged experiences from the field and agreed to continue work and solidarity action against environmental and social injustice and the empowerment of ecofeminists in BiH. The conference also resulted in a series of interviews with eminent ecofeminists and fighters for environmental and women's rights: with Suzana Marjanić, from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore in Zagreb, who spoke about the beginnings of ecofeminism in our region, but also in the world; with Džemila Agić, director of the Center for Ecology and Energy Tuzla, who, speaking about energy poverty, stated that about 50% of households in BiH are energy poor and need help; with Majda Ibraković, coordinator of the Eko BiH network, who warned that "we are once again in a transition from which certain groups and privileged corporations will profit", and with Amela Zukan, president of the Ecological Society "Bistro - Brave Women of Kruščica", who with the others local women and men 505 days and nights was on duty on the bridge guarding the approach to the Kruščica River. The conference was organized in partnership with the Tuzla Association Front Freedom, within the framework of the EkoFem BiH platform.



Third conference EkoFem BiH,  
October 13 and 14, 2023



Prof. Suzana Marjanić from Zagreb was one of  
the lecturers on the conference

- An analysis of the traffic habits of male and female drivers in BiH was conducted, which showed that the choice and way of using means of transport are not gender neutral. The analysis showed that cars driven in BiH are mostly registered to men (respondents' answers show that 1179 vehicles are registered to husbands or fathers, compared to only 290 vehicles registered to mothers and wives), that women use cars more than men for shopping and taking and bringing back children, and that there are still sexist comments about female drivers. The results of the analysis were well covered by the media, and this news item was among the three most read news items on the Nezavisne novina portal.
- The Gender Barometer 2023 was published as an advocacy tool created to effectively and argumentatively monitor the extent to which the key political parties in BiH are committed to the advancement of the principle of gender equality in BiH. The Barometer 2023 showed a continuation of the trend in which political parties do not put gender on the agenda and largely ignore the issue of women's participation in political processes. However, for the first time the Barometer also shows progress in several political parties and important steps forward for women in politics. "Our Party" (NS) has included in its Statute a position which defines that during the election of candidates to party bodies, in case of an equal number of votes, priority will be given to persons of the less represented gender. At the same time, NS is the only political party in BiH whose Statute is written in the feminine gender! Progress was also made by the Serbian Democratic Party, which also changed its Statute in these three years and introduced a new provision that stipulates that at least 40 percent of members of the less represented gender must be elected in party bodies, as well as that the president of the Women's Club automatically becomes a member of the Party Presidency.
- In the reporting period, there was an increase in visits to our online platforms, as well as an increase in the number of new followers on Facebook and Instagram. The number reached through media channels and/or social media is:
  - 117,600 through the website [www.hcabl.org](http://www.hcabl.org), with a minimum reach of over 120,000 per month on Facebook and 2,800 on the Instagram page. Four examples of sexist speech were published on hCa "Pillar of Shame", which is also one of the ways in which we draw attention to the impermissible use of sexist speech in public discourse, and promote gender inclusive language.

## **Academy for Women's Rights**

The project goal is to strengthen the capacity of the new generation of students from different cities of BiH to analyze, monitor and advocate for women's human rights in the process of accession to the European Union. The project is supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

The Online Academy for Gender Equality and European Integration was attended by 16 activists and students, mostly from law faculties and political science faculties, but also from other interested faculties and organizations throughout BiH.

After the training, interested students had the opportunity to write papers on a given topic, which are published and presented to the general public. We modestly awarded seven published student papers on hCa internet platforms. In this process, the students had the support of three mentors. It is

important to emphasize that the topics of the papers are something that women's civil society organizations need for argued advocacy, because these topics are not part of the political dialogue in BiH, nor can they be heard regularly in the media.

Participants who complete this education are part of the hCa community and the Alumni Club, and depending on their personal interests, they have the opportunity to attend various workshops and events organized by hCa. The goal of the club is to establish and maintain a connection between hCa and former participants of the online academy, as well as encouraging mutual cooperation in order to have a stronger impact on issues of gender equality and EU integration through joint action. hCa wants to establish a permanent relationship with its participants, and to inform them about its activities, its development plans and educational programs. Former participants can influence the creation of the development strategy of our online academy, joint activities in the field of gender equality, and help in advocacy and research work. After the education, active work continued with students who have the opportunity to contribute to our work and exchange information on online platforms.



Student initiatives: Presentation of student work at the Faculty of Philosophy, October 4, 2023, Banja Luka



Student initiatives: Presentation of student paper at the Faculty of Law, October 18, 2023, Banja Luka

As another result, students improved their knowledge on the topics of gender equality and EU integration during the online academy by 33% (hCa measured the knowledge that students acquire during education and we organized a test before and after the academy). During the project, one of the central activities was student initiatives, as well as breakfasts with students that we organized in five different cities across BiH on relevant and current topics. Five student initiatives were organized in the

form of advocacy meetings and student presentations.

With the aim of engaging students as volunteers and working on specific tasks such as analyzing public policy documents, hCa had four volunteer engagements.

Added value to the project is given by the cooperation with International Burch University in Sarajevo, which contacted us in the spring of 2023 and requested a meeting to exchange experiences on the organization of the academy, as they would like to initiate similar activities and even include them in their curriculum. International Burch University was particularly interested in the topics covered by the academy, results, student impressions and how some of these methods can be integrated into their educational activities. Consultations will continue in 2024.



Student initiatives: Advocacy meeting with representatives of the Assembly and Government of Brčko District  
June 23, 2023

## **PARTNER PROJECTS:**

### **Peace with Women's Face - Women's Initiative for Facing Past**

#### **BANJA LUKA GOT A STREET NAMED AFTER MIRA KESIĆ**

On November 26, 2021, representatives of the Foundation United Women and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly BL sent to the City of Banja Luka's Department for Communal Affairs the Initiative for naming streets after Vahida Maglajlić and Mira Kesić. The lobbying process for this initiative lasted almost two years, but we succeeded! At the session held in July 2023, **the Assembly of the City of Banja Luka adopted a proposal to assign the name of a street to Mira Kesić**. This decision became legally binding upon publication in the Official Gazette of the City in September 2023.

**The initiative to assign a street after Vahida Maglajlić has not yet been considered** by the Assembly Commission for Local Communities, Street and Square Names. We sent appeals to all members of the Assembly Commission and once again, in September, reminded them of the significance and importance of adopting the initiative for the allocation of the street after Vahida Maglajlić.

366. На основу члана 39, став 2, тачка 14. Закона о локалној самоуправи („Службени гласник Републике Српске“, бр. 97/16, 36/19 и 61/21), члана 38, став 2, тачка 14. Статута Града Бања Лука („Службени гласник Града Бања Лука“, бр. 14/18 и 9/19) и члана 5, став 1, Одлуке о одређивању и објављивању имена насеља, улица и тргова и означавању граница грађевина („Службени гласник Града Бања Лука“, бр. 24/19), Скупштина града Бања Лука је, на 22. сједници, одржаној 11.7.2023. године, донјела

**О Д Л У К У**  
**о утврђивању назива улице**

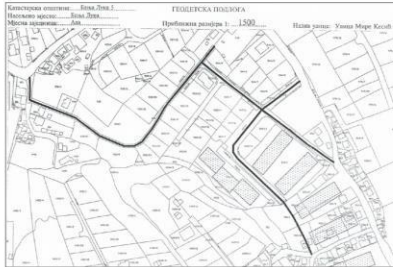
**I**  
Утврђује се назив следеће улице у МЗ Анд:  
Улица Мире Косић - нова улица која се одваја од Улице Новака Пашинчића и пружа се парцелама број 1441, 933/3, 933/37, 933/6, 947/9, 948/7, 944/3, 947/4 и 947/10, к.о. Бања Лука 5, и која је Регулационом планом донет год слатог подручја потока „Уларинг“ планирана да се преко парцела број 950/16, 950/1, 950/12, 950/11 и 1427, к.о. Бања Лука 5, споји са Улицом Веселим Бријег.

**II**  
Саставни дио ове одлуке је геодетска подлога за наведени простор.

**III**  
О спровођењу ове одлуке, старе се Одјелом за комуналне послове.

**IV**  
Ова одлука ступа на снагу осмог дана од дана објављивања у Службеном гласнику Града Бања Лука.

Број: 22-013-325/23.  
ПРЕДСЈЕДНИК  
СКУПШТИНЕ ГРАДА  
Дуђево Павловић, с.р.



367. На основу члана 33. Закона о уређењу простора и грађевина („Службени гласник Републике Српске“, бр. 40/13, 106/15, 3/16 и 84/19) и члана 33. Статута Града Бања Лука („Службени гласник Града Бања Лука“, бр. 14/18 и 9/19), Скупштина града Бања Лука је, на 22. сједници, одржаној 11.7.2023. године, донјела

**О Д Л У К У**  
**о доношењу извојне дијела**  
**Регулационог плана „Лауш 1“**

**I**  
Дноси се извојне дијела Регулационог плана „Лауш 1“ (у даљем тексту: План).

Граница простора која је обухваћен Планом одређене су у графичком дијелу елабората Плана.

**II**  
Елаборат Плана састоји се од текстуалног и графичког дијела.

Текстуални дио сдржи:  
А) УВОДНИ ДИО,  
Б) АНАЛИЗА ПОСТОЈЕЋЕ СТАЊА,  
В) ЦИЉЕВИ ПРОСТОРНОГ РАЗВОЈА,  
Г) КОНЦЕПТ ПРОГРАМА ПЛАНА.

Прилог: Табела коришћења постојећег грађевинског фонда.

Графички дио Плана сдржи следеће карте:  
1а. Геодетска изложба Р = 1:1000,  
1б. Визуелизација постојећег грађевинског фонда Р = 1:1000,  
- иницијал и оријентација објекта

## INITIATIVE FOR ALLOCATING STREET NAME AFTER STAKA BOKONJIĆ IN GRADIŠKA

Lana Jajčević, representative of the Foundation United Women and Željka Umičević from the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, on behalf of the Initiative Peace with a Woman's Face, and with the help of local organizer Desa Rađević (president of the Woman and Family Association), held a round table in Gradiška on April 19, 2023, where they presented the previous work, implemented activities and the goal of the Initiative Peace with Woman's Face. The round table was attended by 13 representatives of the Woman and Family Association and the President of the Commission for the Social Position of Women and Gender Equality in the city of Gradiška.

A special focus was on the conversation about the creation process of the lexicon "One Hundred Women - One Hundred Streets after Women", as well as on the results of the street analysis in Gradiška, which was conducted during April 2023. The analysis revealed that **the total number of streets in Gradiška is 329. Of that number, only 7.59% or 25 are named after women.**

As a result of this round table, the representatives of the Foundation United Women and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly BL, in cooperation with the Association "Woman and Family" and Snježana Gvozden, delegate of the Assembly of the City of Gradiška, initiated **the submission of an initiative to name a street in Gradiška after Staka Bokonjić**, a woman from the famous Gradiška family Čubrilović, who is recorded in history as the first Serbian female doctor in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The initiative was submitted to the Mayor of Gradiška on April 26, 2023. In October 2023, delegaye Gvozden asked a delegate's question about the Initiative. We are still waiting for that answer.

## ACTIVITIES OF PEACE WITH A WOMEN'S FACE IN BANJA LUKA

Activists of the Foundation United Women and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly BL implemented a street action on December 8, 2023 and distributed promotional material to the citizens of Banja Luka. The action was used to, in communication with citizens, point out **the importance of establishing Remembrance Day**, as well as the number of women who died in the war, which was unknown to most. We received encouraging reactions and support from most of the people we talked to.

In addition, we had the opportunity to present the Initiative One Hundred Women - One Hundred Streets at the panel called *Imagining a Woman*, which was held on December 7, 2023. in the framework of the Srđan Aleksić Days in Banja Luka. One of the authors of the publication *Imagining a Women*, Aida Ramić and Sonja Dujmović from the Institute of History of the University of Sarajevo, presented texts from this collection on the panel, while Željka Umićević, in front of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly BL, presented the activities of the initiative *Peace with Women's Face*, as well as a successful initiative in Banja Luka that resulted in Mira Kesić getting a street in this city.



Presentation of the publication *Imagining a Woman*, Srđan Aleksić Days, Banja Luka, 7 December 2023

## **Program area:**

### **Strengthening the capacity of the organization**

*The goal is to continuously invest in organizational development and strengthen the capacities of employees, which will create the foundations for further growth and development of the association.*

### **Core support**

At the end of 2023, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly was granted a Core grant that will be used for organizational and administrative capacity building of the association. The financial support will be used for updating internal documents and protocols, increasing visibility, as well as for hiring new people to work in the association. The Core grant was obtained through the program "SMART BALKAN - Civil Society for a Connected Western Balkans" which, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is implemented by the Center for the Promotion of Civil Society (CPCS).

### **Practice in HCA BL**

Sara Khatib, who normally studies in Doha, stayed in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the summer of 2023 for her master's research work, which also included volunteering in the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka. She says that the experience of volunteering at HCA BL exceeded all her expectations.

"From day one, I was welcomed by a friendly team and a supportive supervisor. Each member of the team had unique experience, knowledge and skills, but they are all united around the goals and vision of the organization to promote and connect civic initiatives, reconciliation and empowerment of marginalized groups at the local and regional level. Extremely interesting, informative and very valuable are just some of the phrases I would use to describe my experiences after two months at HCA", said this student from Jerusalem, and you can read more about her experience at: <https://hcabl.org/sara-iz-jerusalima-volontiranje-u-hpg.../>

## **INFO CORNER**

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### **Signed a declaration against restrictions of rights and freedoms**

Eight civil society organizations based in Banja Luka, including the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka, signed on February 7 the declaration "TOGETHER AGAINST RESTRICTIONS OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS" in which they expressed their opposition and condemned the announcements of the adoption of a set of laws in the Republic of Srpska that would seriously threaten the right to freedom of expression and called into question the free work of independent media, associations, and activists in the RS.

"In democratic societies, institutions should strengthen the critical awareness of citizens and increase their rights and freedoms, and not try, through the law, to practically ban a different thought than the one that is desirable. We believe that the Criminal Code of the RS and other laws must not be changed on a shortcut, to the detriment of the rights and freedoms of citizens", it was stated, among other things, in the Declaration signed by: Banja Luka Centre for Human Rights, Center for Environment, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly



Banja Luka, Transparency International in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Club of Journalists Banja Luka/BH Journalists, Association of Citizens "Hi Neighbour", Association "eTrafika" and the Center for Informational Decontamination of Youth Banja Luka/Buka. The declaration was signed as part of the conference "How Much Freedom Will We Have Left".

## **International Women's Day March**

"We Are Not Cheap Labour Force", was the motto of the International Women's Day march in Banja Luka, in which, as in all previous years, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly also participated. "Women's labour rights are a category that is still put into the background, and about discrimination in the workplace, sexual harassment, unequal wages and working conditions, etc. we speak only sometimes", said Sharp Zero, one of the organizers of the march.



The Agency for Gender Equality of BiH presented data that women spend between 10 and 30 additional hours a week or 4 hours a day on housework. Research by Paylab showed that only 6% of all employed women are among the highest paid employees compared to 13% of men. Among the worst paid jobs in BiH are the jobs of women who are cleaners, tailors and shoemakers (in the textile, leather and clothing industry) and housekeepers (in the tourism and hotel industry) whose salaries in 2023 did not exceed 800 BAM.



## **With workers of Bema**

Menopause and how to deal with the changes it brings was the topic of a panel organized by the Helsinki Citizens' Parliament in cooperation with the City of Banja Luka on March 13, as part of "Women's Month".

Dijana Đurić, a psychologist, and Jordanka Topić, a gynecologist, spoke about this topic to the workers of the Bema footwear factory, as well as to other participants.

## **Feminist Tour though Banja Luka**

In April and May, we organized two feminist tours, one for female high school students and one for female students of the fourth grade of the Catholic Gymnasium.

We introduced them to numerous women who lived, worked and created in Banja Luka, but about whom little is known and about whom they are not taught in school. The Feminist Tour was designed and launched by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly as a response to the neglect and ignoring of the contributions that numerous women made to social, cultural and political development of the city.



## May – consultative meeting with the Ombudsmen of BiH

Together with the representatives of the Human Rights House Foundation from Oslo, a meeting was held in the office of the Ombudsman of BiH, in Banja Luka, in which Ms. Jasminka Džumhur and Mr. Nevenko Vranješ participated on behalf of the institution of the Ombudsman. At the consultative meeting, the current position of human rights in BiH was discussed, as well as specific cases such as the attack on journalists and activists in Banja Luka in March, and the Law on Free Access to Information in BiH.

## The conference "Critical Voices Under Pressure"

At the beginning of June, a conference on media freedom and civil society entitled "Critical Voices under Pressure" was held, organized by the Delegation of the European Union to BiH. The conference discussed freedom of the media and draft amendments to the Criminal Code of RS related to the criminalization of defamation, as well as civil society and the Draft Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Profit Organizations, which are in the legislative process in the Republic of Srpska. One of the panelists was the Executive Director of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Aleksandar Žolja.



The conference "Critical Voices Under Pressure"  
June 1, 2023, Banja Luka

## Zero Conversation in Basoc

As a reaction to the attacks on the offices of several organizations in Banja Luka that are marked as LGBT friendly, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, in cooperation with the Heinrich Boll Foundation and the Banja Luka Social Center, organized the "ZERO Conversation" on July 14, as well as the presentation of the book by the artist Dražen Zarić "Movement is the Sound of the Heart". The topics of the "Zero Conversation" were building communities, independent social cultural centers and initiatives, the possibility of organizing and self-organizing, and issues of cooperation and solidarity within organizations and initiatives in the context of narrowing the space for civil society activities, attacks on offices and activists, and the announcement of restrictive laws. The Zero Conversation and the presentation of the book of poetry were held in the garden of Basoc, one of the organizations that was the target of the attack.

## Not One More

Under the slogan "Not One More", on October 11, 2023, protests were held throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the increase in cases of femicide and the lack of an adequate response from the system. The protest that was also held in Banja Luka warned that 48% of women in BiH have suffered some form of gender-based violence, while as many as 84% of these cases remain unreported.



"We are fed up with watching the number of victims grow month by month, while violence against women and girls is generally perceived either as a private problem or something that is "their own fault". It is not their fault! IT IS THE FAULT of the institutions and policies that allow this. IT IS THE FAULT of the public that allows them to do that. Therefore, WE DEMAND an urgent and effective reaction of the responsible institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a radical change in all social spheres where such beliefs, forms of perception and practices are encouraged, covered up, or tacitly approved", it was said from the protest, which was also held in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, Tuzla and Lukavac.

Prior to that, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly BL and the Foundation United Women organized a peaceful protest walk on August 21, as a sign of solidarity with the victims killed in Gradačac and Živinice, which wanted to point out the increasing number of femicides and the inadequate response of the competent institutions to this increasingly widespread phenomenon in BiH.




## **New Gen(d)eration**

The representative of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Željka Umićević, attended the conference "New Gen(d)eration", which was held on October 4 and 5, 2023 in Skopje and which gathered a large number of actors from the civil sector and the academic and artistic community from the region.

The conference discussed possible feminist responses and resistance to the growing influence of anti-gender organizations, policies and narratives, systemic violence, as well as the consequences of the actions of conservative groups and policies on society, especially on women.

## PUBLICATIONS IN 2023



**ZAKON O RAVNOPRAVNOSTI POLOVA U BIH**


Integracija seksualne iznude u zakone i propise

**POLICY BRIEF**

### Policy Brief 1: Integration of sexual extortion into laws and regulations

The first in a series of policy briefs offers a way and proposals for integrating sexual extortion into the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sexual extortion is a specific form of sexual abuse and exploitation that incorporates elements of gender-based violence and corruption.

If we start from the definition of harassment contained in paragraph 1 of Article 5 of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, and having in mind the essence of sexual extortion, Article 5 should be supplemented with a new provision which would prescribe that "a special form of harassment based on sex represents sexual extortion, which is committed by a person who, using a position of power or authority for the performed action or omission of an obligatory action, demands from another person the performance of a certain sexual service".



Integracija seksualne iznude u zakone i propise

Policy brief 2

### Policy Brief 2: Integration of sexual extortion into laws and regulations

The second in a series of Policy Briefs, prepared by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka, aims to present the possible integration of sexual extortion into the framework of the Draft Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women of the Republic of Srpska (established at the 40th session of the Government of the Republic of Srpska on October 5, 2023).

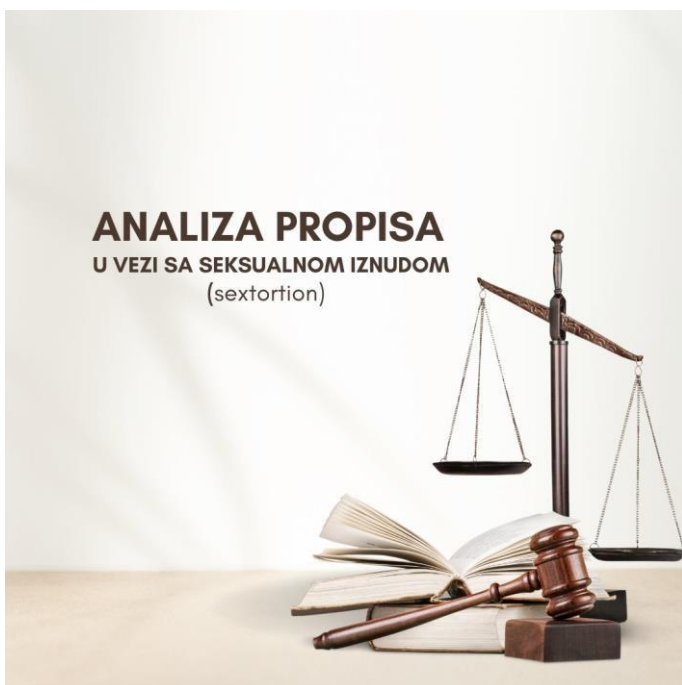
Although sexual extortion most often occurs in areas related to work and labour relations, employment, education and other areas of public life, i.e. in those areas where there is a possibility of using influence and authority, this does not mean that the area of private life is spared from this forms of gender-based violence.



The alternative CEDAW report of civil society organizations in BiH for the period from 2019 to 2023 provides an overview of national legislation, administrative rules and procedures and practices, but also identifies obstacles in the exercise of women's human rights and offers insight into the actual state of gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Activists from various civil society organizations participated in the preparation of the report, and the preparation and creation of the report was coordinated by the organizations Rights for All and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka.

## ANALYSIS OF REGULATIONS REGARDING SEXUAL EXTORTION (SEXTORTION)

The subject of this publication is a comprehensive analysis of regulations related to gender-based violence and corruption, as well as some other areas related to them, in order to determine whether the legislator in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska and the Federation of BiH recognized this behavior - sexual extortion as a form of gender-based violence or as a form of corruption.



RASPROSTRANJENOST  
**SEKUSALNOG  
IZNUĐIVANJA**  
(SEXTORTION) U DRUŠTVU

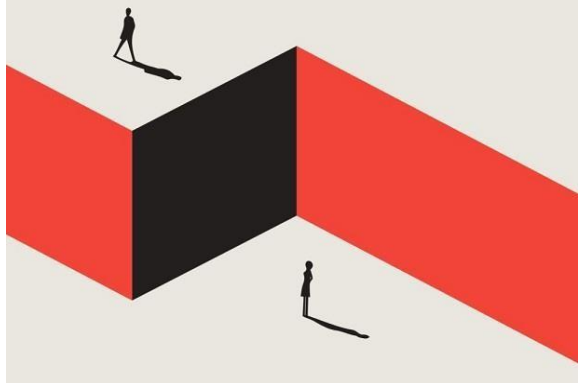


## Research on the Prevalence of Sexual Extortion in Society

The aim of the research was to collect data on attitudes, understanding and prevalence of sexual extortion in the public and private sector in BiH. A total of 275 respondents filled out the online questionnaire, and a group interview was conducted with six people.

The largest number of respondents, over 90%, were familiar with the concept of sexual extortion, while 5% of them answered that they were not. Respondents are of the opinion that sexual extortion is a very frequent or frequent present phenomenon in our society (73.4%), and it is interesting that not a single respondent took the position that this phenomenon never occurs in our society.

PRIRUČNIK ZA PRAVNIKE I SARADNIKE  
U PRAVNIM PITANJIMA  
IZ OBLASTI RODNO ZASNOVANE DISKRIMINACIJE  
U OBLASTI RADA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI



## Manual for Lawyers and Associates in Legal Matters in the Field of Gender-Based Discrimination in the Field of Labour

The manual should serve as a guide for all those who are interested in how they can legally protect rights in the field of gender-based discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina, be they legal experts who work in centers for the provision of free legal aid, lawyers, activists in organizations for human rights, fighters for gender equality, public officials or just interested citizens.

The manual provides an overview of international and domestic regulations regarding human rights and the prohibition of discrimination in general, as well as in relation to sex and gender; talks about domestic protection mechanisms and how to start a procedure with e.g. gender centers, and a special part of the Manual is dedicated to the practice of the European Court of Human Rights, UN and ILO bodies and how to initiate procedures for protection against discrimination with these bodies.



## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN OFFER

### **Civil society and human rights**

#### **Basic trainings**

##### *Training title*

##### *Topics*

#### **Civil society and activism**

The term of the civil society, the term of non-government organization, role, status and legal framework in BiH, establishment and registration of non-government organization, the term activism, etc.

#### **Human rights in my community**

Human rights, history, the term discrimination, mechanism of human right protection, endangered groups, modalities of impact to government regrading human rights protection, etc.

#### **Gender equality**

The term of sex and gender, the term of gender based discrimination, gender stereotypes and prejudices, sexuality, position of women and men in BH society, legal framework for gender equality in BiH, etc.

### **Advanced trainings/trainings for professional groups**

##### *Training title*

##### *Topics*

#### **Gender sensitive policies**

The term of gender analysis, gander sensitive and gender responsive practical policy, etc.

#### **Reporting on the differences in media**

The role of media in modern society, stereotypes and prejudices in media, socially marginalized groups and their presentation in media, discrimination in media (possible focus on specific topics), etc.

#### **Gender based reporting in media**

The role of media in modern society, portraits of men and women in media, discrimination in media, legal framework for work of media in BiH, gender analysis of media contents (possible focus on specific topics)

#### **Development of volunteerism**

The term of volunteerism, ways of including and engaging volunteers in the work of organization, legal framework, development of the volunteer's network, etc.

## ***Building capacities of organization***

### ***Training title***

**Managing the non-government organization and procurement of sources for work**

### ***Topics***

The term of non-government organization, legal framework for non-government activities, structure of non-government organization and decision making, missions, visions and program activities of non-government organizations, financing the non-government organizations, etc.

**Creation of the strategic plan**

Strategic planning and importance of planning, mission and vision, problem analysis, program planning, goals and results, analysis of interior and exterior assumptions for plan implementation, allies and opponents, etc.

**Creation of the project proposals**

The term of project proposal, analysis of problems, goals and results, logical framework matrix, filling the form of project proposal, financial aspect of the project and project budget, contract with donors, etc.

**Basics of the financial managing of non-government organizations**

Specifics of the non-government organization activities and legal framework, financial obligations of non-government organizations towards state and donors, harmonizing requests between donors and domestic financial institutions, organizing financial management in NGOs, etc.

## ***Building personal capacities***

### ***Training title***

**Public advocacy, campaign management, lobbying**

### ***Topics***

The term of public advocacy, planning the activity of public advocacy, target groups of public advocacy, the term campaign, the term lobbying, etc.

**Public relations and media presentations**

The term public relations, communication methods in public relations, media relations, how to become the news, ways of communicating with media, media announcement, press conference, specifics of TV and radio presentation, etc.

**Conflict solutions, negotiations and non-violent communication**

The term of conflict, ways of solving conflict, interest based solutions of the conflict, positions and interests in conflict, reconciliation and mediation, communication skills – non-violent communication, etc.

**Negotiations**

The term of negotiation, interest based negotiation, positions and interests, negotiation obstacles and path towards agreement, phases in negotiation approach, option analysis and determining proposals, etc.

**Facilitation and decision**

The term of facilitation, decision making in group,

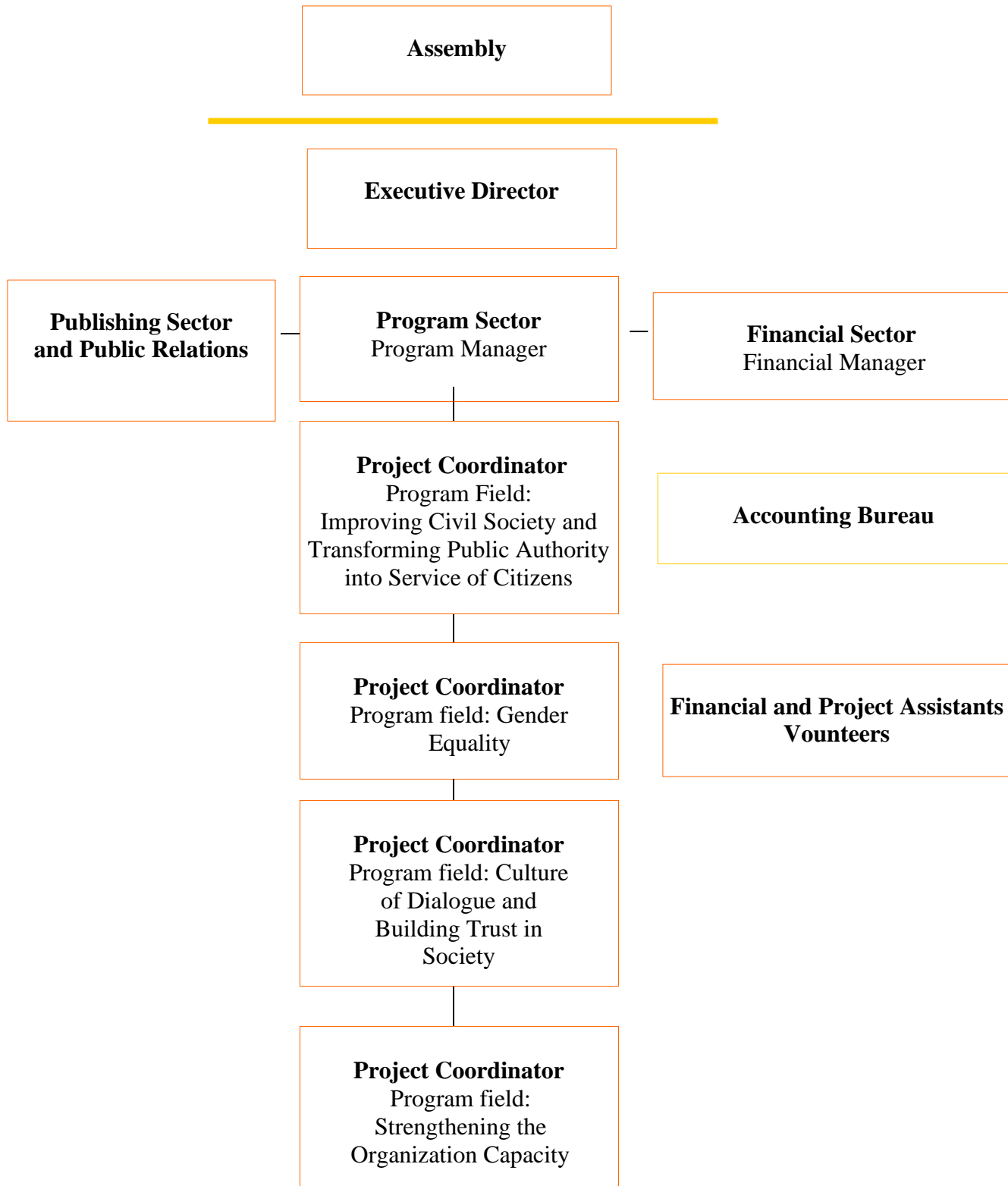
**making**

communication skills, compromise and consensus, how to achieve consensus, voting, etc.

**Integral security**

The term of integral security, recognizing challenges and threats, context analysis, creating the secure space for work and activities, development of the strategy for implementation of the integral security concept, etc.

# Organization structure of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka



| <b>OVERVIEW OF AVAILIABLE FUNDS AND EXPENDITURES IN 2023</b>            | AMOUNT IN<br>BAM | AMOUNT IN<br>EUR |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| <b>FUNDS AVAILABLE IN 2023</b>  |                  |                  |
| Unspent funds from 2022   | 49262,00         | 25187,26         |
| Donor funds by project  | 535266,00        | 273677,16        |
| Individual donations to the association                                 | 983,00           | 502,60           |
| Membership fees   | 0,00             | 0,00             |
| VAT refund  | 0,00             | 0,00             |
| <b>TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE</b>  | 585511,00        | 299367,02        |
| <b>EXPENDITURES FOR 2023</b>  |                  |                  |
| Gross salaries  | 261469,00        | 133686,98        |
| Office costs (rent, electricity, water, heating etc.)                   | 16226,00         | 8296,22          |
| Phone and internet costs  | 2970,00          | 1518,54          |
| Costs of external accounting services and auditing of financial reports | 4140,00          | 2116,75          |
| Bank charges  | 3802,00          | 1943,93          |
| Costs of project activities   | 260798,00        | 133343,90        |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>   | 549405,00        | 280906,32        |
| Total funds available for 2023  | 585511,00        | 299367,02        |
| Total expenditures for 2023   | 549405,00        | 280906,32        |
| Unspent funds from 2023   | 36106,00         | 18460,70         |

## **Donors who supported our work in 2023:**

Foundation “Kvinna Till Kvinna” Sweden

USAID

Heinrich Böll Stiftung

Evropean Union

CCFD – Terre Solidaire

American Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina

European Fund for Democracy

Forum ZFD

Council of Europe

City of Banjaluka

