

# Highlights January - June 2023

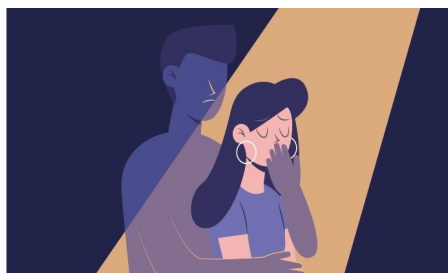


## One year since EuroPride in Belgrade - 'Reflection on the human rights situation of LGBTQI+ people'

The global Pride Month in June was concluded today in Belgrade with a panel discussion, supported by the European Union and the Council of Europe, on the human rights situation of LGBTQI+ people in Serbia, one year after Belgrade hosted EuroPride 2022 for the first time — an event that left a mark in the history of the European Pride movement and LGBTQI+ rights in Serbia, the South-east region and beyond.

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## ENSURING JUSTICE



### Advancing the protection of human rights in the Western Balkans in line with European standards

The harmonisation of domestic legal practices with the European Convention on Human Rights and the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is essential in ensuring legal certainty in the



### Assisting local actors towards an independent and efficient justice system

Independent and more efficient justice systems remains a core reform in the European integration paths of Beneficiaries and an important priority of the Horizontal Facility

overall protection of human rights in the CoE member states. The programme provides assistance to beneficiaries in the process of improving and harmonising domestic legal frameworks in regard to fundamental freedoms.

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programme. During the third phase of the programme, the European Union and the Council of Europe have continued to support public authorities and related stakeholders, in the field of justice in the ongoing reform processes.

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## **Towards a safer and more secure society through the rehabilitation of violent extremist prisoners and improved treatment of sentenced persons**

The Horizontal Facility programme supports public authorities and related stakeholders in efforts to improve the protection of the human rights of persons deprived of liberty and strengthen the management and rehabilitation of violent extremist prisoners (VEPs) and other marginalised and vulnerable prisoners at risk of radicalisation.

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## **FIGHTING ECONOMIC CRIME & CORRUPTION**

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## Advancing in the fight against corruption and economic crime

In order to strengthen anti-corruption/anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing regimes in accordance with European and other international standards, the Horizontal Facility actions have continued to support and provide important assistance to public authorities in the effective implementation of recent key recommendations of the monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe.

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## PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

### Women's access to justice, essential for advancing gender equality in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye



Effective justice systems based on human rights standards, the rule of law and democratic values are key in enabling women to become equal partners in decision-making and development and to be informed participants in their societies. In this context, the programme is continuing to assist beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye to increase the gender sensitivity of legal aid services and women's access to these services.

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## Combatting discrimination and promoting equality in the Western Balkans

Combatting discrimination, fighting hate speech and promoting social cohesion in line with European standards are central subjects that the European Union and the Council of Europe will continue to promote in the following four years in the Western Balkans region.

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## Co-operation and assistance to public authorities essential in fighting human trafficking

Trafficking in human beings remains a serious challenge in the region. Through the support of the Horizontal Facility programme, public authorities are working on improving the identification, protection of, and assistance to victims trafficking, in line with European standards.

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## Strengthening democratic citizenship to achieve quality education for all

Improving the quality of education by strengthening democratic citizenship and ensuring inclusiveness based on

European standards and practices is facilitated by the Horizontal Facility actions implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia in this field. They are closely working with local actors on fostering a culture of democracy and inclusion and combatting all forms of discrimination in the Beneficiaries' education systems.

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## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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**Fighting hate speech in the Western Balkans through co-operation and exchanges of best practices**

An important component in the implementation of the Horizontal Facility actions in the Western Balkans is the fight against hate speech which, whether online or offline, poses a threat to democracy and human rights. Specific interventions and technical support dedicated to local authorities in the efforts to fight hate speech have thus contributed to the process of protecting freedom of expression while fighting hate speech in line with European standards and Council of Europe recommendations in the field.

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## EXPERTISE CO-ORDINATION MECHANISM

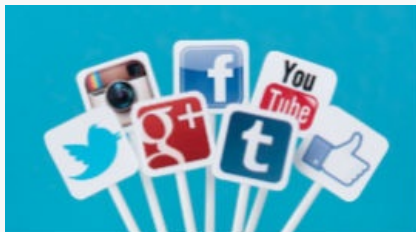
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### Venice Commission provides key opinions

Upon requests from the authorities of the Horizontal Facility Beneficiaries, the Expertise Co-ordination / Mechanism (ECM) enables the provision of legislative expertise and policy advice in the areas covered by the programme, as well as on constitutional issues falling within the mandate of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, known as the Venice Commission. In this context, the Venice Commission adopted three opinions requested under the ECM, during its 134th plenary held on 10-11 March 2023.



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