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**Center for Women War Victims**  
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[www.czzzr.hr/](http://www.czzzr.hr/)  
[www.petra-nvo.net/](http://www.petra-nvo.net/)

**Centre for Women's Studies**  
Zagreb, Croatia  
[www.zenstud.hr/](http://www.zenstud.hr/)

**CURE**  
Sarajevo, Bosnia/Herzegovina  
[www.fondacijacure.org/](http://www.fondacijacure.org/)

**KONTRA**  
Zagreb, Croatia  
[www.kontra.hr/cms/](http://www.kontra.hr/cms/)

**Kosova Women's Network**  
Pristina, Kosova  
[www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org)

**Labris**  
Belgrade, Serbia  
[www.labris.org.rs/en/](http://www.labris.org.rs/en/)

**Lezz/4 counseling hotline for lesbians**  
Belgrade, Serbia

**NLO**  
Novi Sad, Serbia  
[www.n-l-o.org](http://www.n-l-o.org)

**Reconstruction Women's Fund**  
Belgrade, Serbia  
[www.rwfund.org](http://www.rwfund.org)

**Seka House**  
Island of Brac, Croatia

**Women in Black**  
Belgrade, Serbia  
[www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?lang=en](http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?lang=en)

**Women's Group Brod**  
Slavonski Brod, Croatia  
[www.udruga-brod.hr](http://www.udruga-brod.hr)

**Zene Zenama**  
Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina  
[www.zenezenama.org/eng/index1.html](http://www.zenezenama.org/eng/index1.html)

## Pride Parades Face Fierce Opposition in Montenegro and Serbia

Gay pride parades have become routine events in Croatia, but not in Montenegro. The first pride parade organized in the seaside town of Budva this past July turned into a riot. More than 200 demonstrators shouting, "Kill the gays," hurled stones, bottles, and flares at police attempting to protect the marchers. Undaunted, a group of gay demonstrators organized a pride march in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, this past October. An estimated 1500 extremists threw rocks and firebombs, injuring 60 people. Despite the violence, 150 gay activists continued the march under police protection.

Montenegro, which began talks last year to join the EU, hopes to be next in line for membership after Croatia. But first it has to demonstrate its readiness to protect human rights and pass a bill banning all forms of sexual discrimination. Montenegro is a deeply conservative, patriarchal society. A recent survey revealed that two-thirds of Montenegrins regard homosexuality as an illness and 80% said it should be kept private.

For the third year in a row the Serbian government has banned pride parades on the pretext of preventing violence. A contingent of defiant lesbians led a spontaneous march to the parliament this month to demonstrate that they refused to be intimidated



*Impromptu Pride Parade in Belgrade*

by a government that refuses to protect all of its citizens. In another action, a group of 200 gay Serbians marched through the streets of central Belgrade after dark, the only time they felt safe to protest.

The Serbian Prime Minister, Ivica Dacic, doesn't hide his contempt for homosexuality, which he calls "an abnormal thing." Before canceling the march again, Dacic asked, "Should I become gay to be pro-European?" In an open letter to Dacic, the Serbian Police Union condemned his homophobic statements and suggested that his comments could provoke the violence he claims he wants to prevent. Amnesty International, the EU Commission, and the US Embassy all expressed their disappointment in the Serbian government's refusal to allow pride parades.

## Peace March Commemorates 18th Anniversary of Srebrenica Massacre

Women in Black, joined by human rights and civil society organizations, organized a three-day peace march from Belgrade to Srebrenica in July. Activists traveling on foot and bicycles gathered in Republic Square in Belgrade for a silent vigil under the banner, "We will never forget the genocide in Srebrenica." So far, searchers have found remains of 6,838 victims at the site of the massacre.



*Bikers on the road to Srebrenica*

## *Letter from Marta*

Heart & Hand has been funding women's programs in the Balkans for 15 years. Many of our grantees became activists in the peace movement during the four years of a brutal war, and have worked tirelessly since then to improve the lives of women and girls and win equal rights for the LGBT community. Against great odds, they are beginning to see the results of their efforts. Women and the LGBT communities are better organized, more active, and bolder--and their voices are being heard.

Sadly, the working conditions of the activists have not changed. They've gotten worse since the collapse of Socialism and the loss of the safety net it provided. Our activists work for low salaries; many have no benefits, no pensions, and no savings. Many are now in their 50s and starting to experience health problems. Almost all suffer from fatigue that affects not only them but also their families.



*ACT Women's Workshop.*

While they know that their work has made big differences in their communities, they can't help but ask, especially at low moments, whether their sacrifices have been worth it. Although many around the world are applauding the fact that Balkan countries are seeking recognition from the European Union (EU), the results are far more complex for feminist activists. I have excerpted a few of their responses, which you can read below.

*100% of every contribution goes directly to fund the work of activists*

*Peace Development Fund / Heart & Hand Fund*

*C/o Marta Drury  
PO Box 3070  
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019  
650.726.3772  
deadcow@igc.org*

Heart & Hand has given sustainability grants to individual grantees and our grantee, Act Women, in Serbia, offers free monthly workshops for women to learn from professionals how to improve their health and general well being. These are important first steps, but they are temporary measures. What is needed is a new model of sustainability grants that provides benefits and pensions to activists so that they can concentrate on their work without always worrying about their security. We hope more funders will step forward. Funding organizations is essential; funding to ease the lives of activists is essential, too.

## ON BEING AN ACTIVIST IN THE BALKANS

# In Their Words



**Biljana Kasic, Founder**  
Centre for Women's Studies  
Zagreb, Croatia

Two urgent questions concern me: How does the accession of Croatia to the EU... improve women's lives and increase their chances in the market economy...? As feminists, how do we act critically and creatively in the new political configuration? There is no illusion any more that accessing the EU will improve the status of women in Croatia or better their lives--especially for those who've already lost their jobs thanks to the economic devastation in the transition to capitalist democracy. .... In my view, the main problem with neoliberal trends is that they lead to women's poverty, social instability, social neurosis, lack of freedom and intentional gender inequality. (Regarding the second question), most EU funds for gender issues have closed down. There is a backlash against feminist political projects in Western Europe, as everywhere in the world. I think the most demanding feminist task.... is to re-invent the idea of a feminist revolution. Thus, I confess that we didn't celebrate our accession to the EU, and we didn't organize a feminist party.



**Mirjana Miroslavjevic Bobic, Executive Director**  
Reconstruction Women's Fund  
Belgrade, Serbia

For me, being a feminist activist in Serbia is, above all, a privilege.... to be part of a feminist movement, part of women's organizing for the real political power that patriarchal structures try to write out. It is the privilege of having the possibility to transform my anger into action.... Due to the many lies, misuse and abuse of position, and contamination of public space that I experienced very strongly recently is the anxious, hardly bearable feeling that living in Serbia is like living in a constant theory of conspiracy. But it's not a theory anymore. The loss of confidence, the constant uncertainty, the chain of broken promises have made me feel worse than all of the right-wing "black lists" of activists and the physical and psychological fascistic threats we have been exposed to. That's why I call for responsibility and bring charges against all of the state officials who claim they are democratically elected representatives of all Serbian citizens for constantly trying to take away my feeling of trust. Is there a Constitutional or Supreme Court for this?



**Nuna Zvizdic, Executive Director**  
Zene Zenama  
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Even after 20 years as an activist, I find myself in an uncertain situation. Since 1996 in B&H, we activists have been discussing these (same) topics: security, peace, women in politics, justice, gender equality, structure and war-related violence, and the impact of war and its consequences for women and girls. We have come to the point when we ask ourselves what the purpose is of (our efforts) when we as activists do not have secure employment. To be an activist today in B&H means to be fragmented and incidental because one never knows whether one's activist experience is (beginning) or ending with one of the projects that has been implemented. That in itself is an important criterion for the personal life choice between the risk of speaking out or the sin of silence.



Kosova Women's Network on retreat at an Albanian beach

## Kosova Government Responds to LGBT Activists' Demands

In a landmark decision, the government of Kosova agreed this month to establish an Advisory and Coordination Group for the Rights of LGBT Communities. This was a tremendous victory for LGBT activists who, over the past few years, have been physically and verbally abused in the course of working to guarantee LGBT and human rights.

The impetus for the government's action came from a meeting Igballe Rogova (Igo), the executive director of Kosova Women's Network, arranged with Kosova's Deputy Prime

Minister of Justice, to demand that the government protect its LGBT citizens. LGBT activists' belief that the time was ripe to present their case proved accurate. According to a government draft, the Advisory and Coordination group will bring together local and international institutions and nongovernmental organizations to work as partners in protecting and promoting rights of LGBT community members and initiate joint activities to prevent and combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. "Activists hope that this action will send a strong message to future would-be perpetrators," says Igo, "that, at least on paper, the government of Kosova is committed to protecting the rights of the LGBT community."

## Two Heart & Hand Grantees Honored



Rada Boric receives award from President of Croatia

Rada Boric was the first woman in Croatia to be decorated for her work as a woman's human rights activist. In a ceremony held at the Croatian National Theater on the occasion of Croatian Statehood Day and Croatia's entering the EU, Croatian president Ivo Josipovic honored Rada for her "outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of women's rights in the Republic of Croatia, countries of the region, and in the EU for her contribution to the fight against violence against women and her work with the victims of war rape." Prominent people in Croatia's political and cultural life attended the ceremony, which was transmitted on national TV. With Rada's new celebrity, strangers have been approaching her on the street and congratulating her, but, says Rada, "The reward belongs to all of my feminist friends."

Lepa Mladenovic, a Serbian women's and human rights activist, won the 2013 Heinrich Boll Foundation's Anne Klein\* Women's Award. This past March Lepa was honored in a ceremony in Berlin for her work against violence and militarism and for freedom, human rights, and sexual self-determination.

"My wish was not to accept the award alone," says Lepa, "as I am part of a movement." Lepa asked the Heinrich Boll Fund to cover the travel expenses of 10 lesbians to accompany. At first, the Foundation expressed regret that it didn't have discretionary funds to cover the expenses. Lepa persisted, "I have already told 10 lesbians (they could come) and they were jumping to the ceiling in happiness. I can't tell them no."

In the end, the Fund found the money to cover not 10 feminist activists, but an entourage of 22 representing different regions, ethnicities, and backgrounds. "I took the Anne Klein Award in the name of the feminist, lesbian, queer movement in the Balkans," says Lepa. "This was definitely the trip for life. Great, great, great?"



Happy lesbians in Belgrade

\*Anne Klein was a pioneering feminist lawyer and served as the first woman and openly gay senator in Berlin's state government. She died in 2011 at age 61.