

Policy Brief & Recommendations

Protecting the Rights of LGBTIQ+ Women and Non-Binary Persons in Serbia

Executive Summary

Sexual and gender minorities in Serbia continue to face systemic discrimination and violence. Despite Serbia's ratification of international frameworks such as CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, implementation gaps persist. LGBTIQ+ women and non-binary persons experience barriers in legal recognition, protection from gender-based violence, access to healthcare, education, employment, and participation in civic life. This policy brief summarizes findings from civil society shadow reports and national research, presenting key policy demands to ensure Serbia fulfills its international obligations.

Key Findings

1. Legal & Institutional Gaps

- Absence of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and parental rights.
- Inconsistent and pathologizing gender recognition procedures.
- Intersex infants subjected to non-consensual surgeries.

2. Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- High prevalence of domestic and intimate partner violence against LGBTIQ+ women.
- Weak institutional response and mistrust in police/social services.

3. Economic & Social Exclusion

- Disproportionate unemployment and workplace discrimination.
- High poverty risk among trans, intersex, Roma, and rural LGBTIQ+ individuals.

4. Education & Health

- Lack of inclusive curricula; widespread bullying of queer youth.
- Healthcare providers lack training in gender-affirming and intersex-sensitive care.

5. Civic & Political Participation

- LBTIQ+ communities underrepresented in decision-making.
- Civil society organizations underfunded despite providing essential services.

Community Voices

- “It’s the first time I felt safe to share my story without fear of judgment.” – Participant from Niš
- “We need the state to recognize our families, not erase them.” – Lesbian mother, Belgrade
- “I was denied healthcare because of who I am. Training for doctors is urgent.” – Trans participant, Novi Sad

Policy Recommendations

Legal Reform

- Adopt a Law on Same-Sex Partnerships, ensuring equal parental rights.
- Establish gender recognition procedures based on self-determination.
- Ban non-consensual medical interventions on intersex infants.

Strengthen Protection from GBV

- Establish specialized services for LBTIQ+ survivors.
- Train police, judiciary, and social workers on inclusive GBV response.
- Implement GREVIO and CEDAW recommendations through national action plans.

Economic Empowerment

- Enforce workplace anti-discrimination measures.
- Launch targeted employment and entrepreneurship programs for marginalized LBTIQ+ groups.

Inclusive Education & Health

- Integrate LBTIQ+ content in school curricula and anti-bullying strategies.
- Train medical staff in gender-affirming and intersex-sensitive care.
- Provide national healthcare protocols that respect bodily autonomy.

Civic & Political Participation

- Ensure sustainable funding for LBTIQ+ civil society organizations.

- Create consultative mechanisms to include LBTIQ+ voices in policymaking.

References

- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women.
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Conclusion

Serbia must move from formal commitments to concrete implementation of reforms. Ensuring dignity, safety, and equality for sexual and gender minorities is not only a human rights obligation but also a step toward building a more inclusive and democratic society. Policymakers are urged to adopt these recommendations to protect vulnerable communities and strengthen Serbia's alignment with European and international standards.