

Highlights 13

April - June 2026



Profit or people? The battle against modern-day slavery in North Macedonia

Human trafficking for labour exploitation is a serious and ever-growing global concern that affects people of all ages. At its core, it means that people are forced or deceived into working under abusive conditions, which infringe upon their human dignity. The victims are severely overworked, underpaid (or not paid at all), their identity documents are confiscated, they are kept under a strict surveillance by trafficker and cannot leave the work, regardless of the conditions.

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE



Small steps shaping change behind prison walls

In the District Prison in Subotica, change does not come overnight. It begins quietly, often in moments that might seem small

to an outsider- a pause before reacting, a different choice made in a difficult situation, a willingness to speak up. For Dajana Perčić, those moments are at the heart of her work as a treatment officer. “As a treatment officer in the District Prison in Subotica, my job involves an initial assessment of the condition, needs and capacities of convicted persons, based on which an individual programme is developed for each person, as well as implementing that programme throughout the entire duration of the sentence,” she explains.

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From Syria to Reintegration: Supporting Violent Extremist Offenders in the Probation in Albania



In her dark clothing, Fatime* sits quietly, seemingly uninterested in any conversation, waits impatiently to meet her Probation Officer in Tirana. Every three months, she is required to report and discuss her progress with the probation authorities. She is one of the nine women who returned in October 2024 after years in Syria, where she was caught in a conflict far from her homeland, having survived unimaginable hardship. Now, as a mother, daughter, and convicted violent extremist offender (VEO), Fatime faces the daunting challenge of reintegration under the supervision of the Albanian Probation Service.

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Modernising Kosovo's Prosecution System: Digital Tools for a Stronger Justice

Petrit Kryeziu, Chief of the Basic Prosecution Office in Prizren, sits in his office concentrated behind the



Love behind locked doors: Supporting children and families in North Macedonia's prisons

computer screen, as he reviews his caseload. Using the Case Management Information System (CMIS), he is navigating through the new ready-to-use decision templates—recently integrated to simplify and streamline the Prosecution Office processes in Kosovo*. Developed with support of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), these updated templates replace previous forms, ensuring greater consistency and relevance in daily documentation and tasks.

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The bustling atmosphere in the large visitors' area at Idrizovo Prison is suddenly broken by the clattering of locks, followed by the mournful sound of the heavy iron door leading to the space where families come together. It is a weekend day and visiting hours have just begun. Prison security officers seem in hurry to escort the inmates to their loved ones, who await their arrival with anticipation. Damjan*, eager and emotional, embraces his four-year-old daughter tightly, then shares an extended hug with his spouse...

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ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS



Montenegro adopts new Code of Professional Conduct for Lawyers

Montenegro has taken an important step forward in advancing the rule of law with the adoption of a new Code of Professional Conduct for Lawyers. The Code was developed with the support of the Council of Europe, drawing on European standards and best practices to reinforce professionalism,

Bringing property rights closer to citizens through clearer and accessible cadastral services

Access to clear and practical information is essential for safeguarding property rights, especially when it comes to owning home, land and property. While navigating cadastral procedures can often seem complex, these processes are

accountability, and legal certainty. The new Code aligns with the principles of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, as well as the European Model Code of Ethics for Lawyers.

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essential to ensure that property is safe and protected. To support public understanding and bring this information closer to the citizens, an awareness-raising initiative was launched.

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FIGHTING ECONOMIC CRIME & CORRUPTION



Authorities strengthen data use to fight against money laundering and terrorism financing

Authorities in Türkiye are stepping up efforts to use data more effectively in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, with a focus on improving investigations, prosecutions and asset recovery. At a workshop held in Antalya, representatives from key national institutions, including the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Financial Crimes Investigation Board, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Trade and law enforcement agencies worked on practical ways to strengthen data collection, sharing and analysis across institutions.

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Albanian authorities advance expertise in investigating complex money laundering cases

Professionals from key Albanian law enforcement institutions, including prosecutors, investigators, border police, as well as representatives of the Customs Directorate and of the Financial Intelligence Agency took part in a series of regional trainings aimed at enhancing expertise in investigating complex money laundering cases. The events were designed to strengthen the capacity of prosecutors, investigators and other relevant authorities to effectively conduct proactive financial investigations alongside money laundering investigations.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



When equality becomes real for everyone

For many people in Montenegro, discrimination is not always loud or visible. It can happen quietly, in a job interview that never leads anywhere, in access to services, or in everyday interactions that leave someone feeling excluded or stigmatised. Often, those affected are unsure whether what they experienced is discrimination at all, and where to turn for protection. This is the reality the new Law on the Protection of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination aims to change.

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Zavidovići youth stands against hate

Young people from Zavidovići took to the streets on 21 May to send a clear message against hate speech and discrimination, engaging fellow citizens through interactive activities promoting inclusion, solidarity and



Equality at the heart of democracy: IDAHOT+ 2026 marked in Serbia

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade marked the International Day Against Homophobia, Lesbophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia and Interphobia

social cohesion. Organised under the slogan “Zavidovići youth stands against hate”, the street actions transformed public spaces into places for dialogue and awareness raising, encouraging participants to reflect on the harmful impact of hateful narratives and the importance of respecting diversity within local communities.

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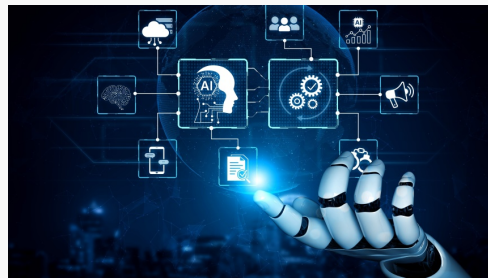
(IDAHOT+) with a ceremonial event held at the “Svetozar Marković” University Library on 14 May. Under the slogan “Equality at the Heart of Democracy”, the event brought together high-level officials and representatives of international organisations to highlight the position of the LGBTI+ community in Serbia.

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Tackling AI driven discrimination in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership regions

In a world shaped more and more by artificial intelligence, discrimination is taking on new forms as algorithms and automated systems are increasingly influencing decisions that impact people's lives. With AI technologies now embedded in many aspects of our daily life, concerns about algorithmic bias and reinforcement of inequality have highlighted the necessity of implementing strong safeguards, in line with European standards.

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Bihać residents and people on the move join forces for community clean-up ahead of Earth Day

In the run-up to International Earth Day, local residents and people on the move came together in Bihać to clean



Equality, Non-Discrimination and Diversity in Police Training in Albania

The interview with Ilirjan Mandro - Rector of the Security Academy centers on the institution's leadership in embedding the principles of

shared public spaces, turning a simple environmental action into a message of solidarity and inclusion. Organised on 19 April across several locations in the city, the clean-up brought together communities that do not often meet, showing how joint action can help build understanding and mutual respect. The activity is part of the joint EU and the Council of Europe awareness-raising initiative against hate speech “[Block the hatred. Share the love.2.0!](#)”

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equality and non-discrimination into Albania’s police education. The Rector describes how reforms have ensured that anti-discrimination is not just a legal requirement but a foundational value guiding all teaching and training activities for cadets and officers. Supported by the EU and Council of Europe partnership, the Academy has introduced dedicated modules on human rights, hate crimes, and diversity.

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EDUCATION FOR ALL



Standing up for academic integrity in a changing digital world

What does academic integrity mean in a time when artificial intelligence can

write essays and information is only a click away? For Professor Božidar Popović of the University of Montenegro, integrity remains the foundation of trust in education, regardless of how technology evolves.

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Kučevo celebrates democratic values: A vibrant Day of Education for Democratic Culture



As one of the experts involved in developing the University of Montenegro’s new Code of Ethics, adopted with the support of the action “Quality education for all” implemented under the joint European Union and Council of Europe programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye”, Professor Popović has worked to ensure that academic values keep pace with the realities of modern education.

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



Freedom of expression, defamation and SLAPPs addressed with lawyers in Pristina

Media actors and professionals, conveyed in a workshop in Bogë/Boga on trauma-informed journalism, with a focus on gender and online threats and harassment. Journalists from Albanian and Serbian communities had the opportunity to strengthen their professional skills for reporting in high-pressure environments, while addressing the safety and wellbeing of media professionals

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Agreement reached on advancing online content regulation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Representatives of public institutions, independent regulatory bodies, the media, academia, and civil society reached agreement on key principles for improving the governance of online content in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a particular focus on the [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec\(2026\)4 on online safety and the empowerment of users and content creators](#). As a central outcome, participants confirmed the need to establish a multi-stakeholder and co-regulatory model, entailing a clear distribution of competences and responsibilities

among institutions, regulators, media, digital platforms, academia, and civil society organisations.

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Horizontal Facility Co-ordination Team
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
Avenue de l'Europe F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France
E-mail: Horizontal.Facility@coe.int / Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 20 00



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