

Highlights 10

July - September 2025



Police cadets from Bosnia and Herzegovina are redefining the badge

In the training yards and classrooms of the Police Academy of the Federal Ministry of Interior in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a quiet revolution has been unfolding. Here, future officers are learning that the badge they will soon wear is more than a symbol of authority - it is a pledge to protect the dignity and rights of every person they encounter, no matter the circumstances.

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ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS



Non-medical prison staff in the Western Balkans to detect timely mental health disorders with violent extremist prisoners

Prison staff and management from the Western Balkans Beneficiaries took a major step forward in strengthening mental health and security in prisons, in line with



New Trauma Informed Therapy brings hope to women prisoners in Albania

For the first time, women prisoners in Albania are benefiting from a structured Trauma-Informed Therapy programme, focusing on mental health, resilience, and dignity in prison rehabilitation. With the support of the EU and Council of Europe and in partnership with the

European standards. The regional workshop in Tirana, Albania, introduced key tools, developed with support of EU and Council of Europe that are now available across the penitentiary systems of the Western Balkans Beneficiaries.

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Directorate General of Prisons, Pojska prison - the only women's prison in Albania - has started piloting trauma-informed therapy sessions.

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Preventing and Combating Child Trafficking in North Macedonia: Stories of Resilience and Collaboration

When Jana (name changed for protection) arrived at SOS Children's Village foster home, she carried only a small bag, and an invisible weight of fear, trauma, and mistrust. At just 15, she had endured months of exploitation by traffickers who had promised her "a better future." Instead, she found herself trapped in a cycle of abuse and control. She disappeared for months, sparking the haunting question: Where is Jana?

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE



Collaboration for change: fostering women's rights through stronger local partnerships in Türkiye

Commitment, collaboration, and solidarity were at the forefront in Ankara

as civil society organisations working in the field of women's rights, bar associations and municipalities from across Türkiye, and international partners convened for the Final Review Meeting: Collective Impact for Women's Access to Justice.

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Strengthening regional response to environmental crime, corruption and money laundering in the Western Balkans

Environmental crime poses a growing threat to natural resources, governance, and stability in the Western Balkans and beyond. To discuss a co-ordinated approach in the fight against corruption and environmental crimes, an open discussion took place in Strasbourg, identifying vulnerable sectors, risk assessments, and building partnerships.

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Advancing cross-border financial investigation involving digital payments and virtual assets

Over 30 professionals from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, representing financial intelligence units, prosecution services, law enforcement and asset recovery offices, consolidated their capacities in detecting, investigating and prosecuting cross-border illicit financial flows involving digital payments and virtual assets.

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Strengthening risk-based audits and sanctioning in the non-profit organisation sector

Thirty-six representatives from the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, the

Financial Crimes Investigation Board of Türkiye (MASAK), the Ministry of Interior, the Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society, and law enforcement agencies strengthened their skills in applying risk-based audits and proportionate sanctions to the non-profit organisation (NPO) sector during a Council of Europe training in Ankara.

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Željezničar and Borac players send message against hate speech and violence

Football fans in Bosnia and Herzegovina witnessed something greater than the game last night, when FK Željezničar and FK Borac faced off in Sarajevo. Just before kick-off, the players took to the pitch with a clear message: *“We are against hate and violence in sport towards anyone.”* This symbolic act united players, clubs, institutions and fans in a common stance against hate speech and violence in sport.

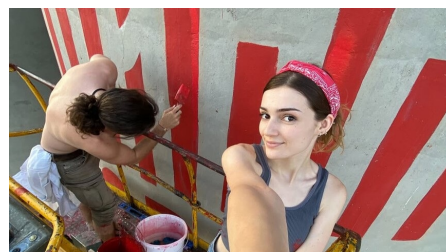
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A strong voice from Albania breaking disability barriers

Suela Lala, a prominent advocate for persons with disabilities in Albania, has spent over 15 years combating discrimination and promoting equality, focusing on accessibility, inclusion, and the protection of fundamental rights. Under her leadership countless individuals and organisations were supported in reporting discrimination, complaint mechanisms, and achieving tangible improvements in education, health, employment and public spaces.

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A wall of words, a voice for tolerance

When graphic designers Kruna Jevtić and Luka Prstojević first sat down to brainstorm their latest project, before presenting it to the Council of Europe since commissioning it, they knew it needed to be more than just art. It had to speak- clearly, boldly, and without borders. And to speak words of tolerance, respect and equality in line with the commitment of the Organisation to ‘strengthening work towards inclusive societies without marginalisation, exclusion, racism and intolerance.’

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EDUCATION FOR ALL

A small school with a big heart: how children in Kraljevo are learning inclusion by living it

When twelve-year-old Maša opened the door of her family home in Adrani, near Kraljevo, she wasn't sure what to expect. A girl her age from Slovenia was about to stay with her as part of a school exchange. At first, the two were shy, carefully observing one another. But soon they found common ground like sketching, sharing stories, and exchanging words in their own languages.



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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



Constitutional Court ruling opens path to strengthen media regulator's independence

Ensuring the independence of the media regulator and aligning the local legal framework with European standards were at the heart of discussions at a roundtable in Pristina, that brought together members and staff of the Independent Media Commission (IMC), civil society representatives, and international partners.

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Prosecutors strengthen capacities to uphold media freedom and protect journalists

Twenty-two lawyers from Bosnia and Herzegovina strengthened their capacity to defend journalists and whistle-blowers by engaging with European human rights standards and local legal practices during a recent two-day gathering held in Bihać. Participants identified gaps in whistle-blower protection and discussed ways to ensure better alignment with European standards.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

Get to know the most

recent publications under the Horizontal Facility programme

In this edition of Highlights, we present the main publications produced under

the framework of the Horizontal Facility III programme with an aim to enhance knowledge and bring European standards in various areas closer to the beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye.

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