



*Centar za građansko obrazovanje
Centre for civic education*

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BURNING THE LGBT FLAG IS A STEP BACK TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOLERANT CLIMATE IN MONTENEGRO

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) strongly condemns burning of the rainbow flag - a symbol of the LGBT community, which was placed in front of building where the Ombudsman office is based and requires authorities to immediately identify and prosecute the perpetrators. We remind that the flag was posted last week to demonstrate a support of this institution to celebration of Pride month, and that was the first time that one Montenegrin institution features LGBT flag.

This kind of manifestation of hate and intolerance shows that Montenegrin society remains uninformed, under prejudices and irrationally aggressive-minded against sexual minorities. This is supported also by recent splitting of the LGBT posters, as well as with the examples of institutional failures such as officers' misconduct during calls for domestic violence against members of the LGBT community.

Montenegrin society continues to foster the practice of homophobic behavior and shows that a lot more needs to be done in order to protect the basic human rights. **In addition to the flag burning as a direct attack on the group of the flag symbol, this is also a direct attack on the Ombudsman institution, which so far has been recognized by its quality work in the anti-discrimination activity. Accordingly, the reaction of the authorities will be crucial both for society and for the institutions of the system, which must find ways to effectively respond to these situations.**

CCE for years has been implementing educational programmes, which gather young people, as well as representatives of civil society and institutions, and among others, have aims to contribute to building a culture of human rights. We believe that, through education, it is possible to make a significant influence on the sensibilisation of the public and to the need to respect diversity and human rights and freedoms of all citizens of Montenegro. **Progress in the promotion and protection of LGBT rights has been made. However, such incidents are reminding us that we live in a society where many individuals are not willing to acknowledge differences, expressing that with acts of vandalism, but the responsibility for sanctioning it remains completely on the institutions of system.**

Nikola Donović, programme associate