

»rokodil

Engaging Words and Community

IN 10 STORIES

... and the story unfolds...

“Certainement qui est en droit de vous rendre absurde
est en droit de vous rendre injuste.”

• ***Voltaire***

“Anyone who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.”

• ***Voltaire***



SUPPORT TO UKRAINE, FIMI AND DISINFORMATION

The KROKODIL Association is among the very few independent, non-partisan civil society organisations in Serbia that actively advocate for the principles of **responsible behaviour** by government and state institutions as well as by the civil society sector and media regarding **Russian propaganda, disinformation** and other **soft power mechanisms**. Therefore KROKODIL has built up and further sharpens capabilities to identify, analyse and assess Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (**FIMI**) under the program entitled **Fake News from the Past**.

Furthermore, KROKODIL is still the main CSO in Serbia that is actively focused on **helping the citizens of Ukraine focusing on both bottom-up and top-down approaches**. Following previous activities of collecting and **personally delivering humanitarian aid** for the Municipal Perinatal Center in Kharkiv in 2022 as well as for the Center for Social Work of the Lozova Raion in the town of Blyzniuky in 2023, KROKODIL's delegation once again headed to Ukraine in mid-February 2024 in order to personally deliver aid to civilians caught in the middle of military operations in the city of Kherson. All these journeys were followed by a series of field stories, a travelogue published under the title "12-to-8."

The first **Ukrainian library** in Serbia was opened in 2023 in KROKODIL Center as a result of KROKODIL's advocacy initiative addressed to local **independent publishers** to donate and support the development of this important collection of 450 titles for adults and another 150 titles for kids and young adults.

Finally, **a series of events marking the first and second years of aggression** were organised by KROKODIL in cooperation with its partners from the International diplomatic corps in Belgrade.

Other programs include: research/analysis with recommendations for the Serbian CSOs engagement followed by the two Serbian-Ukrainian CSOs forums; shelter, space for work, and support to Ukrainian literary creators; creative workshops for children from Ukraine; and various debates, press conferences, networking events, online campaigns and panel discussions.

After three years of continuous activities dedicated to Ukraine KROKODIL finalised 2024 by establishing a platform LIBERTE, EGALITE, SOLIDARITE which will serve for further collaboration among various CSOs from the WB region and Ukraine.

KROKODIL received an **award** from the Serbian Philanthropy Forum for its exceptional contribution to helping the people of Ukraine. KROKODIL was also granted the "Hrabri glas" (Courageous Voice) award by the biggest CSO in Serbia – CRTA, for its boldness in supporting the citizens of this war-torn country.

Supported by the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade, ERSTE Foundation, French Embassy in Belgrade, Ukrainian Embassy in Belgrade, Embassy of Poland in Belgrade, Polish Institute in Belgrade.



FESTIVAL KROKODIL

Ever since its foundation in 2009, KROKODIL has organised the annual KROKODIL Literary Festival. The festival, which was primarily conceived as a regional affair dedicated to the promotion of dialogue, reconciliation and reconstruction of broken links particularly in the overlapping regions of the Western Balkans and Southeast Europe, soon became more and more international and has grown into one of the most distinctive and popular events in the region, exploring the most important cultural, political and social topics of the day.

Combining different formats such as readings, sofa interviews, panel discussions, workshops, press conferences, film and other audio-visual content, the festival has presented, throughout its 16 annual “editions,” hundreds of distinguished writers, artists and public figures from numerous countries.

Among them are: **Bernhard Schlink, Margaret Atwood, Irvine Welsh, Hanif Kureishi, László Krasznahorkai, Erlend Loe, Georgi Gospodinov, Dubravka Ugrešić, Arnon Grunberg, Hassan Blasim, Mathias Enard, Aleksandar Hemon, Mira Furlan, Boris Buden, Ivan Krastev** etc.

The Festival boasts a large, very loyal, and engaged audience.

- **65.000+**
visitors
 - **2500+**
participants
 - **115+**
programs
 - **25+**
in other
European cities
 - **350.000+**
annual reach via traditional
media in the region of SEE
 - **500.000+**
euro media value
-



STRENGTHENING LOCAL INITIATIVES AND CSOs, NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

As a member of the informal network of feminist groups and independent women activists, KROKODIL and its “sisters-in-arms” traditionally mark the International Women’s Day by organising **March for Women’s Labor Rights and Living Wages** continuing the struggle by using this historically and politically important date to point out women’s economic and existential issues.

KROKODIL employees and activists were the first to face **SLAPP** lawsuits in Serbia which initiated formation of the CSOs network/Working Group which will map SLAPPs further and support organisations and activists in defending their rights via institutions thus practising democracy in-situ.

KROKODIL belongs to the network of associations, journalists and media that supports the civil demands of the **Serbia Against Violence mass protest**. Finally, in the ongoing struggle to improve conditions for **fair and free elections** as well as higher voter turnout, KROKODIL, together with other CSOs, participated and campaigned in several civic initiatives such as **DOKLE VIŠE!?** (HOW MUCH LONGER!?)

/ SPACES OF RESILIENCE

By providing physical space for activities, a series of educational programs and mentoring sessions, KROKODIL aims to strengthen and develop the capacities of local civil society organisations, initiatives & groups, activists and individuals.

- 50+ organisations supported
- 1 sub-grant scheme
- 15+ training sessions and seminars
- 10+ podcast episodes
- 30+ online campaigns
- 15 public events

/ BETTER TOGETHER

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique challenge for democracies, and thus for the work of civil society organisations. Project offered a platform for discussing and sharing the lessons learned about policy and public health emergency responses, the role of the government, and the effect on cultural and creative industries.

- 85+ organisations from 9 regional countries involved
- 1 high-profile research with analysis developed
- 3 official institutions addressed
- 3 online campaigns
- 4 public events



WRITER IN RESIDENCE / WRITER IN EXILE

KROKODIL's Writer-in-residence program was launched in 2012 as the first residential program in Serbia intended primarily for writers, translators and other literary creators. During the years, the program grew to encompass historians, journalists, academics and other experts, as well.

In 2022 the decision was reached to freeze all usual activities of this ongoing program and to offer this space to literary creators and cultural workers from Ukraine as a safe haven for work for creative individuals in jeopardy from that war-torn country.

- **137 authors, translators, historians and other literary creators from**
23 European countries
- **13** local translations and published works
- **420** public events in
6 cities
- **200+** online campaigns
- **250+** traditional media announcements.

Emergency residency program for Ukrainian literary creators is supported by The European Cultural Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation and Erste Foundation.

RECLAIM
THE
STREETS!

ENOUGH
IS
ENOUGH



CIVIC INITIATIVES AND DISMANTLING CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

The walls in Serbia have for a long time been a politically desirable and available canvas for the expression of views of various extreme right-wing groups. Secretly legitimised and supported by the authorities, these activities result in an urban landscape saturated with drawings, graffiti, murals, and other visual messages that directly express and endorse hatred, racism, and sexism spreading toxic content and creating a society full of violence.

The activities under the program WHY DO YOU SAY LOVE WHEN YOU MEAN WAR? clearly identified the cases of undue influence on 30 year long culture of violence development as a highly dangerous trend for the democratic processes in Serbia. Ultimately, the objective of the civic initiative FREE THE STREETS/FREE THE PEOPLE! and its constituent programs is to actively transform these dangerous tendencies.

- network of **150+** citizens/activists
- **200+** graffiti removed
- **10** large scale murals in **5** cities and towns across Serbia
- **4** working groups
- **1** official proposal for the legislation changes/public policy
- **1** civic petition
- **15** local protests and advocacy campaigns
- **1** high profile expert research with analysis
- **30** public panel discussions in **22** locations
- **12** online and offline campaigns

During this first year of the aforementioned activities, more than **twenty eight misdemeanor charges** were filed against eight activists and KROKODIL personnel. These **strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP)** par excellence represent a relatively new threat to freedom of speech in Serbia and one of the biggest challenges for KROKODIL to fight against and overcome in years to come.

Supported by the European Endowment for Democracy and Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnership – MATRA.



COMMON LANGUAGE

Back in 2015, the LANGUAGES AND NATIONALISMS project dealt with the important question of language misuse for political purposes in the region of the former Yugoslavia. It culminated in the development of the **Declaration on the Common Language** which was signed by over 15,000 people worldwide.

Avram Noam Chomsky, famous American professor and public intellectual known for his work in linguistics as much as for his political activism, and social criticism is one of many high-profile academia persons who signed the Declaration.

As a continuation the COMMON LIBRARY edition of nine pocket sized books was published in 2021 by KROKODIL containing essayistic doublets on specific socio-political topics such as Exile, Society, Fascism, Europe etc. signed by some of the most important literary names of XX and XXI centuries. Theatre play “Urotnici” (The Conspirators) was developed in 2023 based on these essays. This play/scene reading is still being staged in theatres around Europe with intense public and critical acclaim.

Another detour of this project to the field of different artistic expression is the theatre play “Urotnici” (The Conspirators) based on the essays and lives of authors presented in the Common Library edition. This play was widely staged in theatres around the region with intense public and critical acclaim.

All these advocacy activities were designed to influence legislative changes when it comes to the recognition of the fact that the 4 “political languages” spoken in the region are actually nothing but equal variants of one and the same (still unnamed) polycentric language.

This legislative recognition would effectively bring an end to educational, cultural and, consequently, political segregation.

- 30+ public events in 4 countries
- 1 Declaration
- 15,000+ signatures
- 15+ online campaigns
- 9 books / 1 edition published in 3 countries
- 1 theater play developed and played in 5 countries
- 2 state owned theaters involved and 5 regional festivals
- 80+ media announcements
- 90,000 euro value of the media announcements

Supported by CCFD-Terre Solidaire.

DEBATES ON EUROPE

One of the most internationally recognised programs of the KROKODIL Association is DEBATE ON EUROPE. The first one, entitled What We Talk About When We Talk About Europe was held in December 2014 in Belgrade as an integral part of a series of debates realised in more than 10 European cities initiated by the German Academy of Language and Literature as well as the Cultural and Media Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Germany. The great success of the Belgrade edition, the continuation of the European political crisis as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that followed, led to the marking of this event as one of the KROKODIL's annual programs. DEBATE ON EUROPE presents a two day long event that offers a platform for regular gatherings of intellectuals who are opening dialogue on the burning issues of the European past, the present and the future aiming to contribute to the development of a better society.

- 4 public events
- 15 days of program realization
- 50+ panels realized
- 85+ intellectuals and experts participated
- 3000+ events attendees
- 15+ online campaigns
- 4 media partnerships
- 85+ media announcements
- 100,000 euro value of the media announcements

Supported by the German Embassy in Belgrade, The Federal Foreign Office - Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, forumZFD, S. Fischer Stiftung, Allianz Kulturstiftung, Austrian Cultural Forum, Goethe-Institut Belgrad, The Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade.



HISTOIRE POUR LA LIBERTÉ

In 2019 WHO STARTED ALL THIS? – HISTORIANS AGAINST REVISIONISM project gathered some of the most prominent historians of the post-Yugoslav region. The intention was to actively **fight against revisionist tendencies** in regional historiographies and thus advocate for a multi-perspective approach to learning history in official school curricula. The main result was the publication of the **Declaration Defend History**. During the next five years KROKODIL continued the discussion on the importance of inclusive and balanced historical writing and participatory **cultures of remembrance** through the project HISTOIRE POUR LA LIBERTÉ. By marking events in recent European history, such as the reunification of Germany and the democratic transition of Central and Eastern Europe, but also by correlating them to the breakup of Yugoslavia, this program aims to stimulate debate and reflection on a common culture of remembrance and to promote peace, tolerance, and exchange of experiences and perspectives, in order to further emphasize the dynamic character of European memory.

- 50+ public events in
6 countries
- 1 Declaration in
9 languages
- 1,000+ signatures
- 25+ online campaigns
- 30+ experts historians involved from
6 countries
- 150+ students of history involved
- 3 summerschools
- 4 seminars
- 1 advocacy campaign
- 100+ media announcements

Supported by the Europe for Citizens program of the European Commission and German Embassy in Belgrade.



PHILANTHROPY/ CROWDFUNDING

The KROKODIL Association is locally and internationally recognised as one of the most dynamic and successful crowdfunding organisations with more than 750 regular individual donors that provide financial contribution to different humanitarian causes the purpose of which is to help vulnerable groups. Institutions that care for extremely prematurely born babies, children's hospitals at **home** and **abroad**, civilian refugees from **Ukraine** and **Gaza Strip**, even restoration of vandalized monuments in public space... all were supported through different crowdfunding campaigns initiated and managed by KROKODIL.

Main objective is strengthening solidarity among citizens and encouraging empathy and proactive stance towards addressing the issues that individuals, groups or families, whether temporarily or permanently, face.

Another goal is to advocate for **improved public policies** relating to philanthropy.

- 20 fundraising campaigns during 5 years
 - 80,000 euro fundraised
 - 750+ individual donors worldwide
 - 4 state institutions beneficiaries in 2 countries (Serbia and Ukraine)
 - 14 members of one big **Palestinian family** rescued from Gaza and provided shelter in Serbia
 - 25 online campaigns
 - 15 different charity events
 - 50+ media announcements
 - 100,000 euro value of the media announcements
-



KROKODIL Center

KROKODIL Center is a self-sustainable multifunctional space of 250m2 divided into three separate units: courtyard, office with conference area, and a technically equipped venue with stage, microphones, stage lighting, a screen, projector etc.

KROKODIL Center is a pet/baby/kid-friendly non-smoking place. It contains a bar and a restaurant kitchen plus an experienced and well-trained chef and staff that serves a carefully selected choice of wines, drinks and food. The space is ideal for lectures, training, meetings, work breakfasts, brunches and lunches, organised dinners, presentations, plannings, seminars, workshops, press conferences, corporate celebrations, parties and anniversaries.

Since opening in September 2018, more than 640 different events have taken place in KROKODIL Center, including:

- 120+ literary events
- 200+ socio-political events
- 50+ arts and theater programs
- 40+ exhibitions
- 10+ international student visits
- 220+ academic gatherings, roundtables and panel discussions

...and numerous other projects dedicated to translation, literature, regional and European cultural cooperation, the mobility of cultural workers, cross-border and cross-sector activities funded mainly by the Creative Europe program of the European Commission...

STEERING BOARD



VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ is an award-winning and internationally acclaimed Serbian writer, translator, editor, publicist and human rights activist. He won the 1994 NIN-award for his first novel *In the Hold* (U potpalublju) which was translated into 22 languages. He published 12 books and also writes essays, articles, movie scripts and theater plays. He is one of the founders of the KROKODIL Association.



MILENA BERIĆ holds an MA in Communicology and a BSc in North American Economic studies and EU Economic studies. Milena is a researcher and analyst as well as human rights activist dedicated for the past 10 years to KROKODIL's organisational and program development, external affairs and communications. She speaks English, French, German, and Greek from which she also translates. She is a member of the Pacific Council on International Policy.



BORIS BUDEN is one of the Europe's most prominent and publicly visible philosophers, cultural theorists and publicists today. He holds a PhD in cultural theory from Humboldt University in Berlin. He writes essays and articles in the fields of philosophy, politics, critique of culture and art. He teaches at Bauhaus University and is also a guest teacher at several European Universities.



DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ is a historian and professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. She works on the issues of democracy in Serbia and the Balkans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European influences at the beginning of the 20th century, interpretations of history in textbooks, women's history, and the processes of modernization. She is one of the most distinguished public figures in Serbia today.



IGOR ŠTIKIS is a writer and scholar. He is a professor at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. His novels, *A Castle in Romagna* and *The Judgment of Richard Richter* won numerous awards and have been translated into 15 languages. He was honoured with the French distinction Chevalier des arts et des lettres for his literary and intellectual achievements.



OLGA MANOJLOVIĆ PINTAR is a senior research associate at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia (Belgrade), and a specialist in memory culture. She is involved in many domestic and international projects, and regularly participates in international interdisciplinary conferences and roundtables. She has published numerous articles, edited three collective volumes, and authored two books.

1930S
AT THE FRONT LINE

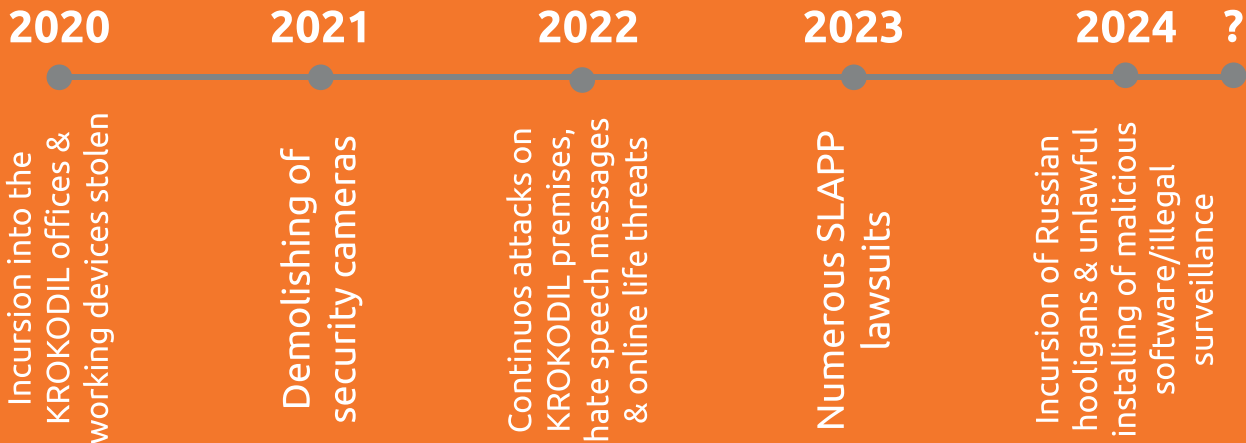
Together with our employees, associates, partners, donors and above all the citizens who support us, we have never been compromising when it comes to the most sensitive political topics. We stayed at the front line by defending basic human rights and freedoms and by calling for institutional accountability. We stayed at the front line to defend democracy. Because of our work in the past couple of years, especially since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine we regularly suffered violence, life threats and systematic vandalism of our premises. **Although we regularly report all these cases to the police and other authorities in charge, there has been no response.**

In September 2024 a group of Russian-speaking hooligans secretly entered our premises and cut the ties on the terrace that held the Ukrainian flag. For the first time attackers were

Russian citizens who physically entered the workspace while the employees were present. This was an ideologically motivated attack carefully planned with the clear message to be sent to us, the Serbian citizens and our Western partners.

Further, KROKODIL employees were targeted with illegal surveillance by the malicious software unlawfully installed by the Serbian Intelligence Services.

Since 2023, KROKODIL employees and activists have faced over twenty SLAPP lawsuits initiated by the Serbian Government. These strategic lawsuits against public participation represent a relatively new threat to freedom of speech in Serbia and one of the biggest challenges for us to fight against and overcome in years to come.



**All these incidents were reported to the authorities but perpetrators have never been identified and prosecuted.*

The KROKODIL Association is among the very few independent, non-partisan civil society organisations in Serbia that deal with culture and literature but also actively advocate for the principles of responsible behaviour by the state institutions, civil society organisations and media in Serbia. Committed to developing democratic culture, civic activism and educating citizens on their political rights, KROKODIL, as a think-and-do tank, is dedicated to establishing the rule of law and, bearing in mind both Serbia's specific geopolitical position today and the importance of European security as a whole, thereby strengthening Serbia's movement towards the EU. To this end, KROKODIL is focused on the development of various programs of social and political significance promoting basic human rights and freedoms while strongly focusing on civic engagement.

The KROKODIL Association is equally dedicated to the production of literary, cultural and socio-political programs and projects with the aim of developing audiences among those that are interested in culture and politics as such. It is particularly engaged in promoting a culture of dialogue and reconciliation and the reconstruction of broken links, particularly in the region of the Western Balkans/Southeast Europe, as well as in deepening mutual understanding and acceptance of differences within the wider European and global context.



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