

xrokodil

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***



KROKODIL REACTS TO THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE / YEAR 3

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 NGO sector and media regarding **Russian propaganda** and other **soft power mechanisms**. Committed to developing democratic culture and 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.

Furthermore, KROKODIL is still the only CSO in Serbia that is actively focused on **helping the citizens of Ukraine**. 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 will once again head 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. This will once again be 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 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 400 titles for adults and another 150 titles for kids and young adults.

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

In addition to all this, some of the other ongoing programs concerning Ukraine are: research/analysis with recommendations for the Serbian CSOs engagement related to the Russian aggression against Ukraine; providing shelter, space for work, and support to Ukrainian literary creators; organising creative workshops for children from Ukraine; and various debates, press conferences, networking events, online campaigns and panel discussions.

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.

All these activities have been followed by the **series of continuous physical and online attacks as well as life threats** on KROKODIL premises and its personnel. Even though these events were reported fully to the police and other relevant institutions, due to the lack of political will, there never was any follow-up.

Supported by Canadian Embassy in Belgrade, Save the Children, Ukrainian Embassy in Belgrade, UK Embassy in Belgrade, Embassy of Poland in Belgrade, Polish Institute in Belgrade, European Delegation to Serbia.



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, KROKODIL has presented, throughout its 15 annual “editions,” hundreds of distinguished writers, artists and public figures from numerous countries.

Among them are: **Bernhard Schlink, Irvine Welsh, Hanif Kureishi, Margaret Atwood, László Krasznahorkai, Georgi Gospodinov, Dubravka Ugrešić, 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 INITIATIVE AND CSOs PROGRAM, NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

As a member of the informal network of feminist and women's groups and independent 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**. KROKODIL continues the struggle and uses this historically and politically important date to point out economic and existential difficulties most women face today.

KROKODIL also belongs to the network of associations of citizens, journalists and media against violence that supports the civil demands of the **Serbia Against Violence protest**.

The protests were motivated and initiated by the horrific massacre in the Vladislav Ribnikar primary school when, in the early morning of 3 May 2023, a thirteen-year-old boy took the lives of nine of his peers and a school guard. This event was the first mass murder of this type in the history of Serbia, and it can be said that it is only the tip of the iceberg of prevailing violence, aggression and hatred that for decades has been permeating every pore of our society, influencing public awareness, education, mass and popular culture.

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, series of educational programs and mentoring sessions, KROKODIL aims to strengthen and develop the capacities of local civil society organisations, citizen associations, initiatives & groups, activists, and individuals in order to empower them to fulfill their goals and missions, to raise and improve the visibility of their activities in the promotion and development of democratic values, civic rights, minority and children's rights, a healthier environment, multiculturalism, and cultural dialogue.

- **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. The project “Better Together – Strengthening Dialogue and Cooperation in the Times of Crises” 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 facing the continued challenges posed by the coronavirus.

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

Supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), European Fund for Balkans (EFB) and Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the US.

WRITER IN RESIDENCE / WRITER IN EXILE

KROKODIL's Writer-in-residence program was launched in 2012 as the first residential program in Serbia intended exclusively for writers, translators and other literary creators.

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.

- **131** 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.





FREE THE STREETS / FREE THE PEOPLE! WHY DO YOU SAY LOVE WHEN YOU MEAN WAR?

The walls of buildings in Serbian cities and towns have for a long time been a politically desirable and available canvas for the expression of views of various extreme right-wing groups, as well as a platform for promoting policies related to them. The result of the secret and even not so secret support as well as undue influence of the ruling political structure is an urban landscape saturated with drawings, graffiti, murals, and other visual messages that directly express and endorse hatred, racism, and sexism and that generally spreads toxic content of various types, creating a society full of violence present everywhere, especially among young people. This rhetoric and related actions also endanger the fundamental rights of people in Serbia.

The activities listed below will clearly identify the cases of **undue influence** in the public spectrum as a highly dangerous long-term trend for the democratic processes in Serbia. Ultimately, the objective of our civic initiative 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
- **16** public panel discussions in
15 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, KROKODIL's project Languages and Nationalisms 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.

The COMMON LIBRARY edition of nine pocket sized books containing essayistic doublets on specific topics and signed by some of the most important literary names as a continuation of the above-named project takes into consideration literary genres rather than linguistic science in order to find the best means to advocate and apply pressure on political authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

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 activities were designed specifically in order to influence legislative change 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

Through active international cooperation, KROKODIL has gained significant recognition in both the European cultural and literary scenes, as well as in European socio political circles. KROKODIL is particularly focused on developing various programs of exceptional social and political significance, mostly in cooperation with different local and international partners. The most prominent among them is an annual series of conferences known as the Debate on Europe. The first Belgrade Debate on Europe, 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 on Europe realised in more than 10 European/Eastern 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 Debate on Europe, the continuation of the European crisis as well as facing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social consequences throughout Europe that followed, led to the marking of the Belgrade Debate on Europe as one of the KROKODIL's annual programs, as an event that offers a platform for regular gatherings of intellectuals from all over the European continent in order to open discussion on and articulate the burning issues of the European past, the present and the future aiming to contribute to development of 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

KROKODIL's project Who started all this? – Historians against revisionism 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 multiperspective approach to learning history in official school curricula. The main result of this project is the publication and dissemination of the **Declaration Defend History**. As a follow-up of this successful project, 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 project 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 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 raise funds and 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.

One of the main objectives here 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
- **25** online campaigns
- **15** different charity events
- **50+** media announcements
- **100,000** euro value of the media announcements



KROKODIL Center

KROKODIL Center is a fully self-sustainable multifunctional space of 250m² that is 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 and 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.



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 ŠTIKS 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.

The KROKODIL Association is among the very few independent, non-partisan civil society organisations in Serbia that deals with culture and literature but also actively advocate for the principles of responsible behaviour by the state institutions, NGO sector 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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