

# OSCE Mission to Serbia announces winner of its 2021 Persons of the Year Award, honours recipients of 2020 Persons of the Year Award

BELGRADE, 17 December 2021 - At a ceremony held today in Belgrade, the OSCE Mission to Serbia presented its 2021 Persons of the Year Award to: Vladimira Dorčova-Valtnerova, Founder and Editor in Chief of Storyteller.rs, from Maglić, and the Voluntary Firefighting Association of Požega. As the recognition of the 2020 Person of the Year Award was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on this occasion the OSCE Mission honoured last year's recipients: Ivanka Jovanović, Executive Director of the National Organisation of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia (NOOIS), and Biljana Stepanov, Director of the Centre for Support of Women from Kikinda.

This award celebrates citizens of Serbia who contribute to the promotion of OSCE values and principles in the country, such as non-discrimination, consolidation of human rights, equal opportunities and sustainable democratic reforms, and focus on improving the lives of individuals and communities.

**Vladimira Dorčova-Valtnerova**, Founder and Editor in Chief of Storyteller.rs, from Maglić, is recognized for her outstanding achievement in advocating for ethical journalism and freedom of expression, including in the languages of national minorities. In 2021, Dorčova-Valtnerova worked with the OSCE Mission on issues relating to the socio-economic position of journalists and media workers in Vojvodina, challenges to media reporting at the local level, use of social media in promoting cyber security and on raising awareness of the importance of public information in languages of national minorities.

**The Voluntary Firefighting Association of Požega** receives the award for its outstanding engagement in enhancing local safety in partnership with Serbia's institutions, and for its response to emergencies. In 2021, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior's Sector for Emergency Management and Požega's Voluntary Firefighting Association, the OSCE Mission focused on promoting voluntary firefighting initiatives in local communities across Serbia.

**Ivanka Jovanović**, Executive Director of the NOOIS, is recognized for her advocacy for the rights and protection of persons with disabilities in emergencies, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Mission supported Ivanka's initiative to strengthen the emergency preparedness of persons with disabilities and raise public awareness on this topic. As a result of this initiative, the OSCE Mission-supported printing in braille the Family Guide on Emergency Preparedness and Response, the first publication on this topic in Serbia tailored for people with visual impairment.

**Biljana Stepanov**, Director of the Centre for Support of Women, was awarded for her contribution to the security of women and girls in the context of the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, marked in 2020. Among other efforts, Biljana contributed to the development of the network of civil society organizations for UNSCR 1325, which included 23 civil society groups, enabling their active and informed involvement on matters concerning UNSCR 1325.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/mission-to-serbia/508634>

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