

# Interview with local activists - Katja Sešek and Filip Vurnik (Slovenia)

We conducted an interview with our local activists Katja Sešek and Filip Vurnik, creators of "Mavrica v žepu" (Rainbow in the pocket)\*. Rainbow in the pocket is a guide created for educators who would like to discuss LGBTQ+ topics with their students but don't exactly know how to approach it.



KATJA SEŠEK

"I'm Katja, I'm 28. I'm involved in LGBT work/activism for 9 years. Right now I'm employed at Legebitra. I have masters in social work. My main topics of interest are social norm criticism, queer theories, doing training and research. I'm human right trainer of Council of Europe, of program Compass. I identify as non-binary and bisexual. I'm a co-author of Rainbow in the pocket."



FILIP VURNIK

"My name is Filip and I'm 25 years old. I've been involved in activism for 4 years now and I am a student of fine arts education. I'm doing my masters now. I'm a trainer. And I identify as a transgender person and I'm one of the authors of Rainbow in the pocket."

*We recorded the interview and is available in audio format. You can listen to the whole interview, but here we gathered some highlights, good hearted advice and thought provoking insight.*



## **Katja and Filip defining activism and why is it important to them:**

**Filip:** "One part of being an activist for me is just being "out and proud" if I say it in a mainstream way. So that you let people know that you are a part of LGBTQ+ community. Also maybe that you are involved in some kind of LGBT organization or that you write about it or talk about it or educate people. I think, also microactivism is a very good thing, when you talk to people one on one. I think that's activism for me."

**Katja:** "If I would have to write a definition of activism, I would say for me is, when you do something a bit out of your comfort zone that is in line with how you feel. When you do the reflection, is the society forcing-in brackets, forcing me into some kind of behavior, some kind of response, some kind of answer but I don't feel that answer is true to myself. Then just because of that it means that if I listen to myself, I would go out of my comfort zone and out of the societal comfort zone. But if I make it broader I would say that activism has to have the social component and the knowledge of social structures. Because I think that without that is just a bunch of people screaming their needs."





### Katja's anecdote about what activism means to them:

When I was very very little, I think I was 4 or 5 my mom always tells me a story when I came home from the kindergarden and I said that the teacher said - "Boys can play but girls have to clean up the toys and I was like screaming all over the apartment that's not fair, that's not fair", so coming from that it's not really hard for me to describe what activism actually means to me.



### Katja and Filip on their achievements in their activist work:

**Filip:** "I think for me as a consequence of me being visible and active in activism what I consider a win is the fact that a lot of young trans people are asking me questions and are looking up to me and are seeking advice. So I would say that is a big win for me to be the person people actually look up to. It's a real privilege to be that person."

**Katja:** "I mean the very good moment for me is when I do education workshops, when I see people actually realizing stuff, that I get through to them. And also when people decide to come out in a workshop because then that's kind of a feedback that I did good. Just the fact that I'm kind of recognized as an activist in this field."

### Katja and Filip on their motivation to do activist work:

**Filip:** "I think my motivation is the same as my frustration. That's the fact that things are not ok in the society. So this kind of motivates me at the same time as frustrates me to quit. It's a battle. But I guess even though that might sound cheesy I do think about people that are coming, that are now like 15 and they struggle and I don't want them to struggle in the same way I did. So I guess that's why I'm still doing stuff in activism."

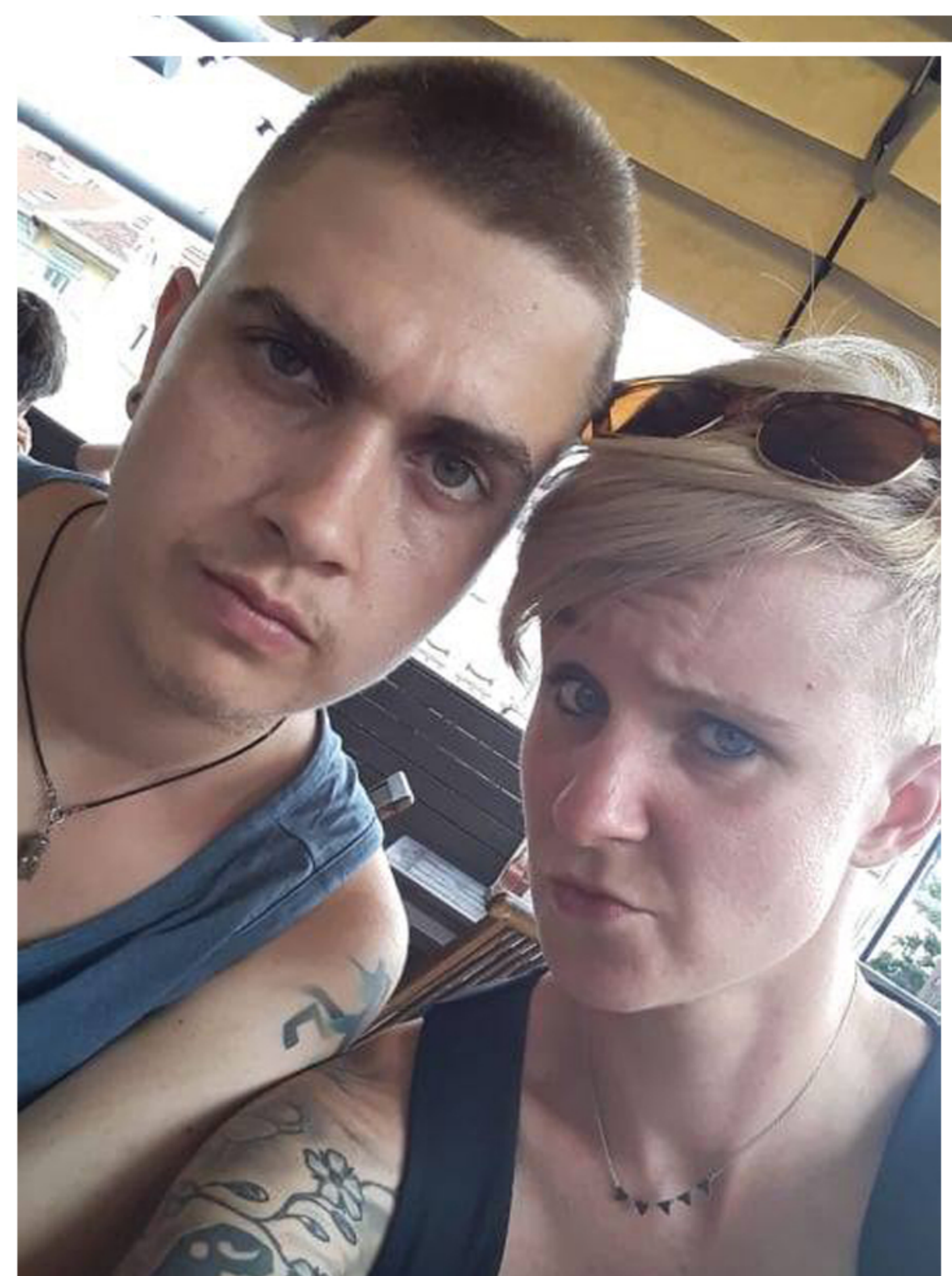
**Katja:** "When your job is also seen as activism, of course I'm doing what I love but it's also it's in every aspect in your life, literally. So that for me lately has been very difficult. I would have to say that I'm still doing this especially for young people that seek safe space and the space to be themselves. And also on the other hand for young people that want to do activism. -- For me one of the best moments is when I see a young activist

### Their thoughts on comparing LGBT+ and environmental activism:

**Katja:** "I think if we compare, just for an example LGBT activism and eco activism I think the main difference and also the main positive and also negative thing is that LGBT is personal circumstance that one person has or doesn't have which on the other topic is not the same. So, from my perspective I think that the fact that a lot of people that do LGBT+ activism also identify on the LGBT+ spectrum or disidentify with the norm. I think that's a plus because that really is a motivating factor but on the other hand I think it's so much more difficult because of that."

When you're fighting you are not fighting for someone, you are not fighting for a cause, ideology you are basically fighting for yourself."

**Filip:** "Also, I think in environmental activism there is no need for reflection of social structure and your privileges. Before being an LGBT+ activist you have to reflect your privileges."



g r o w . "

**If you would like to listen the whole interview we've prepared timestamps for easier navigation.**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oGY2xu2CqWxA7JF32Uzx-2eWb6S0oiMUr/view?fbclid=IwAR1RzkBmpSyR8TzdXKz40hqFWiQtV-gRCUph7qg403R6ENiOrCLf\\_2yzwK8](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oGY2xu2CqWxA7JF32Uzx-2eWb6S0oiMUr/view?fbclid=IwAR1RzkBmpSyR8TzdXKz40hqFWiQtV-gRCUph7qg403R6ENiOrCLf_2yzwK8)

00:00 - Introductions  
02:35 - How do you define "activism" and why is it important to you?  
07:55 - What are your achievements in your activist work?  
10:13 - What motivates you in your activist work?  
12:57 - Are more and more young people joining LGBTQIA+ activism?  
17:00 - Filip's activism and incorporating activist topics in his art  
19:30 - Why did the Slovenian Perform2Reform team decide to make the manual?  
24:11 - What are the positive effects of international collaboration in activism?  
27:15 - Contents of the manual "Rainbow in the Pocket"  
34:40 - English version of the manual (coming this fall!)  
36:20 - How Katja's work with the Theatre of the Oppressed influence the manual  
39:13 - Filip on the illustrations in the manual  
42:02 - What was the feedback for the manual?  
46:02 - What was the feedback from schoolworkers in particular?  
48:15 - How well informed are students about LGBTQIA+ topics?  
52:42 - What are your plans for the future?  
55:55 - What advice could you give to us, newer activists?

**So that's it from our side and remember as Katja says:**

"The world is hard on  
you, the community  
is even harder on  
you, try to be soft on  
yourself."

\*Feel free to use the manual!

Slovenian version: <https://legebitra.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Mavrica-v-zepu-DIGITAL.pdf>

English version: <https://legebitra.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Rainbow-in-the-pocket-digital.pdf>

This interview was conducted by the Slovene team of participants of the Erasmus+ youth exchange Step 4 Change as part of their preparation.

