SECOND REGIONAL FORUM: PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

“INTEGRATED POLICIES, INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS”

Tirana, Albania, 9 -10 October 2019

DRAFT FORUM REPORT
December 2019
ACRONYMS

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Civil society organizations (CSOs)
Council of Europe (CoE)
European Union (EU)
Ending violence against women (EVAW)
Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)
International Labour Organization (ILO)
Non-governmental organization (NGO)
Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Session</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Scene – Implementation Progress in Partner Countries</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenary Session</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakout sessions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2: Sexual Violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation: Overview of protection, prosecution and integrated policies on sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenary Session</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakout sessions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Session</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Recommendations and Ways Forward</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Note</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker Biographies</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Second Regional Forum Promoting the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey, “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships,” was held in Tirana, Albania, from 9-10 October 2019. The Forum was convened by UN Women, in collaboration with the Government of Albania through the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP), and the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), in partnership with the Council of Europe (CoE). The Forum brought together over 140 participants from the Western Balkans and Turkey and throughout the region, including representatives of governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), UN Women, regional institutions, and European Union (EU) delegations. The objective was to foster dialogue and exchanges of expertise, knowledge and experiences on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence at the regional, national and local levels. While the Istanbul Convention requires multi-agency collaboration, one of the main challenges for effective cooperation is the lack of clear definitions of the role of each actor, particularly law enforcement agencies, which may adopt a perpetrator-centred approach or are likely to impose mandatory mediation or conciliation, which are prohibited by the Istanbul Convention. Furthermore, women’s organizations are not systematically part of the official system of coordination and cooperation between different agencies. Organizations of women from marginalized and disadvantaged groups are particularly excluded from these systems of coordination.

Secondly, participants shared strategies and best practices for improved implementation of the Istanbul Convention provisions relating to sexual violence, harassment, stalking and other forms of violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey. While countries in the region have made efforts to address physical violence

within the domestic context, more robust measures are needed to address other forms of violence such as sexual violence, harassment and stalking. Services for women survivors of sexual violence are extremely weak across the region, with adequate services (including easily accessible rape crisis and sexual violence referral centres for immediate medical counselling, care and forensic services) still lacking. Legislation and prosecutorial procedure must be harmonized with international standards to support women survivors of violence and protect them from secondary victimization through the judicial process.

Throughout two days of collaboration and thoughtful discussion, participants developed a series of conclusions and recommendations to improve the capacity of states to support and protect women and girls who are victims of violence.

**Effective inter-agency cooperation should include all sectors at all levels of operation.** Intersectoral cooperation streamlines processes and makes services more accessible and responsive to the needs of those they are serving. Part of this cooperation includes knowledge-sharing between these bodies. Data standardization across all sectors will increase inter-agency cooperation and the effectiveness of services. The use of content management systems throughout all sectors involved in service delivery makes the data accessible and comparable, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of both the provision of services and the impact evaluations of those services.

Across the region, providing education and specialized trainings for service providers is seen as a key step towards promoting capacity building, inter-agency cooperation, and effectiveness in responding to the needs of all women, particularly the most disadvantaged. Increased education lowers biases and increases service quality, particularly for survivors of sexual violence. Education and trainings should be provided by accredited institutions or bodies, and there should be follow-up mechanisms to ensure that lessons learned are put into practice.

Participants identified the **proper allocation of resources to support service providers** as a crucial step that requires collaboration between all actors working in EVAW. Gender-sensitive budgeting is imperative for proper implementation of Istanbul Convention standards, and civil society organizations must act as monitoring bodies to ensure that institutions are properly using their resources to fulfil their commitments. Service providers, particularly grassroots CSOs, should be funded partially by governments, but partially by other actors, maintaining their autonomy while continuing to work towards full implementation of Istanbul Convention standards through their own work, and holding others (and themselves) to account.

**Establishing specialized and centralized centres for survivors of sexual violence,** where victims can access all services from the same location, is a necessary step towards making these services accessible and available to all, and lessens the risk of secondary trauma as a woman navigates the reporting process. Additionally, the centralization of systems and services can improve multisectoral coordination and promote a systematic approach to service provision, but it is crucial that the centralization is informed by a bottom-up approach that flows between the local level and central level, ensuring the active inclusion of voices at the grassroots level, rather than a top-down approach.

All activities implemented, whether trainings provided to service professionals, the allocation of resources, or the establishment of centres for victims of violence, must have **monitoring mechanisms in place** to evaluate their effectiveness and hold service providers to account.

Finally, participants noted the need to **standardize language and definitions of the various forms of violence** throughout the region. National legislations utilize varying definitions of different forms of violence, if they are defined at all; this has impacts on prosecution and service provision, as well as on the comparability of data among countries. As one participant noted, “It creates a kind of vagueness within the system that makes it difficult to tackle violence against women as a whole.”

As follow-up actions to ensure the effective and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention focusing on inter-agency cooperation and the provision of specialized services for victims of violence, participants specifically proposed monitoring of recommendations for each country, increasing and supporting regional support networks and mechanisms, an increased focus on sharing solutions pertaining to sexual violence prevention.
Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations and is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and systemic gender-based discrimination.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, with 34 ratifications and 48 signatories (including the European Union)\(^2\) is the first legally binding treaty in Europe that criminalizes different forms of violence against women and girls. The Convention emphasizes and recognizes that violence against women is a human rights violation, a form of discrimination against women, and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men. The Convention requires State parties to take a holistic approach to violence against women and domestic violence through proactively creating integrated policies with a set of comprehensive and multidisciplinary measures to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), protect survivors, and prosecute perpetrators. The adoption of the Istanbul Convention represents a landmark decision at the European level; its standards and the recommendations of GREVIO, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, have become the roadmap for legislative and other important measures to prevent and protect women from violence.

All countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey (with the exception of Kosovo\(^*\)) have ratified the Istanbul Convention and subsequently aligned their national Constitutions to its requirements, thereby showing the regional dedication to ending domestic violence and VAWG\(^3\). As highlighted during the First Regional Forum Promoting Implementation of Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships”\(^4\), the region shares many achievements and challenges with regards to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and constitutional alignment with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), alongside their subsequent implementation. The Second Regional Forum addressed two of these common challenges: inter-agency response for a coordinated response to violence against women and the implementation of Istanbul Convention provisions relating to sexual violence.

The Second Regional Forum provided a space for relevant stakeholders to come together and discuss these two subjects, providing an opportunity to compare and share experiences, challenges, and best practices, and to collaborate more effectively in combating VAWG, in particular as part of EU accession processes.


\(^*\) For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

\(^3\) Kosovo, while unable to ratify the Istanbul Convention, has taken recent steps to amend Article 22 of its Constitution to include the Istanbul Convention in the list of directly applicable legal instruments for the protection of human rights.

The inaugural session welcomed participants to the Forum, setting the scene for the conference as well as underlining the pervasiveness of violence against women around the world and in the region and the critical implications for health, safety and development. Speakers reminded participants of the responsibility of states to serve as guarantors of their citizens’ rights and safety, and their responsibility to effectively punish perpetrators of violence and offer necessary protection to survivors. Ultimately, speakers emphasized the importance to have a space to meet, foster exchange, cooperation and dialogue, not only simply in the region but also between governments and civil society.

With Misa Stojiljkovic, journalist, as the Master of Ceremonies, opening remarks were made by:

**Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office**

Ms. El-Yassir reflected on the past work that has been done in the region and particularly on the role of UN Women and the partnerships with stakeholders that have been fostered. She reminded participants of the urgency to accelerate progress towards the achievement of a world free from violence by 2030 and the key role that the Istanbul Convention plays as a tool to achieving that goal. In particular, she highlighted the necessity of intersectoral cooperation and improved services, as well as the need for explicit roles and responsibilities for each actor within the system of violence prevention and response.

**Luigi Soreca, European Union Ambassador to Albania**

Mr. Soreca spoke about the European Union’s commitment to improving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region. Highlighting statistics about the success of the programme, he expressed strong gratitude and admiration for the work of civil society across the region in ending violence against women; additionally, he acknowledged the efforts of governments in the region to implement the Istanbul Convention. Mr. Soreca remarked on the need for swift change, and assured participants that the EU would continue to offer technical assistance and support as part of the collective effort to make sure that women and girls can participate fully in all parts of society.

**Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Health and Social Protection, Albania**

Ms. Manastirliu welcomed participants to Tirana and reflected on the current progress and opportunities for improvement in Albania. She noted the significant efforts made by the Albanian government to fight domestic and gender-based violence, including legislative amendments, integration and mainstreaming of gender-sensitive budgeting, and the establishment of a centre for services for victims of violence. However, she reminded participants that there still remains much work to be done. She introduced two girls from Albania who have developed an award-winning app that helps women to report and deal with gender-based violence.

**His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania**

Mr. Rama highlighted the progress that Albania has made towards gender equality, noting that the country ranks among the top five most gender-balanced governments in the world. However, he stressed that this progress is only in comparison to where they started, rather than where they want to be. Domestic violence remains a large problem in Albania, and gender parity in the government does not translate to equal treatment of women throughout the country. He particularly noted the need for reform in the justice system that responds to the lived experiences of women, as well as the need for criminal legislation to hold perpetrators accountable.

**Keynote address by Iris Luarasi, Vice-President of Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - GREVIO**

Ms. Luarasi offered a current overview of the Istanbul Convention, as well as of the instruments and mechanisms that must be developed to ensure its full implementation. The legally-binding nature of the Convention makes it stand out from other treaties, as it not only stipulates that governments need to meet specific requirements, but also because it recognizes various forms of violence and includes a series of specific measures and mechanisms to be implemented. Overall, the Convention has already fostered policy
change, a transformation of legislation and the establishment of coordinating bodies across the region.

Ms. Luarasi underlined the importance of cooperation and teamwork among different actors by pointing out that no single agency or institution can effectively tackle violence against women and domestic violence. Indeed, the Istanbul Convention clearly encourages government agencies to cooperate with NGOs that provide specialized support services. With this in mind, GREVIO has made sure to both engage in a dialogue with NGOs and to collect additional information from alternative sources including members of civil society, national human rights institutions, and CoE bodies, as well as other international treaties bodies.

Nevertheless, the Istanbul Convention has not been exempted from criticism, and the fight to end violence against women continues to face a lot of challenges as even generally accepted human rights terminology and principles are also being undermined. Some countries and political actors have argued that the Istanbul Convention threatens gender identity as well as traditional family life and the institution of marriage, and that the focus on women is misleading and discriminatory. Such statements stem from fear of losing the traditional society model based on a binary conception of gender that defines strict roles for men and women in the public and private sphere. Ms. Luarasi pointed out that while the IC recognizes that VAW has its own specific characteristics and that it does not impose life choices on men and women, nor does it include any standards in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation.

Finally, Ms. Luarasi discussed GREVIO’s report recommendations, which include the need to provide systematic and compulsory trainings on VAW and on the treatment of victims; education on other forms of violence beyond domestic violence and sexual crimes, such as forced marriages and genital mutilation; ensuring the provision of specialized support services with a gender approach that will provide comprehensive, immediate, short and long term support to all women victims of violence and to their children; and to introduce the practice of referral to specialized services and law enforcement agencies.
SETTING THE SCENE: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

These presentations provided an overview of the progress that each state has made in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and the challenges they still need to overcome, in order to build a better understanding of the regional situation.

Merita Xhafaj
General Director at General Directorate of Polices and Development of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Albania

The Government of Albania has undertaken a series of follow-up actions based on the 19 key recommendations made by GREVIO in their 2017 report. The legal definition of violence has been extended and harmonized with the IC; existing protective measures have been improved by establishing clear rights and obligations for implementing partners; and laws addressing the rights of sexually abused and juvenile victims as well as victims of trafficking have been amended. In terms of service provision, Albania has opened its first centre for victims of sexual violence, has trained teachers to provide students with sex education curricula, and has worked to educate law enforcement officers. Finally, gender-sensitive budgeting has been included in the law on local governments’ finances while a portion of budgets across all sectors have been allocated to gender policy. Ms. Xhafaj highlighted cooperation and partnership across sectors as the key to success, noting the realization of roundtables with partners and institutions, multisectoral data coordination, a strong cross-sectoral referral mechanism, and the importance of continuous regional partnerships.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić
Director of the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Representative of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made significant efforts towards harmonizing legislation with the Istanbul Convention, as well as with their national Gender Action Plan. Criminal legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina now includes the prohibition of any form of gender-based violence, and established the obligation for institutions to take effective measures to prevent it. Inter-agency cooperation has also been strengthened, both with international institutions and through the support of an NGO network which will coordinate the provision of protection for victims of violence. Multisectoral approaches are used within communities, together with the judiciary, law enforcement, and health officials, to provide holistic and victim-centred responses. Bosnia and Herzegovina has worked to provide state funding for these initiatives, as well as convening regional conference and investing in regional coordination to develop best practices and share experiences. Some key tasks remain to be addressed, such as extending the provision of specialized services to the whole country, addressing social stigmas and situations that enable cycles of violence, and establishing a single monitoring and reporting system under the IC.

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa
Head of the Board, Kosovo Women Network, Kosovo

In Kosovo, significant efforts are being made to integrate the IC into the Constitution and the definitions of violence against women have been harmonized with the Convention. The victim’s advocate institution within the judiciary serves as a unique regional example; Kosovo has also tightened their legal definitions of domestic violence and sexual harassment, and redrafted standard operating procedures that outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency. A domestic violence strategy and action plan have also been established. It has also created an inter-institutional database which collects and provides information on domestic violence in the country. A vibrant civil society sector acts as advocate and watchdog, pushing for change and holding institutions to account. Continued monitoring of implementation is necessary moving forward. Some significant challenges also remain regarding the prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators, as a significant percentage of perpetrators are not duly prosecuted, and sentences remain insignificant; additionally, there will be challenges in lobbying for the inclusion of Istanbul Convention standards into the national constitution.

Sinisa Bjekovic,
Deputy Ombudsperson, Montenegro

While Montenegro has approved legislation that fulfils most of the standards set out by the Istanbul Convention, implementation has remained a challenge. Conservatism and traditional conceptions of the family remains strong barriers, leading to underreporting and lack of prosecution or conviction in cases of domestic violence.
violence. There also seems to be little political will from the government or institutions to follow through; while the state has nominally instituted Istanbul Convention standards, there is a need to enforce these protocols. Results are also lacking in terms of strategic and operational measures, as well as their corresponding monitoring mechanisms. However, civil society organizations in Montenegro are strong key actors when it comes to addressing domestic violence in the country; though they may lack funding, they are extremely committed, and engaged in ongoing educational efforts, such as trainings for members of the judiciary. Work to unify the efforts of the government and civil society in their fight against domestic violence is continuing.

**Jovana Trenchevska**  
*State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of North Macedonia*

At the legislative level, North Macedonia has adopted a national action plan with three strategic goals that have aligned several regulations on domestic violence with the Istanbul Convention’s provisions, established specialized services, and formed a working group to begin amendments to the Criminal Code. The government is currently working towards adopting a law on the prevention of all forms of violence against women, in multisectoral partnership with relevant institutions and stakeholders. The adoption of this law will establish a coordinating body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the law and activities related to ending gender-based violence. In this past year, the government has opened several centres providing specialized services to victims of gender-based and sexual violence, including for human trafficking and domestic violence, with plans to open more centres outside of Skopje; they have also developed standard operational procedures related to the treatment of victims of gender-based violence, in order to build capacity in the specialized centres, as well as trainings for professionals. The amendment of the Criminal Code will further serve to align North Macedonian legislation with Istanbul Convention standards.

**Ljiljana Loncar**  
*Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Coordination body for Gender Equality, Serbia*

In Serbia, a significant commitment has been made in terms of multisectoral cooperation, and particularly towards behaviour and societal change that creates an enabling environment for implementation. Serbian legislation is generally aligned with Istanbul Convention standards, as well as an institutional code; the country is currently in the process of reporting on Istanbul Convention standards, having taken ownership of the process. However, there remain challenges with implementation. Specific groups have been created as part of prosecutors’ offices, that focus on building intersectoral cooperation, which have been highly effective thus far; gender mainstreaming is also part of policy making and education, which ultimately aims to establish zero tolerance for discrimination and violence. There has also been a push to create sustainable financing streams, which will foster sustainability. Serbia is continuing with its efforts to mainstream the standards of the Istanbul Convention through national legislation, and in building the capacities of institutions to engage with and respond to violence against women.

**Gökçe Bahar Öztürk**  
*Investigating Judge, Victim’s Rights Department, Ministry of Justice, Turkey*

Turkey has made significant efforts to engage with implementation of the Istanbul Convention. At the judiciary level, trainings have been provided to public officials to sensitize them to gender-based violence issues and the experiences of victims, and particularly on the usage of separate interview rooms that shield victims from their perpetrators to avoid secondary traumatization. An inter-sectoral approach to judicial support has also been adopted by bringing professionals and service providers from all sectors in the same centre, where victims are provided with information, and provided with a case manager who can support them and assess their situation. Additionally, specific measures have been adopted to protect victims; these include electronic bracelets for perpetrators and an app that locates women in need of assistance. Centres for the prevention of violence which provide temporary shelter have also been set up.
The Istanbul Convention calls on all state parties to coordinate efforts and establish effective cooperation among all relevant stakeholders playing a role in preventing and combating all forms of violence against women. UN agencies also recognize the importance of inter-agency cooperation and have included it as a crucial element of the services package for women and girls subject to violence. Cooperation between relevant agencies should include local authorities, health and legal professionals, and law-enforcement agencies, as well as CSOs. However, effective inter-agency cooperation remains a significant challenge in the region due to the lack of clear definitions of the role of each actor, as well as the lack of acknowledgement of expertise and experience of women’s groups in decision-making and implementation mechanisms, particularly organizations of women from marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

This plenary session thus aimed to provide an overview of the requirements under the Istanbul Convention relating to inter-agency cooperation and to identify the main challenges faced by Western Balkans countries and Turkey in this area. Additionally, this presentation showed the different mechanisms, tools and methodologies that encourage good practices in inter-agency cooperation.

**Chair:** Aldijana Sisic, Chief, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

**Panelists:**
- Zlatan Hrnčić, Senior Advisor at the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina & Selma Begic, Programme Manager, Safe Network, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Edi Gusia, Chief Executive of the Agency on Gender Equality, Office of the Prime Minister, Kosovo
- Natasa Medjedovic, Director, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Montenegro
- Beti Pejeva, Executive Director, EHO Educational Humanitarian Organization Stip, North Macedonia
- Merve Demircan, Ankara Yenimahalle Municipality, Turkey
- Kosana Beker, Programme Director, FemPlatz, Serbia

**Key takeaways:**

**Inter-agency cooperation for effective support services and monitoring mechanisms**

Inter-agency cooperation was identified as a crucial mechanism to ensure the protection of victims of violence. A multi-sectoral and integrative approach allows for the coordination of the delivery of...
standardized and specialized services to women and girl victims of violence. North Macedonia, for example, has set up small specialized teams coordinated by NGOs, which bring together professionals from all sectors, as well as CSOs. This model allows to reach more women in their communities, and to offer tailored support to victims. Another highlighted approach is the centralization of coordination mechanisms at the legislative level. The gap between the legal framework and its implementation can thus be addressed by the development of effective mechanisms that ensure coordination among different sectors.

Building a stronger relationship with CSOs
The civil society sector is also a crucial partner in the delivery of specialized services for the effective implementation of the IC, and as monitoring bodies through their expertise and knowledge. Therefore, CSOs need to be included in decision-making processes as well as in implementation phases. In Kosovo, the agency for gender equality worked alongside CSOs to conduct research that made the law on domestic violence possible, as well as the drafting of its action plan and strategy. Bosnia and Herzegovina has created a network of CSOs which, along with experts, presents reports that then inform the annual plan of institutions. In order to ensure this cooperation, there needs to be an institution or body focusing on gender issues that coordinates exchanges between the civil society sector and governmental bodies.

Adopting a bottom-up approach
Finally, the importance of developing a more democratic and participatory approach was emphasized. Better cooperation and inter-agency coordination needs to be engineered through a bottom-up approach, by listening to victim’s voices and taking everyone’s experiences into account. Lack of information about available services and the centralization of policy changes without reaching local levels are both concerns that need to be addressed. Including both civil society and beneficiaries in decision-making and data collection offers an indispensable intersectional approach and supports effective protection and support for every woman, including those from marginalized communities.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Group 1: Key stakeholders and challenges in inter-agency co-ordination and cooperation
Facilitated by: UN Women

Guiding questions:
- Which stakeholders should be part of inter-agency cooperation?
- How to establish responsibilities among different actors and ensure accountability?
- How to allocate resources among different organizations and bodies to prevent overlaps or the leaving out of essential services?
- How can inter-agency cooperation impact the changing of harmful attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women?

Key takeaways:
Stakeholders taking part in inter-agency cooperation hail from all sectors, including institutional service providers such as police forces, health care staff and social workers, as well as local government bodies and CSOs. Other potential stakeholders were also mentioned: the media for accurate reporting, the academic sector to collect and analyze data, independent institutions to monitor and decision-makers to champion gender equality and lead change within the institutional system.

Each stakeholder has their role and must be held accountable. It was noted that while standard operating procedures have been defined, there is a lack of effective implementation. Political actors have a crucial role in holding stakeholders accountable. It is also necessary to establish working monitoring mechanisms.

Early childhood education and trainings for service providers are key when addressing the issue of how inter-agency cooperation can foster behavioural change. In the long term, this education would address the issue of violence against women at its root by eradicating harmful stereotypes, behaviours and practices, while also ensuring an effective and adapted protection of victims. Measures should also be taken to address such cases in the short term; perpetrators must be held accountable and punished in accordance with the severity of their crime. Shelters and safe spaces must also be established for women and girls so that they are cared for and protected. Combining these short and long-term measures would, therefore, contribute to a behavioural change in the long term while guaranteeing the protection of victims in the process.
Finally, gender-sensitive budgeting is imperative for proper allocation of resources, as well as putting in place functional monitoring mechanisms to ensure the proper and effective use of resources. Women’s organizations and grassroots groups must be funded in a way that allows them to maintain their autonomy, and therefore must seek funding from sources other than governments.

**Group 2: Tools and approaches to strengthen inter-agency coordination and cooperation**

*Facilitated by: Enkelejda Bregu, Programme Officer – Social Policies and Gender Equality, EU Delegation in Albania*

**Guiding questions:**
- How to strengthen knowledge and skill building for members of inter-agency cooperation mechanisms?
- How could an inter-agency cooperation mechanism better advise on the optimal allocation of financial resources?
- How to foster common approaches and methodologies at regional, local and even individual levels?
- How to ensure inter-agency cooperation for better and synchronized collection of data through inter-agency cooperation?

**Key takeaways:**

Establishing mandatory sectoral and multisectoral education programmes to strengthen agency skills and build inter-agency cooperation is necessary to address the lack of qualified staff throughout service-providing agencies, as well as to implement follow-up monitoring mechanisms after the trainings to determine their effectiveness. These trainings must be provided by accredited institutions, who in turn should include modules on gender equality issues and gender-based violence. Bringing together decision-makers and institutional representatives from all sectors will encourage learning and dialogue, not only between agencies, but also as a way to raise awareness about the reality of violence against women.

Specific attention and investment should be brought to existing referral mechanisms and institutions, working towards strengthening them by establishing clear guidelines and protocols that dictate the obligations and responsibilities of each actor.

Additionally, countries should develop policy tools in order to adopt common approaches and methodologies at all levels of implementation, as well as to monitor the quality of the programmes and trainings. There is a dual need for a centralized approach that ensures effective coordination and development of best practices, while also maintaining a bottom-up approach through which centralized decisions are informed by the needs and realities of the local level. This also applies to data collection; the creation of a content management system and the standardization of data collection across all sectors would streamline these processes. Ultimately, this data should be used to ensure the sustainability of services.

**Group 3: Financing for services for survivors of violence**

*Facilitated by UN Women*

**Guiding questions:**
- What are the main barriers for ensuring the availability of services? How to overcome them?
- What are the main challenges to ensure the sustainability of services? How to overcome them?

**Key takeaways:**

Data must be collected on the types of services that are being provided, and what activities they engage in. Without this information, it is difficult to understand where and how resources have been allocated, and consequently to establish solid funding plans. Resource allocation should be informed by results, in order to support those services that are actually addressing the needs of their beneficiaries, as well as by what specific and pressing needs there are in the field. Ultimately, budgeting should be guided by the IC provisions and recommendations. Supporting and increasing the funding of NGOs is made easier by making information about funding readily available and building stronger relationships with governments and international bodies. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain NGOs’ autonomy. Specialized services, then, should be partially funded by the government and partially by other actors to ensure their viability, following the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
SESSION 2: GOOD PRACTICES ON ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

PRESENTATION: OVERVIEW OF PROTECTION, PROSECUTION AND INTEGRATED POLICIES ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Presentation by Mirela Arqimandriti, Executive Director, Gender Alliance for Development Centre on behalf of the Civil Society Strengthening Platform led by WAVE Network.

The lack of specialized sexual violence services in the Western Balkans and Turkey, or only the rudimentary provision of services at best, remains a major challenge in the region. As does the lack of holistic data on the actual number of support services and types of institutions working in this sector. Additionally, despite parties’ obligation to adopt legislation that addresses all forms of violence against women alongside significant efforts undertaken to tackle physical violence in the domestic context, more effective measures are needed to address other forms of violence, such as sexual violence. Besides adopting the relevant legislation, parties must also ensure the provision of quality and multi-sectoral services for victims of sexual violence, including rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres to provide immediate medical counselling, care and forensic services, among others.

Changes in legislation differ throughout the region and the lack of basic provision of specialist sexual violence services remains a critical issue. This presentation provided an overview of the current situation of integrated policies put forward by parties to address sexual violence and of the provision of specialized services for victims of sexual violence. The aim was to better understand what policies are being applied, which services are being provided, by whom and where in each country. The presentation identified inter-agency dynamics between governments and other stakeholders. Ultimately, understanding the situation of sexual violence support services and the interactions among different stakeholders allows for cross learning and creates opportunities for future capacity building for the provision of these services in the region.

PLENARY SESSION: GOOD PRACTICES ON ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Chair: Blerta Cela, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office

Speakers:
- Etleva Sheshi, Assistant Commissioner, Ombudsperson’s Office, Albania
- Radmila Zigic, Director, Foundation Lara Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Shenaj Berisha, Prosecutor, Prosecutor’s Office in Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo
- Nermina Fakovikj, Coordinator for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, Ministry of Health, North Macedonia
- Biljana Delic, Head of Department for Analysis, Planning and Development Provincial Secretariat for Healthcare, Provincial Government of Vojvodina, Serbia & Veronika Mitro, Project Coordinator, Iz kruga Vojvodina, Serbia

Key takeaways:

Building cooperation between services and sectors: providing all-inclusive services to victims of sexual violence

When discussing good practices, all-inclusive services and multi-sectoral cooperation are an effective approach to provide support and protection to victims of sexual violence. Several countries, such as Albania and Serbia, have established centres which offer not only medical care but also psycho-social support and shelter, and coordinate with the judiciary system and law enforcement officers. These centres are usually set up in public health institutions in order to provide medical and forensic services, as well as to maintain financial sustainability and 24/7 care. To make this model successful, inter-agency cooperation between service providers, institutions, and NGOs is crucial, as well as a strong political will and a comprehensive legal framework that addresses sexual violence.

Naming the violence, breaking taboos: the importance of education

Persistent stigmas and a high rate of acceptance of violence against women remains a crucial challenge in the region. This leads to underreporting, and encourages biased attitudes from professionals across all sectors,
preventing the effective protection and support of victims. Consequently, there needs to be change of mindsets at all levels of society: professionals need to receive specialized trainings, while the education sector and media should invest in sharing information about VAW and the mechanisms and services available to victims, as well as conducting awareness raising campaigns. NGOs must also to be included in advocacy efforts.

Building accessible and inclusive services
Sexual violence is a pervasive issue that affects all women regardless of their status and situation. However, services are not always adapted to all women’s needs and vulnerabilities. Women with disabilities, refugee women, sex workers and members of the LGBTQI+ community are particularly overlooked by protection services. Consequently, services must be inclusive and make sure that information is shared with everyone. Additionally, due to the fact that sexual harassment does not happen only in the domestic sphere, countries should ratify the Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Group 1: Strengthening the prevention of different forms of sexual violence
Facilitated by Clíona Saidléar, Executive Director, Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Guiding questions:

• What are the main gaps in the prevention of sexual violence and how can they be addressed?
• How to address beliefs, attitudes that encourage or condone sexual violence?
• What actors are or should be involved in the prevention of sexual violence at country and local level?
• What is the role and importance of monitoring processes to support the prevention of sexual violence at national, regional and local levels?

Key takeaways:
In this context, it is important to differentiate between primary and secondary prevention, as they both require specific tools. Primary prevention seeks to stop the crime before it occurs, through education and a transformation of cultural practices, harmful behaviours and stereotypes. Secondary prevention involves disseminating material about existing services.

Shaping education through a systematic intervention is a way of changing mindsets in the long term by involving all ages, from early childhood to university. There is a need for strong leadership among actors across all sectors, to become champions in their actions and their commitments to further the rights of women and protect victims of violence.

In terms of secondary prevention, it is crucial to protect victims’ privacy. The media plays a significant role in how the cases of violence are covered. This is a crucial point that can violate the victim’s privacy and have serious consequences for her life in her community, leading to revictimization.

Ultimately, the crux of strengthening the prevention of violence against women is the transformation of culture and everyday attitudes.

Group 2: Addressing the main challenges in achieving effective prosecution of different forms of sexual violence cases in the region
Facilitated by Anca Ciupa, WAVE Network/ CSSP

Guiding questions:

• How are different forms of sexual violence defined in the region and what implications does this have for the prosecution of perpetrators?
• What are the challenges for the comprehensive and coordinated application of legislation regarding the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence in the region?
• How to overcome overlapping definitions and legal provisions that hamper the proper prosecution of reported cases?

Key takeaways:
One of the primary challenges is the issue of defining sexual violence within legislation. Child marriage, for example, is poorly defined, which contributes to difficulties in effective prosecution of perpetrators. Culture is also often used as a justification for certain practices and behaviours which are then not prosecuted at the judicial level. This is particularly relevant in cases of violence within the family, where the individuality and consent of the victim is often disregarded in favour of her family’s decision. Similarly,
there is also a tendency in the judicial system as well as in the media to put a greater emphasis on the perpetrator’s rights, often debating his actions rather than focusing on the victim's rights and her consent. Consequently, victims are often forgotten or humiliated in the process, resulting in secondary violence.

Biases among prosecutors, lawyers and judges remains a crucial issue and contributes to secondary violence, putting some women more at risk than others. For instance, women who rely on others to express themselves – women with disabilities or refugee women – find themselves at a disadvantage, as biases affect portrayals of the victim and the perpetrator. Additionally, a lack of professionalism among lawyers can mean that women are targeted and humiliated throughout the judicial process. Consequently, professionals need to be trained, and capacity building programs included at every level of the judicial system. Additionally, because cases of sexual violence require a specific and more sensitive approach, monitoring mechanisms should be established that allow follow-up on the victim’s experience with service providers during the process to determine the effectiveness of trainings. These approaches would examine whether the legal framework is being applied correctly, and if biases and stigmas have played a role in the way the case was prosecuted and/or how the victim was treated.

Finally, the role of women’s rights organizations was also highlighted, and in particular the need to recognize them as a third party in the judicial system. Their experience and knowledge in these cases can be useful in providing not only practical but also legal insight into the case, and in advocating for the victim’s rights.

**Group 3: Providing specialist services for survivors of different forms of violence**

**Facilitated by UN Women**

**Guiding questions**

- What are the most acute needs of survivors?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders to address this issue?
- What are the main challenges encountered by both governmental and non-governmental service providers addressing sexual violence?
- How to maintain 24/7 emergency services for victims of sexual violence?
- How to better make use of the long-standing experience of CSOs as specialized service providers?

The first priority is to provide victims of sexual violence with easy access to information, with special attention to more vulnerable groups such as disabled women or women who speak a different language. Moreover, services must be sustainable, meaning that once a victim starts benefitting from a service, she will be guaranteed to have access to it for as long as she needs it. Service providers should be sensitized and duly trained to deal with these cases, especially when it comes to more vulnerable groups of women. This is particularly relevant in the case of first responders such as social workers and psychologists, who should receive training on how to approach a victim and the particular vulnerabilities that are at play in cases of gender-based violence. At the institutional level, the establishment of institutional coordination to prevent secondary victimization is necessary, as well as providing specialized services according to the victim’s specific needs and situation. Institutional coordination also minimizes the risk of further trauma for the victim by reducing bureaucratic processes.

Centralizing services in one centre can bring together service providers from the healthcare sector (including social workers), institutional representatives and prosecutors. The example of monitoring centres for children victims of sexual crimes in Turkey illustrates effective intersectoral cooperation. Similarly, the creation and sharing of databases was also mentioned. While institutions agree that limited information should be made available about the victims, crucial elements about their situations should be shared across institutions to avoid multiple interviews and to provide a more adapted care. In this context, the protection of the victim’s privacy is of particular importance and the role of the media should be carefully considered. NGOs also serve a key role as monitoring bodies, as they are able to provide pertinent assessments on the delivery of services.

Finally, in order to keep 24/7 emergency services running, there must be proper budget allocation. In cases where human resources are available, it is crucial to share responsibilities and coordinate among colleagues to make these services available day and night. In cases of limited resources, sharing or deferring to other institutions or organizations providing the same support can also be an option. Kosovo serves as a good example with its funding of a public service broadcaster by introducing a very small tax to every household, which allows emergency services to function without needing extra funding from the government.
Closing remarks were given by Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, Europe and Central Asia Regional Office UN Women. Ms. El-Yassir provided an overview of the discussions that took place during the conference, highlighting that in both interagency cooperation and responses to sexual violence there is room for both collective and individual action. She emphasized the importance of backing up words with concrete action, through ensuring that budgeting and resources are allocated in such a way that countries are able to support the commitments made to women and girl survivors of violence. It is equally important to make sure that these women and girls are part of the solution-building process, so that they are not being spoken for but that their voices are being included, particularly for those with specific needs in minoritized groups.

Ms. El-Yassir concluded by highlighting the importance of monitoring and accountability, not only through making sure that institutions and governments are following through on their commitments in an effective and responsive way, but also as a reflective process, to ensure that all actors in the fight to end violence against women are holding themselves to account as well – to ensure that they are listening to those they are fighting for, that they are adapting approaches to get results, and how they are challenging stereotypes, cultural taboos, and biases around them.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

The participants offered several key recommendations as a result of the forum.

1. Effective inter-agency cooperation should include all sectors at all levels of operation, including not only institutions and service providers, but also CSOs, the media, and educational and medical professionals. Encouraging dialogue and knowledge-sharing between these bodies – particularly supported by standardized data practices, developed in concert with others and monitored for their effectiveness – is a crucial step in the implementation process. This cooperation may not only streamline processes, but may make services more accessible, more responsive to the needs on the ground, and sustainably funded. Through gender-responsive budgeting and the implementation of best practices and policies that are shared, not only through national partners but also by using examples from the region, inter-agency cooperation can be significantly improved.

2. Educations and trainings must be offered to service providers at all levels of implementation. Education across all levels can pay high dividends in the reduction of biases and stereotypes, a change in behaviours, and a deeper understanding of the challenges facing women, particularly the most vulnerable. Mandatory sectoral and multi-sectoral trainings, provided by accredited institutions who create tailored and gender-responsive curricula, would build the capacity of service providers. These trainings would also be geared toward the media and educational professionals, teaching them how to speak about and report on gender-based violence in a way that does not revictimize the woman. Education in these levels would have short-term benefits, of increasing the number of qualified service providers and the way in which gender-based violence is discussed in the media, but also would have long-term benefits in the reduction of negative stereotypes and acceptance of gender-based violence.

3. Establish specialized and centralized centres for survivors of sexual violence. Following best practice examples, the establishment of centres specifically tailored to the needs of survivors of sexual violence is a key recommendation, where institutional cooperation between healthcare staff (including psychologists and social workers), law enforcement officers, and the judiciary can streamline the process and reduce the burden on a survivor. Additionally, these services should be accessible and available to all women, including those with disabilities or who speak a different language, and they should be sustainably available for however long they are needed.
4. Gender-sensitive budgeting should inform the sustainable allocation of resources. Ensuring proper implementation of Istanbul Convention standards demands a restructuring and reflection on how budgets are being used to fulfil these responsibilities. Governments should be cognizant of how their budgets are being used, and whether their resources are being properly allocated; civil society should act as watchdogs and monitoring bodies to ensure that resources earmarked for this purpose are being used properly. Simultaneously, civil society should be funded in a sustainable way that ensures their autonomy and monitoring capacities – partially by government and partially by outside sources, to ensure that they can hold both governments and themselves to account. Monitoring mechanisms should be in place and budgeted for.

5. Standardize language and definitions of various forms of violence. Varying definitions between national legislations of forms of domestic and gender-based violence can have serious impacts on service provision, on prosecution, and on the comparability of data on VAW among countries. This negatively affects abilities to regionally compare statistics and solutions. The lack of definition can also make the concepts of gender-based violence nebulous and more susceptible to misinterpretation. Standardizing definitions and language around gender-based violence can make the problems clearer – and, therefore, easier to tackle.

THINKING AHEAD TO THE 2020 THIRD REGIONAL FORUM

According to the findings of the participant survey for the Second Regional Forum, participants were positive about the event. 78% of respondents rated the Forum as "excellent" or "very good," 98% were satisfied or very satisfied with the organization of the event, and 82% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of sessions and speakers. In addition, 65% of respondents felt the space for participant engagement and dialogue was improved compared to the First Regional Forum in 2018.

Key areas for improvement were also identified that will inform the planning and design of the Third Regional Forum in 2020. Participants would like to see more interaction between the audience and panel members during plenary sessions, as well as increased priority placed and time spent on the breakout sessions. Participants also voiced the need for improved adherence to the agenda and respect for the time allotted to each panel and presentation. Regarding key follow-up priorities, a communication network among participants from different countries was identified as helpful, as was the need to continuously monitor governments’ fulfillment of their public commitments related to EVAW and alignment with the Istanbul Convention. Finally, there is a demand across the board to institutionalize the Forum and reach concrete agreements that would strengthen the agenda on ending violence against women.
I. Background and Context

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations and is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and systemic gender-based discrimination.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention (IC), with 34 ratifications and 48 signatories (including the European Union) is the first legally binding treaty in Europe that criminalises different forms of violence against women and girls. The Convention emphasises and recognises that violence against women is a violation, a form of discrimination against women, and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men. The IC, opened for signature in May 2011, requires State parties to take a holistic approach to violence against women and domestic violence through proactively creating integrated policies with a set of comprehensive and multidisciplinary measures to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), protect survivors, and prosecute perpetrators. The adoption of the IC represents a landmark decision at the European level; its standards and the recommendations of GREVIO, the IC monitoring body composed of independent experts, have become the roadmap for legislative and other important measures to prevent and protect women from violence.

Taking stock of the developments of the last 25 years, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) adopted General Recommendation (GR) no. 35 in July 2017, which reaffirms the UN’s commitment to a world free from violence for all women and girls and defines gender-based violence (GBV) as a social problem: “one of the fundamental social, political and economic means by which the subordinate position of women with respect to men and their stereotyped roles are perpetuated.”

It also sets out the requirement for comprehensive responses to address GBV. As emphasized by civil society and the United Nations, VAWG is both a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men and represents a serious breach of women’s human rights.

---

1 Status as of 23/05/2019.

All countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey (with the exception of Kosovo*) have ratified the IC and subsequently aligned their national Constitutions to its requirements, thereby showing the regional dedication to ending domestic violence and VAWG. As highlighted during the First Regional Forum Promoting the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships”, there have been significant achievements in the implementation of the IC in recent years, however, there are still areas of concern and space for improvement. Many achievements and challenges are common to countries across the region. These commonalities, as well as the regional advancements towards EU accession, create opportunities for relevant stakeholders to come together and collaborate more effectively in combating VAWG and sharing best practices.

The EU/UN Women regional programme “Ending gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”, in its third year of implementation, has contributed in all countries to bringing national legislation in line with the IC, raising awareness and improving services for victims of violence. Significantly, the programme has created opportunities for increasing the dialogue between government institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) towards their common goal of ending VAWG.

Within the framework of the regional programme, the Second Regional Forum Promoting the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships” will be held in Tirana, Albania, in recognition of the Government of Albania’s commitment and efforts towards gender equality and ending VAWG, and with a view to mark the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention in Albania.

II. Purpose and themes of the II Regional Forum

The region shares many achievements and challenges with regards to the ratification of the IC and constitutional alignment with CEDAW, alongside their subsequent implementation. The Regional Forum aims to provide a space for relevant stakeholders to come together and collaborate more effectively in combating VAWG and sharing best practices, in particular as part of EU accession processes.

Informed by research and front-line work carried out by over 60 partner organizations of “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”, the Second Regional Forum will address the following themes:

Improved inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women and domestic violence at the regional, national and local levels.

Article 7, paragraph 2 of the IC calls on state parties to co-ordinate and implement measures by way of effective cooperation among all relevant actors playing a role in preventing and combating VAWG and domestic violence. In providing support to victims, states parties must facilitate effective cooperation among all relevant state agencies, including the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant organizations and entities (Article 18).

* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Kosovo, while unable to ratify the Istanbul Convention, has taken recent steps to amend Article 22 of its Constitution to include the Istanbul Convention in the list of directly applicable legal instruments for the protection of human rights.

While the IC requires multi-agency collaboration, one of the main challenges for effective cooperation is the lack of clear definitions of the role of each actor, particularly law enforcement agencies, which may adopt a perpetrator-centered approach or are likely to impose mandatory mediation or conciliation, which are prohibited by the IC. Furthermore, women’s organizations are not systematically part of the official system of co-ordination and co-operation between different agencies. Organizations of women from marginalized and disadvantaged groups are particularly excluded from these systems of co-ordination.

Identifying these challenges and learning from good practices and successful models of co-ordinated response in the region could inspire key measures to improve the Western Balkans and Turkey’s coordinated response to VAWG and domestic violence.

**Improved implementation of the IC provisions relating to sexual violence, harassment, stalking and other forms of violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey.**

States party to the IC are obliged to adopt legislation and provide support for victims of all forms of violence against women as defined in the Convention. However, while countries in the region have made efforts to address physical violence within the domestic context, more robust measures are needed to address other forms of violence such as sexual violence, harassment and stalking.

Adequate services, including easily accessible rape crisis and sexual violence referral centres for immediate medical counselling, care and forensic services are still lacking.

Services for women survivors of sexual violence are extremely weak across the region. There are several good models that could serve as examples for the region, such as in North Macedonia (with three newly opened sexual violence referral centers), Albania (with one center opened in 2018) and Serbia (where a pilot project has established seven Centers for Victims of Sexual Violence as part of hospitals in Vojvodina). Although these are positive examples, these centers are not sufficient to cover the whole territories of their respective countries and many countries simply do not provide such services.

Regarding prosecution, Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention obliges state parties to criminalise sexual VAWG, including rape, so that the crime of rape is determined by a lack of consent. In the region, only Kosovo has legislation fully aligned with the IC with regards to consent. Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia are only partially aligned. In these countries, the use of force or the threat of force is required for nonconsensual sex to be classified as rape. In Turkey, although there is no requirement for the use of force, legislation does not stipulate that rape can be based solely on the lack of consent, leaving room for different interpretations. On the other hand, there are examples of good practices such as North Macedonia’s multi-sectoral protocol for cases of sexual violence, which ensures that survivors can only be interviewed once and are protected from facing the perpetrator, and the Code of Criminal Proceedings in Albania, which provides a similar provision during the interview of victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking.

The Regional Forum participants are expected to deliver an outcome declaration focused on the themes discussed.

---

4 As per the Istanbul Convention, sexual violence is defined as “engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object; engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person; causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person.” Please see https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046031c
III. Organization of the Forum

UN Women, in collaboration with the Government of Albania through the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP), and the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), in partnership with the Council of Europe (CoE), will organize the Second Regional Forum for the promotion of the implementation of the IC in Tirana, Albania, on the 9th and 10th October 2019.

The Second Regional Forum acknowledges the Government of Albania’s commitment towards gender equality and violence against women. Albania was the second country in the region to ratify the IC in early 2013, which entered into force on August 1st, 2014, without any reservations. Albania was also the first country in the region to have been monitored by GREVIO and is making efforts to effectively implement its recommendations.

Co-organizers roles and responsibilities

UN Women is the leading institution responsible for initiating, coordinating, facilitating and communicating with all parties for the organization of the forum. UN Women is responsible for the logistics, including venue, travel and accommodation of sponsored participants.

The Government of Albania will host the Forum and will support its organization by providing inputs to the Agenda, facilitating the completion of the list of invitees and securing the presence of national high-level officials and relevant speakers at the Forum.

European Commission DG NEAR will input into the agenda, clear documents and secure the participation and involvement of European Commission/EU and EU delegations to the forum from participant countries.

The Council of Europe will input into the agenda and secure its participation and involvement.

Expected participants:

The forum will tentatively host 100 participants including:

- National machineries for the advancement of women’s rights
- Other key stakeholders from national governments
- Parliamentarians
- Representatives from civil society
- Representatives from EUDEL in the 7 countries covered by the forum
- European Commission DG NEAR/ EUDELS
- Regional institutions/organizations; including representatives and staff from organizers (UN Women and CoE); EIGE, OSCE, etc.
- Regional initiatives such as Regional Coordination Council

IV. Language

English will be the working language of the forum. Translation to local languages will be available.
II. AGENDA

SECOND REGIONAL FORUM: PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

“InTEGRATED POLICIES, INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS”

Tirana, 9-10 October 2019

THE PLAZA HOTEL

AGENDA

Master of Ceremony, Misa Stojiljkovic, Journalist

DAY 1 - 9 October 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:15</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 - 10:15</td>
<td>Opening of the Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morning session chaired by Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome remarks by H. E. Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome remarks by Luigi Soreca, European Union Ambassador to Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome remarks by Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Health and Social Protection, Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 – 10:30</td>
<td>Keynote address by Iris Luarași, Vice-President of Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - GREVIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:15</td>
<td>Presentation: <strong>Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in each country</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This presentation will provide an overview of the progress that each state has made in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and the challenges they still need to overcome. This will build a better understanding of the regional situation, which ultimately allows participants to engage more with the Forum’s contents and discussions.

- **Merita Xhafaj**, General Director at the General Directorate of Policies and Development of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Albania
- **Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić**, Director of the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Representative of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa**, Head of the Board, Kosovo Women Network, Kosovo

*For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
• **Sinisa Bjekovic**, Deputy Ombudsperson, Montenegro
• **Jovana Trenchevska**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of North Macedonia
• **Ljiljana Loncar**, Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister for Gender Equality, Serbia
• **Gökçe Bahar Öztürk**, Investigating Judge, Victim’s Rights Department, Ministry of Justice, Turkey

12:15 - 13:30 Plenary session 1: **Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

The Istanbul Convention calls on all state parties to co-ordinate efforts and establish effective cooperation among all relevant stakeholders playing a role in preventing and combating all forms of violence against women. UN agencies also recognise the importance of inter-agency cooperation and have included it as a crucial element of the services package for women and girls subject to violence. Cooperation between relevant agencies should include local authorities, health and legal professionals, law-enforcement agencies, social services as well as CSOs. However, effective inter-agency cooperation remains a significant challenge in the region due to the lack of clear definitions of the role of each actor, as well as the lack of acknowledgement of expertise and experience of women’s groups in decision-making and implementation mechanisms; in particular organizations of women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

This plenary session thus aims to provide an overview of the requirements under the Istanbul Convention relating to inter-agency cooperation and to identify the main challenges faced by Western Balkans countries and Turkey in this area. Additionally, this presentation aims to show the different mechanisms, tools and methodologies that encourage good practices in inter-agency cooperation. Overall, it is expected that a better understanding of the common structural and logistical challenges for co-ordinated responses, as well as examples of good practices, will lead stakeholders towards the adoption of good practices into national or local contexts and effective implementation of those models.

**Chair: Aldijana Sisic, Chief, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women**

**Speakers:**
• **Zlatan Hrnčić**, Senior Advisor at the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina & **Selma Begočić**, Programme Manager, Safe Network, Bosnia and Herzegovina
• **Edi Gusia**, Chief Executive of the Agency on Gender Equality, Office of the Prime Minister, Kosovo
• **Natasa Medjedovic**, Director, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Montenegro
• **Beti Pejeva**, Executive Director, EHO Educational Humanitarian Organization Stip, North Macedonia
• **Merve Demircan**, Ankara Yenimahalle Municipality, Turkey
• **Kosana Beker**, Programme Director, FemPlatz, Serbia

Q&A
**AGENDA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13:30 - 14:45</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>14:45-16.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>Breakout sessions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1:</strong> Key stakeholders and challenges in inter-agency coordination and cooperation</td>
<td><strong>Group 2:</strong> Tools and approaches to strengthen inter-agency coordination and cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated by UN Women</td>
<td>Facilitated by Enkelejda Bregu, Programme Officer – Social Policies and Gender Equality, EU Delegation in Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding questions:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guiding questions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Which stakeholders should be part of the inter-agency cooperation?</td>
<td>- How to strengthen knowledge and skill building for members of inter-agency cooperation mechanisms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to establish responsibilities among different actors and ensure accountability?</td>
<td>- How could an inter-agency cooperation mechanism better advise on the optimal allocation of financial resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to allocate resources among different organisations and bodies to prevent overlaps or the leaving out of essential services?</td>
<td>- How to foster common approaches and methodologies at regional, local and even individual levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How can inter-agency cooperation impact the changing of harmful attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that perpetuate violence against women?</td>
<td>- How to ensure inter-agency cooperation for better and synchronized collection of data through inter-agency cooperation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 2.a:</strong> Tools and approaches to strengthen inter-agency coordination and cooperation</td>
<td><strong>Group 3:</strong> Financing for services for survivors of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated by UN Women</td>
<td>Facilitated by UN Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding questions:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guiding questions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to strengthen knowledge and skill building for members of inter-agency cooperation mechanisms?</td>
<td>- What are the main barriers for ensuring the availability of services? How to overcome them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How could an inter-agency cooperation mechanism better advise on the optimal allocation of financial resources?</td>
<td>- What are the main challenges to ensure the sustainability of services? How to overcome them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to foster common approaches and methodologies at regional, local and even individual levels?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to ensure inter-agency cooperation for better and synchronized collection of data through inter-agency cooperation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16:00 - 17:15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plenary meeting CONCLUSION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Report on the break-out sessions (10 min each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The way forward: proposed actions for follow-up (15 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group Photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 9:30</td>
<td>Presentation: <em>Overview of protection, prosecution and integrated policies on sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey</em> by Mirela Arqimandriti, Executive Director, Gender Alliance for Development Centre on behalf of the Civil Society Strengthening Platform led by WAVE Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The lack of specialized sexual violence services in the Western Balkans and Turkey, or only the rudimentary provision of services at best, remains a major challenge in the region. As does the lack of holistic data on the actual number of support services and types of institutions working in this sector. Additionally, despite parties’ obligation to adopt legislation that addresses all forms of violence against women alongside significant efforts undertaken to tackle physical violence in the domestic context, more effective measures are needed to address other forms of violence, such as sexual violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Besides adopting the relevant legislation, parties must also ensure the provision of quality and multi-sectoral services for victims of sexual violence, including rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres to provide immediate medical counselling, care and forensic services, among others. Changes in legislation differ throughout the region and the lack of basic provision of specialist sexual violence services remains a critical issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This presentation provides an overview of the current situation of integrated policies put forward by parties to address sexual violence and of the provision of specialized services for victims of sexual violence. The aim is to better understand what policies are being applied, which services are being provided, by whom and where in each country. The presentation will identify inter-agency dynamics between governments and other stakeholders. Ultimately, understanding the situation of sexual violence support services and the interactions among different stakeholders allows for cross learning and creates opportunities for future capacity building for the provision of these services in the region. This presentation will begin this necessary conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10:30</td>
<td>Plenary session 2: Good practices on addressing sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair: Blerta Cela, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speakers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Etleva Sheshi, Assistant Commissioner, People’s Advocate Institution, Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Radmila Zigic, Director, Foundation Lara Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shenaj Berisha, Prosecutor, Prosecutor’s Office in Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nermina Fakovikj, Coordinator for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, Ministry of Health, North Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Biljana Delic, Head of Department for Analysis, Planning and Development Provincial Secretariat for Healthcare, Provincial Government of Vojvodina, Serbia &amp; Veronika Mitro, Project Coordinator, Iz kruga Vojvodina, Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 –12:15</td>
<td><strong>Group 1: Strengthening the prevention of different forms of sexual violence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Facilitated by Clíona Saidléar, Executive Director, Rape Crisis Network Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 2: Addressing the main challenges in achieving effective prosecution of different forms of sexual violence cases in the region</strong>&lt;br&gt;Facilitated by Anca Ciupa, WAVE Network/ CSSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Guiding questions:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- How are different forms of sexual violence defined in the region and what implications does this have for the prosecution of perpetrators?&lt;br&gt;- What are the challenges for the comprehensive and coordinated application of legislation regarding the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence in the region?&lt;br&gt;- How to overcome overlapping definitions and legal provisions that hamper the proper prosecution of reported cases?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 3: Providing specialist services for survivors of different forms of violence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Facilitated by UN Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Guiding questions</strong>&lt;br&gt;- What are the most acute needs of survivors?&lt;br&gt;- What are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders to address this issue?&lt;br&gt;- What are the main challenges encountered by both governmental and non-governmental service providers addressing sexual violence?&lt;br&gt;- How to maintain 24/7 emergency services for victims of sexual violence?&lt;br&gt;- How to better make use of the long-standing experience of CSOs as specialized service providers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-13:00</td>
<td><strong>Plenary meeting CONCLUSION</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Report on the break-out sessions (10 min each)&lt;br&gt;- The way forward: proposed actions for follow-up (15 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00 - 13:15</td>
<td><strong>Closing remarks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

SECOND REGIONAL FORUM: PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY
“INTEGRATED POLICIES, INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS”
Tirana, 9-10 October 2019
THE PLAZA HOTEL

Speaker Bios

Misa Stojiljkovic
Journalist
Master of Ceremony

Misa is a psychologist by education and a journalist by profession, with more than 20 years of experience in media (15 at RTV B92, the last three at Serbian Broadcasting Corporation - RTS). Over more than 10 years, he has moderated dozens of conferences, round tables, and panel discussions organized by numerous companies, NGOs, Serbian and international organizations, and institutions. In the last few years he has been engaged in public relations, but also in parenthood - through the Association “Nest” in Belgrade. He is the creator and host of the first (and so far the only) radio broadcast about fatherhood, called “Papa, You’re Crazy,” in which he talks with all kinds of fathers about their parenting experiences. As a journalist he is most interested in psychological and social issues such as gender equity, minority rights, social responsibility, and mental health. He is co-creator of three documentary films: “Be a Man - Change the Rules” (2011) is about young men struggling for a different idea of masculinity in the 21st century, and “The State of the Soul” (2014) and “Man is a Man’s Cure” (2017) speak of people living with mental disorders. He is married and more than proud to be the father of two boys.

Alia El-Yassir
Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
Welcome remarks

Ms. Alia El-Yassir has been working with UN Women since 1997. Prior to assuming her role as Regional Director for the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, she was the Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia Regional Office and UN Women Special Representative in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), managing a complex portfolio of programmes and projects, as well as supporting the UNCT and HCT on establishing coordination mechanisms for tackling gender equality and women’s empowerment issues.

She is part of the UNDG roster of gender experts and has supported other UNCTs in this capacity. Before joining UN Women, she briefly worked with UNDP and was engaged in the education field. In addition to volunteering with a number of women’s and human rights NGOs, she has worked on educational media for children. Alia El-Yassir graduated from McGill University in Montreal and pursued post-graduate studies in Education and Anthropology, with a specialization in Gender Studies at Ben Gurion University of the Negev.
**Welcome remarks**

With a remarkably rich and diverse career path, Edi Rama counts his contributions in arts, sports and teaching, and as a publicist and politician. He was previously a professor of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and a member of the national basketball team, and he has authored two books: *Refleksione (Reflections)*, together with Ardian Klosi, which was published immediately after the collapse of the dictatorship, and *Kurban*, published in 2011. Additionally, Edi Rama has published two art books containing his works in collaboration with the distinguished artist Anri Sala. He has also been artist and participant in many worldwide art exhibitions.

Edi Rama’s involvement in the public and political life of the country starts with the movement for democracy that led to the dismantling of the communist regime in Albania, with Rama being one of the most publicly outspoken members and a key leader of the students’ movement at the Academy of Fine Arts.

Following a hiatus of several years in which he left Albania to dedicate himself to the artistic life (although he remained a staunch critic in the press of the first post-communist government), Edi Rama entered politics in 1998 in the capacity of the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. During his tenure he won the support and wide appreciation of the Albanian public opinion for his creative and efficient ways of promoting art and culture in Albania.

In 2000, Edi Rama ran for mayor of Tirana Municipality with the support of the Socialist Party and marked a landslide victory against his rival. Upon taking over, he set off on a campaign aimed at transforming and regenerating the capital city by restoring public spaces that had been usurped by illegal buildings and increasing the green areas, while instilling a new spirit and vision in the administration of the Capital. Under Edi Rama’s leadership, Tirana Municipality turned into a modern European environment. His projects to introduce colour in public spaces amongst the ruined facades of residential buildings of the communist era, the rehabilitation of Lana Riverbed, the increase of recreational parks and green areas in the city, as well as the reconstruction of Tirana’s road network based on entirely new standards found international recognition, resulting in a series of awards, amongst which, *World Mayor Award* (2004) and *European Hero Award* by Time Magazine. Edi Rama was re-elected as Mayor of Tirana in 2003 and 2007 and led the Albanian Capital for 11 years.

In 2005, Edi Rama was elected Chair of the Socialist Party of Albania, leading this force through the difficult opposition years and into the overwhelming victory of 23 June 2013.

**Welcome remarks**

Since September 2018, Luigi Soreca is EU Ambassador, Head of the European Delegation to Albania.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Soreca was Director for Security in DG HOME of the European Commission, with responsibilities in the fight against terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, drug trafficking, corruption and cybercrime. He was in charge of the EU support for law enforcement cooperation at European and international level, and Member of the Management Board EUROPOL, CEPOL (police training) and EMCCDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction). In the Juncker Commission, he coordinated the services’ efforts for the preparation, adoption and implementation of the European Agenda on Security in April 2015. During the terrorist events in 2015-2017 in the EU, from this position, he has coordinated the EU policy response to the attacks in terms of new legislative and policy initiatives, including the preparation and adoption of the Directives on Terrorism, Firearms and Money Laundering, the Action Plan on Firearms and Explosives and the creation of the EU Counter-Terrorism Centre at EUROPOL.
Luigi Soreca has overseen the work of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and was the Chair of the EU Internet Forum. In the area of drugs trafficking, he was also responsible for the EU Action Plan on drugs trafficking for 2017-2020. He was the Commission representative in the G7 Senior Officials “Rome-Lyon” Group which deals with global terrorism and transnational organised crime. He also negotiated several international agreements on behalf of the EU with third countries, including with the USA on PNR and TFTP. During the migration crisis in summer 2016, he was appointed as Special Commission Envoy to Italy for the launch of the relocation process under Council Decision 2015/1523.

From 2006 to 2013 he had the privilege to coordinate the launch and the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Dialogues with countries in the Western Balkans, including Albania, the Eastern Partnership and with the Russian Federation. He coordinated the preparation of the roadmaps for Visa Liberalisation focusing on achieving justice reform, the establishment of solid track record on corruption and organised crime, including drug trafficking, and the protection of human rights in the countries concerned, including Albania. Following the conclusions of the Visa Dialogue, he coordinated the launch of the post-visa liberalization mechanism to monitor the potential misuse of those countries’ citizens of their freedom of movement and right of asylum into the Schengen area.

Luigi Soreca joined the European Commission in 2001. A lawyer by training, he started his career in the banking sector in Italy and then joined the Italian Ministry of Interior in 1992.

Ogerta Manastirliu
Minister of Health and Social Protection of Albania

Welcome remarks

Mrs. Manastirliu holds a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry and Environment. She studied at the University of Tirana, at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in the General Chemistry branch, where she graduated and received a Master of Science. Since 2009, she has been engaged as a professor at the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

In 2004 she started her professional career in the Municipality of Tirana, initially in the Project Coordination Directorate. From 2005-2011, she headed the Housing and Social Services Directorate. During this assignment, Mrs. Manastirliu has been one of the main contributors to the design and implementation of the “Local Housing Strategy”.

Between 2011-2013, she was engaged as an expert in managing and coordinating of social and human resources policies for various national and international organizations, such as UNFPA, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and others. From 2013 - 2017, she directed the “Mother Theresa” University Hospital Center, in Tirana.

Mrs. Manastirliu has a long history of political activity in the ranks of the Socialist Party and is a member of the National Assembly. In the parliamentary elections of 2017 she was elected as Deputy/Member of the Albanian Parliament.
Speaker Bios

Iris Luarasi
Vice-President of Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - GREVIO

Keynote Speaker
Iris Luarasi is the Executive Director of Counselling Line for Women and Girls (the National Hotline for victims of Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence), a pioneer women's organization in the country, which fights gender-based violence and does lobbying and advocacy for women’s rights. Mrs. Luarasi also leads the first male centre in Albania, Counselling Line for Men and Boys, which tries to rehabilitate perpetrators of domestic violence, works on prevention with young boys in the country, and engages in fatherhood campaigns. She has been elected for a second mandate as a member and First Vice President of GREVIO, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention.

Iris Luarasi is a pedagogue in the Department of Journalism and Communications at the University of Tirana, where she has taught for almost 23 years. Luarasi also trains Albanian journalists in human rights, journalism ethics, fake news, hate speech and sexism. Luarasi was President of the South East Europe Network of Associations of Private Broadcasters from 2004 to 2006, which comprises more than 400 radio and television stations in the Western Balkans, and has helped produce Albania’s Media Sustainability Index for the last 14 years. Her research and publishing activities include leading a study on domestic violence and sex crimes and a guide for reporters on gender-based violence and sexual assault, as well as authoring two books on radio journalism and media in Albania. Mrs. Luarasi has a PhD in Journalism and Communication. She holds a master’s degree in European Studies and was a Golden Medal student during her bachelor studies.

Merita Xhafaj
General Director at the General Directorate of Policies and Development of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Albania

Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention
Ms. Xhafaj has over 25 years of experience in high-level policy making positions in the public administration sector and the private sector. She has an extensive skillset due to her different qualifications and direct involvement in policy making processes throughout USA and EU programs. With a bachelor’s degree in Finance from Tirana University, Ms. Xhafaj also holds a master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Tirana in collaboration with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, USA.

In the last six years, since her appointment to her current position at the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, her responsibilities include the fields of gender equality, women’s empowerment and gender responsive budgeting, violence against women and families, Roma and Egyptian integration, child protection, social protection, and economic aid. In the last three years, she has led the preparation of different reports and strategic documents for Albania, such as Beijing +25 and CEDAW Report. Ms. Xhafaj has been instrumental in the preparation of various key national strategies, such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016-2020 and action plan, the LGBTI National Action Plan 2016-2020, and the National Action Plan on Youth 2015-2020. Recently Ms. Xhafaj led discussions on behalf of the Albanian Government during the Albania Side Event in CSW61 “Application of Gender Responsive Budgeting to the Economic Empowerment of Women” in New York, and participated in the Plenary Session of CSW61 presenting the latest developments of the Albanian Government on gender equality, gender budgeting, women’s economic empowerment, and the participation quota of women in the public administration.
Speaker Bios

Samra Filipovic-Hadziabdic
Director, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Representative of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees

Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

Samra Filipovic-Hadziabdic has long been at the forefront of women’s rights and gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She’s currently the director of the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and she also established and initiated the development of other institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gender Center of the Republika Srpska, and committees in the legislative bodies.

In that role, she developed governmental strategies to mainstream gender issues (the third generation of Gender Action Plan of BiH and Action plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, then the Framework Strategy for implementation of Istanbul Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and led the processes of development and adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH. Ms. Filipovic-Hadziabdic is an approved UN and Council of Europe expert and leads Bosnia and Herzegovina delegations to UN sessions and constructive dialogues with UN treaty bodies. She was a member of the Ad Hoc Committee that developed the Istanbul Convention as well as a candidate for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 2016 CEDAW Committee election.

As the director of the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Filipovic-Hadziabdic took a leading role in the development of the Regional Declaration on Cooperation of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality in West Balkan countries, and has organized several regional initiatives. She has also initiated the establishment of Gender Master Studies in Sarajevo, where she lectures. Ms. Filipovic-Hadziabdic holds a BA in Law, passed the bar exam and obtained her master’s degree in State and International Public Law from the University of Sarajevo.

Prior engagements included Ms. Filipovic-Hadziabdic’s title of an adviser to the president of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a legal adviser to the Human Rights Department of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission to BiH.

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa
Head of the Board, Kosovo Women’s Network, Kosovo*

Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa is a senior analyst, feminist and human rights activist with more than fifteen years of experience. She is part of senior management of KIPRED, one of most reputable think tanks in Kosovo and Balkan region. She has acted as Chair of Kosovo Women’s Network from 2012-2016, was re-elected again in 2018, and continues to support the development of the organization actively as a leading umbrella organization for women-focused NGOs in Kosovo. She has published a number of policy analyses and research reports for KIPRED and Kosovo Women’s Network related to good governance, rule of law, and human rights, as well as reports related to gender analysis, gender-based violence, and women, peace and security issues. She also often acts as a trainer and consultant related to human rights and gender equality issues with a number of organizations such as the EU Office, UNDP, UN Women, etc. She has a Master of Science degree in Gender, Development and Globalisation from London School of Economics, a Political Science degree from the University of London-UK, and a Bachelor of Law from University of Prishtina. She is a PhD Candidate in Law in the Law Faculty “Iustinianus Primus” in Skopje. She conducted research at Washington College of Law, Washington D.C from April to May 2010. From September 2017 until December 2017 she attended a graduate certificate programme in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies with Dartmouth University, Hanover USA. She graduated with high honors.

* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
Speaker Bios

**Sinisa Bjekovic**
Deputy Ombudsperson, Montenegro

**Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention**

Sinisa Bjekovic has been a Deputy Ombudsman of Montenegro since 2015. Previously, he worked in the Republic Administration of Income of Montenegro, Institute for Development and Research in the Field of Occupational Safety in Podgorica, and from 2001 to 2014 he held the position of Project Manager, Executive Director and Head of the Center for Human Rights in the Faculty of Law of the University of Montenegro.

As part of his international engagement, he served as Vice President of the Steering Committee of the Balkan Human Rights Network (BHRN), and since 2008 has been serving as a member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

At the national level, he has been engaged as a lecturer in the training of judicial and state and local government officials, and as a consultant or lecturer has participated in numerous civil sector projects in Montenegro. As a local expert and/or coordinator, he has been hired by international organizations (Council of Europe, OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF) as part of the support provided to the work of national institutions in Montenegro.

In addition to his participation and coordination in international human rights projects, he is the author or co-author of numerous academic and professional publications, studies, analyses and articles in the field of human rights, while as an international lecturer he has been engaged by academic institutions both in the country and abroad.

**Jovana Trencevska**
State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of North Macedonia

**Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention**

Jovana Trencevska has worked in the field of gender equality in the Republic of North Macedonia since 1997. She currently serves as State Secretary in Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP). Previously, she was Head of the Unit for gender equality in the Department of Equal Opportunity in the MLSP. She also has experience in working in the civil sector in the field of gender equality.

Her experience and expertise includes gender equality and anti-discrimination, gender-responsible budgeting, prevention of violence against women and human trafficking, EU integration policies etc. Ms. Trencevska was a member of her country’s delegation for defense of the Report on Fulfilling International Conventions Ratified by the Macedonian Parliament. She is a member of the Advisory Board for Project Implementation Assessment for Gender-Responsible Budgeting in North Macedonia, BiH, Serbia, and Albania. She is the author of several handbooks on gender equality and guides for implementing legal regulations in the anti-discrimination field, and the co-author of several studies and analyses related to gender equality.

**Ljiljana Loncar**
Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister for Gender Equality, Serbia

**Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention**

Ms. Ljiljana Loncar is a special Adviser on Gender Equality to the Deputy Prime Minister and the president of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Republic of Serbia. She is a lawyer by profession and has extensive experience in gender issues, antidiscrimination and human and minority rights, gained through work with the Coordination body for Gender Equality, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality and the Protector of Citizens. Ms. Loncar is a member of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe.

As a state focal point for gender issues, Ms. Loncar has coordinated and participated in the preparation and submission of the first Beijing 25+ report, the report on implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the second Action plan on the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020, as well as the draft Law Gender Equality proposed by the Deputy Prime Minister Office.

Ms. Loncar holds a master’s degree in Gender Equality and is also specialized in gender-responsive budgeting.

#changingmindstoEVAW  
#IstanbulConventionForum
**Speaker Bios**

**Gökçe Bahar Öztürk**  
Investigating Judge, Victim’s Rights Department, Ministry of Justice

Presenter: Update on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

Ms. Öztürk was born in Ankara and graduated from Bilkent University Law Faculty. She is currently pursuing a master’s degree in criminal law at Çankaya University, specializing in victims’ statutes in the criminal law systems. After working as a lawyer for one year, she began working as a criminal judge in criminal courts of first instance, and the high criminal court. She currently works as an investigating judge in the Victims’ Rights Department in Ministry of Justice, where she is responsible for women’s and refugees’ rights in the department. She is a part time lecturer in the Justice Academy, and she gives lectures about Victims’ Rights to trainee judges and prosecutors.

**Aldijana Sisic**  
Chief, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

Chair, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges

Aldijana Sisic is the Chief of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Campaign Manager of the United Nations Secretary-General’s campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. With over 20 years of experience working in preventing and ending violence against women and girls, Aldijana is responsible for the development and implementation of the strategic direction, resource mobilization and overall management of the Fund and the Campaign.

Prior to her coming to the United Nations in January 2009, Aldijana worked for 15 years at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London as an advocacy and human rights specialist where she led the development and implementation of national, regional and international strategies and campaigns on a number of human rights issues, including women’s rights, children rights, refugee and migrants rights, torture and the death penalty.

In her native Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aldijana worked as a teacher and journalist. After finishing her PhD in 1997 at the University of London in United Kingdom and teaching at the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, she pursued a career as a human rights advocate and practitioner.

**Zlatan Hrnčić**  
Senior Advisor at the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges

Zlatan Hrnčić graduated in German Language and Literature from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, and holds a master’s degree in Business Economics from the Faculty of Economics, University of Sarajevo. He is currently working on doctoral dissertation related to domestic violence as a PhD candidate in Sociology from the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. He is currently employed by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an Assistant Director. He mainly works on coordination of implementation of strategic documents in the field of domestic violence, harmonization of legislation, establishment of training programs, establishment of electronic databases, multisectoral approach, promotion of non-violent behaviour and analytics. He is author of several publications and educational programs on domestic violence.
Speaker Bios

Edi Gusia
Chief Executive Officer of the Agency on Gender Equality, Office of the Prime Minister, Kosovo

**Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

Edi Gusia is the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Gender Equality in the Prime Minister’s Office of the Republic of Kosovo. In 2005, she was assigned to the Agency, initially as a consultant from UNMIK to support the newly established Agency for Gender Equality. A year later, she was officially invited by the Kosovo government to join the Agency as a civil servant, and until 2016 she led the Agency’s Division of Reporting and Monitoring. During her career with the Agency, Mrs. Gusia has contributed to designing capacity development programs on gender issues and to the organization of regional and international conferences. She has vast experience in the drafting of key policy documents for the advancement of gender equality agenda in Kosovo, among which include the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, National Strategy for Combating Domestic Violence, and National Action Plan for the Implementation of the 1325 UN Resolution. As of February 2017, she serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Gender Equality of Kosovo and leads the work of Kosovo’s gender machinery spread out at all levels of Kosovo state and public institutions for the fulfilment of the Kosovo gender equality agenda.

Natasa Medjedovic
Executive Director, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Montenegro

**Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

Natasa Medjedovic is one of the founding members and the executive director of SOS Hotline for Women and Children Niksic, founded in 1998. Over the past 20 years, she has become one of the major women’s right activists in Montenegro, and she is recognized as a leader in combating domestic violence on local and national level. She created and coordinated a number of programs, including: Center for Roma Women and Children, Establishing Shelter for Women Survivors of Gender Based Violence, National Helpline for Domestic Violence, Improving Access to Life with No Violence for Women Survivors in Central and Northern Montenegro. Additionally, she served as a member of a number of working groups for the creation of national policy against domestic violence. For 4 years she was a Board member of WAVE Network (European Women against Violence Network) and she currently serves as delegate for Montenegro in Advisory Committee of WAVE for Montenegro.

Beti Pejeva
Executive Director, Educational Humanitarian Organization, North Macedonia

**Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

Beti Pejeva is the President of the NGO (EcoHO) Educational-Humanitarian Organization. She has been promoting women’s rights and gender equality for over two decades and has earned a reputation as a strong gender equality advocate and leader of one of the foremost non-governmental organizations in North Macedonia that provides free legal aid services to women survivors of violence. She also works as a consultant and trainer in areas of gender equality, gender sensitization, prevention of violence against women and girls, gender-responsive policymaking, gender responsible budgeting, and integrated approaches to essential services for women and girl victims and survivors of violence.

She has been a member of numerous national working groups involved in the preparation of standards, protocols for mutual cooperation, laws and strategic documents regarding protection from VAWA. She is an author and co-author of several guides, studies and analyses on topics related to the introduction of standards for specialized service providers for women and girl victims of violence, integrated policies and for the incorporation of gender perspectives in local policies and budgeting.
**Speaker Bios**

**Merve Demircan**  
Ankara Yenimahalle Municipality, Turkey

**Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

Merve Demircan graduated from the Department of Business Administration at Kirikkale University. She completed her master's degree in the European Union department at Yıldırım Beyazıt University and another in Gender and Women's Studies at Hacettepe University.

Ms. Demircan is now working as a project coordinator in Ankara Yenimahalle Municipality International Relations and European Union Office. She has been writing and implementing national and international projects for almost 12 years. For the last 5 years, she has been conducting more intensive activities, especially in the field of women's rights. Due to the lack of rights-based non-governmental organizations in the Yenimahalle region, she founded the Humane Life and Democratic Society Association and is still serving as the chairman of the board. She has also carried out different projects and studies in this field thus gaining extensive experience in women's human rights in the field. By strengthening Public-NGO cooperation, she strives to create more effective and powerful projects for local communities.

For the past year she has been working to implement the local equality action plan for Yenimahalle Municipality to obtain the title of Women Friendly City, and to carry out studies.

**Kosana Beker**  
Programme Director, FemPlatz, Serbia

**Speaker, Plenary session 1: Inter-agency cooperation for an integrated response to violence against women at the regional, national and local levels: Potentials and challenges**

Kosana Beker is a PhD candidate at the Center for Gender Studies (Association of Centers for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies, University of Novi Sad). She completed her master's degree in gender studies at the UN mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica, and previously graduated from the University of Belgrade Law School. She has been a human rights activist for many years, particularly in the area of women's rights. She is currently program director of Women's Rights Organization FemPlatz and she works as a consultant in the area of anti-discrimination and gender equality. She was an Assistant to Commissioner for Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia (2010-2016). She authored and co-authored numerous reports, analyses and publications on the implementation of national and international antidiscrimination legislation, women's rights and disability rights. She is a member of ANED (Academic Network of European Disability Experts) and was a member of EQUINET (European Network of Equality Bodies) Executive Board for two terms (2013-2016).

**Mirela Arqimandriti**  
Executive Director, Gender Alliance for Development Centre

**Presenter: Overview of protection, prosecution and integrated policies on sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey**

Mirela Arqimandriti is a feminist and human rights activist in Albania. She is a gender policy mainstreaming analyst and the author of many research papers, policy briefs, articles and research studies about women's rights as human rights. Mirela is continuing her doctorate studies with Clemson University on Family and Community Development. She obtained her master’s degree in Business Administration (EMBA) from Sheffield University, UK after she finished her degree in Physics from Tirana University, Albania. Mirela Arqimandriti is currently the executive director of the Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC) in Albania and represents a solution-oriented executive, with a successful record in the development and implementation of many projects for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality in Albanian society. In her lifetime, as a women’s rights activist, she has met with many girls and women trying to spread valuable information on human rights all over Albania.
**Etleva Sheshi**  
Assistant Commissioner, People’s Advocate Institution, Albania  

**Speaker, Plenary session 2: Good practices on addressing sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey**

Etleva Sheshi is Assistant Commissioner at the People’s Advocate Institution for women and LGBTI rights. She holds a master’s degree in social work and has 20 years of experience in human rights, including the rights of women, children, youth and LGBTI communities. She has contributed to the drafting of legislation on gender equality and domestic violence in Albania and National Strategies such as the National Strategy for Children 2001-2005; National Youth Strategy 2007-2013; National Strategy on Gender Equality, Gender-based Violence Reduction and Domestic Violence 2011-2015; National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020; National Action Plan on LGBTI People in the Republic of Albania, 2016-2020; etc.

She has participated in the process of drafting national reports on children and women and helped establish and set into operation the national shelter on the treatment of domestic violence victims and rape crisis centers/sexual violence centers.

Ms. Sheshi is a former member of the expert team Ad Hoc Committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO), as well as a former member of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) in the Council of Europe.

She has been involved in the organization of awareness-raising campaigns on protecting women’s rights, promoting gender equality, promoting women’s participation in decision-making, preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, etc.

Ms. Sheshi is a guest lecturer at the University of Tirana, the Faculty of Social Sciences for Gender Policies.

**Radmila Žigić**  
Director, Foundation Lara Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina  

**Speaker, Plenary session 2: Good practices on addressing sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey**

Radmila Žigić has worked with planning, researching, and management for the Organization of Women “Lara” (now Foundation) in Bijeljina, since 1998. For the last three years, she has been a coordinator for the project “Peace with a Woman’s Face”, which gathers 12 organizations from across BiH. Within that project, she coordinated the research on sufferings of women during the war in BiH, and she is one of the editors of the publication “Book of Memories” based on material collected during the research (2015/2016).

She has been a researcher and analyst in several research projects in the field of gender equality in the media (such as women in daily newspapers in BiH) and in the election process (women in local elections in 2004), as well as gender budgeting.

She was the editor of the first web-portal for women in BiH “Lara online”, and several publications, including “Women in History of Semberija – revised edition” (2012). Overall, Ms. Žigić has 20 years of experience in the media as a journalist and editor both in the radio and press.
Shenaj Berisha
Prosecutor, Prosecutor’s Office in Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo

Speaker, Plenary session 2: Good practices on addressing sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Shenaj Berisha has been working as a State Prosecutor at the Basic Prosecution Office in Pristina since 2014 and coordinated affairs at the Prosecutor’s Office for handling domestic violence cases from 2002-2014. She also worked as a victim protection manager at the Ministry of Justice, where she handled cases of domestic violence, human trafficking, and rape. She was a member of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence before the Ministry of Justice and a lecturer at the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety in Vushtrri.

Ms. Berisha is a certified trainer for domestic violence from the US Embassy, and she has organized trainings on handling domestic violence cases for prosecutors, police officers, judges, and victim advocates.

She participated in the drafting of the national anti-trafficking strategy and Action Plan for 2008-2011 and 2011-2014, as well as the national anti-trafficking strategy. She also participated in the Working Group on Drafting the Implementation Plan for Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security organized by AGE / OPM. Finally, she has contributed to the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures for cases of victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking in human beings.

Nermina Fakovikj
Coordinator for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, Ministry of Health, North Macedonia

Speaker, Plenary session 2: Good practices on addressing sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Nermina Fakovikj is a Coordinator for Equal Opportunities in the Ministry of Health and a member of the Inter-sectorial Gender Group for gender equality, which is the national body responsible for mainstreaming gender perspective in the policies of all public institutions and monitoring the progress of harmonization of national gender equality legislation with the legislation of the European Union and European standards.

She manages the National Preventive Program for Mother and Child Health, a key program that covers a number of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) efforts, maternal mortality, family planning and GBV. Ms. Fakovikj is substantially involved in the development and implementation of the first ever National SRH Action Plan 2018-2020. She is a certified trainer for gender-based violence, clinical management of victims of rape, child protection against abuse and neglect.

Ms. Fakovikj completed her studies on gender equality and she is currently attending postgraduate studies in public health, on a topic related to gender based and sexual violence, and response at the national level.
Enkelejda Bregu
Programme Officer – Social Policies and Gender Equality, EU Delegation in Albania

Facilitator, Group 2: Tools and approaches to strengthen inter-agency coordination and cooperation

Since 2016, Enkelejda Bregu has worked as Programme Officer on Social Policies and Gender Equality at the European Delegation to Albania. From 2013-2016, Mrs. Bregu worked as the Advisor of the Minister at the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, focused on areas of social inclusion, social protection and gender equality. Prior to this appointment, Mrs. Bregu worked for almost 16 years in the area of development programmes, social inclusion and protection, and preventing violence against women and children with several organizations such as: Terre des hommes, World Vision, UNDP, IOM in Albania and several regional programmes. With an educational background in social work and social policies, she holds a M.A. in Social Policies on Children and Youth and a Ph.D in Social Policies focused on interdisciplinary models and practice in child protection work.
Speaker Bios

**Anca Ciupa**
WAVE Network/CSSP
Facilitator, Group 2: Addressing the main challenges in achieving effective prosecution of different forms of sexual violence cases in the region

Anca Ciupa is currently working for the Women against Violence Network (WAVE), as a Membership & Legal Project Coordinator, where one of her tasks is to coordinate the Civil Society Strengthening Platform (CSSP) in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as part of the ongoing EU/UN Women programme ‘Implementing Norms, Changing Minds’. She is also one of the four experts that contributed to development of the Council of Europe E-learning online course on ‘Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’, part of the HELP Platform (Human rights Education for Legal Professionals). Anca Ciupa has a bachelor’s degree in Law at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania and a master’s degree in European and National Business Law, also obtained in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Babes-Bolyai University. Additionally, Anca has obtained a postgraduate diploma in International Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna in June 2014.

**Clíona Saidléar**
Executive Director, Rape Crisis Network Ireland
Facilitator, Group 1: Strengthening the prevention of different forms of sexual violence

Clíona has been specialising in Sexual Violence since 2004 when she joined Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) the network body for Rape Crisis Centres in Ireland, as Policy and Communications coordinator. She has a strong interest in systemic and cultural change through public discourse and mainstreaming of both education and standards of zero tolerance and building good evidence whilst protecting the dignity and privacy of survivors. Her PhD is in International Politics where she studied the movement from the politically unthinkable to the politically possible.