



United Nations Regional
Issue-based Coalition on
Gender Equality for Europe
and Central Asia



unicef



Advancing Generation Equality Forum Commitments in the Europe and Central Asia Region: Action Coalition #5 on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality



Summary of discussions

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This report has been elaborated by **Ms. Andra Mocanu**, Cybersecurity Consultant at ITU Office for Europe, with the support of Luzia Zeruneith, Programme Coordinator, UNICEF and Ms. Nargis Azizova, Regional Programme Specialist, UN Women, ECA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The regional event on [“Advancing Generation Equality Forum Commitments in the Europe and Central Asia Region: Action Coalition #5 on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality”](#) was held online on 4 July 2022. The event was jointly organized by the ITU Office for Europe, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, and UN Women, in partnership with the UN Regional Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality (IBC-GE). The regional event was held within the framework of the regional series on the [Generation Equality Forums \(GEF\)](#) and in support of the priorities of the [Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality \(AC TIGE\)](#), co-led by ITU and UNICEF.

The regional event convened AC TIGE commitment-makers from governments, private sector, civil society, as well as women and girl leaders, in a dynamic dialogue on the progress and implementation of the regional commitments to advance gender equality in STEM. It showcased how the commitments are translated into tangible actions and provided a platform to exchange on gaps that remain to be addressed and related policy recommendations. The event aimed to serve as a key convening to foster new strategic alliances and partnerships advancing women and girls participation in technology and innovation, overall aspiring to forge new commitments, including collective commitments, building on the momentum of the GEF.

The event’s agenda covered the following:

- Keynote on “Building Momentum since the Paris GEF”
- Session 1 on “Translating Commitments into Sustainable Changes for Women and Girls”
- Session 2 on “Building Partnerships and Alliances to Advance Implementation of the AC Roadmap”
- Session 3 on “Looking Ahead: Policy Recommendations to Accelerate Progress for Women and Girls in STEM in the Region by 2026”

The main outcomes of the event are outlined in this report, which structures the key points that emerged during each session of the event.

2. DOCUMENTATION

The event was held virtually. Relevant documentation was made available in electronic form on the [event's webpage](#). **Video recording** of the event, together with all presentations delivered, as well as this **outcome report** are also made available on the website.

3. SUMMARY OF EVENT SESSIONS

OPENING

Speakers: Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office & Natalia Mochu, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for the CIS

Key Points from Philippe Cori, UNICEF:

- It is a privilege to be here opening this Regional Meeting one year after the Generation Equality Forum in Paris, which was such a success. In our region we are lucky to have a generation of female leaders who lead the change themselves and there are many initiatives going on for girls to break the cycles of disadvantage;
- Knowledge societies are the new challenge for countries, the competition will be driven around knowledge and digital skills. Girls must be included in the digital space and social norms must be addressed. Most work opportunities are coming from the digital space and investing in girls is the best and smartest investment countries can make;
- We have almost 30 tangible commitments from 10 partners under Generation Equality. UNICEF is committed to these efforts. UNICEF has reached 23 million girls globally with skills training and development opportunities including in STEM, digital skills, and social entrepreneurship between 2018 and 2021, and thousands of them in our region;
- We need to push the envelope further. Together with partners, UNICEF will continue to collaborate on programmes, partnerships, resource allocation and joint advocacy, there is a lot of potential in years to come and we need sessions like this one today for co-creation, innovation and sharing of best practices.

Key Points from Natalia Mochu, ITU:

- Women and girls should have equal rights to access and participation in ICT, and the gender gap should be decreased and eliminated. Together with partners, ITU always pays attention to this gap and raises the issue of attracting women and girls in the STEM field, particularly in the ICT sector;
- ITU established the International Celebration of Girls in ICT, which is celebrated every year since 2011. ITU also different programs and events aiming at empowering girls and women with cybersecurity and ICT skills. These initiatives actively draw young professional women and girls to the work of ITU, and in general to the ICT sector;
- Our Action Coalition is an important platform to exchange our liabilities, responsibilities of our organizations being part of this Coalition, as well as to encourage dialogue to resolve the barriers to gender equality in ICT;

KEYNOTE: BUILDING MOMENTUM SINCE THE PARIS GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM

Speaker: Ms. Helene Molinier, UN Women Senior Advisor, Innovation and Technology, GEF Secretariat for the AC on TIGE

Key Points:

- AC #5 on TIGE is the first initiative that covers all objectives of SDG 5 and represents a way through which UN Women together with partners come together to embody the implementation of both SDG 5 and SDG17, looking at new partnerships to strengthen the implementation of the Development Goals;
- It represents a platform to share knowledge and expertise, where countries can exchange on good practices to develop new policies and have dialogues between public institutions, the private sector, and civil society;
- The four priorities of the AC #5 are to: **(i)** bridge the gender gap in digital access and competence; **(ii)** prevent and eliminate online tech facilitating gender-based violence and discrimination; **(iii)** increase investment in developing gender transformative technology; **(iv)** build an inclusive, transformative and accountable ecosystem;
- The objectives are to generate new commitments, implement and deliver these commitments, strengthen the movement and political mobilization around technology and innovation for gender equality, and build new collaborations;
- An example of collaboration is the gender innovation guide developed by the leadership coalition with the aim to increase feminist technology and gender transformative technology. The guide aims to define gender transformative technology and provides a step-by-step implementation guide.

SESSION 1: TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS INTO SUSTAINABLE CHANGES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Focus: Commitment-makers to present a set of concrete examples of how to translate the commitments into tangible actions, while exchanging on challenges and best practices that can represent a source of inspiration for others in the region to act.

Moderator: Ms. Ellen Walker, Founder and Executive Director of RightsTech Women

Ms. Liisa Ketolainen, Specialist, Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland



- Preventing and eliminating all types of gender-based violence and harassment is crucial. Online gender-based violence (GBV) is as serious as offline gender-based violence. According to a large-scale study, over half of girls have experienced cyberbullying or harassment online, and the numbers are even higher for vulnerable girls. Finland has made of this issue a priority, tackling online GBV at both national and international level;
- At national level it ensures that online gender-based violence is included in the legislation, as well as in all policies and strategies implemented to eliminate this issue. A concrete example is the National Action Plan which covers digital violence for the first time, incl. a series of concrete measures. At international level, it advocates in all relevant forums such as the UN and the EU;
- To build inclusive and safe ecosystems, it is important to also address the root causes of GBV which are represented by the discriminative norms, attitudes, stereotypes. To eliminate the previously mentioned causes, boys and man need to be included as well in this initiative. This can be done through including online GBV as part of the trainings offered to police officers and military service.

Ms. Mariam Lashkhi, Deputy Chair of Foreign Relations Committee, Parliament of Georgia

- To ensure the implementation of the AC on TIGE commitments, the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality



Council, with the support of UN Women Georgia created a monitoring group. The group is co-chaired by the head of the Council and the Prime Minister Advisor on Human Rights, and comprises representatives of various UN organizations, Honorary Ambassadors of Sweden, Norway, and France, as well as the Ombudsman and other donor organizations. Within the framework of the group, the Council has identified key stakeholders at the national level who play an important role in advancing gender equality in technology and innovation;

- It is important to bring together all key stakeholders and have constant dialogues to synchronize commitments, as well as to organize high-level conferences to ensure exchange of good practices and lessons learned;
- Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA) is a key player in building and transforming innovation ecosystems and is currently developing a special project to advance the objectives of the AC;

SESSION 2: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES TO ADVANCE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AC ROADMAP

Focus: Commitment-makers to present a set of concrete examples of how to translate the commitments into tangible actions, while exchanging on challenges and best practices that can represent a source of inspiration for others in the region to act.

Moderator: Ms. Nargis Azizova, Regional Programme Specialist, UN Women ECA

Mr. Sinisa Marcic, Senior Expert on Human Capital Development at the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

- There is a need for open and transparent dialogue between various organizations such as UN Agencies, EU-funded organizations; development agencies (e.g., GIZ, USAID, etc.) about their agendas and future strategic goals;
- Other partners can be engaged through already existing projects. The Western Balkan Responsible Research and Innovation platform is such an example, where other women's organizations are encouraged to get involved in the [working group](#);
- [The Western Balkan Innovation and Research Platform](#) aims to bring together stakeholders from different sectors, such as policy makers, governments, businesses, academia and international organizations;
- To implement the commitments, the RCC launched in partnership with UNDP the [regional network of women in STEM](#), aiming to encourage young women and high school girls to pursue a career and education in the STEM field; So far, there have been very good results, with an average of 55% of girls enrolling in higher education in the STEM field. However, very few choose to continue with a career in the field. It is important that academia and policy makers partner together to work towards bridging this gap;

Ms. Vera Strobachova-Budway, Senior Co-ordinator, Adviser Gender Issues at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

- More partnerships with the private sector should be built, as now there is a lack of such partnerships, and private companies can play a critical role in advancing the agenda;
- One example of a successful private-public partnership is with the Coca Cola Foundation. The partnerships provided assistance to a self-employment start-up focusing on generating income opportunities for women, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- OSCE is committed to close the gender digital gap by 2026, by working with Member States in strengthening legal and policy frameworks to combat gender-based digital violence; by organizing a series of roundtables on gender digital divide and develop a set of recommendations for Member States on how to improve gender equality in digital economy.

Ms. Bharati Sadasivam Regional Gender Advisor, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub

- UNDP and UNICEF have launched [STEM4ALL](#), an interactive platform aiming to share knowledge and raise awareness on women and girls in STEM and addressing gender stereotypes STEM fields, offering a comprehensive set of

resources for private sector, policy and decision makers, educators and parents including tools, guidance, and articles; UNDP and UNICEF carried out substantive user research to accommodate different types of users who come online.

- UNDP and UNICEF are excited about the collaboration, because with our different roles we can adjust different constituencies that are vitally important for the agenda on advancing women and girls' skills and jobs in STEM.
- From the beginning, we saw a key niche for this work, with over 200 sign-ups for the first event in Central Asia.
- UNDP and UNICEF will push for more visibility, more role models for women and girls, sub-regional and cross-regional events. We are excited about our "STEMinists network" with podcasts and events with successful women in STEM.
- We also want to work more with the private sector – for example we have Limak as partner in Turkey with the fascinating programme Engineer Girls of Turkey. Our overall goal is networking. We need to create – energetically and creatively – across the ecosystem.
- We seek to collaborate as much as possible in many capacities: we seek Knowledge, Impact, Resource & Media Partners, we thank all country offices and partners who have engaged with us and made this a creative exercise. We express our commitment to the AC #5 and invite you all to collaborate with UNDP and UNICEF on STEM4ALL

Ms. Tamara Dancheva, Senior Manager of International Relations at GSMA, and Ms. Lea Sophie Gill, Engagement Manager, Strategy, Health Sciences and Wellness at EY- Parthenon

- [EQUALS](#) is the largest public-private partnership, bringing together more than 100 partners from both public and private sector to bridge the digital gender gap, and supporting 4 SDGs (i.e., quality education; gender equality; industry, innovation and infrastructure; and partnerships for the goals);
- [Her Digital Skills \(HDS\)](#) initiative aims to provide access to free gender transformative digital skills education for 1 million women and girls by 2026. The initiative is built on three pillars: workshops, e-mentoring and digital badges;
- There are very few gender transformative digital skills trainings on the market. The importance of having such trainings is crucial, given that 90% of the future jobs will require digital skills.

SESSION 3: LOOKING AHEAD: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN STEM IN THE REGION BY 2026

Focus: Youth and policy advisors to present concrete policy recommendations to accelerate participation of women and girls in STEM in ECA region by 2026. A mentimeter poll was also introduced to participants with the aim to gather their policy recommendations, as well as examples of support needed and expected from the UN IBC side.

Moderator: Ms. Ilayda Eskitascioglu, Generation Equality Gender Youth Activist

Speakers: Miss Zhanjya Koshkimbaveva, participant in UniSat Nano-satellite Educational Program for Girls (UNEPG), Ms. Andreea Barbu, ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy, and Mr. Mario Filadoro, Policy Analyst Officer on Gender and Digital Economy at ITU



Key Points:

- Zhanjya Koshkimbaveva (16 yrs) from UNICEF's [Unisat Nano-satellite Educational Programme for Girls \(UNEPG\)](#) described her experience growing up in Central Asia in a society where men and women have different roles. Zhanjya experienced how boys and girls were treated differently in STEM competitions she joined since she was 11 years old.
- Yet, feminism is going fast and strong in Central Asia and women can express themselves more, which makes Zhanjya proud. Before, Zhanjya only saw a few girls in the Tech Olympics, now she sees an equal share of girls and boys.
- Zhanjya also emphasized her mother, an important role model for Zhanjya, as she is a female leader in the construction sector and has also witnessed and shared with Zhanjya the progression in Central Asia with more

women in STEM.

- For Zhaniya, participation in UNICEF’s activities on Girls’ STEM and Digital Skills encouraged her to pursue STEM as an adolescent girl, especially with female mentors who were there for support to the girls.
- Zhaniya concluded that although her region is progressing, there is still much left to do and the first thing decisionmakers must think about is how we can transform the cultural norms that prevail about girls in STEM.
- Several events were organized with the active participation of [ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Group](#) which addressed the digital divide and related topics and highlighted the importance of role models to encourage girls and young women pursue an education and career in the field, as well as the necessity for having equal opportunities and access to the labor market;
- Other recommendations provided in the [Generation Connect Youth Call to Action](#) include **(i)** upholding human rights online; **(ii)** giving women a voice in the legislative framework; and **(iii)** create social support systems to vulnerable women to help them overcome their challenges and access high quality education in the STEM field.

When asked to provide one specific, concrete policy recommendation to the Technology and Innovation Action Coalition commitment-makers, the youth and policy advisor highlighted the **(i)** importance to work towards transforming gender cultural and social norms; **(ii)** necessity to focus more on reaching out and meeting the needs of vulnerable women and girls; **(iii)** importance of collaboration between all various relevant stakeholders.

When asked about **policy recommendations to accelerate women and girls’ participation in the STEM field**, participants highlighted, among others, the need to **(i)** build private-public partnerships; **(ii)** have equal opportunities and access to the labor market; **(iii)** address gender norms; **(iv)** engage women and girls in dialogues to make sure the initiatives taken address their needs and concerns.



When asked **about the support needed and expected from the UN IBC GE side**, participants highlighted, among others, **(i)** the need for evidence-based solutions and case studies; **(ii)** Internet access for rural areas; **(iii)** micro funding; **(iv)** more opportunities to increase digital literacy and digital skills among women and girls.

