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the European Union



Co-convened by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo*, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of North Macedonia, and the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fourth Regional Forum

Ending Violence Against Women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye

“Integrated Policies, Inclusive Partnerships”

29-30
November 2022

ONLINE

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) continues to devastate communities and societies worldwide. A wide array of international and regional legal standards have been adopted in response to pave the way toward ending VAWG, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention), as well as the European Union’s *acquis communautaire*. COVID-19 exacerbated gender inequalities, increasing VAWG and rolling back progress in all spheres of life, including employment, health and education. As a result, the strategic partnership between the EU and UN Women, 10 years on, is more important than ever to advance gender equality and women’s rights at every level.

Any approach to ending VAWG requires a comprehensive, rights-based approach for all women, with measures that go beyond the traditional ideas of public space and criminal justice, as well as significant investment in prevention by addressing perpetrator behaviour and harmful attitudes and norms that justify such behaviour. These efforts require innovative and transformative thinking, underpinned by financial investments that match the stated commitments of international, regional and state actors. Since 2017, the EU-funded regional programme, “[Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye: Implementing norms, changing minds](#),” implemented by UN Women, has leveraged these approaches through persistent and coordinated effort with multiple stakeholders to create positive, sustainable change for women and girls in the region.

* 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).

During the [Third Regional Forum](#), held on 1-2 December 2021, 150 representatives of national governments, local and regional institutions and CSOs collectively developed a [Roadmap](#) which provides a framework to advance work with perpetrators in the region; leverage data through establishing femicide watches to prevent violence; promote social norms that favour equality; and make necessary amendments in laws, policies and budgets to provide fully funded, sustainable and high-quality services for survivors of violence.

This year's **Fourth Regional Forum**, to be held within the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, aims to build on the momentum and progress from the last five years to set the stage for continued achievements toward ending VAWG in the region. As such, the Fourth Regional Forum will focus in detail on strategies and next steps for establishing femicide watches at the national and regional levels, as well as different aspects of coordination and collaboration, including among and between sectors, agencies, civil society organizations, and states in the region. The Forum will also look back on and celebrate the women supported and results achieved within the regional programme over the last five years.

2. THEMATIC FOCUS

a. Femicide

The gender-related killing of women and girls, also known as femicide, is the most violent and extreme form of VAW. Earlier this year, statistical framework for measuring femicide was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission¹ as part of a wider effort to enable the institutionalization of mechanisms to monitor femicide, such as femicide watches or observatories. Femicide watches are a powerful tool to unfold the scope of the issue and put in place evidence-based responses. In the Western Balkans, a femicide watch initiative is being implemented in Serbia and replicated in Albania and Montenegro, paving the way for the establishment of a regional femicide watch, which is expected to prevent and reduce cases of femicide by improving and strengthening existing preventive measures by identification of possible failures of protection and promoting awareness on the issue of VAWG and inciting further actions for its prevention.

The Fourth Regional Forum will present the argumentation for the establishment of the regional femicide watch and jointly think through the models, mechanisms, resources and networking needs as well as sketch the roadmap to its establishment.

b. Strengthening alliances, networks and platforms throughout the region and locally

The work of civil society, including women activists and feminist groups, is at the heart of advancing women's rights and ending VAWG, and their collaboration is fundamental to building movements and creating change. The Civil Society Strengthening Platform (CSSP) was established to strengthen women's voices and agency at a regional level. The CSSP gathers partner organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye to work together with Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) to strengthen women's organization networks within their countries as well as the entire region.

During the Forum, CSSP organizers will jointly reflect on the aims, activities and achievements of the Civil Society Strengthening Platform in the past five years, as well as achievements in building country and local level network alliances and how those alliances can be strengthened and maintained moving forward.

¹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2022/March/un-approves-new-statistical-framework-to-measure-and-characterize-femicide-for-more-effective-prevention-measures.html>

c. Multi-sectoral response to violence against women

Collaborative and coordinated multi-sectoral response is essential to effectively address VAWG. All relevant agencies and actors – such as the police, the legal and justice system, social services, healthcare providers and women’s CSOs – must be systematically involved in the response to VAWG in accordance with victim/survivor-oriented policies and procedures. Similarly, strong referral mechanisms help survivors navigate the protection and response system and access the services they need.

The final block will examine successes and gaps in cooperation between women’s organizations and healthcare providers in the region and best practices, challenges and opportunities in strengthening referral mechanisms at local and national level. Through these discussions, we expect to jointly re-strengthen the commitment to increase collaboration between governments and CSOs, and multisectoral collaboration within institutional response.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES



- Developing a **femicide watch roadmap** to summarize the progress made thus far in the establishment of femicide watches in the region and outline the steps and strategies for creating a regional femicide watch;
- Finalizing **action points for strengthening alliances** among women’s organizations, and among women’s organizations and state actors throughout the region;
- **Renewing commitments to coordinated multi-sectoral response** by state actors, and highlighting specific areas for focus and improvement.
- Defining **priorities for the next five years** based on the achievements and challenges from the past five years;

4. FORMAT OF THE FORUM



The Fourth Regional Forum will feature a mix of plenary and group work sessions on the thematic areas of the Forum outlined above to enable insightful and inspiring participant discussion. Experts from the region and beyond will present evidence-based analysis, including existing challenges and recommendations for addressing them, in each of the themes covered in the Forum and lead discussions around them with the goal to agree on the methods and approaches for implementing interventions towards ending VAW in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

5. ORGANIZATION OF THE FOURTH REGIONAL FORUM



The Forum is organized by UN Women and co-convened by the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of North Macedonia, and the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. LANGUAGE



The working language of the Forum is English. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in the languages of the region.