



## CSW67: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

### Unlocking digital opportunities for women and girls for the gender responsive socio economic recovery and sustainable development

Sub-regional on-line consultations for Western Balkans and Türkiye to prepare for CSW 67 session

#### DRAFT Concept Note

**Date:** 24 February 2023

**Time:** 10.00 a.m. Belgrade/Pristina/Sarajevo/Skopje/Tirana; time: 12.00 p.m. Istanbul

**Format:** Online consultations

**Connection arrangements:** to be provided to all confirmed participants

**Language:** Albanian, B/C/S/Montenegrin, English, Macedonian, Turkish with simultaneous translation<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Background

##### 1.1 Update on forthcoming intergovernmental events

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2021- 2024), [the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\) in 2023](#) will consider “**Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls**” as its priority theme “**Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls**” as the review theme. The CSW67 priority theme brings a unique opportunity to revisit the gendered impacts of innovation and technology and to identify recommendations that will allow for a more inclusive and equitable digital evolution. The UN Secretary-General’s report on the CSW67 priority theme is underway (*to be changed to “has been issued” once it is out*) to provide an analysis of how to harness technology so that women and girls enjoy full political, economic and social equality, participate in innovation processes from design to application, monitoring and evaluation and shape the values and principles that should underpin their governance.

To take stock of the current progress in Western Balkans and Türkiye in terms of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of emerging technologies, digitalization, and innovation, as well as discuss the main challenges and obstacles and agree on the main actions to be taken to make the required changes, the Government of Albania and UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO) will convene sub-regional consultations on the priority theme to be held in on-line format on 24 February, 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> All logistical technical arrangements will be supported by UN Women

[The UN Secretary-General's report](#) on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly concludes that the rapid technological change is having an impact on every aspect of economic, social and political life, creating opportunities and risks, especially for women and girls around the globe, as technological change is not gender neutral.

Rapid changes in technology and media are creating new spaces for the perpetration of violence against women and girls<sup>2</sup>. Examples of cyber-violence include cyber-stalking; non-consensual pornography (or 'revenge porn'); gender-based slurs and harassment; 'slut shaming'; unsolicited pornography; 'sextortion'; rape and death threats; and electronically enabled trafficking. ICTs also facilitate the abuse and harassment of female participants in politics in the forms of disinformation campaigns and digital forgeries.

Rural women tend to spend more time than their urban counterparts on unpaid care and domestic work, given generally poorer access to infrastructure such as running water or labour-saving technology. The development of ICT can generate unique opportunities to strategically address challenges associated with achieving Sustainable Development Goals, such as sustainable food production; access to clean and safe water; and green energy generation and usage. All of these have gender targets and disproportionately affect women around the globe, especially in low and middle-income economies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has showcased how structural and systemic vulnerabilities that digitalization has added, disproportionately affect women and girls. The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed devastating socio-economic consequences on the Eurasia region – consequences that may have long-lasting effects for generations of women to come.

### ***1.2 Gender Equality and Digitalization in Western Balkans and Türkiye.***

The gender gap in digital access (further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), gaps in digital literacy and use of digital services, women's underrepresentation in professions, entrepreneurship, and decision-making on the digital transformation, as well as online discrimination and violence, are significant obstacles to a gender equal, resilient digital transformation in the South-East Europe. Women comprise more than 40 percent of university graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. However, women's involvement in STEM in the Western Balkan countries does not translate into strong participation in technology sectors: women are significantly underrepresented in ICT industries, founding or investing in technology start-ups or serving as high-level managers or directors in technology companies<sup>3</sup>. Addressing the multiple discrimination and education-related barriers that keep women from participating equally in STEM fields, accessing digital finance, and becoming digital leaders is critical to unleashing their full entrepreneurship potential<sup>4</sup>.

The access to internet significantly varies in the region, ranging from 72.2 percent in Albania, to 89.9 percent in Kosovo\*, and 81.4 percent in North Macedonia and Montenegro<sup>5</sup>. There is also a noticeable difference in the access to internet between women and men, with only 69.3 percent of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina versus 77.8 percent of men in this country, with 89 percent of women in

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (A/HRC/38/47).

<sup>3</sup> [Digitally empowered Generation Equality Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries \(UN Women, ITU, 2021\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UNDP Gender Equality in Digitalization \(2021\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [ibid](#)

Kosovo\* followed by 80.7 percent of women in Montenegro versus 81.9 percent of men, and 79.2 percent of women versus 83.5 percent of men in North Macedonia. In Türkiye 77.7. percent of individuals use internet, out of which women constitute 72.2 percent versus 83.3. percent of men<sup>6</sup>. Türkiye, thus, exhibits relatively wider gender gaps in Internet usage (16%) than the other G20 economies for which data are available<sup>7</sup>. In terms of country groupings across the dimension of access to internet, the respective rates for developed, developing and least developed countries are 86.0, 40.7 and 13.9 percent<sup>8</sup>.

The ICT sector in the European Union (EU) grew by 50.5 percent from 2012 to 2021, almost 8 times as high as the increase (6.3 percent for total employment.)<sup>9</sup>. In Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia ICT is the fastest growing industry. However, women are underrepresented in this industry and have significantly lower wages compared to men. In Serbia, women are only around 14 percent of programmers with the average monthly wage for women programmers is some EUR 400 lower than for men, and there is a 15 percent gender pay gap in the ICT sector<sup>10</sup>. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the average salary of a male programmer is USD 1 033 per month, while women in the same position earn only USD 810<sup>11</sup>. In North Macedonia women comprise only 27 percent of the IT workforce and only 12 percent at management level<sup>12</sup>. Overall, women employed as ICT specialists in Serbia reach 25 percent, and 23.3 percent in North Macedonia, and 16.8 percent in Türkiye.

New technologies have also awakened concerns about fairness and inclusion, privacy and autonomy, accountability and transparency, including the heightened exposure of women and girls to the risk of violence and abuse in technology-enabled spaces. Technological advances could be harnessed to advance gender equality as they open up new avenues to mobilize and connect women around the world but, without proper regulation, they might simply replicate inequalities of the past or even exacerbate them. In the European Union, 1 in 10 women reports having experienced cyber-harassment. Moreover, some groups of women, including human rights defenders, women in politics, journalists, bloggers, women belonging to ethnic minorities, indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, and women with disabilities are particularly targeted. According to the 2019 OSCE-led survey on violence against women in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, 34 percent of women in Albania, 28 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 31 percent in Montenegro, 30 percent in North Macedonia, and 42 percent in Serbia have experienced all forms of sexual harassment<sup>13</sup>. The findings of the survey identified that younger women tend to indicate experiences of nearly all forms of sexual harassment in higher proportions compared with their older counterparts, but the differences are particularly marked in relation to forms that could be classified as cyber-harassment, i.e., via mobile and Internet technology. Unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that caused offence since the age of 15 are indicated almost nine times more often among 18–29-year-olds<sup>14</sup>. No doubt the greater usage of such technologies by younger women increases the risk of experiencing such behaviours, but the finding also highlights the extent to which such technologies are being used inappropriately. A study conducted in Türkiye in 2017 showed that nearly 60 percent of 550 female social media users over the age of 18 were exposed to cyberviolence<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> OECD “[Bridging The Digital Gender Divide](#)” (2018)

<sup>8</sup> [UN E-Government Survey 2022](#)

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat “[ICT specialists in employment](#)”

<sup>10</sup> [Digitally empowered Generation Equality Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries \(UN Women, ITU, 2021\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> [OSCE-led survey on VAWG in South and Eastern Europe \(2019\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> [GREVIO’s Approach to Digital Violence Against Women and States’ Obligations Under Istanbul Convention](#)

While governments in the region do not keep official statistics, studies attest to the pervasiveness of digital violence among girls and women in all walks of life, with incidents of violence likely increasing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>16</sup>. Without greater involvement of girls and women in technology, the kinds of products, services and platforms being created will not address the needs of half the population. Throughout the Western Balkan and Eastern European region, technology is being used to promote gender equality, such as in mobile applications to aid survivors of domestic violence or virtual reality tools to train law enforcement on gender-sensitive codes of conduct. Women's involvement is critical both to recognizing these problems in the first place and to addressing them in a responsible manner.

### **1.3 Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls in Western Balkans and Türkiye**

In Southeastern and Eastern Europe, where outmigrants are mainly younger people – men and women leaving agricultural areas for other opportunities – the rural population is ageing rapidly and the share of rural women both as workers on the farms but also as household and caretakers is increasing<sup>17</sup>. The effects of outmigration on the ageing of the population are reinforced by demographic factors such as low fertility rates and the longer life expectancy of women (78.6 years for females and 73.4 for males 10). According to Eurostat (2021b), women aged 65 years and older represented 13 percent of the rural population in Serbia compared with 10 percent for men; and in Albania, 7.5 percent of the rural population are women over 65 years of age compared with 7 percent of men; in Türkiye, men above 65 years represent 5 percent of the rural population compared with 7 percent of women<sup>18</sup>. Rural, elderly and low-income groups have poorer access to the internet and the opportunities it offers. Overall, digital gender gaps are wider in rural areas and among communities that face intersectional disadvantages, including poverty, lower education, lack of employment or informal employment. This is due to a combination of cost, lack of digital skills and lack of broadband/mobile signals in some rural or mountainous areas. This issue is particularly striking in Albania, where broadband costs remain high and there is often no Internet access in remote areas<sup>19</sup>.

According to the demographic and health surveys (DHS) conducted in Türkiye, the female-headed rural households experience higher rates of poverty than female-headed urban households or male-headed households in both urban or rural areas.<sup>20</sup> Taking into account that the risk of poverty and social exclusion is highest in rural areas and in some parts of Southern Europe<sup>21</sup>, rural women and girls are most vulnerable. In most of the countries in the Eastern European region, rural women experience inequalities in the labour market, and in access to financial institutions, social services and education<sup>22</sup>. Women's asset ownership rights are constrained by negative societal practices that limit their access

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<sup>16</sup> [Digitally empowered Generation Equality Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries \(UN Women, ITU, 2021\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> FAO. 2022. Food policy, rural development and gender equality in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Summary and recommendations of the International forum (10, 12, 17 March 2021). Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9097en>

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> [Digitally empowered Generation Equality Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries \(UN Women, ITU, 2021\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> FAO. 2022. Food policy, rural development and gender equality in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Summary and recommendations of the International forum (10, 12, 17 March 2021). Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9097en>

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> FAO. 2022. Food policy, rural development and gender equality in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Summary and recommendations of the International forum (10, 12, 17 March 2021). Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9097en>

to supply and product markets<sup>23</sup>. In Albania, for example, both women and men can be registered as land owners and have equal ownership rights over land. However, during the registration process, only one person is registered as the owner. This person is identified as the head of the household and is usually a man. Estimates suggest that over 90 percent of land is registered in a man's name<sup>24</sup>. By comparison, official data suggests that only 6.47 percent of farms are managed by women<sup>25</sup>. Most other countries in the region share similarities with Albania in relation to women's de facto enjoyment of their ownership rights over land. In Türkiye, women are 29 percentage points less likely than men to own a bank account at a financial institution<sup>26</sup>.

The OECD recommendations<sup>27</sup> suggest that the irreversible worldwide trend of digitization can present significant chances for the region's governments, economies, and educational systems to change. Rural women's professional profile and earning potential can be raised by training young women in information technologies, computers and digitalization. These new directions require proper financial support and specially-designed training programmes geared toward rural women and men that are tailored to their age and skills. One recommended approach is to apply gender equality mainstreaming principles for ensuring women's enrolment and developing financial support guidelines in targeted fields of study. These measures will increase women's decision-making powers in the family and community. Greater economic empowerment of rural women will lead to higher investments, economic growth and better outcomes in household and children's welfare, and importantly contribute to rural ecosystems transformation.

## **II. Key arrangements:**

**The objective** of this event is to support the countries in Western Balkan and Türkiye to prepare for the CSW67 consultations and jointly agree on key joint messages to form the sub-regional vision, its perspectives, experiences, and recommendations on the game-changing actions in the innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for gender equality as well as empowerment of rural women and girls.

### **The specific objectives are to:**

- Present a briefing on the CSW67 theme including data and evidence on how digitalization and the development of new technologies are affecting women and girls in the region.
- Discuss existing barriers to strengthening gender mainstreaming in the context of digitalization and gender equality in the region.
- Share best practices and examples of success stories of projects aimed at empowering women in the digital era and highlighting the unique contribution women have made for enhanced innovation and productivity by bringing more diverse technological breadth to address socio-economic issues in Western Balkans and Türkiye.
- Present challenges, opportunities, and solutions in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls in Western Balkans and Türkiye, focusing on the role of rural women and girls as agents of change for rural transformation.
- Agree on the sub-regional position and contributions to be presented at CSW67.

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<sup>23</sup> [FAO "Gender And Rural Development In Eastern Europe And Central Asia: Key Issues" \(2016\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>25</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>26</sup> [OECD "Bridging The Digital Gender Divide" \(2018\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> [OECD Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans \(2021\)](#)

### *Format of the consultations*

The consultation **will consist of 1 session in two parts:**

**The first part** will be devoted to an assessment of the challenges and barriers to gender equality in digitalization and technological change that the region is facing and defining potential solutions. The session will be organized as an interactive moderated discussion on the following questions:

- What are the key issues and barriers for strengthening gender-transformative innovation ecosystem in Western Balkans and Türkiye?
- How to ensure the substantive and meaningful participation of women as agents of change in innovation and digitalization strategies, policies, programmes, and projects?
- What capacities are needed in Western Balkans and Türkiye to ensure women are leading the way towards more equitable and sustainable solutions to digital transformation, while ‘leaving no one behind’?
- What are the barriers both legal and policy hampering rural women’s and girls’ voice, leadership and participation, including access to quality and affordable education, skills and vocational training?

**The second part** will be focused on the actions and the key messages to be shared at CSW67 consultations. The session will be organized as an interactive moderated discussion on the following questions:

- What are the best practices and examples of success stories of women-led initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls in the digital era and highlighting the unique contribution women have made for enhanced innovation to address socio-economic issues in Western Balkans and Türkiye?
- How to mainstream gender in digital policies and investments – both public and private, and increase women’s participation in digital cooperation?
- What steps have governments in partnership with other stakeholders taken to ensure that ICT and other technologies reach and benefit rural women and girls for their economic and political empowerment?
- What are the key messages and take aways to bring to and advocate for at CSW67 global consultations?

**A summary of discussions will be prepared and shared with participants within a week after the consultations.**

**Organizers:** in preparations for the CSW 67 the Government of Albania jointly with the UN Women ECARO will co-organize and co-host the sub-regional consultations for Western Balkans and Türkiye.

UN Women will provide all necessary advisory support, ensure participation and contribution by the experienced external experts on gender dimensions of innovation, technological change, and

education in the digital age, facilitate preparations of the agenda and background materials, capture the findings, and facilitate the dissemination of the outcome of the consultations at the global platforms/events by the host country.

UN Women ECA RO and UN Country Team will support by providing technical support.

**Participants** will come from the National Gender Equality Mechanisms, Parliaments, CSOs and youth representatives, gender experts, research centers and think tanks, United Nations System and other inter-governmental organizations with relevant mandates and expertise, also the relevant regional bodies and mechanisms, members of the international community and donors on subjects which are important and of interest to the South East Europe, with a view to promoting and advancing the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region.

### **Suggested Programme:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>10.00 - 10.20 CET time</b>	<p><b>Opening session</b> – introduction of objectives and expected results Mr. Michele Ribotta, UN Women Representative</p> <p><b>Welcoming and Keynote address: CSW67 commitments</b> Ms. Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Health and Social Protection</p>
10.20 - 11.20	<p><b>Part 1. Gender Equality for digitalization, and empowerment of women and girls current challenges and priorities for Gender Sensitive Actions in the region.</b></p> <p><b>Questions to discuss:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What are the key issues and barriers for strengthening gender-transformative innovation ecosystem in the region?</li> <li>➤ How to ensure the substantive and meaningful participation of women as agents of change in innovation and digitalization strategies, policies, programmes, and projects?</li> <li>➤ What capacities are needed in Western Balkans and Türkiye to ensure women are leading the way towards more equitable and sustainable solutions to digital transformation, while ‘leaving no one behind’?</li> <li>➤ What are the barriers both legal and policy hampering women’s and girls’ voice, leadership and participation, including access to quality and affordable education, skills and vocational training overall and in rural areas?</li> </ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Ms. Bojana Zoric, Senior Policy Analyst, Regional Cooperation Council</p> <p><b>Panelists (tbc):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. Milva Ekonomi, Minister of State for Standards and Services, Albania</li> <li>- Ms. Fatmire Isaki, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia</li> <li>- Mr. Stanko Blagojevic, Assistant Minister of Culture, Serbia</li> <li>- Ms. Gülser Ustaoglu, Director General, General Directorate on the Status of Women, Ministry of Family and Social Services, Türkiye</li> <li>- Ms. Aleksandra Kuljanin, Mistral HTAC, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>- Ms. Teuta Sahatqija, Women in Tech Ambassador, Kosovo*</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers are invited to share views (max 5 min for each speaker)</b></p>

	<b><i>Interventions will be followed by interactive moderated discussions</i></b>
11.20 – 11.25	<b>break</b>
11.25 - 12.20	<p><b>Part 2: Gender responsive digitalization for economic empowerment of women and girls to support address gender digital gaps in employment context</b></p> <p><b>Questions to discuss:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What are the best practices and examples of success stories of women-led initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls in the digital era and highlighting the unique contribution women have made for enhanced innovation to address socio-economic issues in Western Balkans and Türkiye?</li> <li>➤ How to mainstream gender in digital policies and investments – both public and private, and increase women’s participation in digital cooperation?</li> <li>➤ What steps have governments in partnership with other stakeholders taken to ensure that ICT and other technologies reach and benefit rural women and girls for their economic and political empowerment?</li> <li>➤ What are the key messages and take aways to bring to and advocate for at CSW67 global consultations?</li> </ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Iris Luarasi, GREVIO</p> <p><b><i>Speakers are invited to share views (max 5 min for each speaker)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Panelists (tbc):</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. Arberie Nagavci, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Kosovo*</li> <li>- Ms. Samra Filipovic Hadziabdic, Director Agency for Gender Equality/Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>- Ms. Biljana Pejovic, Head of department of gender equality, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro</li> <li>- Ms. Maja Atanasova, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, North Macedonia</li> <li>- Ms. Nihal Gungor, SisterLab ,Türkiye</li> <li>- Ms. Milica Stevic, Secons, Serbia</li> <li>- Ms. Katia Stathaki, CEO Vodafone, Albania</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Interventions will be followed by interactive moderated discussions</i></b></p>
12.20 - 12.30	<p><b>Wrap up</b> Ms. Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Health and Social Protection, Albania</p> <p><b>Closing remarks</b> Ms. Alia El-Yassir, UN Women Regional Director, Europe and Central Asia</p>

## Resource materials:

- Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. [Report of the Secretary-General](#) (2019).
- CSW 67 [Expert Group Meeting](#) – concept note
- [UN Women Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022](#)
- [UNCTAD Technology and innovation report 2021](#)
- [2022 Report on gender equality in the EU](#)
- [Harnessing Technology and Innovation to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls](#)
- [EGM/RWG/Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 62 Priority Theme](#)
- [Digitally empowered Generation Equality Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries \(UN Women, ITU, 2021\)](#)
- [UN Women Summary of Consultation “Unleashing Digital Transformation for Women and Girls in the Western Balkans: Closing the gender digital divide in jobs, services and civic engagement” \(September 2021\)](#)
- [2018 Commission On The Status Of Women Agreed Conclusions](#)

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\*All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo