

## Item 8. Thematic session: Leveraging financing for gender equality in the UNECE region

### Biographies of moderator and panellists

**Moderator: Ms. Anna Collins-Falk, International Coordinator and Senior Advisor, Swedish Gender Equality Agency, Sweden**



Ms. Anna Collins-Falk is the International Coordinator and Senior Advisor at the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. Prior to joining the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to lead its international work, Anna was the Lead Policy Specialist on Gender at Sida HQ. She joined Sida after 12 years with the United Nations system, including as Resident Representative of UN Women in the United Republic of Tanzania and Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Cambodia for UNDP.

Over her 35-year career in the field of gender equality and women's rights, she has held various positions ranging from the United Nations, the Swedish government, academia, and civil society. Ms. Anna Collins-Falk possesses in-depth knowledge and experience of international and regional instruments, norms and standards on women's rights and gender equality, as well as regional and international processes, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. She is an experienced trainer, moderator, facilitator, and lecturer in gender, women's rights/human rights, gender statistics, gender responsive budgeting, violence against women and girls, and gender and climate change.

Ms. Anna Collins-Falk represents Sweden in high-level intergovernmental United Nations and EU commissions, the EIGE Expert Forum, and delegations and expert groups on gender equality and violence against women. She holds a BA in Social Anthropology and an MA in International Relations from the University of Lund, Sweden.

**Panellists:****Dr. Iryna Postolovska, Deputy Minister of Social Policy, Ukraine**

Dr. Iryna Postolovska is the Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine for European Integration. In this role, she is responsible for the EU negotiations process, international relations, and gender equality. Prior to joining the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, she worked as a Senior Health Economist at the World Bank Group in Washington, D.C. Ms. Postolovska led and supported the development and evaluation of health systems reforms in more than 15 countries with a particular focus on health financing and service delivery. She

returned to Ukraine in December 2022 to join the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine as an Advisor to the Minister.

Ms. Iryna Postolovska holds a Doctor of Science degree in Global Health and Population from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and International Studies from Macalester College.

**Mr. Arthur Erken, IOM Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia**

Mr. Arthur Erken is IOM's Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia. He resumed this position on 15 October 2024. In this capacity, he is responsible for providing overall strategic leadership and policy direction, ensuring effective programme implementation, and supporting regional and international processes and dialogues on migration.

Prior to joining IOM, Mr. Erken served as the Director of the Policy and Strategy Division at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in New York. There, he oversaw the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of UNFPA's

Strategic Plan, the most progressive to date, and guided the organization's inter-agency and intergovernmental engagements.

Before this role, Mr. Erken led UNFPA's Division of Communications and Strategic Partnerships, responsible for corporate resource mobilization, corporate communications and facilitating strategic partnerships. His experience also includes senior leadership positions with UNFPA in Asia, where he served as the Acting Regional Director for the Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok, and as UNFPA Representative in Vietnam and Bangladesh, and before as Deputy Representative in Tanzania.

Mr. Arthur Erken holds Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Anthropology from Radboud University in the Netherlands.

**Ms. Diane Elson, Emeritus Professor, University of Essex, and Former Member of the UN Committee for Development Policy**



Ms. Diane Elson is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, England and Visiting Professor at the WiSE Centre for Economic Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland. She was Chair of the UK Women's Budget Group (2010-16) and continues to be an active member of their Policy Advisory Group. She has also served as a member of the UN Committee for

Development Policy (2013-2021), adviser to UN Women and UNDP, and to several international development NGOs. Ms. Elson was Vice President of the International Association for Feminist Economics (2004-6). She has published widely on gender equality, human rights and economic justice. She was awarded the 2016 Leontief Prize for Advancing Frontiers of Economic Thought by the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University.

**Ms. Selma Prodanovic, Vice President and Chair of the Gender Committee of European Business Angel Network (EBAN)**



For the last 20 years, Ms. Selma Prodanovic has considerably shaped the startup and angel investing ecosystem in Europe. She is among "Europe's most influential women in the startup & VC space" in 2022 & 2023, with prominent media in over 40 countries covering her expertise and activities. As Vice-President of the European Business Angel Network (EBAN), she is leading Europe's early stage investing ecosystem and initiated the EBAN Manifesto for Gender Balanced Investing, aiming to triple the number of female angel investors in Europe by 2030.

Ms. Prodanovic is the founder of the global SDG platform 1MillionStartups and the Austrian Angel Investors Association (now Invest Austria), while she has launched a dozen successful brands with her boutique advisory Brainswork. Beyond her boardroom decisions, ecosystem leadership, and policy initiatives, Ms. Prodanovic possesses a unique ability to inspire and empower others. For her innovative approach to business and commitment to entrepreneurship and social change, she has received numerous awards such as the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award and EBAN Best Pioneering Investment Initiative.

**Ms. Marija Savovska, Executive Director at Association for Advancement of Gender Equality Akcija Združenska, Republic of North Macedonia**



Ms. Marija Savovska brings 30 years of experience in the civil society sector, with a deep personal and professional dedication to advancing gender equality, empowering women, and advocating for policy reforms. From 1996 to 2004, she served as a Grant Officer and Program Coordinator for the Women's Program and the East/East – Cross Borders Partnership Program at the Foundation Open Society Institute-Macedonia. Since 2005, she has held the position of Executive Director at the Association for the Advancement of Gender Equality, Akcija Združenska Skopje, one of the leading advocacy organizations in North Macedonia. Under her leadership, the organization has played a critical role in shaping legal and policy frameworks on gender equality and the protection of

women's rights at both national and local levels. The organization also empowers local women's activists and communities to self-organize and hold local governments accountable.

Ms. Savovska has extensive experience in developing, managing, and implementing training and research-based advocacy programs focused on gender equality and women's human rights. She has collaborated with government institutions and numerous international agencies as a trainer and gender specialist. Additionally, she has authored and co-authored several studies and publications on topics such as gender mainstreaming, women's political empowerment, domestic violence, and gender-responsive budgeting.