

**REGIONAL ASSESSMENT
OF IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BEIJING DECLARATION
AND PLATFORM FOR
ACTION IN EUROPE AND
CENTRAL ASIA**



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**UN WOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE
FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Beijing Platform for Action, with its twelve overarching Strategic Objectives and its periodic review processes, constitutes an important opportunity to take stock of progress made and of ongoing and emerging challenges that impede women's advancement. Coinciding with the first milestone of the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the implementation of its Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing +25 Regional Review marks an occasion to foster the integration of these reporting and implementation processes to more fully engender the SDGs, while harnessing national commitments to both documents for improved results. Indeed, gender equality is a necessary step in the process of implementing all of the SDGs and their targets.

Positive trends and reversals within individual countries, sub-regions and across the region as a whole are highlighted in this report, which is based upon the Beijing +25 Regional Review process by UNECE members States for the European and Central Asia region, held on 29-30 October in 2019 in Geneva, in preparation for the 64th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women to be held in March 2020.

The most significant advances tend to correspond to those countries whose long-term commitment to and financing for gender equality has produced significant change over time. The advances in gender equality in such countries are evident in the demonstrable economic benefits and the qualitative improvements in governance tied to women's increased and equal participation.

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work: Strategies for women's increased labour participation figured prominently for almost all countries in the region, with an emphasis placed on policies to address women's unpaid care and domestic work as a barrier. Innovations in parental leave schemes to foster fathers' participation, the expansion of kindergartens and tax reforms to

incentivise women's return to work and to reduce the costs of care for families constitute highlights in the field. The low levels of women and girls enrolled in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) has also become an emerging area of concern, given the prominence of these fields in forecasted employment opportunities.

Health, education and social protection and services: Ensuring gender-sensitive and adolescent-friendly healthcare services, including access to contraception, as well as accessible, inclusive and quality healthcare in rural areas continues to be a challenge in countries outside of the EU. Women and girls have achieved educational parity and beyond in almost all countries across the region. In some countries, gendered stereotypes remain embedded in educational curricula and comprehensive sexuality education has not been included. Addressing the gender pension gap and the creation of a carers' allowance mark two initiatives undertaken by countries to address persistent structural inequalities in the social protection sphere.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes: In many countries, the harmonisation of national legal frameworks with the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) has brought increased protection and access to justice to women, accompanied by the expansion and specialisation of services for gender-based violence survivors. Responding to violence perpetrated through technology, which disproportionately targets women in the public sphere, such as politicians and journalists, as well as girls, constitutes an emerging concern. However, outside of the EU sub-region, few countries have addressed the issue from a gender perspective.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions: Women's political participation has increased modestly in the region, with significant

setbacks in a few countries. Successes include the highest level of female political representatives in several countries, even if in most of them women have not yet reached parity. Women have achieved political parity in several countries within the European Union where the implementation of quotas has produced meaningful results. Despite the existence of quotas in other countries, their *de facto* implementation remains a challenge and calls into question the political will to ensure this most basic element of democracy: equal representation.

While several countries strengthened their gender equality mechanisms, they were simultaneously weakened or marginalized in others manifesting increased hostility to gender equality. Advances were made in several countries across the region on developing, adopting and implementing methodologies for gender-responsive budgeting. Effective gender mainstreaming involves evidence-based policy making, which requires reliable and disaggregated data. Data disaggregated by gender and other characteristics remains uneven across the region, and very weak in some countries, particularly data related to gender-based violence.

Peaceful and inclusive societies: Women remain under-represented in current peace negotiations in the region, despite ongoing capacity-building by CSOs and international organizations. Recent efforts to localize women, peace and security national action plans through participatory consultations have been undertaken in a few countries to ensure their meaningful application to women's lives. The rise of violent extremism in the region and its deeply misogynist ideology poses a threat to regional security as well as to the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. At the same time, it presents an opportunity to capitalize on women's role in conflict prevention and the inclusion of their needs and participation in national and regional security processes.

Leveraging the SDG approach *leave no one behind* to ensure that the rights and protections foreseen in the Beijing Platform for Action are accorded to *all* women and girls remains essential. Intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination continue to impede advancements from reaching the most

vulnerable women and those with specific needs, including women with disabilities, ethnic minorities, poor women, migrants and refugees, LGBTQ women and sex workers, among others. Unfortunately, there remains a lack of understanding of intersectional oppressions and the lived reality of these in many countries within the region. Perhaps the obstacles needing the greatest transformation in order to achieve women's equality are gender-discriminatory attitudes and social norms.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation: A significant increase in women's perspectives and participation in environmental and climate change policy and natural resource and disaster-risk management is urgently needed as only a few countries were able to provide information on these issues. These issues should see increased prioritization in national policy agendas.

Ongoing changes to the political, social and environmental context including migration, conflict and climate change have a significant impact on gender equality. The past five years saw an unprecedented increase in voluntary and forced migration to parts of the region due to crises generated by conflict, natural disaster and climate change. In addition to a life-threatening journey, many female migrants faced diverse forms of violence and discrimination during each phase of the migration process, and a lack of gender-sensitive services and procedures on their arrival in some destination countries.

The influx of migrants into some countries in the region prompted a rise in nationalistic and populist right-wing movements that in addition to their anti-immigrant stance, have sought a return to traditional gender roles. Questioning women's equality as a "gender ideology," these movements have led to concrete reversals in past achievements in terms of policies, institutional capacities and in political discourse. Gender equality and democratic backsliding trends in Eastern and Central Europe and the United States are thus closely linked. Restricted space and financing for civil society organizations generally, and the women's movement specifically, have negatively impacted upon the scope and quality of service provision for survivors of gender-



based violence, as well as on the possibility for effective gender equality advocacy.

Despite consistent advances within the region, and around the world, gender equality remains an illusive goal in all areas of women's lives. Although having taken the center stage in international and regional discourse among international institutions and non-governmental organizations, women continue to face diverse and persistent forms of discrimination and violence where it matters—within their families, at the workplace, in schools and healthcare centers, in public spaces and political fora, to name a few. Overcoming barriers to gender equality requires transformative and structural change. Yet, with few exceptions, most of the progress reported by individual countries remains modest and incremental, rather than structural and transformational. Only a few countries in the

UNECE region have made great strides in advancing gender equality, while others have engaged in more limited, donor-funded, project-based initiatives.

The Beijing +25 Regional Review process provides an opportunity to reflect on positive developments and to articulate with clarity issues of concern. At the same time, it brings a wide diversity of stakeholders together to share good practices and garner increased support and political will from governments and the full range of their potential partners. As eloquently stated in the national report from Iceland regarding the main lesson learned: "gender equality does not come about of its own accord. It requires hard work to secure progress whereas the collective action and the solidarity of the women's movement is vital in fostering political will".

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSW	Committee on the Status of Women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
EBO	Emergency barring order
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESP	UN Essential Services Package
EVAW	Ending Violence against Women
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GBV	Gender-based violence
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HPV	Human papilloma virus
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
LBTIQ	Lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender, inter-sex, queer
MARAC	Multi-agency risk assessment conferences
ODA	Overseas development assistance
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEE	Southeastern Europe
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, mathematics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, peace and security

INTRODUCTION



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

This report presents a review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and its interplay with the implementation of the first four years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It is based on national reports submitted to the UNECE in preparation for the Beijing +25 Regional Review meeting,¹ complimented by thematic background papers prepared for conference, reports from a series of sub-regional consultations,² the outcome papers of the Regional Review meeting, held on 29-30 October 2019 in Geneva, and reports and data produced by regional and inter-governmental organizations.³ It

highlights the key messages and recommendations issuing from the Regional Review meeting,⁴ while providing the background and context for the meeting, and a more detailed analysis of the underlying issues.

Beijing +25 offers an important occasion to take stock of regional advances and set backs. The national reports reveal clear trends with respect to the priority areas identified by countries in the region pertaining to gender equality. Topping this list was combating violence against women and domestic violence, women's economic empowerment and labour participation, and women's political representation and participation in decision-making.

Efforts for combating violence against women reflect the momentum achieved through a long-standing commitment in the region and the significant impetus generated by the Istanbul Convention in driving States' commitment and in establishing clear and measurable standards for its implementation. National efforts focused primarily on combating two forms of violence against women: domestic and intimate partner violence and human trafficking. Ensuring the provision of multi-sectoral services for

1 National reports are available at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51017>.

2 Over 100 non-governmental and government representatives from Eastern Partnership countries and Romania met in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019 for the first consultation. At the second, civil society activists from across Central Asia joined high-level guests in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, for a two-day dialogue, on 18-19 September 2019. Approximately 60 representatives from the Western Balkans and Turkey gathered in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019 for the third meeting in the series.

3 A list of sources is appended.

4 Beijing +25 Regional Review meeting documents are available at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51017>.

survivors also constituted a significant endeavour.

Women's economic empowerment and their inclusion into the workforce has also been a key past and future priority for most countries, as a significant driver of prosperity in the emergence of the economic crisis of 2008. Many countries focused on reducing women's unpaid care and domestic work as a significant barrier to women's full workforce participation. Occupational segregation and the gender pay gap remain prevalent throughout the region to varying degrees. Although numerous countries also indicated support programmes for women entrepreneurs, women constituted a minority of beneficiaries in most of the programmes cited. On the whole, a broader, more transformative approach to women's economic empowerment is required.

Women's political participation has only seen modest improvements in most countries across the region, with some significant setbacks in a few countries. While a few countries within the EU have achieved political parity at the national level, in many of the countries that have adopted quot

as, they are not actually implemented in practice and no sanctions are contemplated in most of the relevant legislation. Women's political participation at the regional and local level remains particularly low.

Indeed, across all areas covered by the Beijing Platform for Action, most of the progress across the region has been incremental, rather than structural and transformational. Gender-responsive macro-economic policies that go beyond social protection, health and education are necessary. Austerity measures and structural adjustment programmes are known to have a disparate gendered impact, yet of the countries that signaled having implemented austerity measures during the reporting period, a large majority had not considered gender. As an indicator of States' commitment to ensuring that the needs of women are addressed in macro-economic policies within the region, only three, Denmark, Finland and Slovenia, had assessed the gendered impact prior to implementing austerity measures.

Beginning in 2015, the significant increase in forced movements of people driven by natural disasters, environmental degradation, armed conflict, unemployment, poverty, human rights violations, persecution and political instability resulted in considerable loss of life, immense individual hardships, internal displacement and reports of violence to and

the enslavement of migrants en route. The massive influx of migrants into the European region also prompted xenophobic responses that contributed to the rise of right-wing, nationalist and populist movements—all of which pose a threat to women's and human rights. Such conservative movements are often characterized by a:

renewed emphasis on 'traditional values' and a resurgence of conservative narratives suggest[] that the role of women should be limited to the private sphere, family and procreation. These trends subvert efforts to ensure that women in diverse circumstances enjoy substantive equality and the freedom to voice their opinions and participate meaningfully in processes that have an impact on their lives.⁵

There is growing evidence of an increasingly coordinated and effective opposition to women's rights, in particular to sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual education and preventing violence against women and girls. This opposition demonstrates increased coordination, funding and effectiveness in mobilizing, challenging hard won rights. National reports revealed the marginalisation of gender equality mechanisms, the reframing of gender equality policies to promote women's traditional role within the family and an emphasis on demographic growth. Populist rhetoric, hate speech and hate crimes have further posed direct threats to the rights of women, especially women from ethnic and religious minority communities, female migrants and asylum seekers, the LGBTIQ population, feminists and women human rights defenders. Restricted space for civil society is being felt in a few countries as governments hostile to gender equality support conservative CSOs.

A review of the national reports revealed a striking dearth of information provided by countries on women's participation and gender mainstreaming in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation, climate change and disaster-risk management. Indeed, numerous countries failed to provide any information on this issue in their national reports, leaving the relevant questions blank. Many others responded that national policies in these fields were either "gender neutral," or did not incorporate a gender perspective.

The absence of information on these issues indicates

5 Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 27.

that initiatives to ensure women's perspectives in environmental and resource conservation are urgently needed. It also signals the need in many countries to step up their commitments to several of the SDGs, including clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), climate action (SDG 13), life

below water (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15), and at the same time to ensure that their efforts to do so include women's full participation and perspectives. The paucity of information provided by States also signals a need for increased attention to these issues by the international community and development partners



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

METHODOLOGY



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

The content of this report derives from information provided from national reviews submitted by 51 member States, sub-regional consultation meetings,⁶ background documents, CSO submissions, presentations and interventions at the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting on 29-30 October 2019 in Geneva and the outcome documents.⁷ It also draws upon the reports and statistics of UN agencies and other inter-governmental bodies and NGOs.⁸

The national reports were drafted in response to a Guidance Note, containing a series of questions on the following topics: i) achievements, challenges and setbacks on fostering gender equality in during the reporting period; ii) advances in the substantive guarantees set forth the Beijing Platform for Action, linking them to the SDGs; iii) the practices and priorities pertaining to gendered statistics; and iv) national processes related to Beijing Platform for Action and SDG reporting.

6 Three sub-regional consultation meetings were held for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania, the Western Balkans and Turkey and Central Asia in September 2019. The first was held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; the second, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019; the third in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

7 National reviews and official meeting documents are available at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51017>.

8 Citations are provided for the reports of CSOs and inter-governmental and international organizations only.

In light of the need to foster synergies between international reporting obligations, the structure of the Guidance Note underscored connections between the substantive areas of the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs, and grouped the questions into six dimensions:

- Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work
- Poverty eradication, social protection and social services
- Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes
- Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions
- Peaceful and inclusive societies
- Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation.

This report is organized according to these six dimensions. As each national report focused its content on recent developments within its specific country context, not all countries reported on the same issues, limiting comprehensive comparative analysis.

The Guidance Note provided for multiple-choice responses on past achievements and future priorities under diverse subject areas, yes/no questions, as

well as detailed narrative explanations. Where quantitative trends could be identified from the country responses, these are noted. In this regard, not all countries responded pursuant to the format indicated in the Guidance Note, and not all countries provided information in response to all of the questions. Furthermore, most of the data was often not comparable, underscoring the critical need to harmonize data collection and disaggregation practices across the region. It should be noted as well, that several countries selected answers to multiple-choice questions without providing any information

in the narrative to substantiate the selected answer(s), and or the narrative information contradicted the selected response, rendering the data on these answers less reliable.

Additional research was conducted to complement or verify the information provided in the national reports, including references to statistical data and reports issued by UN Women, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), among others.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

RECENT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS IN THE REGION

Progress in realising women's rights is contingent and conditioned upon the social, economic and political contexts in which it occurs. It has become clear over the last several years, within the region and beyond, that even as gender equality has become an embedded feature in international policymaking and discourse, political, economic and social power structures remain unchallenged, and in many countries the de facto implementation of gender equality laws and policies is superficial at best.

The last five years has seen a marked rise in economic inequality, with very significant gendered consequences not only for women's economic opportunities, but also for their ability to engage politically and to access services in those countries where austerity measures remain in place. Women's labour force participation illustrates one of the many ways in which the underlying structural nature of existing barriers has not been addressed. While women's participation rates in the region have generally moved closer to men's, they remain less likely to participate in the work force, especially during the family formation years in light of mothers' disproportionate socialized responsibility for unpaid care. Given the structure of the economy, questions remain as to whether increased labour participation and income will have the necessary impact on reductions in poverty and the distribution of wealth.

Political instability within the region hinders the continuity of public reforms in the field of gender equality. Regional and international politics have witnessed significant examples of democratic backsliding initiated by governments themselves, as what were formerly perceived to be exemplars of democracy have leaned toward authoritarian style governance. This will likely amplify the relative lack of gender sensitivity in the male dominated cultures of national political bodies and parties in a number of countries within the region. Despite modest advances in women's political participation, 25 years after Beijing,

women have achieved political parity in only a few countries in the region.

The inter-connection between economic barriers and traditional gendered social norms arose in diverse and meaningful ways. Similar to other historical moments marked by significant economic inequality, the past five years has seen a resurgence of right-wing political ideologies deriving from diverse but increasingly coordinated movements, which have posed a challenge to women's rights through social conservatism, as well as by restricting the public financing, support and space available for women's voices to be heard. Re-characterising gender equality as "gender ideology," these movements have specifically targeted LGBTI communities, often involving acts of violence and hate speech. These phenomena cannot be divorced from the anti-immigrant and often racist discourse and response to the rise in crisis-related migration into the region, which have a disproportionate effect on migrant women and those from minority ethnicities.

The #metoo movement openly challenged toxic masculinities and violence linked to male economic privilege and dominance in specific sectors. As the exposure went viral, touching a deep social nerve, a series of courageous women continue to come forward whose stories are increasingly socially validated, signalling a potentially meaningful shift in social consciousness.

The region has also faced challenges related to the radicalisation to violence among nationals and abroad, and their gendered dynamics. While gender has been considered as an element in strategies to prevent violent extremism, less attention has been paid to the gendered drivers as they relate to the political economy of gender inequality and gender violence. Finally, the underestimated human and economic toll due to the absence of meaningful initiatives by public and private sector leaders to address environmental and climate crises is likely to become a pressing future priority.

DIMENSION 1: INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Structural barriers to gender equality and gender discrimination manifest as gaps in labour force participation and pay, occupational segregation, unequal working conditions and an unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work. As observed at the 61st session of the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW): “These gender gaps are rooted in historically unequal power relations between women and men in the household and in the economy and society more broadly; gender-biased design and impacts of macroeconomic fiscal, monetary and trade policies; discriminatory laws and social norms; and greater constraints on women in balancing work and family

responsibilities”.⁹ Consequently, compared to men, women are less likely to work full-time, more likely to be employed in lower-paid occupations, and less likely to advance in their careers.

Women’s economic empowerment is essential, not only for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, but also for ensuring 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objective F.1 states: “Promote women’s economic rights and

⁹ UN Economic and Social Council, Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work, E/CN.6/2017/3, 2016, para 9.

independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources. Strategic Objective F.3 involves providing “business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women”. SDG Target 5A calls for States to “undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws”.

Achievements in inclusive development and shared prosperity are underpinned by women’s equal participation in the economy, including entrepreneurship. Increasing women’s economic empowerment and labour participation was a clear priority for a majority of the countries in the UNECE region. Significant efforts were put into a myriad of strategies, including: fostering women’s entrepreneurship, improving parental leave and expanding child and eldercare services to alleviate domestic work and care-giving obligations. At the same time, questions remain as to whether improved labour participation, income and earnings have the necessary impact on reductions in poverty and the distribution of wealth.

Notably, few of the national reports addressed the informal sector of the economy, despite the magnitude of informal employment in the region. Informal employment makes up one quarter (25.1%) of all employment in Europe and Central Asia, with variations between Western Europe (14.3%), Eastern Europe (31.5%) and Central Asia (43.4%). Within the region, the highest levels of informal employment are found in Albania (61%) and Armenia (52.1 %), representing more than half of the employed population. Approximately twenty-three percent of women in the region are employed informally, less than men, of whom approximately 26% are working informally. Conversely, in Central Asia, when taking into account the agricultural sector, 47.3% of women are employed informally, compared to 41.1% of men.¹⁰ Work in the informal sector is undertaken without social insurance, such as unemployment benefits.¹¹

10 ILO, Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2018, p. 40, including informal employment within the formal and formal sectors and in households.

11 For example, in Spain, 35% of domestic workers are not affiliated with the social security system. Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer “Beijing+25”, p. 4.

A major difference between women and men in informal employment is the proportion of women contributing family workers: more than three times higher among women than men worldwide. With the exception of high-income countries, women occupy a lower share of informal employees and own-account workers compared with men, meaning that they earn a lower income, and have less access to decent work.¹²

A defining feature of informal labour is workers’ lack of social protection and labour rights, which constitutes a significant barrier to women’s economic empowerment. Only a few of the national reports addressed the challenges in integrating migrant women into the workforce. In this regard, SDG Target 8 foresees the protection of “labour rights and promot[ing] safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”.

1.1 Women’s participation in the labour force

Women’s workforce participation continues to lag behind men’s in every country in the region, irrespective of the level of economic development within a given country. Moreover, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has observed that within the EU, the “continuous increase in women’s labour market participation over the last decades has often gone hand in hand with their move into women-dominated jobs rather than a more widespread distribution across sectors and occupations”.¹³ Women’s decisions to seek paid employment are determined both by socio-economic constraints, as well as pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. Marital status, levels of education, access to transport, and the availability of quality childcare all constitute determinative factors.

The OECD average difference for workforce participation by sex for 2016 was 69% for men, 51.9% for women.¹⁴ The biggest gap in the OECD region is in Turkey, where women constitute 32.4% of the workforce compared to men’s workforce participation

12 ILO, Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2018, pp. 20-21.

13 EIGE, Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, 2017, p. 4.

14 OECD.Stat, available at: <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54741>.

at 79.5%.¹⁵ Countries where women's workforce participation for 2018 was below 50% range from: Bosnia and Herzegovina (35%) and Moldova (38.9%) to Bulgaria (47.7%) and Kyrgyzstan (47.9%). In most countries, the number of women engaged in part-time work significantly exceeded that of men. A reduction in the gender gap in work force participation could have a positive economic impact in these countries, boosting GDP.

With regard to increasing women's workforce participation, many countries, including Albania, Hungary and Azerbaijan, report as a principle strategy providing subsidies to companies that hire women workers, including women from marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities and women with disabilities. For countries subsidizing private sector employment opportunities, no mention was made of engaging corporate responsibility in lieu of private sector reliance on state subsidies.

It is interesting to note that many of the national reports described generalized employment support schemes that were open but not targeted to fostering women's participation. Given women's occupation of the lowest paid jobs in the Central Asian region, concerns were expressed at the sub-regional consultation regarding their future workforce participation in light of increased digitalization and the prospects of artificial intelligence.¹⁶ Destination countries for migrants, including Finland, noted as a challenge the low employment rate for migrant women, especially women from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, and especially mothers.

Several countries, such as Hungary, reported on the use of public sector hiring to foster women's employment opportunities, significantly increasing their employment opportunities and providing them with skills that enable them to transfer to jobs in the private sphere. Although public sector employment tends to have a lower gender pay gap than the private sector, in Latvia the reverse is true.

Tax policy can also have a significant impact on workforce participation. For example, policies in which second earners in married couples (typically women) are taxed more heavily than single individuals discourage women's participation. With respect to

the use tax schemes to foster women's workforce engagement, in 2015, Austria created a tax incentive to have an income above the marginal employment threshold in order to encourage women's full-time employment.

In one innovative strategy, Austria initiated a three-year project, *Perspektive:Arbeit* (Perspective:work), to reintegrate violence-affected women into the labour market, implementing the first social impact bond.

It should be noted that many of the national reviews provided basic data on the numbers of women supported to become employed, without any contextual data about the number of unemployed, comparators with male counterparts, and the long-term results of employment programmes, among other analytical factors for determining whether employment programmes offered met the needs of the beneficiaries.¹⁷

1.1. 1. Women entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is crucial to economic development, promoting social integration and reducing inequalities. Worldwide, women-owned enterprises account for a third of businesses in the formal economy, but most are small enterprises with little growth potential. Barriers to women's entrepreneurship include limited access to markets, credit, financial services and products, infrastructure, procurement opportunities and discriminatory property and inheritance laws, which limit access to capital.

Numerous national reports indicated supporting women's entrepreneurship as a principle strategy for fostering women's economic participation, while acknowledging that women's entrepreneurship remains mostly limited to small (and medium) enterprises (SMEs). Many countries reported supporting women entrepreneurs through SME investment support schemes that tended to be gender neutral. Other reports indicated providing women with extra points in competitions for investment schemes. Yet, women comprised significantly less than half of the beneficiaries in almost every specific programme cited that purported to support female entrepreneurs. For example, a CSO report submitted from Tajikistan observed not only that the number of participants in programmes for women entrepreneurs

¹⁵ ILO, The gender gap in employment: What's holding women back? available at: <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#global-gap/labour-force>.

¹⁶ Held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 6.

decreased from 2016 to 2018, but so did the total number of women entrepreneurs in the country.¹⁸

In other words, the absence of a gendered approach to entrepreneurship programmes appears to have a limited impact in providing meaningful opportunities for women. This particularly holds true for women from vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities and conflict-affected women.

In several countries policies for supporting women's entrepreneurship were limited to initiatives within the scope of rural development policies, while failing to mainstream gender throughout such policies. Furthermore, the types of women-led businesses supported were often in traditional sectors, such as handicrafts. As noted in the sub-regional consultations, public policies designed to support the economic development of rural women remain inadequate.¹⁹ Entrepreneurial support schemes in Azerbaijan prioritize supporting family businesses, with a potentially negative impact on women given that women working in family-owned businesses are often not considered as full shareholders or compensated equally. In Albania, there is an absence of counselling services for women seeking to start a business, and they face significant discrimination and prejudice.²⁰

1.2. Anti-discrimination provisions

Women face discrimination in hiring, training, employment conditions, promotions, remuneration and advancement. To tackle this phenomenon, most but not all countries have anti-discrimination provisions within their respective labour codes; several have also adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that covers employment.²¹ Legislation prohibiting workplace discrimination is

essential for addressing the multiple forms of gender discrimination faced by women, including direct and indirect discrimination in hiring, promotions, working conditions, remuneration and sexual harassment, among others.

There are several EU Directives that address workplace discrimination, including Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast). It prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex in all aspects and conditions of employment and remuneration.

Georgia adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in 2014, which added protections against pre-contractual discrimination, covering vacancy announcements and interviews. Amendments passed in 2015 to the Labour Code in Albania require the creation of employer mechanisms on sexual harassment, and protect against discrimination based on pregnancy. Lithuania established breach of equal treatment between men and women as an administrative offence.

Several countries, including Norway, Finland and Spain have required private employers to establish internal equality plans. In Finland, for example, this applies to private employers with over 30 employees, and plans must include a sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) component. States could further improve the valuation of women's work by strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks related to job evaluations, pay transparency and gender pay audits, and also by facilitating collective bargaining. In Spain, a 2019 law requires companies with 50 or more employees to register salaries and to create internal gender equality plans with a sexual harassment component. Andorra offers the Olympe de Gouges prize for companies with internal equality policies.

In the EECCA sub-regions, however, there is an absence of effective legislation and mechanisms for combating sexual harassment occurring in the workplace, schools and in public accommodations and public spaces. The sub-regional consultation in Central Asia called for urgent measures to promote the adoption of anti-discrimination laws prohibiting all forms of discrimination with a wide range of protected categories and grounds, as well as the creation of effective mechanisms to implement anti-discrimination law.

¹⁸ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹ Three sub-regional consultation meetings were held for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania, the Western Balkans and Turkey and Central Asia in September 2019. The first was held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; the second, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019; the third in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

²⁰ Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 9.

²¹ Specialized anti-discrimination is often necessary to ensure the application of procedural rights, such as the shifting burden of proof to the respondent, as set forth in international standards and EU directives.

Most countries, including Norway, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, Latvia, Romania, Lithuania, Spain, Albania and Canada, have ensured that their national human rights institution (NHRI) and/or equality or anti-discrimination body has competence to investigate complaints concerning employment discrimination based on gender. Georgia and provided its Public Defender's Office with the competence to monitor the law's implementation, mediate cases and ensure survivors' access to court. The existence of national equality bodies with jurisdiction to investigate and make recommendations in individual cases fosters increased access to justice in light of the financial costs and length of time usually involved in initiating judicial proceedings. In Hungary, few cases reportedly address women's rights. Several countries have not yet established NHRIs, including: Malta, Switzerland, Belarus, Slovakia, Ukraine, although the latter two have established equality bodies.

1.3. Occupational segregation

Gendered occupational segregation in employment persistently characterizes the workforce across the region, and constitutes an underlying factor in perpetuating the economic disadvantages faced by women, such as the gender pay gap. Occupational segregation can be both vertical and horizontal. Horizontal segregation results in women and men working in distinct fields.

Most countries described men dominating certain fields such as construction, engineering and technology, while women constituted the majority in the education, social service and health care professions. Skill-biased technological change over the past two decades has further exacerbated occupational segregation, particularly in developed and emerging economies.²² Furthermore, gendered barriers result in "numerous sectors such as engineering and ICT fail to attract or retain women workers, despite the immense growth prospects and a shortage of specialists".²³ Women-dominated professions are not as equally valued both socially and

in terms of remuneration when compared with fields dominated by men. Furthermore, research has shown that when women saturate a well-compensated field, the pay declines and *vice versa*.

In vertical segregation, women tend to work in low-valued, poorly remunerated jobs. Women also hold less senior and management roles, often facing a "glass ceiling"²⁴ that limits their engagement in executive positions. The Beijing Platform for Action specifically calls for eliminating occupational segregation.²⁵

Although fairly ubiquitous, several countries, including the Czech Republic, Georgia, Lithuania and Latvia, explicitly acknowledged occupational segregation as a significant barrier to women's equal participation in the labour market. In one initiative to reverse this trend, Kazakhstan eliminated legal restrictions on women's employment. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection issued an order in 2018, reducing by 96 the number of posts prohibited for women and minors.

Other efforts to tackle occupational segregation tended to focus on the education sector and youth. Numerous countries described initiatives to involve female students in STEM studies, and to provide students with exposure to professions dominated by one gender. For example, an annual National Future Day is organized in Liechtenstein for 5th to 7th graders to be introduced to diverse jobs, in order to breakdown gendered occupational segregation in the future. These efforts are described in more detail in the section on education, below.

1.4. Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap, defined as the difference in average wages paid to women as compared with men, can be attributed to diverse factors, many of which are inter-related. One significant factor is occupational segregation, described above, by which women and men work in different fields and jobs. Other causal factors include the lack of women in senior roles and on company boards, and the fact that women are more likely to hold part-time jobs, often as a result of child- and parental-care responsibilities.

Moreover, women tend to occupy lower professional rungs within fields, with consequently lower income

22 UN Economic and Social Council, Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, E/CN.6/2017/3, 2016, Skill-biased technological change is a shift in production technology that favours skilled over unskilled labour, and is related to wage inequalities.

23 EIGE, Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market, 2017, p. 5.

24 The 'glass ceiling' refers to seemingly invisible impediments and barriers that can preclude women's access to top decision-making and managerial positions in an organisation.

25 Beijing Platform for Action. Strategic Action F.5.

levels, while men are over-represented in higher management levels, offering greater income. Fixed-term employment and long family leave further undermine women's career and wage development. Time out of the labour market also has a substantial impact on women's salaries. One study in the UK revealed that women earn 2% less on average for every year spent out of work; highly qualified professional women earn approximately 4% less for each year.²⁶

Studies have also found that "gender differences in pay increase considerably with age among jobholders with indefinite contracts, signaling the impacts of career interruptions and vertical segregation".²⁷ While the pay gap is often low upon entry into the labour market, the difference grows substantially along the career path, corresponding to increasing family demands. Gender pay gaps accumulate over people's lives, cementing life course gender income inequalities. Even when adjusted for factors such as education and industry, an unexplained discrepancy of an estimated five per cent persists. The gender pay gap is thus, in part, a simple manifestation of gender discrimination.

The gender pay gap contravenes the Beijing Platform for Action and three SDGs (5, 8 and 10), as well as Article 11(d) of CEDAW. Specifically, the Beijing Platform for Action calls for eliminating all forms of employment discrimination.²⁸ The first target of SDG 5 reads: "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere". More specifically, SDG 8 includes as a target "equal pay for work of equal value". SDG Target 10.4 calls on States to adopt wage policies in order to "progressively achieve greater equality".

The gender pay gap remains an issue for all countries in the region to a varying extent. For OECD countries, the average gender pay gap is 16%. In Iceland, the gender pay gap is the smallest, at 4.5%. In contrast, in Tajikistan, it is 39.3%, and 47.4% in agriculture.²⁹ Countries across the region recognized and reported on the gender pay gap, using varying methodologies, which render comparisons difficult.

26 Institute for Fiscal Studies, *The Gender Wage Gap*, 2016.

27 EIGE, *Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance*, 2016, p.16.

28 Beijing Platform for Action, Strategic Action F.5.

29 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 30, noting that 74% of working women received only cash salaries, and 13% received no salaries.

Several countries, including Sweden, Finland and Georgia adopted policies and measures to ensure its reduction, including the development of methodologies to calculate the gap and the adoption of action plans to address it. A "motherhood pay gap" was also noted in several countries, measuring the pay gap between mothers and women without dependent children, and between mothers and fathers. For example, Lithuania noted a significant difference between the overall hourly gender pay gap (16,6%) and the pay gap for single mothers (33%) as compared with single fathers.

Specific initiatives to tackle the issue through wage transparency were undertaken in several countries within the EU, including the U.K., Germany, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, Iceland as well as Canada, most of which concentrated on relatively large enterprises. The Transparency in Wage Structures Act entered into force in Germany in 2017. It aims to enforce the right to equal pay for women and men for equal work or work of equal value by creating an individual right to information for all employees of companies employing more than 200 employees. The employer must also disclose the statistic median of the average monthly gross remuneration received by the opposite gender. A Pay Transparency Monitor was also created to help companies "not only to calculate their gender pay gap but also to review their salary definition rules and structures for potential areas of discrimination, as well as to provide information on their compliance with reporting obligations under the Pay Transparency Law in Germany".³⁰

Sweden also has a comprehensive set of pay transparency measures. First introduced in 1994, the scope of applicability of the pay audit requirement was widened in 2017 to companies with at least 10 (previously 25) employees and on an annual basis. (It was previously every three years). Swedish companies must analyse pay differences and prepare action plans to tackle unjustified pay gaps. Iceland also amended its Gender Equality Act to include an equal pay provision applying to employers with 25 or more employees, which requires an equal pay certification.

In Denmark, the Equal Pay Act requires a national statement on gender pay gap every three years, based on an extensive review and made public. Companies with more than 35 employees, and at least 10 men and 10 women in same job function, have to prepare yearly

30 EIGE, *Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance*, 2016, p.24.

pay statistics disaggregated by sex. The periodical publication of a national statement ensures ongoing gender pay gap analysis, and that the issue is kept on the political agenda and in the media. In Scotland, public authorities with 20 or more employees must publish their gender pay gap. The U.K. also took a step forward in 2017 by instituting regulations that require large companies, those with 250 or more employees, to publish their gender pay gap. Similarly, in Austria pay transparency legislation applies solely to relatively large enterprises with more than 150 employees.³¹

1.5. Unpaid care and domestic work

Globally, women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work than men, including cooking and cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, among other household tasks.³² As a result, women have less time to engage in paid labour. Moreover, they work significantly longer hours in an attempt to reconcile their paid and unpaid responsibilities. The average time spent in unpaid work by sex in OECD countries in 2019, for example, was 136 minutes/day for men, compared with 264.4 minutes/day for women. In some countries the difference was greater. In Turkey, women spend almost five times as much as men in unpaid work, (305 minutes/day compared to 67.6 minutes/day); in Portugal more than four times (382.3 minutes/day to 96.3 minutes/day).³³

Women's unpaid reproductive labour constitutes a transfer of resources from women to other actors, enterprises and institutions in the economy, by subsidizing the costs of care that sustains families, supports economies, and it compensates for the lack of social services. Although rarely recognized as work, according to UN Women, unpaid care and domestic work can be valued at "10 and 39 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product [globally] and can contribute more to the economy than the manufacturing, commerce or transportation sectors".³⁴

31 EIGE, Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance, 2016, p.24.

32 UN Women, Redistribute unpaid work, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/redistribute-unpaid-work#notes>, citing Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016.

33 See, OECD.Stat, available at: <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54757#>.

34 UN Women, Redistribute unpaid work, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/redistribute-unpaid-work#notes>, citing Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016.

SDG Target 5.3 calls on states to «recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate». As described throughout this section, social protection policies to improve women's labour force participation include providing child and eldercare services, parental leave and universal healthcare. Infrastructure developments, such as ensuring access to potable water, and clean, modern energy can also have an impact on reducing the types of unpaid labour often assumed by women.³⁵

Almost all countries acknowledged the critical importance of work-life balance to increasing women's labour participation. National reports further revealed a growing recognition of the inequality, and the economic implications, of women's engagement in unpaid care and domestic work. Some countries, such as the U.K., Spain and Albania, have undertaken time use studies, disaggregated by sex, income, age and location, as a means of measuring and valuing the disparities in men's and women's contribution to unpaid care and domestic work. In 2017, Statistics Austria developed an app using a Eurostat grant to conduct a time use survey, which has been tested in pilot study. The results of such studies can be used to assess the monetary value of unpaid work and to inform policies to improve women's economic empowerment.

A few countries have taken other steps to reduce women's unpaid care and domestic work through redistribution. In Sweden, local and regional authorities undertook a campaign to increase men's participation in unpaid household and care work, so that women may enjoy economic opportunities and outcomes on an equal footing with men.

The sub-regional consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania characterized as weak both government and CSO efforts to address women's unpaid care and domestic work, including by encouraging men's participation. In many countries in the region, there are no existing policies related to the redistribution of unpaid care.³⁶

35 Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016, para 25.

36 The sub-regional consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania was held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; see, also, NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 5.

1.5.1. Infrastructure and social protection for carers

Gender-aware physical infrastructure development, both urban and rural, can have a significant impact on women's economic participation, access to education, health and quality of life. Improved access to public infrastructure affects women's time allocation decisions in ways that can lead to growth and economic development. Yet, there is insufficient infrastructure, service development and institutional support for women workers with families, primarily in the Eastern part of the region.

A few countries noted the benefits to women of infrastructure development projects, in terms of their potential time- and labour-saving benefits. For example, residential areas that are segregated from workplaces and shopping areas result in greater commute times, complicating women's ability to cope with the triple burdens of childcare, breadwinning and caring for the elderly.³⁷ Easy access to child- and eldercare facilities is critical for facilitating women's participation in the economy. Several countries, including Moldova and Albania, noted the importance of, and investment into, time and labour-saving infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, and waste and water management, in order to reduce the time women dedicate to unpaid care and domestic work.

Several countries, primarily in EECCA regions described construction of kindergartens in order to expand access, often financed through the European Structural and Investment Funds. In Azerbaijan, kindergarten expansion is occurring through private sector investment. Germany doubled childcare placement. Countries in Central Asia identified efforts to ensure sanitation facilities in schools, the lack of which impedes girls' access to education.

Studies have also shown gender differences in public transport use.³⁸ With respect to urban design, for example, Austria conducted a series of studies on transport: *Mobility of women and men in different life circumstances*, including single parents, *Bicycle-specific mobility* and *Mobility of persons with care responsibilities*. Otherwise, most countries failed to address the distinct needs of women in accessing public transport and urban design.

37 See, OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, p. 15.

38 See, OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, p. 17.

The failure in many countries, and on the part of international financial institutions, to recognise and value women's contribution to social reproduction and care has a detrimental structural effect on the policy and development strategies that could reverse the current structures that result in and continue to replicate women's social depletion. Notably, macroeconomic and social reform policies related to social infrastructure are not approached through a gendered lens and thus do not take into account the negative gendered impacts of these policies on women. In this regard, international financial institutions can play a more proactive role in ensuring the application of gender-responsive macroeconomics.

An expanded, gender-responsive welfare system constitutes another important policy measure to encourage women's participation in the workforce. Several countries strengthened non-contributory entitlements to address women's unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities, through for example, entitlements to care givers. In Austria, persons who take care leave or who work part-time and care for someone the rest of the time have a legal right to a carer's allowance, to free health and pension insurance and to a supplement for dependent children. The support also applies to hospice care. Malta increased its carer's allowance, and removed means-testing and marital status (single) requirements. Despite the existence of a carer's allowance in Spain, the financial support allocated remains insufficient, and 20% of those in need are on a waiting list.³⁹

In Lithuania, comprehensive long- and short-term care can be provided, but only for fully dependent persons. In Kazakhstan, social protection support is provided as family support schemes with no transformational gender component, and the Law on Special Social Services provides assistance for elder care only for those who do not have working-age adult children, thus failing to reduce women's unpaid care burden.

1.5.2. Work-life balance

Public policies aimed at reconciling work and family life have been shown to be instrumental in reducing

39 Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer "Beijing+25", p. 2.

the gender-income gap.⁴⁰ Several countries made adjustments to employee benefit systems to render them more flexible to facilitate work-life balance. For example, in Finland, a flexible parental care allowance is provided to either parent working part-time, and a full-time care allowance is provided for parents of children under 3 who are not enrolled in day care. Latvia now allows a partial parental benefit at 30% to be paid to the income earning person during parental leave, thus creating the flexibility to combine work with childcare. In Hungary, the Childcare Fee Extra programme enables women returning to work to continue to receive the child home care allowance. Despite creating the legal basis for flexible work modalities, Malta maintains the highest percentage of part-time female employees in the workforce in the region due to family care obligations (36.5%).⁴¹

In Austria, the Public Employment Service provides a childcare allowance to cover the cost of education and childcare expenses to enable balance between work and family obligation. The aim is to improve the conditions, primarily for women, to gain access to employment, to take part in training courses and improve job security. Families and individuals with children and a low income who need full-day, half-day or hourly care for their child because they start a job or take part in a labour market policy measure can get this allowance for up to 156 weeks in total.

In the Czech Republic, a long-term care entitlement was introduced to provide up to 90 days leave for the care of a family member at 60% of their daily assessment base. Germany's Act on Better Reconciliation of Family, Care and Work provides for the right to an extended short-term absence from work, as well as a right to family caregiver leave. The U.K. adopted a Carers Action Plan in 2018 and established Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers. The Carers Action Plan aims to incentivize employers to unlock quality jobs for flex and part-time work, to address the structural inequalities unpaid carers face in the workplace, as well as the healthcare and education needs for unpaid carers, and to enable carers to work alongside care responsibilities.

40 EIGE, Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance, 2016, p.13.

41 Beijing+25 Dashboard, UN Women ECA RO, indicator: main reason for part-time employment, other family or personal responsibilities, citing Eurostat.

1.5.3. Maternity, paternity and parental leave

The creation of expanded parental leave options have shown positive effects on women's labour market participation. They are fundamental to ensuring women's equity in the labour market as they enable balancing work and home life by allowing time for both parents to spend with their children, and equalize child-caring responsibilities between partners. Parental and paternity leave support the involvement of fathers in the family home, as well as the well-being of children. Given the demonstrated economic and professional impact that maternity leave has on women's earnings and career advancement, providing for the possibility of paternity leave not only fosters work-life balance, but also serves to breakdown gender stereotypes about care-giving roles.

Over the past five years, countries throughout the region improved policies related to available maternity, paternity and parental leave schemes. Paternity leave was introduced in a few countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic and Moldova, and extended in others, like Spain, Italy and Switzerland. Moldova introduced a 14-day paid paternity leave; a 7-day paid paternity leave was introduced in the Czech Republic in 2018 at 70% of pay. Paternity leave was also introduced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in both the Republika Srpska and the Federation (FBiH), which allow the father to take paternity leave, 60 and 42 days after the birth of the child, respectively.

While in Iceland 90% of fathers take advantage of the 3-month non-transferable paternity leave,⁴² a few countries noted limited uptake in paternity leave, generally attributed to traditional social norms. For example, in Finland, fathers use only 10% of available family leave. In the Czech Republic, public opinion does not support fathers taking leave. In order to foster greater paternal involvement in childcare, Denmark engaged in a three-year paternity leave campaign from 2017-2020.

Paternity leave is available in a few countries in limited and/or inflexible arrangements. For example, in Belarus, fathers are eligible for paternity leave only after the mother returns to work full-time. In Israel,

42 Iceland provides a total of 9 months paid leave at 80% of the salary, including 3 months of non-transferable leave for each parent and an additional 3 months to be determined by the family.

fathers permitted one week of paid paternity leave immediately following the birth, and one additional week during the period of maternity leave. Paid paternity leave is not yet available in Central Asia, Lithuania⁴³ or Malta.

Maternity leave was also improved in several countries, either by expanding leave time or, in Slovakia, by an increase in the rate of pay during leave. Maternity leave was extended to free-lance workers in Austria. In Finland, an additional 54 days of parental allowance can be taken by single mothers. Leave was extended to same-sex partners in Denmark, Austria and Sweden. Denmark provides two-weeks leave for same sex mothers. In Austria, adoptive fathers and those in same-sex relationships have a legal right to unpaid parental leave for up to four weeks.

In an important advance for increasing men's participation in childrearing and unpaid care responsibilities, parental leave sharing incentives and arrangements were implemented in Denmark, the U.K., Slovenia, Austria and Canada. Denmark provides for sharing of up to 32 weeks. Romania and Sweden have established a 'parental leave quota' that is only available for fathers and cannot be transferred to a partner within a parental leave policy design that sets family leave entitlements on a family level.⁴⁴

Others introduced incentives for fathers to take parental leave by extending its duration, or offering bonus payments if both parents take leave.⁴⁵ In Austria, the 2017 Act on Childcare provides a partnership bonus of 500, serving as an incentive for parents to take equal amounts of childcare allowance time. In Sweden, a third reserved month of parental leave was introduced to increase men's participation in childcare; in Germany, a flexible care allowance was established in 2015 along with four additional partnership months.

Austria has also used tax reform to incentivize the sharing of childcare responsibilities, as well as to reduce the economic burden of childcare for carers and single-parent families. The U.K. has introduced tax-free childcare in which working families can claim up to 85% of child care costs each month.

43 In Lithuania, parental leave can be taken by fathers, but can only be taken by one parent.

44 EIGE, Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance, 2016, p.25.

45 EIGE, Tackling the gender pay gap: not without a better work-life balance, 2016, p.25, referring to Denmark, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal, and France, respectively.

1.5.4. Available and affordable childcare

One of the most effective means of fostering work-life balance and women's increased participation in the labour force is the provision of subsidised childcare services. The OECD average enrollment in pre-primary and primary school for children from three to five years of age is 88.3% for 2016, with France and the U.K. achieving 100% enrollment.⁴⁶

Yet, significant gaps remain across the region. For example, the pre-primary childcare enrollment rate in several countries is quite low. In Spain, 28.5% of children aged 0-3 were enrolled in 2017-18,⁴⁷ in Turkey, 37.2% of children were enrolled in 2016; in Switzerland, 49.8%. Although achieving 86.6% enrollment for three to five year olds, according to its national report, in the Czech Republic, in 2016 only 4.7% of children under the age of three were in formal childcare. Similarly, in Moldova, only 54% of kids 2-3 attend early childhood education; recent increases in kindergartens still do not meet demand; and, there are significant rural and urban differences in access. The government of Northern Macedonia recently committed to increase the enrolment rate of the children aged 3-6 from 40% to 50%.⁴⁸

Other countries have instituted a range of public policies to render childcare more affordable. In the UK, during the reporting period, the child care entitlement for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds doubled from 15 to 30 hours/week, and was made available on a means-tested basis for 2-year-olds. It also made childcare tax free for up to £2000/child/year up to age 12.

While affordable, quality childcare is the key to unlocking women's economic participation, it is important to recognize that the care economy is often informal, and generally characterized by the absence of decent work and labour rights, particularly for migrant workers.

Despite its vital economic role in supporting the

46 OECD.Stat, Employment: Enrolment rates in pre-primary education or primary school, children aged 3 to 5 years old, available at: <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54761>.

47 Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer "Beijing+25", p. 2.

48 UN Women, Investing in free universal childcare in FRY Macedonia: Analysis of costs, short-term employment effects and fiscal revenue, 2019, noting that: "Provision of childcare in Macedonia is inadequate, relying mainly on mothers' informal care time and with unequal access to early childcare and education services despite relatively low prices. Quality of childcare services is also unequal".

economies in both destination countries and in countries of origin in the form of remittances, domestic work operates within the shadow of the informal sector, providing no rights or protection for the vast majority of workers. Statistically invisible, the millions of domestic workers employed around the world are primarily women and girls.

Within Europe, Spain, France and Italy employ the highest number of domestic workers. In Spain, domestic workers are mostly migrant women, primarily from Latin America. In Italy, 78.4% of registered domestic workers are migrants, mainly from Eastern Europe. In France, a majority of domestic workers come from francophone Africa, mainly from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.⁴⁹

Migrant domestic workers are at risk of diverse forms of exploitation, and a range of abuses. Their invisibility and silence as labourers in private households is exacerbated by their migration status. Yet, the economic interests at stake are enormous on both the supply and demand side. Millions of families in countries of origin around the world survive on the remittances sent by domestic workers. At the same time, domestic work functions as a pillar on which the economic participation of increasing segments of the population in destination countries depends. Domestic work is characterized by precarious working conditions, including: instability, exceedingly long hours, no defined work schedule, and the absence of days off, vacations, benefits, maternity leave and medical insurance. Domestic work is further renowned for the abuses it generates: contracts broken or modified on arrival, the withholding of salary, physical violence, discrimination, sexual harassment, and others.

1.6. Property rights

Ownership of land and property empowers women by providing both income and security. Resources provide women with increased influence in household decision-making, and recourse to assets during crises. Women's access to land and property can have an impact on their vulnerabilities to other threats, such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, among others. Indeed, without the security of a home or income, women and their families can fall into poverty traps and struggle to attain their basic rights, such as livelihoods, education, sanitation and health care.

49 ILO, Extension of Social Protection to Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe, 2013, p. 1.

Despite formal equalities in the right to own property and in inheritance, socio-cultural norms and practices impede women from owning and inheriting property in several countries in the region, such as in Georgia and Albania. In Albania, women own only 8% of land as women are marginalized in inheritance practices, and property is often registered under the “head of household,” a role reserved for men. Women's lack of knowledge about their rights, legislative gaps, incorrect judicial and administrative practices and a lack of monitoring the implementation of the law all contribute to women's inability to own property on an equal basis with men. Legal initiatives were thus undertaken in 2018 to tackle *de facto* inequalities in women's property ownership.

In Spain, 70% of the listed owners of agricultural enterprises are men; women's contribution remains considered as an extension of their unpaid domestic work.⁵⁰ The absence of land rights further impedes their access to capital to start a business.⁵¹ In Tajikistan, women's extremely limited access to property has a major influence on poverty levels and restricted economic opportunities.⁵²

1.7. Violence in the workplace

Representing a significant advancement in the international legal framework, in 2019, the ILO Convention (C190) on Violence and Harassment opened for signature, incorporating the prohibition of violence and harassment in the workplace into international labour standards. It defines violence and harassment as “a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices” that “aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm”. This definition can thus encompass physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and stalking, among other behaviours. The Convention also takes into account the fact that nowadays work does not always take place at a physical workplace, and consequently

50 Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer “Beijing+25”, pp. 4, 10.

51 Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 10.

52 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan “From Equality *de jure* to Equality *de facto*” on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 16.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

covers work-related communications, including those enabled by ICT. The Convention covers all workers, irrespective of contractual status.

Critically, the new ILO Convention highlights GBV, taking into account third parties, such as clients, customers, service providers and patients, because they can be victims as well as perpetrators. The impact of domestic violence on the world of work is also addressed, and an accompanying Recommendation sets out practical measures, including leave for victims, flexible work arrangements, and awareness raising.

In a study that encompassed sexual harassment in the EU, the European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that a third of all sexual harassment occurs at work, and that:

75 % of women in the top management category and 74 % of those in the professional occupational category have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime, compared with 44 % of women in the occupational category 'skilled manual worker' or 41 % of women who state that they have never done paid work.⁵³

Several countries, including Lithuania, Albania, Georgia, Italy and Andorra indicated having adopted legislation to address sexual harassment at work and in educational institutions during the reporting period. While most utilized civil legislation schemes, such as

anti-discrimination laws, a few, such as France and Serbia, criminalized sexual harassment. At the same time, sexual harassment at work is not prohibited in all countries within the region, including Tajikistan.⁵⁴

Several actions were undertaken by diverse stakeholders in Iceland in the wake of the #metoo movement. The government administration's occupational safety and health agency engaged in awareness raising and trainings on sexual harassment and mobbing. A federation of employers, Business Iceland, issued a declaration stressing zero tolerance for sexual harassment. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Equality also set up two task forces to map the prevalence of sexual harassment and bullying at work, and existing prevention plans. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports also established a working group to respond to the #metoo stories of women in sports, whose final report resulted in the establishment of an independent body to address complaints in 2019.

53 FRA, Violence against women: An EU-wide survey, 2014, p. 96.

54 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 48.

DIMENSION 2:

HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SERVICES



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Efforts to mainstream gender issues and women's needs throughout their life-cycles into national programmes related to health, education and social protection are considered in this section, along with the discriminatory and structural barriers to enjoying their rights in each of these sectors.

2.1. Healthcare

At the broadest level, the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as CEDAW, the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provide for “the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”, covering basic healthcare needs as well as specialized services, such as reproductive health and cervical and breast

cancer screenings, in line with women's needs.⁵⁵ This right should be provided to all women and girls in all geographical areas, rural and urban, as well as women of diverse ethnicities and socio-economic status, adolescents and to those with disabilities.

Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objective C.1 calls for increased access throughout women's life cycle “to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services”. SDG Targets 5.6 and 3.7 provide for “universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights,” including for “family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes”. Target 3.1 also calls for reducing “the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births”.

⁵⁵ Beijing Platform for Action, para 89.

2.1.1. Access to healthcare

Although women in the region as a whole enjoy better health than in other regions in the world, significant health inequities among women occur both within and between countries. For example, women's life expectancy differs by up to 15 years, as particular groups of women remain more exposed and vulnerable to ill health.⁵⁶ These inequalities can be attributed to health system responses to women's needs, but also to underlying gender inequalities and discrimination.

One important overall trend in the region is the aging population:

with 70% of the 14 million people currently over 85 years old being women – a population group that will grow in years to come. For many women, however, the years longer lived are often characterized by ill health or disability: women in Europe live on average 10 years in ill health.⁵⁷

Almost all countries reported efforts to expand access to affordable health care to women and girls. Yet, in countries throughout the region, and especially in the SEE and EECCA sub-regions, women in rural and remote areas often lack access to healthcare due to the distance required to travel to healthcare facilities, the costs of service and the waiting periods. Estonia has consistently had the highest self-reported unmet need for healthcare due to distance, expense and/or waiting lists.⁵⁸ A related concern in several countries is the quality of healthcare services provided, and whether they are accessible to women with disabilities.

Access to primary and reproductive healthcare was also extended to specific categories of women. In Albania, the Basic Primary Healthcare Service Package established in 2015, which includes maternity care, family planning, cancer screening and sexual health, was offered to women in eight prisons, and to formally identified victims of human trafficking. In 2019, the new corrections code in Kyrgyzstan provides maternal health services to incarcerated pregnant women.

56 WHO, Women's health and well-being in Europe: Beyond the mortality advantage, 2016, p. 6.

57 WHO, Women's health and well-being in Europe: Beyond the mortality advantage, 2016, p. 6.

58 Beijing+25 Dashboard, UN Women ECA RO, indicator: self-reported unmet need for medical care due to reason: too far or too expensive or waiting list, citing Eurostat.

Ensuring access to basic as well as reproductive healthcare for women with disabilities remain a challenge in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia,⁵⁹ among other countries. In Spain, universal health care was restored in 2018, ensuring access to irregular migrants. Specialized healthcare programmes were established for migrant women in a few countries, including Belgium and Switzerland. In Albania, efforts were made during the migration crisis to ensure women's rights to healthcare. The sub-regional consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania observed that women with special needs, displaced women and women from conflict-affected areas, LGBTI and women from national minorities face double discrimination and difficulties accessing healthcare.⁶⁰

Actors reportedly faced challenges in identifying violence survivors for the purpose of providing them with assistance. The U.K. appointed a national LGBT health adviser. Malta introduced legal provisions to establish a Gender Wellbeing Clinic to ensure free specialized healthcare for transgender persons.

Several countries, such as Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and Albania, initiated gender-sensitive training for health care providers.

2.1.2. Sexual and reproductive health

The concept of reproductive health set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action is broad, covering “a satisfying and safe sex life” as well as the ability “to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so”.⁶¹ Indeed, the ability of women to control their own fertility constitutes a foundation for the enjoyment of other rights.⁶² The enjoyment of reproductive health specifically implies:

access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which

59 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 4.

60 Held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; see also, NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, pp. 9, 10, noting the need for guidelines for providing healthcare for gender non-conforming individuals, and the lack of accessibility for and training on the healthcare needs of women with disabilities.

61 Beijing Platform for Action, para 94.

62 Beijing Platform for Action, para 97.

are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.”⁶³

In the EECCA sub-regions, women still face obstacles in accessing reproductive and sexual health, resulting in preventable maternal deaths, unintended pregnancies and access to safe abortion, high rates of cervical cancer and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Limited access to SRHR can in part be attributed to a resurgence of socially conservative values and policies.⁶⁴ Limitations on access are especially acute in rural areas. Countries across the region have expanded access and improved sexual and reproductive care in numerous ways, including: physical infrastructure development, removing cost as a barrier and developing specialized, gender-responsive policies. Azerbaijan established several peri-natal centres. Access to maternity care in several countries is free of charge, such as in Moldova and Belarus. The Russian Federation and other countries in the EECCA sub-regions noted decreases in maternal mortality.

Finland established a comprehensive programme for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights that encompasses care at birth, sexuality education and free contraception for youth. Serbia’s first national programme on sexual and reproductive health was adopted in 2017. France, Luxembourg, Ireland and Montenegro also have developed national strategies on sexual health. Georgia adopted a Maternal and Newborn Health Strategy for 2017-2030. Kazakhstan has both a 2017-2021 National Framework Programme and Action Plan for Strengthening Family Planning Service. Ukraine adopted clinical guidelines on reproductive health in 2014. Notably, Tajikistan adopted an Action Plan on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Mothers, Newborns, Children and Adolescents 2016-2020.

Other countries ensured the availability of sexual and reproductive healthcare to diverse groups of women. In Latvia, vulnerable women have access to State-funded contraception. In Slovenia, sexual and reproductive health provided free of charge to refugee women and girls. In Switzerland, recent initiatives ensure access

63 Beijing Platform for Action, para 94.

64 UNFPA, Sexual and reproductive health in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2015, p. 2.

for migrant women to birthing courses, post-partum home visits, and access to information in native languages in migrant reception centres. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania issued an Order approving a Minimum Initial Service Package for Emergency Reproductive Health in humanitarian crises, with standard operating procedures. In Turkey, access by Syrian women migrants and refugees to reproductive health services improved drastically.

Despite focused attention on women’s reproductive and health in many countries, progress is not uniform. Access to reproductive health care, modern contraception and information and counseling remain a challenge, particularly in the Eastern part of the region, such as Kazakhstan and Georgia, as well as in Liechtenstein, with the attendant serious health risks related to the use of abortion, especially clandestine abortion, as a means of fertility control.⁶⁵ Access to modern contraception in several countries in the EECCA sub-regions falls below that of the average rate for the world’s least developed countries, which is at 30%. These include: Northern Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania—all with rates under 20%. In Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Serbia and Armenia the rates also fall below 30%.

Contraception is not covered by the minimum health insurance package in Switzerland, for example, and only two-thirds of women have access to contraception Kyrgyzstan, where the risk of maternal mortality consequently remains high. In Georgia, low awareness and access to information on sexual and reproductive health services result in premature sexual relations and early and unwanted pregnancy. Access to health services in Georgia is also reportedly impeded by women’s unpaid care obligations.⁶⁶

2.1.2.1. Maternity and obstetric care

A few countries have undertaken initiatives to ensuring mother- and infant-centred approaches to birthing in line with WHO recommendations. Denmark launched an initiative to foster the development of individually tailored birth plans, enhancing outreach toward

65 See also, CEDAW Concluding Observations, CEDAW/C/KAZ/CO/304, 10 March 2014, para 30, noting that “free access to contraceptives is not on the list of State-guaranteed free medical services”; NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 7.

66 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 5.

vulnerable pregnant women. The Czech Republic has undertaken to continuously promote childbirth-related care options, and has expanded midwifery units. In Norway, national ante-natal guidelines ensure woman- and newborn-centred care, including mental health support and home visits. Within the framework of its national mental health policies, the U.K. specifically addresses childbirth-related depression, anxiety and psychosis. In Albania, birthing classes were introduced for the first time.

Finland established a National Programme for Promoting Breastfeeding 2018-2022, and appointed a national breastfeeding coordinator. Croatia also established a Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion Programme. In another good practice example, Finland provides gender training for healthcare providers, and has developed a manual on gender equality for maternity clinics, which aims to broaden traditional concepts of the family and to promote family diversity.

Even as standards improve, their application in practice remains inconsistent, including within countries. For example, hospitals are not following recommended breastfeeding and newborn contact standards in the Czech Republic. As acknowledged in the national reports of a few countries, NGOs have begun to identify cases of obstetric violence. With respect to women's ability to control their fertility, a recent study in Albania revealed that only 2.7% of women aged 15-49 make decisions on sexual relations with their partner, contraceptive use and reproductive health care; 26.2% of women indicates that it is the man who decides.

2.1.2.2. Prevention screenings

Cancers of the breast and cervix, other cancers of the reproductive system and infertility affect growing numbers of women and may be preventable or curable if detected early. Numerous national reports detailed free and accessible screening for cervical and breast cancer, and HPV vaccinations. Albania established clinical guidelines on breast cancer screenings in 2015. Of concern is the situation in Ukraine, the rise of breast and cervical cancer was documented in Zhytomyr as a result of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

2.1.2.3. Access to abortion

In its General Comment on the Right to Life, the UN Human Rights Committee addressed the issue of access to abortion, stating that “restrictions on the ability of women or girls to seek abortion must not, inter alia, jeopardize their lives, subject them to physical or mental pain or suffering ... discriminate against them or arbitrarily interfere with their privacy”.⁶⁷ It further clarified that:

States parties must provide safe, legal and effective access to abortion where the life and health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, and where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering, most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or is not viable.⁶⁸

Moreover, States should not “apply criminal sanctions against women and girls undergoing abortion or against medical service providers assisting them in doing so”.⁶⁹

According to WHO recommendation, mandatory waiting periods should not apply to abortion services and abortion should be provided as soon as is possible, without delay.⁷⁰ Conscientious objection must also be regulated so that it does not hinder women's access to lawful services.

Belgium and Luxembourg decriminalized abortion during the reporting period. In 2017, France criminalized impeding access to abortion and abolished the reflection period. In 2019, Iceland passed the Act on Termination of Pregnancy, codifying women's personal autonomy and self-determination, appealing the prior approval process. A law was passed in North Macedonia to ensure that free and legal abortion services are available to all women. Albania established clinical guidelines on abortion in 2015, but the Law on Termination of Pregnancy does not foresee free pre-

67 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, CCPR/C/GC/36, 2018, para 8.

68 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, CCPR/C/GC/36, 2018, para 8.

69 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, CCPR/C/GC/36, 2018, para 8.

70 WHO, Safe Abortion Guidance, (2012).

abortion visits, abortion and post-abortion care.⁷¹

At the same time, access to abortion is restricted in several countries. In Andorra abortion is criminalized, except to save the life of the mother. In Liechtenstein, abortion remains penalized in cases of fetal impairment. It is prohibited in all circumstances in Malta and San Marino, and under restricted circumstances in Monaco and Poland, namely: in cases of rape, incest or fetal impairment. In Belarus, medical workers often collaborate with religious organizations, and during «For Life» campaigns access to abortion is restricted. In Croatia, the limited access to healthcare in rural areas results in *de facto* lack of access to abortion. Georgia maintains a limited mandatory reflection period, which increases the costs of services, resulting in a barrier. The high cost of abortion in Georgia requires women to access loans or resort to illegal abortion.⁷² Several countries restrict the autonomy of adolescents to obtain and abortion, including girls aged 16-17, such as Spain.⁷³ No mention was made in these country reports regarding health the impacts of women's lack of full reproductive autonomy due to restricted access to abortion.

Sex-selective abortions, including forced sex-selective abortions, are also practiced in the Caucasus and SEE regions.⁷⁴ They were made an administrative offence in Armenia, and are criminalized in Georgia, among other countries.

2.1.4. Adolescents

As described by the Beijing Platform for Action, “[a]dolescent girls are both biologically and psychosocially more vulnerable than boys to sexual abuse, violence and prostitution, and to the consequences of

71 Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 14.

72 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, pp. 5-6.

73 Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer “Beijing+25”, p. 5.

74 Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 19, stating: “Outside urban areas of Tirana, women tend to perform unsafe abortion which puts their lives at risk, precisely because of the mentality and traditions of giving birth to a baby boy at all costs. This mentality remains so embedded in the minds of a considerable part of society, and is so strong that not infrequently, women - who are considered the only one responsible for not being capable of bringing to life a baby boy! - become victims of violence, are abandoned or forced to repeatedly become pregnant until the birth of a boy.”

unprotected and premature sexual relations”.⁷⁵ Yet, adolescent-friendly services are needed in the EECCA sub-regions, especially in remote and rural areas, in order to ensure sexual health and prevent adolescent pregnancy. The adolescent birth rate is highest in the Central Asia and Caucasus sub-regions. In Tajikistan, it is 57.1 per 1000; in Azerbaijan, 55.8 per 1000; in Georgia 46.6 per 1000.⁷⁶

A recent study undertaken in Lithuania on early marriage among Romani girls found that the adolescent birth rate among Roma is 25%. A study in Georgia revealed that in most cases of early marriage, the girl had lacked information on family planning and contraception.⁷⁷

Several country reports described initiatives to provide counseling and access to sexual and reproductive health information and services to adolescents. Andorra, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Sweden and Norway have established or expanded the availability of counseling and access to sexual and reproductive health information, services and contraception targeted for adolescents, often provided for free. Also with respect to adolescents, access to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination expanded to numerous countries beyond the EU.

2.1.5. HIV/AIDS

Numerous national reports, particularly from the EECCA and SEE subregions described significant progress in addressing transmission by pregnant women living with HIV, and the treatment provided to them and their newborns. While national reports described efforts to curtail the virus, the focus remained limited to reductions in the percentage of new infections and to addressing pregnant women living with HIV as vectors of the virus. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have yet to be seen from a gender perspective in many countries of the region.

Worrying developments relate to an increase in

75 Beijing Platform for Action, para 93.

76 Beijing+25 Dashboard, UN Women ECA RO, indicator: adolescent birth rate.

77 See, NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 17.

women living with HIV in a few countries, and the treatment of women living with HIV themselves. These include an increase of women living with HIV in Ukraine and Tajikistan,⁷⁸ and a two-fold increase in Kyrgyzstan, who comprise 60% of persons living with HIV, and suffer discrimination, stigmatization and diverse forms of gender-based violence (GBV). In Tajikistan, women living with HIV have limited access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, social welfare, education and employment.

The national reports from some countries in EECCA sub-regions further described violence against women as a factor that renders women more vulnerable to HIV. Conversely, it is a consequence of their infection. Latvia provided a specialized training on gender-based violence for stakeholders of the HIV Prevention Point network to address these phenomena.

2.1.6. The health impact of GBV and GBV in the healthcare sector

Gender-based violence, including physical and psychological abuse, trafficking in women and girls, and other forms of abuse and sexual exploitation place girls and women at high risk of physical and mental trauma, disease and unwanted pregnancy. Intimate partner violence has been found by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to be a major contributor to women's mental-health problems, including depression and suicidal thoughts or actions, as well as to sexual and reproductive health problems, including maternal and neo-natal health problems.⁷⁹ Such situations often deter women from using health and other services of which they are in need.⁸⁰ Ensuring access to healthcare for women and girls encompasses the provision of appropriate and gender-sensitive healthcare to survivors of gender-based violence, in all its forms. For example, survivors of FGM require specialized healthcare services, and girls subjected to early forced and child marriage face specific health risks due to early sexual activity, pregnancy and childbearing at a very early age.

78 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 9.

79 WHO, Global and regional estimates on violence against women: prevalence and health effect of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, 2013, Appendix 2, page 47.

80 Beijing Platform for Action, para 99.

Several countries, including Albania, Ukraine, Malta and Sweden, initiated gender-sensitive training, including for those responding to the health needs of survivors of gender-based violence. In 2016, Finland developed national guidelines on sexual violence, establishing local treatment chains for district hospitals that include an examination, mental and physical health care and legal aid. Trainings were provided to hospitals prior to launching the guidelines. Sweden has also ensured that this issue has been incorporated into its regulatory framework. In Spain, health sector protocols were developed on FGM and sexual exploitation. In Austria, EVAW public awareness workshops and information materials were disseminated to target specific groups of professionals, including the healthcare sector.

Both Albania and Sweden incorporate domestic violence screenings into maternity care provision. CSOs in Albania noted that in some regions, doctors do not report incidence of violence among patients primarily due to fear of perpetrators, as they remain unprotected.⁸¹

In Georgia, violence against women survivors can access health services free of charge. In other countries, such as Moldova, survivors of domestic violence are still required to pay for all or a significant portion of needed health care services.

Women continue to face gender bias and discriminatory treatment, as well as the provision of inadequate, inappropriate medical services and obstetric violence by health care personnel. In some countries in the EECCA sub-region, the discriminatory treatment of, and violence against, certain categories of women by healthcare workers, including those living with HIV/AIDS, sex workers and drug users, constitutes a significant barrier to their accessing needed healthcare, and further poses a public health concern.⁸² These countries further observed a significantly higher prevalence of domestic and intimate partner violence against women with HIV/AIDS.

Standards related to privacy and confidentiality are not always respected, women are not provided with full information about their options and available services, and voluntary and informed consent is not ensured. Obstetric violence, abuse,

81 Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 14.

82 See, e.g., NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 13.

over-medicating women's life events, unnecessary surgical interventions and inappropriate medication can all have a devastating impact on women's health experiences and choices.⁸³ Women with disabilities lack access to health care, including reproductive health care, in several countries.

One innovative initiative in Iceland involves a nationwide study, entitled SAGA (Stress-and-gene-analysis) on the impact of trauma on women's health, with the aim to contribute to the prevention and treatment of adverse health consequences.

2.2. Education

Education is a basic human right. Equality in access to, and the attainment of, educational qualifications is necessary for empowering women in all areas of their lives, from their ability to actively participate in decision-making to improving their health, nutrition and education within their families.

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for ensuring equal access to education, and specifically improving "women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education".⁸⁴ SDG 4 contains a series of targets for ensuring equal access to education in pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical, vocational and tertiary education.⁸⁵ SDG Targets 4.5 and 4.7 further call on States to "eliminate gender disparities in education," and to ensure learning in the fields of sustainable development, "human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence". Finally, SDG Targets 4.5 and 4A require gender-sensitive, safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments for ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities.

2.2.1. Access to education

In most countries in the region, women and girls either equal or exceed men and boys in educational enrollment and attainment overall. Exceptions include countries in Central Asia. For example, in Tajikistan, girls comprise only 22% of primary school students, and it is common for girls to drop out of school in 9th

grade due to domestic work obligations.⁸⁶ Similarly, in Uzbekistan, girls comprise only 30% of 10th grade students, and recent changes in the law permit girls to study part-time from primary up to vocational school, to enable them to combine study with their domestic work responsibilities. In Kyrgyzstan, girls from ethnic and religious minorities face barriers in completion of primary and secondary education, and married girls are barred from attending school.

For almost all of the region, women represent a majority of all graduates from tertiary education. Exceptions include Liechtenstein and countries in Central Asia. In Tajikistan, women comprise 33.5% of secondary vocational schools, where quotas have been established in higher education institutions for girls from rural areas. In Uzbekistan, women comprise 38.9% of students in higher education; in Turkmenistan 38.5%. Women comprise approximately one-third of university students in Liechtenstein. Yet, even in countries where women's educational attainment exceeds that of men, their achievement does not translate into equivalent levels of participation and remuneration in the labour market.

2.2.1.1. Early school leaving: early marriage and pregnancy

The Beijing Platform for Action observes that "early childbearing continues to be an impediment to improvements in the educational, economic and social status of women," and that "for young women early marriage and early motherhood can severely curtail educational and employment opportunities and are likely to have a long-term, adverse impact on the quality of their lives and the lives of their children".⁸⁷ Early marriage was identified in several country reports, including Albania and Kazakhstan. It was noted as particularly affecting Romani girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, for example. In Kazakhstan, harmful practices, such as child marriage result in girls dropping out of school.⁸⁸ Several countries permit pregnant students to continue their

83 See, Beijing Platform for Action, para 103.

84 Beijing Platform for Action, Strategic Objectives B.1 and B.3.

85 SDG Targets 4.1 - 4.3.

86 See also, Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 20, noting a decrease in women's education levels, except for primary education, which can be attributed in part to traditional social norms and early marriage.

87 Beijing Platform for Action, para 93.

88 See also, CEDAW Concluding Observations, CEDAW/C/KAZ/CO/304, 10 March 2014, para 26.

attendance at school, including Andorra and Austria.

Despite formal equality in access and in numbers, discrimination against women and girls persists in the form of gender bias and stereotypes in teaching materials, sexual harassment in schools, and limitations to certain fields based on what is considered an appropriate subject of study. For those countries that provided statistical breakdowns on women's and girls' enrolment in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), the differences between men and women were striking.

2.2.3. Gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive and inclusive education

Countries in the region have taken a diversity of approaches to mainstreaming gender and gender equality into education. Several countries undertook initiatives over the last five years to incorporate these issues into national curricula. For example, in Armenia, gender equality, sexuality and the elimination of violence was incorporated into curricula. In Sweden, the curricula from pre-primary to upper-secondary schools integrates issues related to gendered social norms, honour-related violence, consent and pornography. Albania also launched a new pre-school curriculum that adopts a gender equality and anti-discrimination lens, and the Ministry of Education has conducted anti-discrimination trainings in schools.

Several countries ensure training and guidance for educators and administrators. Austria has adopted a Teaching Principle on Reflexive Gender Education and Equality of 2018, anchored in the Higher Education Act, establishing a diversity-focused gender competence as a key requirement for the teaching profession. The principle addresses diverse gender issues, including cultures of honor and forced marriage. Finland produced a Guide for Gender Equality in Primary Education, and the city of Helsinki has incorporated gender impact assessments to avoid gender stereotypes in early childhood education. Armenia provides gender-sensitivity trainings for teachers and administrators. Latvia provides capacity building for educators on inclusive, safe and non-offensive education for girls.

Yet, gender stereotypes remain present in teaching materials, and not all teaching staff have the requisite gender sensitivity. Primarily in the EECCA sub-regions, many lessons, activities and subjects are extremely gendered, containing information based on gender stereotypes, which impacts upon the career paths

women perceive as viable and thus their access to jobs. The national reports of Moldova, Romania, Liechtenstein, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that a gender mainstreaming of the national curricula had not yet been conducted, and that textbooks contained gender stereotypes. Curricular reform requires the allocation of sufficient resources, and in several countries initiatives to address gender within the education sector are limited to donor-funded short-term projects.

2.3.4. Comprehensive sexuality education

Comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education is a crucial factor in protecting the health and well-being of children and young people. It can also serve to support them in their sexual and overall development into adults.

A recent report by WHO found that sexuality education has become the norm in most countries throughout Europe and Central Asia.⁸⁹ According to the national and WHO reports, the existence and status of sexual education courses vary in each country. Some are integrated into the curriculum and are mandatory, others are optional and/or are offered only after school.

Countries in the region, such as Finland, Austria and the U.K., provide for mandatory comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education in schools. In Slovenia, sexuality and health education is compulsory in both primary and secondary schools. In Austria, sexual education is anchored as a teaching principle in all curricula, is age appropriate, and includes contraception. In Norway, compulsory sex education addresses personal boundaries and sexuality. In Albania, advances in comprehensive sex education were made by donors and civil society organizations, including teacher trainings, despite significant opposition. Sexual education is mandatory for students from ages 10-18. In Portugal, the National Strategy for Citizenship Education covers gender equality, gender-based violence and sexual education. In Romania, reproductive and sexual health education is optional and/or extra-curricular.

Moreover, in some countries, a link is made between sexuality education and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. This can mean that information on those services is provided during

⁸⁹ WHO, *Sexuality Education in Europe and Central Asia: State of the Art and Recent Developments*, 2018, p. 5.

sexuality-education lessons, or that the staff of youth-friendly SRH services provides some sexuality-education lessons in schools. In Sweden and Estonia, school classes visit youth clinics to receive lessons there. This enables students to become familiar with a clinic for possible future use of services.

The early marriage and pregnancy continue to constitute a barrier to school attendance in some countries in the region underscores the importance of integrating age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into school curricula, including comprehensive sex education for adolescent girls and boys, covering responsible sexual behaviour. Yet, few countries, such as Hungary, are piloting programmes that are couched in terms of promoting family values.

Opposition to sexuality education is still widespread in the region. Only in five countries did respondents feel that there was hardly any opposition (Belgium, the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland and Sweden). In eight other countries, there was ‘some’ opposition, and in 12 countries opposition it was felt to be ‘serious’.⁹⁰ The two primary reasons for such opposition include the belief that:

sexuality education causes early onset of sexual behaviour, despite all the research indicating that this is not the case. Other arguments often used against sexuality education are that it remains the task of parents and not of the school, and that it will ‘spoil the morality’ of young people.⁹¹

2.2.5. Vertical and horizontal segregation in the education sector

Gender segregation remains a characteristic feature of education systems within the region, involving the concentration of one gender in certain fields of education or occupations (horizontal segregation) or the concentration of one gender in different grades, levels of responsibility or positions (vertical segregation). It has an important effect on women’s and men’s social status, “prestige, working conditions, work environments, experiences and earnings”, reflecting gendered social hierarchies.⁹²

90 WHO, *Sexuality Education in Europe and Central Asia: State of the Art and Recent Developments*, 2018, pp. 10, 27.

91 WHO, *Sexuality Education in Europe and Central Asia: State of the Art and Recent Developments*, 2018, pp. 10, 27.

92 EIGE, *Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, 2017, p. 7.

Gendered educational segregation also has significant subsequent labour market outcomes. For example, an EIGE report on *Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market* found that:

The chances of employment for women graduating from men-dominated fields of education are significantly lower compared to those of men. In 2014, the employment rate of EU women graduates who studied STEM at tertiary level was 76%. This is more than 10 percentage points lower than the employment rate of men with the same qualification.⁹³

Many national reports identified both horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the education sector. In the region, women remain significantly over-represented as teachers at the levels of primary and lower secondary education, with the exception of Finland. Yet, despite women’s over-representation in tertiary education, men remain over-represented in senior academic posts.

Several countries described vertical segregation in education in their national contexts. For example, in the Czech Republic, vertical and horizontal education was identified among both teachers and students. The national report observed that 84.7% of all teachers are women; 85.1% of public university professors are men, as well as 75% of assistant professors. Similarly, in Uzbekistan, women comprise 16% of higher academic positions; and 70% of primary school teachers. In 2017, women comprised 20.9% and 23% of professors in the Netherlands and Ireland, respectively. In Turkey, women comprise 31.4% of university professors.

A few countries reported initiatives to increase women’s representation in university-level academic posts. Sweden has begun to implement quotas to ensure the recruitment of women professors on a 50/50 basis. The Netherlands also started an initiative to appoint women professors in 2017. Ireland adopted a National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2018-2020.

With respect to horizontal segregation, gender differentiation continues to be a principle that shapes the practices and curricula of schools, especially when school staff have not been trained to address gender-related topics. Peer pressure to conform to gendered expectations can also play a role in limiting children’s ability to avoid replicating gender-typical behaviours.

93 EIGE, *Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, 2017, p. 5.

To provide some examples, in the Czech Republic, 16% of female secondary students enter technical branches, compared to 78.3% who enter the social sciences. Women also remain under-represented in scientific and technical disciplines in Latvia, where they comprise 31.76%, while they comprise 92% of 2018 graduates in the fields of education, health and social welfare. In Uzbekistan, girls comprise 84.2% of humanities students, but only 19.2% of the fields of agriculture and water management.

A few countries signaled efforts to combat horizontal gendered segregation in education. In 2017, Denmark created a 3-month introductory period for upper secondary students in which they are exposed to the full range of subjects prior to being divided into specific academic areas (technical, commercial, foreign language). The students then receive guidance before choosing a subject. The programme aims to open students' mindsets regarding their initial preferences.

Liechtenstein also offers an Annual National Futures Day that introduces 5th to 7th graders to jobs dominated by one gender, in order to discourage gendered occupational segregation. Germany has initiated a national project called *No Clichés*, which promotes study choices free of gender stereotypes. Switzerland also started a federal project to assist children ages 9 to 13 to reflect on study and career choices beyond gender stereotypes.

2.2.6. Women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

As observed at the 61st session of the CSW, the sectors expected to grow in the future include the computer and mathematical professions, and the architectural and engineering fields". Moreover, information and communications technology (ICT) is expected to create the most jobs, followed by professional services and the media.⁹⁴ In light of this forecast, "unless appropriate recruitment, retention and promotion policies are enacted and investments made in building new skills for women, women would tend to lose jobs since they are less likely to be employed in sectors where the adoption of new technology will create jobs, resulting in a widening of the gender gap".⁹⁵

94 Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016, para 41.

95 Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016, para 43.

An EIGE report found that within the STEM fields in the EU, "the most men-dominated fields of education are ICT and engineering on the one hand, and manufacturing and construction on the other, with women representing 11% and 16% of the respective educational cohorts".⁹⁶ It further noted that "[g]ender segregation is much stronger in vocational than in tertiary education in almost all EU countries. Overall, only 14 % of women in the EU graduate from STEM vocational education, whereas 31% graduate from STEM tertiary education".⁹⁷

A recent OECD study on the role of relative academic strength in determining the extent of the gender gap in STEM found that gender differences in academic performance in science were not significant. The study found rather that student selection was based more on the gendered differences in "relative performance". That is, "that girls were stronger in reading in all countries, while boys were stronger in mathematics in all countries, and in science," which led to their distinct choices.⁹⁸

Although women's rising STEM education levels is necessary for their equal participation in the future workforce, only a few countries reported significant female representation in these fields. Cyprus indicated a high concentration of women in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics. In Albania, women constitute the large majority (75-85%) of students in biology, environmental and energy and water resource engineering programmes. In contrast, almost all countries reported that fewer women than men complete university degrees in STEM fields. To provide one example, in Croatia, where women represent 19% of computer science and 25.7% of engineering graduates, there has been an increase in women and girls in STEM studies, but a decrease in women's employment in STEM fields.

Numerous countries reported initiatives to increase girls' and women's inclusion in STEM fields. Within the U.K., Wales is tackling gender stereotypes around STEM by training physics teachers in gender-inclusive teaching methods, funding specific computer-coding workshops to engage and motivate girls, and establishing a STEM

96 EIGE, Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, 2017, p. 5.

97 EIGE, Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, 2017, p. 5.

98 OECD, Why don't more girls choose STEM careers, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/why-dont-more-girls-choose-stem-careers.htm>. See also, UN Women dataset indicators on gender parity index for achievement in mathematics ratio for lower secondary education, identifying a one-to-one ration.

Cymru 2 programme that aims to encourage more young women to pursue engineering careers. In several countries, such as Liechtenstein, girls' engagement in STEM is being promoted in schools through public/private partnerships. In other countries, efforts are being driven by CSOs and donors. In Hungary, the Association of Hungarian Women in Science initiated the SMARTIZ programme in 2018 to expose under-privileged girls to STEM and IT and offers mentoring. In Romania, initiatives at the tertiary educational level to support women in STEM are engaged through outside donor support. In several countries, including Latvia, STEM initiatives are not gendered.

2.3. Social protection

Women's poverty derives from multiple factors, not only the absence of economic opportunities, but also the lack of access to: economic resources, education, support services and decision-making processes.⁹⁹ Consequently, poverty cannot be reduced through anti-poverty programmes alone, but requires changes in economic structures in order to ensure access for all women to resources, opportunities and public services. Spending on social infrastructure has a positive effect on addressing inequalities between women and men, with recognised economy-wide benefits.

Social protection policies do play an essential role in reducing poverty and increasing gender equality. When well-designed, social protection schemes have the potential to narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women's access to personal income and to provide critical support for families. The Beijing Platform for Action calls on States to "review, adopt and maintain macro-economic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty".¹⁰⁰ SDG Target 10.4 calls on States to "adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality".

At the same time, many social welfare systems "do not take sufficient account of the specific conditions of women living in poverty, and there is a tendency to scale back the services provided by such systems".¹⁰¹

99 Beijing Platform for Action, para 51.

100 Beijing Platform for Action, Strategic Objective A1.

101 Beijing Platform for Action, para 52.

2.3.1. Strengthening contributory social protection schemes: pensions

Social care investments were the primary means by which most countries in the region addressed gender in their national policies. Women's risk of poverty is particularly acute in old age, and for single mothers and mothers with numerous children. Older women also face greater obstacles to re-entry into the labour market. Workers in the informal sector, many of whom are women, have limited access to social protection. Notably, not all retired women are in receipt of pensions in numerous countries throughout the region.¹⁰² For example, in Malta and Spain, less than 50% of women received pensions. Those where less than 75% of women are in receipt include: Armenia, Ireland, Luxembourg and Iceland.¹⁰³

Given that "social security systems are based on the principle of continuous remunerated employment," which fails to accommodate the reality of women's lives in which work-force participation is often interrupted by caring obligations and the unbalanced distribution of unremunerated work.¹⁰⁴ Differences between women's and men's pensions are also generally attributed to the lower incomes earned by women due to horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, with women dominated sectors being less valued and remunerated. The pension gap is also due to wage discrimination based on sex, women's decisions to take leave and/or work part-time to manage family/work life, and the distinct retirement ages established for women and men. Taken together, these factors have a cumulative effect in significantly reducing women's pensions. According to EIGE, in the EU, women's pensions are on average 37% less than men's.¹⁰⁵ Given that women have longer life expectancies, low pensions result in increased risk of poverty for women.

Pension reform constitutes a social care investment strategy with a significant impact on women. Many countries enacted gender-neutral pension reform, while acknowledging the often disproportional benefit such reforms can have for women. Countries have taken a diversity of approaches to pension reform, including: equalizing the pension ages for men and women, increasing pension levels, the

102 Based on the latest data provided for each country, ranging from 2014-2019.

103 In Iceland and Armenia, the figures were comparable for men.

104 Beijing Platform for Action, para 52.

105 EIGE, Better work-life balance would shrink the gender pay gap, 2019, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/news/better-work-life-balance-would-shrink-gender-pay-gap>.

introduction of pension-sharing schemes, and enabling self-employed women to access pensions.

Equalization of the retirement age for men and women removes the longstanding inequality that was based on an outmoded rationale that women were dependent upon their husband's income. While many countries have equalized the age for retirement for men and women, several countries, such as Kazakhstan, Albania, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia, have established pension reform schemes that provide for scheduled extensions of women's retirement age, foreseeing parity in 8 or 9 years.¹⁰⁶ In Albania, women and men are set to have the same retirement age, 67, in 2056.

In the Czech Republic, an amendment to the Pension Insurance Act in 2018 increased base assessments and fostered quick valorisations for bottom-level pensions. In Austria, a Social Security Act amendment in 2017 also established a higher equalization supplement for pensions. In Slovenia, the "My work.My pension" project strives to address gender pension gap.

In order to respond to the pension gap, a few countries have taken a proactive gender-responsive approach. For example, Austria adopted a pension-splitting scheme in 2017, which enables women to build up their own independent retirement income. It allows partial credits to be transferred by a partner for up to seven years per child. In Croatia, in 2019, amendments to the Pension Insurance Act established a category of additional working years to supplement pensions for mothers for each biological and adopted child, in order to mitigate the pension gap.

In addition to pension splitting, some States further addressed the inequalities resulting from the treatment of partners by social protection criteria. In 2018, Austria also abolished a provision whereby a partner's income was credited to one's unemployment insurance. Prior to the amendment, the income of the partner influenced the calculation of one's unemployment assistance, its diminishment often increasing women's dependency upon their partners. The national report from Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that common-law spouses lack a right of survivorship over pensions.

¹⁰⁶ In Kazakhstan, the retirement age for women is currently 59 years, and set to become equal to men's (63 years) in 2027.

2.3.2. Non-contributory social protection

In light of the fact that women take on most of the informal long-term care, they benefit disproportionately from social protection measures that aid in reconciling care responsibilities and work. For example, some countries provide assistance to carers in order to compensate for their inability to engage in economic activity.

In Austria, persons who take care leave, or who work part-time and care for someone the rest of the time, have a legal right to a carer's allowance, to free health and pension insurance and to a supplement for dependent children. The care allowance also applies to hospice care. Belarus reduced the contributory period for socially vulnerable women who provide long-term care. In Spain, new lines of non-contributory support were created for caregivers of family members as of 2019. Hungary increased the "nursing fee" entitlement provided to long-term carers.

Several countries, such as Lithuania, provide a universal childcare benefit, tailored for multiple births and adoptions, and an education benefit, to offset the costs of raising and educating children and decrease the number of impoverished families. Social protection targeted to the poorest families is offered in most countries. However in many countries, such as Tajikistan, the amounts provided do not meet actual need.¹⁰⁷

Another important advance in gender-responsive social protection has been to develop specific support for survivors of diverse forms of gender-based violence. For example, in Albania, a law on social care passed in 2016 established a specific category including survivors of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking as eligible to receive social services.

Despite the contribution of migrant workers to the economies of their host and home countries, they often remain excluded from even basic coverage by social protection schemes, especially irregular and women migrant workers. Current human rights standards related to migrant workers and families,

¹⁰⁷ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, pp. 15-16, also noting that the Household Budget Survey used to measure poverty does not disaggregate data by the gender of household members, nor the gender of the head of household.



such as ILO and UN Conventions, have so far had little impact on this situation.

The absence of social protection systems is often cited as a key factor in decisions to migrate, regardless of the risk. Such distress migration fosters a supply of workers in precarious sectors, such as domestic and garment work. In destination countries, migrant women workers are often employed to fill gaps in social protection and services, where economic pressures and austerity measures have increased the unpaid care burden on women.

Moreover, migrant workers may come from countries with weak social security schemes. Women migrant workers often play a crucial role in compensating

for underfunded or the absence of public services, as their remittances are used to clothe, feed, house and educate their families. In countries where social protection measures exist, migrant workers risk losing entitlement to benefits due to their absence.

Thus, despite playing an outsized, transnational role in ensuring *de facto* social protection, migrant women workers are also among the least able to access services and protection. Host countries may not have established a basic social protection floor, or may impose restrictive conditions. Furthermore, contributions may not result any corresponding benefit, and their rights may not be portable.

DIMENSION 3:

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Violence against women constitutes a human rights violation and a serious impediment to women's equality in all areas of life, and to their ability to enjoy all other basic human rights. It is "one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men".¹⁰⁸ Violence against women takes many forms. Intimate partner violence can entail domestic abuse, sexual assault, psychological and economic abuse, coercion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and stalking. Other forms of violence include, *inter alia*: femicide, trafficking in persons, sexual harassment, violence committed via technology, female genital mutilation (FGM), and early, and child and forced marriage, forced

sterilization and abortion, and prenatal sex selection.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs both address the need to eliminate violence against women and girls, including human trafficking.¹⁰⁹ The Beijing Platform for Action contains several strategic objectives on combating violence against women, including the need to "take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women", and to "eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking".¹¹⁰ SDG Target 5.2 reiterates the need for States to "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including

¹⁰⁸ Beijing Platform for Action, para 117.

¹⁰⁹ Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objectives D1, D3; SDG Targets 5.2, 5.3, 16.2.

¹¹⁰ Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objectives D1 and D3, respectively.

trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation". SDG 16.2 applies this commitment to children. SDG 5.3 refers to eliminating "all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation". CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and the UN Essential Services Package all establish comprehensive standards for combating all forms of violence against women and ensuring survivor's access to protection and necessary services.

Combating violence against women and providing protection and services to survivors was a clear priority across most of the region, building on a long-standing commitment. Approximately 80% of the national reports listed the elimination of violence against women as a past during the reporting period.¹¹¹

The Istanbul Convention has not yet been ratified by 13 member States of the Council of Europe, mostly in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. National reports from several of these and other countries noted a growing resistance by conservative and religious groups to signing onto the Istanbul Convention, and to the "gender ideology" that it represents to them. Despite having not signed the Convention for political reasons, several countries have engaged in legislative and policy reform in order to align national law and practice with the Convention. The Convention has been less of a driving force outside of the Council of Europe member States, namely in Central Asia. However, it is open to signature and ratification by any country.

The Regional Review Meeting emphasised the importance of taking a holistic approach to combating violence against women by drawing on the synergies between all international commitments in this field, including CEDAW and its General Recommendations No. 19, 35, 30 and 33,¹¹² the ECtHR's and CEDAW's robust jurisprudence in this field, the new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment and the recommendations issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

¹¹¹ Andorra, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

¹¹² Addressing violence against women, women, peace and security and women's access to justice, respectively.

priority; 74% listed it as a future priority. Of the forms of violence targeted, 66% of the countries addressed intimate partner and domestic violence; 43% focused on human trafficking. Less attention was paid to femicide (14%) and FGM (20%).

Thus, the momentum in this field was sustained and grew over the last five years, with significant advances on a range of issues. Recent efforts, in part, reflect the significant impetus generated by the Istanbul Convention, the signature and ratification of which has driven many states' commitment. Opened for signature in 2011, 27 of the Council of Europe member States, a majority, ratified the Istanbul Convention

Most countries' efforts in combating gender-based violence were focused on two forms of violence against women, namely: domestic and intimate partner violence and human trafficking. While several countries enacted domestic and intimate partner violence legislation and ensured its penalization during the reporting period, a few countries revised legislation to more precisely capture the nature of the violence. Specific advances were also made in criminalizing other forms of violence against women, including harmful practices, as well as in developing tailored responses to address the needs of survivors. Other important achievements within the scope of the justice system included the creation of protection and emergency barring orders and the criminalization of their violation.

Despite advances and the priority placed on the issue by States, however, violence against women and girls remains far from being fully addressed. Rather, it is persistent and systemic, normalized and tolerated. Prevalence rates remain quite high in many countries in the region, particularly considering that it is an under-reported phenomenon. In the Western Balkan sub-region, the prevalence of GBV and femicide are often linked to the traumatic conflict and continue to be fueled by the migrant crisis from Syria.

3.1. Criminal frameworks and national policies

Comprehensive criminal and civil legislation is generally necessary for ensuring that the full range of measures is available for combating and preventing all forms of violence. A clear trend was discernible in

countries' efforts to align their laws and policies to the types and the nature of the harms addressed by the Istanbul Convention.

3.1.1. Domestic and intimate partner violence

Several countries adopted new legislation to combat domestic and intimate partner violence during the last five years, including: Andorra, Armenia, North Macedonia, Croatia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Ukraine, where domestic violence was also criminalized.

At the same time, a few countries made efforts to harmonize their laws and policies with the nature of violence addressed by the Istanbul Convention. For example, Georgia, Malta and Romania expanded their domestic violence laws to encompass the broader concepts of violence against women and gender-based violence. The U.K. passed legislative amendments that captured the nature of intimate partner and domestic violence by criminalizing “controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or family relationships”. Some countries, such as Sweden, Italy, Finland, Norway and Denmark have captured the nature of the violence in the titles of their national policies, such as Denmark's National Action Plan on Physical and Psychological Violence in Close Relations, 2019-2022.

In contrast, the gendered nature of the violence is not captured either in the names of national policies, nor in the content of national legislation in several countries throughout the region, particularly in the EECCA sub-regions. These countries have not yet engendered domestic violence legislation. Their laws contain gender-neutral definitions of violence within the family, and as such do not extend protection to non-cohabitating and/or intimate partners, nor address stalking. For example, the legal framework in Tajikistan contains no legal definition of gender-based violence, and family violence constitutes only an administrative offence. Furthermore, the Law on Prevention of Family Violence does not cover second or third wives, nor intimate partners.¹¹³

Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation decriminalized the offences commonly invoked in domestic violence cases, reducing them to administrative offences. Kazakhstan

decriminalized battery and intentional infliction of minor bodily injury, diminishing the consequences for perpetrators, as the Code of Administrative Violations foresees up to a maximum of 24-hour detention. Russia's current legal framework for combating violence against women was recently found in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) by the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Volodina v. Russia*.¹¹⁴ A few countries have no dedicated legislation on domestic violence or other forms of violence against women, including: Azerbaijan, Liechtenstein, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus.

A concerted effort is required to ensure that the application of international standards and national laws are implemented in an effective and meaningful way. In 2016, Portugal adopted a targeted strategy that aims to localize domestic violence policies. In Sweden, countries have to disseminate the national EAW strategy and develop their own localized action plans.

At the same time, patriarchal social norms, discriminatory gender roles, tolerance of violence against women and girls and victim-blaming attitudes, including by front-line responders and the courts, remain widespread and impede effective protection and access to justice for survivors. Moreover, national reports from the EECCA sub-regions revealed that the cultural primacy of the family leads to a focus on mediation and reconciliation of “disputes”, rather than placing an emphasis on the safety and well-being of women and children.

3.1.2. Combating human trafficking

Human trafficking is defined as the movement, harbouring or transporting of people for the purpose of exploitation through diverse means, such as force, fraud, coercion, or deception. The CEDAW Committee has categorized it as a form of violence against women.¹¹⁵ Although human trafficking affects men, women, girls and boys, women and girls are disproportionately represented among its survivors. Global data for 2016 indicates that women comprise 49% of trafficking survivors (men comprise 21%), and girls 23% (boys 7%). UNODC indicates that 71% of the women and girls trafficked globally is for the purpose of sexual exploitation.¹¹⁶ For the region, women comprised between 49 to 52% of survivors, and of

¹¹³ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan “From Equality de jure to Equality de facto” on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 48.

¹¹⁴ Application No. 41261/17, 9 July 2019.

¹¹⁵ CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 19, para 13.

¹¹⁶ UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2018, p. 10.

the persons trafficked for sexual exploitation, women comprised between 65 to 72%.¹¹⁷ Although most human trafficking occurs intra-regionally, transnational flows move primarily from Eastern Europe and Central Asia into the rest of Europe.

The majority of identified trafficking victims are women and children that come from poor countries, regions or communities, reflecting structural economic and social inequalities. Women and girls tend to experience distinct forms of trafficking based on their gender and their age, such as trafficking for sexual exploitation, marriage and domestic servitude. Trafficking for the purpose of domestic servitude is fueled by the demand generated by an increasingly aged population, as well as increased numbers of working mothers and single parents in need of childcare. Where violence against women and girls remains normalized, exploitation through the use of violence may not be recognized as trafficking in human beings. Cultural norms can also mask human trafficking such as in the practice of early and child marriage.

Longstanding efforts to combat human trafficking in the region were prompted by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), which entered into force in 2003, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CoE Trafficking Convention), which entered into force in 2008.

Most countries have updated national policies on human trafficking, as well as legislation harmonized with the Palermo Protocol. Andorra adopted its first piece of legislation to combat human trafficking in 2017. Liechtenstein ratified the CoE Trafficking Convention in 2016. Armenia passed a Law on Identification and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking and Exploitation in 2014. Belarus established a national referral mechanism in 2015, providing free assistance to survivors of human trafficking.

However, in many countries in the region, front-line actors fail to adopt a gender-sensitive, victim-centred approach to combating human trafficking. Not all countries ensure that foreign national survivors are provided with a reflection period and services prior to deportation, which renders them vulnerable to re-trafficking. Law enforcement often conflate sex

work with human trafficking, thus violating sexual self-determination. Conversely, they fail to recognize trafficking survivors who are engaged in prostitution due to stereotypical notions of the ideal victim. In countries where sex work remains criminalised, this results in the arrest and prosecution of survivors of human trafficking. Furthermore, female victims trafficked for other purposes, such as labour exploitation or forced marriage, are not identified.

3.1.3. Criminalization of all forms of violence against women

In many countries within the region, efforts to combat violence against women were focused on, and limited to, domestic violence and human trafficking. At the same time, significant progress and achievements were made in criminalizing all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including: stalking, FGM and early, child and forced marriage. Estonia, Georgia, Serbia and Spain criminalized all three. Norway and Slovenia criminalized stalking and forced marriage; and, Montenegro stalking; Austria, Malta and Ukraine, forced marriage; and, the U.K. and Malta, performing or arranging FGM overseas. Many of these legal reforms were recent, and the extent of actual implementation to date remains unknown.

Importantly, a few countries, including Germany, Sweden, Iceland and Ukraine, amended the definition of rape within their criminal legislation to turn on the constituent element of consent, as set forth in the Istanbul Convention. The State Criminal Code in Bosnia and Herzegovina was amended to remove use of force from definition of rape as a crime against humanity in 2015. In contravention of the Istanbul Convention, in most countries in the region, rape is still defined by the threat or use of force.

Several other advances were made within the criminal justice framework. Belgium, France and Serbia criminalized sexual harassment, including in public places. In Spain and Georgia, gender was added to the list of bias motivations for hate crimes. Liechtenstein added gender as a grounds for discrimination to its criminal code.

Although the commission of femicide remains a serious issue, particularly in the EECCA regions, it is not separately criminalized in most countries. Turkey established a working group on femicide. In Georgia, the Public Defender's Office formally monitors such crimes. A few countries, such as Romania, have removed from

¹¹⁷ UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2018, pp. 51, 52, 56, 57, 60, 61.

their criminal codes honor as a justification or mitigating circumstance in line with Istanbul Convention standards.

A few countries, including Latvia, Georgia, Armenia and Switzerland, have amended legislation to ensure that cases involving violence against women are prosecuted *ex officio*. Georgia and Armenia established specialized units within police, prosecutorial offices to address sexual and gender-based crimes and protocols to ensure best practice in the rights protection of victims in investigations and judicial proceedings. A significant setback was revealed in the U.K. on the reduction of police referrals, prosecution declination rates and a reduction in the number of convictions for rape cases. In 2017-18 police referrals fell by 9.1%, prosecutions fell by 13% and convictions fell by 11.9%.

Austria and Germany criminalized violations of the right to sexual self-determination. In 2017, Germany passed the Prostitution Protection Act, ensuring protection, sexual self-determination and improved working conditions for sex workers.

At the same time, the criminalization in some countries of consensual sexual conduct, including adultery, sex work and same-sex relations, drug use, HIV exposure and transmission and abortion can have a significant impact on gender equality and access to health. Criminal laws governing sexual conduct, reproduction and drug use are often based on moral or religious beliefs, both grounded in and reinforcing existing stereotypes, including gender stereotypes.¹¹⁸ Human rights bodies as well as international, regional and national courts have expressed concerns about the impact of such criminal laws on the enjoyment of human rights, including on gender equality and the right to health.¹¹⁹ An examination of the national reports reveals the continued existence of criminal provisions in the region with significant implications for gender equality and women's ability to exercise their human rights. In Liechtenstein, prostitution is criminalized, which often prevents sex workers from reporting incidents of exploitation and abuse. Abortion remains criminalized in Liechtenstein and Andorra. National reports described

¹¹⁸ Birga et. al, Criminal law and the risk of harm: a commentary on the impact of criminal laws on sexual and reproductive health, sexual conduct and key populations, *Reproductive Health Matters* 2018;26(52), p. 1.

¹¹⁹ For a list of relevant decisions, see, Birga et. al, Criminal law and the risk of harm: a commentary on the impact of criminal laws on sexual and reproductive health, sexual conduct and key populations, *Reproductive Health Matters* 2018;26(52), fn. 1-15, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09688080.2018.1543991>.

violence against sex workers perpetrated by police in Central Asia. Currently, no legal provisions criminalize torture committed by non-State actors.

3.1.3.1. Violence perpetrated through the use of technology

One of the areas where the digital transformation yields worse outcomes for women and girls than for men and boys is exposure to cyber-bullying. According to an OECD report, for countries with available data, an average of 12% of girls aged 15 report having been cyber-bullied, compared to 8% for boys. It notes that cyber-bullying is particularly prevalent in a number of Eastern European countries, as well as in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Girls report being targeted through digital media more often than boys in all OECD countries from the region except Denmark and Spain. This form of violence entails health repercussions, as there are documented links between cyber-bullying and mental health problems.¹²⁰

Given the rise in, and recognition of, violence against women through technology, several countries took steps to criminalize such forms of violence. For example, Scotland adopted the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act in 2016, creating the offence of sharing private intimate images without consent with a maximum penalty of 5 years. In 2015, the UK established custodial sentences for up to two years for revenge pornography. In 2019, the Voyeurism (Offences) Act was passed in the U.K., criminalizing upskirting, defined as making unauthorized photographs under a woman's skirt or man's kilt, capturing an image of the crotch area, underwear, and sometimes genitalia. Spain criminalized "sexting," and online child grooming. Austria criminalized cyber-bullying. Sweden and France criminalized revenge porn and the dissemination of sensitive images.

Digital forms of violence were also targeted in national-level strategy documents on violence against women in several countries, such as the Czech Republic and Denmark. The U.K. established a Revenge Porn Helpline in 2015, which has received 15,000 calls. Other countries have engaged in awareness raising on this issue. For example, in Norway, the police have developed an awareness-raising programme, *Shareable?*, for adolescents ages

¹²⁰ OECD, Girls are more exposed than boys to cyberbullying, relying on 2014 data, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/girls-are-more-exposed-than-boys-to-cyberbullying.htm>.

13-16 on sharing sexually explicit images and content. The Violence Prevention Commission in Liechtenstein launched a campaign against cyber-bullying called “Respectfully Together”.

However, in numerous countries, efforts to tackle violence committed on-line contained no gender perspective. Moreover, combating violence against women perpetrated through technology poses a distinct challenge for those countries in the region that have yet to criminalise this form of violence, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in those countries where evidence of technological communications remains inadmissible in court, such as Armenia. The sub-regional consultation process, the Western Balkan and Turkey region noted an increase of hate messages on social media that incites violence against women in political and other leadership positions, as well as against feminist and LGBTQI organisations. Despite new media laws in some countries, the enforcement against anti-gender and anti-feminist messaging remains difficult, and impunity prevails.¹²¹

3.1.4. National strategies and policies on combating violence against women

Most countries in the region have adopted national strategies and policy documents on combating and preventing violence against women. The first national strategies to combat domestic violence were adopted in Moldova and Malta in 2018 and 2017, respectively. Other policy advances include Albania’s national strategy for the control of small arms and light weapons, which addresses the use of firearms in domestic violence situations.¹²²

A few countries, including Finland, Sweden and Spain, among others, noted in their national reports that they provide meaningful funding to CSOs to provide services and shelters to GBV survivors. Both survivor and CSO involvement in the development of strategies and action plans can be crucial to their success. However, the lack of state financing and political will for addressing this issue was apparent in some country reports, in which efforts to address violence against women were almost entirely donor-funded and project-based.

121 Held in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

122 Sweden has also advocated in international fora on the importance of making a link between gender-based violence and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons.

Specific attention should be paid in policy development to the need for sensitivity to, and tailored services for, the needs of vulnerable categories of women, such as women with disabilities, as well as women from ethnic minorities, LGBTI, sex workers, transgender and women living with HIV and women in detention, among others. National policies and action plans must also take into account intersection of violence and discrimination. In Central Asia, a specific focus has been given to violence against women and girls with disabilities and violence against older women.

The potential role of the private sector should also be considered in addressing violence against women, as it is bad for employees and thus bad for business. The ILO Convention No190 on Violence and Harassment makes an explicit link to the private sector employers as a critical stakeholder.

3.2. Harmful practices

3.2.1. Early and forced marriage

Child marriage frequently results in the end of a girl’s education, limiting her economic and livelihood choices. Early sexual activity and pregnancy can have a deleterious health impact, and girls experience increased complications in pregnancy and childbirth. Girls who marry in childhood are also at greater risk for intimate partner violence than girls of the same age who marry later. Child marital arrangements tend to involve assuming large burdens of household labour and having little or no control over their own bodies. Forced marriage can also lead to honor killings.

By virtue of their age, child spouses are considered to be incapable of giving full consent. The right of girls to be protected from child marriage is upheld in various international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and CEDAW, both of which call for countries to legislate a minimum marriage age of 18.

Child marriage continues to be practiced in the EECA sub-regions. For example, although the legal age for marriage is 18 years old in Tajikistan, courts can order

dispensations and most contain no legal reasoning.¹²³ Furthermore, there is an absence of reliable data as official statistics only record registered marriages, and the majority of child marriages are unregistered. UNFPA reports that the rates of officially registered marriages involving girls aged 15-19 were highest in Albania (27.2%), Turkey (23%), and Kyrgyzstan (19.1%).¹²⁴

As described in the national reports, early and child marriage tends to affect girls within ethnic minorities, in rural areas and of poorer economic status. UNFPA confirms that “[a]mong certain minority groups, principally Roma in South East Europe and Ukraine, rates of child marriage are known to be much higher than among the general population”.¹²⁵ It further noted “considerable variation in rates of child marriage within countries, but that overall, girls living in rural areas and in lower wealth quintiles were more likely to be married before their 18th birthday”.¹²⁶ Lesbian and bi-sexual women have also been victim of forced marriage in some countries within the region, including Georgia.¹²⁷

Legislative and policy reform across the region sought to address the issue of early, child and forced marriage. Within the EU, efforts to address child and forced marriage appear to be driven by migrant flows during the period, as well as by practices within existing minority communities. For example, several countries within the EU, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden, revised legislation to abolish any dispensations for the marriage of minors. In Sweden, legislative amendments also preclude recognition of foreign child marriages. As an outlier on this issue, Spain raised the legal age of marriage to 16 in 2015. As noted above, several countries across the region criminalized early, child and forced marriage, largely in order to harmonize their national frameworks with the Istanbul Convention.

123 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan “From Equality de jure to Equality de facto” on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 41, noting that parents also marry their daughters according to the nikokh religious custom without registering the marriage.

124 UNFPA, Child marriage in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Regional overview, 2014, p. 2, available at: <https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Child%20Marriage%20EECA%20Regional%20Overview.pdf>.

125 UNFPA, Child marriage in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Regional overview, 2014, p. 2, noting that among Roma in Serbia, 44% of girls aged 15-19 were married or in a union, of whom 14% had married before the age of 15.

126 UNFPA, Child marriage in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Regional overview, 2014, p. 2.

127 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 15.

At the same time, early, child and forced marriage continue to be practiced in Central Asia, South Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Caucasus. The national reports from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example, describe early, child and forced marriages as taking the forms of unregistered religious marriages, bride kidnappings and polygamous marriages. Child marriage was also reported to be common in Georgia. In response, Kyrgyzstan enacted a Law on the Prohibition of Religious Marriage Ceremonies with Minors in 2016, and conducted an awareness campaign to address an increase in bride kidnappings. Turkey adopted an Action Plan on Combating Early and Forced Marriages 2019-2023. Georgia has developed an inter-agency working group to address both child marriage and FGM.

3.2.2. Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM violates women’s and girls’ rights to sexual and reproductive health, physical integrity, non-discrimination and freedom from cruel or degrading treatment. It leads to long-term physical, psychological and social consequences. Given the inherent safety issues involved, it can be considered a violation of medical ethics.

Several countries in the region indicated in their national reports that FGM was not an issue. Yet, it remains important to ensure that effective legislation is in place, and healthcare providers, among others, can engage in protection and specialized care in their work with migrant populations and minority groups, where it might be practiced. For example, during the reporting period, the U.K. criminalized performing or arranging FGM overseas, increased the sentence for FGM from 5 to 14 years, permitted lifelong anonymity for survivors, and, established an FGM and a forced marriage protection order. It ran a campaign targeting affected communities, in order to change attitudes and increase knowledge about the practice, including long-term health implications and the fact that it is a crime. It also established an FGM-specific hotline. After FGM was criminalized in 2015, 2019 marked the first conviction.

3.2.3. Honor-related violence

Honor-related violence is often pre-planned, and covers a range of punishments: coercion, physical violence, killing, isolation and control. Forced marriage

can often lead to honor crimes and honor killings. Some girls try to leave marriage later, suffering violence and even killing after they have left. Perpetrators include intimate partners, family members, and members of the wider community.

Triggers for honor crimes include: extra-marital relationships, refusing marriage, dressing “inappropriately,” wearing make up, not wearing a hijab, homosexuality and relations with “unapproved” persons, among others etc. Survivors are confined to their homes, and have no money. Their access to the phone, the Internet and friends is limited. They may have an insecure immigration status, or face language barriers in contacting police, or they simply do not know how to contact police.

Honor-related violence is commonly seen as a family matter, outside of the state’s remit. Survivors are often too traumatized to describe what happened. They often experience poor mental health, may inflict self-harm and suffer financial loss. They will never be accepted back if they leave. Some commit suicide; others are killed.

In addition to revised legislation, several countries within the EU have developed specific policy documents on addressing customary forms of violence. Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands adopted action plans on honor-related conflicts, social control and harmful practices. For example, Denmark adopted a National Action Plan for the prevention of honor-related conflicts and social control in 2016, which established a task force to advise local governments on the prevention of honor-related conflicts, such as forced marriage. It also created a team of security consultants to advise in specific cases regarding the right to assistance and the performance of risk assessments. Other harmful practices and honor-based forms of violence include the incitement to commit suicide, which persists in the Eastern part of the region and is criminalized in many countries.

The sub-regional consultation for Central Asia observed that strict patriarchal social norms prevent the continuing education of girls after the ninth grade, support the practice of early marriage and limit the rights of women and girls to make decisions about their lives, professions, economic independence and freedom from violence.¹²⁸ Practices that restrict the mobility of women and girls have become increasingly common in recent years. Girls are not permitted to leave their homes or villages on their

¹²⁸ Held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019.

own, as events outside the home are considered a threat to preserving the honour of girls, and the use of new information technologies has been restricted.

3.3. Multi-sectoral services and protection orders

3.3.1. Protection and emergency barring orders

The due diligence standard in international human rights law requires States to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparations for human rights violations, including all forms of gender-based violence.¹²⁹ This entails ensuring protection measures to prevent the perpetration of additional violence. Pursuant to the Istanbul Convention, States must enact:

legislative or other measures to ensure that the competent authorities are granted the power to order, in situations of immediate danger, a perpetrator of domestic violence to vacate the residence of the victim or person at risk for a sufficient period of time and to prohibit the perpetrator from entering the residence of or contacting the victim or person at risk. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall give priority to the safety of victims or persons at risk.¹³⁰

The Istanbul Convention foresees the application of both emergency barring orders (EBOs) and longer-term protection orders to be issued by a court and/or law enforcement authorities. EBOs are to be imposed for “a sufficient period of time,” which generally ranges from 10 days to 4 weeks.

Several countries, such as Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Romania, established protection measures for survivors during the reporting period, some as part of their recently adopted or amended domestic violence legislation. Others extended existing protection orders, such as by widening the scope of persons entitled to seek protection. For example, in 2018, Albania extended emergency protection orders to survivors of intimate partner violence, and established a registry for such orders. Azerbaijan introduced long-term protection orders into the Civil Procedure Code. Denmark created specialized temporary restraining

¹²⁹ See also, CEDAW General Recommendation 28.

¹³⁰ Article 52, Istanbul Convention.

orders for stalking, and the U.K. established FGM and forced marriage protection orders. Lithuania has not yet established protection orders.

Yet, ensuring the effective implementation of protection measures has been and remains a challenge for many countries, those in both the initial and more advanced stages of developing systematized forms of protection for survivors of intimate partner and domestic violence. GREVIO has observed that the implementation of protection orders is not effectively monitored, and only a few countries have employed the electronic monitoring of perpetrators.

GREVIO has further expressed concern about exceptions to protection orders being carved out in cases where parents have joint custody, with potentially fatal consequences for both the survivors and the children. CSOs have also identified the use of “parental alienation syndrome” in domestic violence proceedings as a way to force contact between children (and the survivor) with the perpetrator, with often dire consequences.¹³¹

Increased capacity building for both law enforcement and service providers is needed related to the application of international standards, namely on applying a survivors-centred, human rights-based, gender-sensitive approach. As explained by the Council of Europe, the concept of emergency barring orders requires a “paradigm shift”.

Rather than asking victims to seek a place of safety from violence. It shifts that burden to the perpetrator, who is ordered to leave the residence of the victim or person at risk and not to contact her or him.¹³²

In this regard, the perpetrator’s temporary inability to access his/her right to property and private and family life cannot supersede the survivor’s right to life, and the right to physical and mental integrity.¹³³ The priority is to be placed on the survivor’s safety and that of his/her children.

A few national reports revealed policies and practices

¹³¹ Queen Mary University of London School of Law and Women’s Aid, “What about my right not to be abused?” Domestic abuse, human rights and the family courts, 2018, pp 32-36.

¹³² Council of Europe, Emergency Barring Orders in Situations of Domestic Violence: Article 52 of the Istanbul Convention, 2017, p. 43.

¹³³ See, Gökce and Yildirim v. Austria, CEDAW, 2005, (stating that “the perpetrator’s rights cannot supercede women’s human rights to life and physical and mental integrity”).

that emphasize the rights of the perpetrator. In some countries, police decline to remove the perpetrator from joint dwellings even after a protection order has been issued. In Kazakhstan, protection orders are only available for a maximum of 30 days, without any longer-term option, and removal of perpetrators from the home depends upon whether they have access to another accommodation and not the safety needs of the survivor. Similar issues have arisen in other countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine. An over-emphasis on the rights of the perpetrator within legislative frameworks and protocols can serve as an obstacle to effective protection.

Several countries also adopted protocols to guide implementation, such as through the application of risk assessments and establishing sanctions for non-compliance. Risk assessment protocols, were introduced in several countries, including Georgia, Armenia, Albania and Andorra, during the reporting period. Risk assessment protocols function not only as a life-saving tool, but also as a means of ensuring the efficient and effective use of limited resources by distinguishing between levels of risk. Finland conducts multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and has increased the number of MARAC working groups. However, risk assessments are not yet standard practice throughout the region.

The effective implementation of risk assessment protocols by law enforcement officers has constituted a significant challenge in many countries, as was noted in the national reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Andorra. Furthermore, not all countries have yet adopted risk assessment protocols for domestic violence cases. For example, risk assessments have not yet been integrated in police response or the process for issuing emergency barring or protection orders in Albania.¹³⁴ Several States have not yet criminalized the violation of a protection order.

3.3.2. Multi-sectoral services

The UN Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence¹³⁵ (ESP) guide standards for the provision of a coordinated set of essential and quality multi-sectoral services for all women and girls who have

¹³⁴ GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Report: Albania, 2017, para 181.

¹³⁵ A joint initiative between UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC.

experienced gender-based violence. The ESP identifies the essential services to be provided by the health, social services, police and justice sectors, and establishes guidelines for delivering the core elements of each service. It also establishes guidelines for governing the coordination mechanism for service delivery.

Important advances were made throughout the region, but particularly in the EECCA sub-regions, in expanding the scope and quality of services available to survivors of gender-based violence, including in countries without an established legal framework for combating domestic violence. In some countries, services are now provided free of charge to survivors of gender-based violence, including legal aid, health care and social welfare assistance. Others have developed standards for service provision and cooperation, as well as referral mechanisms between service providers. Numerous initiatives were identified in the national reports related to building the capacity of service providers, both governmental and non-governmental.

Several countries, including Albania, Belgium, Hungary and Kyrgyzstan established sexual violence crisis centers. Yet, crisis centers offering specialised services for survivors of sexual violence remain lacking in several countries, and their geographical distribution is limited. For example, they exist in only 9 of Spain's 17 autonomous communities.¹³⁶ A temporary shelter was established for domestic violence survivors in Belarus, but none yet exists in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, service provision is challenged by: inadequate and short-term funding, a limited scope of services, facilities in poor physical condition and the lack of professionally trained staff.¹³⁷

The provision of psycho-social and rehabilitation assistance should be strengthened as an essential component of enabling women to escape violence permanently and to rebuild their lives. CSOs underscored insufficient financial support by states in this regard. The absence of financial assistance and long-term housing also constitute barriers for women to leave abusive situations.¹³⁸

Several countries throughout the region, including

Andorra, Albania, Ukraine¹³⁹ and Hungary, established 24/7 hotlines. However, in Andorra, professionalized response and referrals are only available during standard working hours. The U.K. established a revenge porn helpline in 2015, which has received 15,000 calls. In Germany, hotline response is available in 18 languages. France adopted a 24/7 hotline targeted specifically to violence and harassment on public transport.

Taking a significant step to increase reporting and protection, Georgia carved out an exception to doctor-patient confidentiality for cases of imminent repeated violence. Belgium lifted medical confidentiality in cases of honor-related and customary forms of violence.

A few countries within the EU have developed specialized services for diverse survivors, taking into account their specific needs and vulnerabilities. For example, Portugal developed specialized services for LGBTIQ, women with disabilities and sexual violence survivors. Austria provides specialized counseling for survivors with disabilities, and Denmark provides specialized counseling for stalking survivors. Iceland established a family justice center for survivors of violence that offers integrated service provision in one location, including for diverse vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, migrants and the elderly. Lithuania translated a domestic violence brochure into diverse languages to ensure information provision to migrant women. Although their specific needs are addressed in some countries, LGBTI women are not guaranteed the same rights to protection and services by law and in practice in many countries, such as Spain and Georgia.¹⁴⁰

Despite these advances, services remain inadequate in many countries in the region, both in scope and in quality. Ineffective response and services of poor quality serve to further victimize survivors, resulting in secondary rights violations. State funding for such services remains insufficient, and is often provided in the form of one-off grants to CSOs, which compromise the sustainability of services. In several countries, funding for CSOs has also been limited in the context of increased restrictions on

136 Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer "Beijing+25", p. 5.

137 Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 48.

138 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 13.

139 In Ukraine the hotline is currently managed by a civil society organization La Strada International (formally the International La Strada Association) with financing from international organizations and other donors. The negotiations are being conducted on the national hotline.

140 NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 14, noting that LGBTI persons decline to report violence due to their fear of coming out and secondary victimisation.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

civil society generally, as well as in concerted opposition to women's rights, with consequent impact on the availability of services for GBV survivors.

At the Regional Review Meeting, the importance of cooperating with CSOs in service provision was reiterated. In most countries, CSO began providing services for survivors of violence against women prior to state involvement, and they are often foremost experts in the field. Without CSO's efforts, the celebrated advances would not have occurred. For states serious about combating violence, CSOs must be given the tools and the resources to continue their work on a permanent basis.

Participants at the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, conducted on 29-30 October 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, underscored how the discourse of «gender neutrality» has also had a negative effect on women's NGOs, as grants are awarded to large organizations that take a gender-neutral approach, despite the fact that women are disproportionately affected by violence. Finally, in some countries in the region, combating violence against women in perceived as part of a foreign agenda.

3.4. Violence prevention

Violence against women and girls is rooted in gender-based discrimination, social norms and gender stereotypes. While effective protection and response is required to address both imminent and ongoing violence, prevention of violence is the best and most cost-effective policy for tackling the phenomenon, especially targeting children and youth.

Over 90% of the responses to the question in the Guidance Note on violence prevention indicated conducting public awareness campaigns and changing attitudes and behaviours; 45% indicated perpetrator programmes; and, 41% working in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education.

3.4.1. Public awareness campaigns

Many of the public awareness campaigns mentioned in the national reports referred to the UN-led global campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence and HeForShe. At the same time, in many countries national authorities engaged in country-specific prevention campaigns to address diverse forms

of violence. For example, Azerbaijan engaged in a three-year awareness campaign *Say NO to early marriage for a healthy life*, 2014-2017. The Netherlands and Slovakia led campaigns focused on sexual violence, *If it happened to you*, and *Because I say no*, respectively. Kyrgyzstan conducted an awareness campaign to address an increase in bride kidnappings. The Netherlands also engaged in an awareness campaign on *Marrying against your will*. In 2018, Iceland adopted what will be an annual campaign both as an underlying root cause and as a barrier to effective response. Ensuring the involvement of men and boys and tackling harmful masculinities constitute an important strategy in this regard, one that was mentioned by only a few countries, such as Iceland and Sweden.

3.4.2. Perpetrator programmes

In order to respond to individual perpetrators who use physical, psychological, economic or sexual violence against women, Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention requires States parties to set up or to support two separate types of programmes: those targeting domestic violence perpetrators to teach them “to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns,” and others for sex offenders. Both must ensure that “the safety of, support for and the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programmes are set up and implemented in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims”.

Several countries established perpetrator programmes during the reporting period, including Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. In a few countries, perpetrator programmes were developed prior to services for survivors and emphasis has reportedly been placed on working with the perpetrator over working with the survivor in contrast to the required survivor-centred approach.

3.5. Gender-based violence in schools

Girls across the region face diverse forms of gender-based violence at school, including: verbal or sexual harassment, sexual violence, corporal punishment, stalking, cyber-harassment and bullying. Gender-based violence at school can have a significantly

targeting intimate partner violence among youth, called *Crazy Love*, that stresses the importance of boundaries and consent, but also covers other topics, such as: sex, pornography, gender equality, abusive behaviour and how to seek help.

The need to transform social norms and gendered stereotypes, including victim-blaming, constitutes an essential element of combating violence against women, negative impact on girls’ education. It can result in increased absenteeism, poor performance, school dropout, low self-esteem, depression, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

At the same time, schools are an important venue for raising awareness about violence against women. There is an ongoing need to teach adolescents about consent, healthy relationships and the impact of negative gender stereotypes.

Advances have been made in addressing gender-based violence in schools, including sexual harassment and cyber-bullying. One positive example is the UK, where the statutory safeguarding guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, was revised in 2018 to include a new section on child-on-child sexual violence and harassment. Other efforts include the issuance of manuals on gender-based and digital violence in schools by the Serbian Ministry of Education. Andorra provided school workshops on cyber-bullying and LGBTIQ. Albania has gender equality coordinators within schools to address issues of harassment. In Latvia, violence prevention and awareness-raising activities on bullying in schools are led by school inspectors.

Specific policy documents were also developed on violence in schools. In this regard, Austria adopted a *National Strategy for Violence Prevention in Schools 2014-2016*, targeting sexual violence and cyber-bullying. In Georgia, the Gender Equality Law applies to schools, and a complaint mechanism for discrimination has been established, but without a clear definition of discrimination, such as whether it includes sexual harassment.

Yet, violence prevention curricula has not been introduced in schools at all levels across much of the region, especially in the Eastern part. Several national reports, including Romania’s and Lithuania’s, described diverse initiatives to address the dangers ICT can pose for children, and violence in schools, without any

reference to a gender perspective or to the issues that primarily affect girls. This signals a need to ensure gender mainstreaming into such efforts.

3.6. National and local coordination mechanisms and data collection

3.6.1. National and local coordination mechanisms

Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention and international best practice require States to establish one or more official bodies responsible for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies to combat violence against women. At the same time, The ESP also elaborates guidelines for inter-agency coordination and the governance of such coordination.

Effective national coordination should function not only between the relevant ministries, bodies, CSOs and other stakeholders at the national level, but also between local service providers, and at the intermediate (provincial, regional or entity) level. Significantly, cooperation and coordination must also occur between the levels. That is to say, both horizontal and vertical collaboration are necessary.

Several countries, such as Georgia, Malta and Andorra, established a national coordination mechanism in line with Article 10 of the Convention during the reporting period. Georgia's exemplary advances in strengthening its institutional framework include the establishment of an Inter-agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence within the executive, in addition to the creation of gender equality focal points within national institutions and in local government. Several countries strengthened sub-national level coordination. In Albania, local gender equality focal points coordinate local referral mechanisms and collect data on cases. Ukraine established mobile teams to respond to incidents involving domestic violence.

National reports also revealed positive examples of the use of national human rights institutions in combating diverse forms of gender-based violence. For example, Georgia's Public Defender's Office assumed responsibility for monitoring femicide in Georgia, the second NHRI in the world to do so. Other NHRI's have issued special or investigative reports on diverse issues related to violence against women. National gender mechanisms, such as the Gender Equality Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have also supported

coordination efforts at the national and local levels, have granted financial support to services providers and have lobbied international donors for the same.

However, at the Regional Review Meeting it was noted that the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) monitoring has revealed that national coordination bodies are given inadequate resources and authority to undertake their functions effectively.

Good governance requires adequate human and financial resources to be allocated to inter-agency coordination at the local level, including support for the work of CSOs. As duty bearers, States are responsible for ensuring the provision of services. In many countries, this role has often been assumed by NGOs in the face of government non-action. States' growing assumption of the provision of free services, as well as their provision of funding to CSOs and NGOs providing services in this domain constitutes an indicator of advancement. Countries that have begun to do so during the reporting period include Liechtenstein, Kazakhstan and Albania.

An important replicable advance with respect to the funding of services to survivors includes an Act on Victim Surcharge, passed in Finland in 2016, which channels charges from offenders to survivor support organizations thereby sustaining financial support for needed services. In Finland, the State thus funds both the hotline and CSO service providers.

Pursuant to Article 10, national coordination bodies must also ensure monitoring and evaluation of national laws and policies. This can be performed by an independent agency or research institute to prevent any conflicts of interest. CSOs also have a role to play in monitoring. The need for strengthened accountability mechanisms is reflected in the fact that the strong national and international normative framework is not translated into the realities of women and girls in the region.

3.6.2. Data collection

Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention requires the collection of disaggregated statistical data, including to support research. Indeed, the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Convention requires the robust collection of prevalence and

administrative data. This involves the regular collection of disaggregated data over time on all forms of violence. GREVIO monitoring has revealed that few countries in the region disaggregate data by all of the relevant factors. Data gaps mask the true scale and nature of gender-based violence.

There is a particularly glaring data gap related to femicide and gender-related killing, despite calls by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences for such data to be collected, focusing on the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim (e.g., intimate partner, family member and prostitution). There is currently no comparable data on femicide in the region. Information should also be disaggregated based on disability and sexual orientation and gender identity, among other categories.

Albania recently developed a set of harmonized indicators to guide data collection on gender equality and domestic violence. While several countries made progress on collecting and harmonizing statistics, reliable data for many countries in the region remains difficult to obtain. It was noted as a challenge in several countries, including Liechtenstein, Latvia and Andorra. The information provided by data is also limited due to significant under-reporting. Additional concerns relate to protection for survivors in data collection and sharing practices.

3.6.3. Capacity building

The lack of capacity among professionals and front-line actors in responding to violence against women constitutes a significant barrier to effective service provision. This includes not only a solid understanding of the nature, forms and cycles of violence against women, but also the requisite gender sensitivity and victim-centred approach. Where these are lacking, survivors are retraumatized and experience secondary rights violations by the very actors designated to assist them, deterring future reporting.

Several countries, such as Switzerland, Sweden, Georgia, Austria, Finland, Albania, Ukraine and Latvia, reported on efforts to provide information to, guidelines for, and the capacity building of the staff

of diverse stakeholders, such as primary healthcare centres, family-planning centres, existing school health services, mother and baby protection services, HIV support centres, centres for migrant families and asylum officers.

3.7. Gendered stereotypes in the media

The media exerts a significant influence over the way in which we view ourselves and society. Stereotypes can be both descriptive and prescriptive, setting parameters for socially acceptable behaviour. By repeatedly portraying men and women in certain ways, the media can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. As described by UN Women:

Women in all types of media tend to be thin and sexualized. They talk less than men. They have fewer opinions. And they are far less likely, in the entertainment industry, to play roles as leaders or professionals, or even as women who work for a living.¹⁴¹

Good practices in combating gender stereotypes in the media can include:

- national and targeted media campaigns;
- specific legislation;
- awards for the non-stereotyped portrayal of women;
- women expert databases;
- training courses aimed at raising the awareness of media professionals to the gendered nature of information and the media.¹⁴²

Several countries indicated providing media training to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls; legal reforms were undertaken to combat discrimination and gender bias in the media; and, voluntary codes of conduct were established. Several countries also

¹⁴¹ UN Women, Women and the media, available at: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/media>.

¹⁴² See, Council of Europe, Combating gender stereotyping and sexism in the media, p. 5.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

reported on the development of guidelines and regulations by national media authorities on the broadcasting of gender discriminatory materials. Policy initiatives include the state-level Code of Audio-visual and Radio Media Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which prohibits discriminatory or prejudicial content based on gender. In Sweden, a gender and diversity perspective in programming is required for the issuance of public broadcasting licenses.

The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF has an equality plan, and gender discrimination is banned for public and private broadcasters. The Austrian Advertising Council's webpage has a *retouche* barometer to verify the authenticity of advertising photos on slenderness and beauty.

At the same time, several countries noted discriminatory portrayals of women in the media. For example, Croatia reported high levels of sensationalism, secondary victimization and victim-blaming in the media. Cyprus also indicated that sexist portrayals of women permeate mass media. A recent media study in Kyrgyzstan found that women were most often portrayed as wife, mothers or sex objects.

The Equality Ombudsman in Sweden conducted a study gender stereotypes and sexist advertising in the media and concluded that self-regulation of sexist advertising not working.

The sub-regional consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania indicated that where journalists may employ gender sensitivity, directors who are not sensitized continue to promote concepts based on stereotypes, and that commercial and business media tended to engage in more sexist stereotyping than non-commercial media.¹⁴³ It further noted that despite the potential role of social media as a means for cultivating gender-sensitive public opinion, it is primarily used to propagate sexism and hate speech. In Tajikistan, no efforts have been undertaken by public or private media to address gender stereotypes.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019.

¹⁴⁴ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 12.

DIMENSION 4: PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Women's participation in decision-making is essential for ensuring quality governance that reflects women's needs and concerns and gender-responsive institutions. This section covers women's participation in decision-making in politics, public administration and the private sector. It also addresses national laws and policies on gender equality, and the strength and positioning national gender equality machinery, including the use of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and gender impact assessments. Finally, it covers tracking gender as a component of overseas development assistance (ODA).

4.1. Women's participation in decision-making

The equal participation of women and men in decision-making reflects the actual composition of society and constitutes a necessary condition of democracy. As described in the Beijing Platform for Action: "women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women....a necessary condition for

women's interests to be taken into account".¹⁴⁵ SDG Target 16.7 calls for ensuring "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". SDG Target 10.2 calls on States to "empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status". Target 10.3 requires eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices.

4.1.1. Women's political representation

Despite an overall legal basis for equality of women and men, the reality in the political life of many countries in the region is quite different. Women candidates continue to experience discrimination, stigmatization and violence in many countries in the region, and the phenomenon of "family voting" persists in some countries, nullifying their right to political participation. Too often, where specific measures to support women's political participation have been adopted, they have not actually resulted in a substantial increase in women candidates, nor in their election. The lack of effective enforcement mechanisms in most countries undermines the existence of measures.

Yet, there are signs of some progress. Overall, women's political participation in countries across most of the region has increased, though modestly. Women currently comprise 11 heads of state or heads of government. For some countries, such as Estonia, Georgia and Slovakia, this was for the first time. In a few countries within the EU, women have achieved parity, or close to parity, in political representation, including in Spain, Andorra, France, Belgium, Norway and Finland.

In several countries, the percentage of female parliamentarians constitutes an all-time high, namely: Finland (46%), Italy (34%), Albania (29.3%), Israel (27.5%), Moldova (25%), Kazakhstan (a near two-fold increase to 22%) and Ukraine (20%). Despite these successes, it is notable that only Finland actually approaches parity in women's political representation. Men still represent on average approximately three quarters of members of national governments and parliaments in Council of Europe member States. In the Caucasus and much of Eastern Europe, women hold approximately 20% of the seats in parliament, with few exceptions.¹⁴⁶

In contrast, sharp declines in women's parliamentary representation occurred in Liechtenstein, where the percentage halved to 12%. It dropped from 22% to 16% in Uzbekistan, and from 37% to 31% in Germany. Other countries with notably low levels of women parliamentarians include: Malta (12%), Georgia (15%) and the Russian Federation (15% Duma; 16% Federation Council). Indeed, only 20 of the 56 ECE member States have surpassed the 30% target established by the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs.

Although increasing in numbers, women continue to face barriers in access to decision-making positions within representative bodies. In Finland, there are fewer female chairs of parliamentary committees and subject matter segregation between women and men. To address these issues, the « *Gender Matters?* » project promotes gender equality in Parliament, in particular through expert consultations for the standing committees. The sub-regional consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania observed that women often play a tokenistic role in politics and are excluded from real decision-making positions.¹⁴⁷

The representation of women among ministers also runs the gamut from none (Lithuania and Azerbaijan) to full parity, such as in Spain where women comprise 11 of 17 ministers, Albania (8 out of 14) and France (8 out of 16 ministers and 10 out of 20 secretaries of state). Significantly, in France and Spain female ministers hold a wide range of portfolios, including those traditionally reserved for men, such as in the fields of defence and justice. They thus have access to meaningful decision-making positions in addition to equal numbers in terms of representation.

Having observed that women aged 30-49—years often dedicated to bearing and raising children—tend to resign from public office, Sweden passed legislation in 2018 offering municipal and county elected officials the possibility to take parental leave. In order to address the phenomenon in which women politicians were « ousted » after the elections, Kyrgyzstan amended the elections law to require the seat to go to a person of the same sex. A similar phenomenon has occurred in Albania.¹⁴⁸

For most of the region, women fared particularly poorly as representatives of regional and municipal bodies with some marked exceptions. At the regional

¹⁴⁵ Beijing Platform for Action, para 181.

¹⁴⁶ Council of Europe, Regional study on women's political representation in the Eastern Partnership countries 2017, p. 7, covering: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

¹⁴⁷ Held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 23.

level, women have achieved political parity in the autonomous communities in Spain (43,17%), but there are no female governors in Georgia, and all local administrative governors are men in Uzbekistan. At the local level, women achieved a historic 39% in local councils in Norway, and 39% in municipal councils in Finland. Women represent 48.2% of local councils in Belarus. In Liechtenstein, the percentage of women in municipal councils doubled to 39.1%. But for most of the region, the numbers are disheartening. For example, in Cyprus, women comprise 10.26% of mayors and only 4.56% of municipal councils. In Georgia, women represent 13.2% of city councilors. In Turkey there are 40 women out of 1,381 mayors. In Austria and Lithuania, women comprise 8% of mayors.

Women have achieved parity within the judiciary in most countries in the region, although in many countries not within the highest courts, reflecting a glass ceiling. In a few countries, women are not equally represented among judges, including Tajikistan, where they comprise only 15%. Women have also achieved parity, or close to parity, within civil service in many countries across the region, such as the U.K, where women occupy 42.7% of senior civil service positions, and in Kyrgyzstan, where women comprise 40.1% of civil service posts and 29% of the top administrative posts. Women comprise 29% of civil service employees in Georgia. In Kazakhstan, they comprise only 11.7%. Ireland adopted a Civil Service Renewal Plan 2014 to improve gender balance.

The role of political parties is crucial. They are gatekeepers and can act as barriers to prevent, or enablers to foster an increase in women's political representation. In several countries, women face barriers to inclusion by political parties, and may further be discouraged from political participation by discriminatory attitudes and practices, as well as family and childcare responsibilities. The sub-regional consultation for the Western Balkans and Turkey indicated that political parties themselves, as bastions of traditionalism and patriarchal structures that resist reform and public control, are among the biggest barriers to women's political participation.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, women's alliances in politics are weak and too easily divided due to pressure to follow the party line. In countries in both the EECCA and SEE sub-regions, women tend not to play a major role in the internal policy-making bodies and structures of parties. Furthermore, women's issues and concerns are

not visible in the policies and programmes presented.¹⁵⁰

One significant barrier to women is the cost of being selected as a candidate and running a campaign. As women tend to work in sectors that are not well paid, they are less likely to have savings that they can use to fund a campaign; and cultural norms indicate that women are less likely to raise funds on their own behalf and, if they do, to see that finance as belonging to the family.

Significantly, only the U.K. national report indicated the representation of the diversity of women politicians. Information was almost entirely absent on the representation of women from diverse categories, including ethnic and sexual minorities and disabled women.

4.1.1.1. Temporary special measures

In response to women's chronic under-representation, many countries have implemented temporary special measures, or quotas, to ensure a minimum level of representation by both men and women in political bodies at both the national and local levels. France enacted the Law on Real Equality between Women and Men in 2014, establishing 40% quota for state nominations. In Iceland a gender quota was established at 40% for all government committees, councils and boards, which applies also to the boards of publicly-owned companies.

Croatia set a 40% quota for women on party lists in its Gender Equality Act. Ukraine introduced a 40% quota in a new electoral code and a 30% quota for party lists in its local elections law. Montenegro established a 30% quota for electoral lists. Other countries raised the percentage of existing quotas. Armenia increased Electoral Code quotas by 10%. Portugal raised its quotas to 40% for women on electoral lists for national, European and municipal elections. Several countries established quotas for gender parity in municipal elections. For example, Albania adopted a quota in 2015, requiring 50% women on party lists for municipal elections. Portugal adopted a 40% quota for civil servant positions.

Despite these advances, quotas are not implemented in practice in several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta, North Macedonia, Lithuania and Uzbekistan. To address this problem, Luxembourg adopted amendments to political party financing law, restricting

149 Held in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

150 Council of Europe, Regional study on women's political representation in the Eastern Partnership countries 2017, p. 7.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

funding to parties in compliance with the 40% quota.

Three initiatives to introduce mandatory quotas for women's participation in parliament and on party lists failed in Georgia due to political opposition. Israel conducted its first campaign to foster women's political participation in 2018. In several countries, such as Romania, no positive measures have been undertaken to advance women's ongoing low levels of political participation from local to national levels.

Women have attained significant leadership positions within the non-governmental sector. However, in some countries in the region, women have not achieved parity as leaders in this third sector either. For example, in Kazakhstan, women run 36.7% of NGOs.

4.1.2. Capacity building and networking

As reflected in the national reports, efforts have also been made to strengthen women's political leadership capacity, such as through targeted trainings and mentorship programmes. Women's civil society organizations have played an important role in the region in supporting the capacity development of women politicians, as well as in advocating for increased women's political representation. As described by UNDP:

Parliamentary and sub-national gender equality groups can play a role in empowering women as elected representatives through capacity development, awareness-raising and knowledge-building exercises. They also prove effective in providing a neutral space where female politicians and gender advocates can come together across party lines to discuss issues of concern, whether related to policy and legislation, the procedures of parliament itself, or the working environment.¹⁵¹

Women's parliamentary networks have been established in Southeastern European countries to boost the political participation of women. Montenegro established the Women's Political Network in 2017, consisting of members from 16 political parties (including opposition parties). It advocated for amendment of the Law on Financing Political Parties, in order to allocate more resources for women's groups within parties. A forum of women parliamentarians was established in Kyrgyzstan. Other countries in the region also have established similar

¹⁵¹ UNDP, Strengthening women's political participation: An analysis of the impact of women's parliamentary networks in Europe and Central Asia, 2016, p.14.

networks prior to reporting period. For example, Serbia has an active Women's Parliamentary Network, which has enhanced women's representation in national parliamentary policy on issues outside the traditional sphere of "women's issues," such as influencing the work on regional peace and reconciliation as well as mainstreaming gender in national legislation and adopting gender-specific policies such as laws on violence against women.

4.1.3. Violence against women politicians

Violence against women in politics, which can also prevent women from seeking political office, constitutes a significant problem in the region. A recent study by the Council of Europe (CoE) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) found that of the surveyed current and former female members of parliament:

- 85.2% said that they had suffered psychological violence in the course of their term of office.
- 46.9% had received death threats or threats of rape or beating.
- 58.2% had been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks.
- 67.9% had been the target of comments on their physical appearance or based on gender stereotypes.
- 24.7% had suffered sexual violence.
- 14.8% had suffered physical violence.¹⁵²

Younger members of parliament and those working on gender equality issues were often singled out. Many of the women surveyed underscored the absence of a mechanism or service to which to direct complaints and seek support. This problem was noted only in a few of the national reviews, including, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kyrgyzstan.

In contrast, the issue was raised in the sub-regional consultations, which indicated that as a general matter States did not take deterrent action with respect to violence against female candidates during

¹⁵² CoE and IPU, Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe, 2018.

elections.¹⁵³ The consultation for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania further noted the absence of solidarity between women politicians and women human rights defenders (WHRDS).¹⁵⁴

The murder of British MP Jo Cox in 2016 marks an unfortunate, extreme example of the convergence of violence against women and the rise of conservative and right-wing movements.

4.2. Women's representation in the private sector

Women remain under-represented in decision-making positions at work and in leadership positions in trade unions, employer organizations and corporate boards. Women's participation in decision-making in the private sector continues to lag behind men's significantly. In particular, they have limited participation in managerial roles, and low participation on the boards of private companies. For 2017, the OECD average of women holding seats on the largest publicly listed companies was 22.3%. Women's participation on boards surpassed the OECD average in a few countries in the region, including: France (43.4%), Norway (42.1%), Sweden (36.3%) and Italy (34%). It was significantly lower than the OECD average in the Russian Federation (7%) and Estonia (7.4%).

Several countries have initiated quotas to ensure increased women's participation on executive boards of companies listed on public exchanges. In Austria, the 2017 Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards established a 30% quota for women's participation on the boards of publicly traded companies or companies with more than 1000 employees. As a result, the number of women on the boards of publicly traded companies rose 4% in one year, to 22% in 2019. In Spain, the participation of women in publicly-listed companies rose to 23.2% in 2018. In Sweden, women comprise 34% of boards of publicly listed companies. The U.K. saw an increase to 26.7% of women on FTSE 350 boards; and FTSE 100

¹⁵³ Three sub-regional consultation meetings were held for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania, the Western Balkans and Turkey and Central Asia in September 2019. The first was held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; the second, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019; the third in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019; see also, Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ Held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019.

boards are comprised of 32% of women. Iceland set a 40% quota for women on public and private-sector boards, which had no spill-over effect on women's representation in executive managerial positions, which remain dominated by men.

In 2015, the Finnish government adopted a resolution, establishing voluntary quotas for women's representation on corporate boards, which by 2018 had not resulted in the goal of 40% women. Similarly, Germany set a mandatory 30% quota for women on boards of publicly listed companies. However, 81% of companies fail to present targeted quotas, and women comprise only 6.1% of private company boards. In Sweden, women comprise 9% of the chairs of private companies, and only 8.4% of managing directors.

Denmark has had some success in the implementation of legislation adopted in 2013, requiring companies to set a target figure and policy for gender at senior management levels or face sanctions. The percentage of women in senior management rose from 9.6% in 2012, before the legislation took effect, to 15.9% in 2017. Ireland achieved 40% quota for women on State boards in 2018, and in Italy women hold 33% of top-level positions for listed companies.

Germany established a 50% quota for women on public-sector supervisory boards, and Luxembourg a 40% quota. Portugal established quotas in 2017 for women on boards of public companies (33%); and for publicly listed companies (20%).

4.2.1. Women's representation in the media

Globally, women hold only 27% of top management jobs in media organizations.¹⁵⁵ Although in several countries in the region women are over-represented as journalists, men predominantly occupy high-level managerial and ownership positions in the media for the countries that reported on this issue. In Kazakhstan, women account for 30.2% of media heads. The Russian Federation reported *de facto* gender parity in leading media positions, but provided no data.

In a study by the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) covering the EU and countries in

¹⁵⁵ UN Women, Infographic: Women and the media, 2015, based on a study in 59 countries, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2015/11/infographic-women-and-media>.

Eastern and Southeastern Europe found, for example, that in France, women represent 42% on screen, dropping at 29% during peak time programming; in the UK, women aged 55 were seen less frequently on TV, while in Hungary the number of female presenters/hosts decreases by more than 60% above the age of 40.¹⁵⁶ In France, women appear as 27% of the experts in media. A study undertaken in Iceland in 2014-2015 revealed that the balance of representation between men and women in the media had not changed for the last 15 years, with men constituting 70% of those appearing on TV and radio, and the majority of anchors, reporters and journalists.

4.3. National gender equality machinery, strategies and action plans

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women constitute one of the twelve critical areas in the Beijing Platform for Action, which aims to ensure a central policy coordination unit within government with a mandate to support mainstreaming gender into all government policies and programmes in all areas.¹⁵⁷ Gender equality mechanisms should be placed at the highest levels of national government, and undertake policy analysis, advocacy, communications, coordination and liaising with national governmental and non-governmental stakeholders as well as regional and international organizations, and monitoring. Yet, national gender equality machineries are sometimes marginalized within government structures, under-staffed and lacking in sufficient data and resources.

4.3.1. Gender equality machinery

Almost all of the national reports indicated an agency responsible for addressing gender issues within the public administration. Several countries have developed apparently robust gender equality machinery, such as Iceland, Croatia, Spain, Moldova and Georgia.

Several countries established gender equality bodies during the reporting period, including, Cyprus,

¹⁵⁶ EPRA, Achieving Greater Diversity in Broadcasting - special focus on Gender: Comparative Background Paper, 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Beijing Platform for Action, para 201.

Latvia, Montenegro, Sweden and Malta. Romania re-established the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men in 2015, and Uzbekistan set up a Women's Committee. Georgia established the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence within the executive branch.

Albania made considerable efforts to strengthen its national machinery on gender equality during the reporting period. In 2018, the Deputy Prime Minister was appointed as the National Coordinator for Gender Equality, ensuring high-level commitment. The Parliament also established a subcommittee on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women in 2017, thus creating a parliamentary oversight mechanism to ensure effective implementation of law and policy. These compliment the pre-existing National Council on Gender Equality. Ukraine also strengthened its mechanism for gender equality, placing it within the mandate of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, and introducing the post of Governmental Commissioner for Gender Policy.

Andorra and Turkmenistan have no gender equality machinery in place.

The placement of gender equality mechanisms can have an important bearing on their effectiveness. Most countries indicated that the gender equality mechanism was placed within a ministry, often the ministry assigned to address issues of social protection. In others, such as Iceland and Kazakhstan, the mechanism was placed within the office of the highest-level executive. In Georgia it functions as an inter-ministerial council within the executive branch.

Yet, despite positive trends across the region in developing and institutionalizing gender equality mechanisms, these bodies are often marginalised within governmental structures, hampered by the lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, inadequate support from political leadership and complex and expanding mandates. Indeed, some countries have sought to dismantle or render ineffectual gender equality mechanisms by placing them in lower offices within the public administration.

In Hungary, gender equality and violence against women issues have been assigned to two different Deputy State Secretariats within the State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs within the Ministry

of Human Capacity. Liechtenstein devolved its Equal Opportunities Unit from an independent governmental unit to a unit under the Office of Social Services. The Czech Republic relocated the Department of Gender Equality three times to different ministries. Andorra has no gender equality machinery in place. Other countries have reframed the gender equality mandate of such agencies in order to advance women's traditional roles in society. For example, Azerbaijan established the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs in 2017.

Some countries, including Georgia, Iceland, the Czech Republic and Moldova, have appointed gender equality focal points within ministries, which have a diverse array of competencies. The absence of regulations regarding the competencies of ministerial focal points on gender in the Czech Republic has led to significant differences in the level of contribution and scope of their competencies across ministries within the same country. In Tajikistan, gender groups that were established within ministries upon a ministerial order and support from UN Women ceased to function when the programme ended as their work was performed on a voluntary basis.¹⁵⁸

Some countries, such as Moldova and Iceland, have also established equality mechanisms at the local level with diverse competencies. In Albania, gender equality employees at the local level are responsible for coordinating the referral mechanisms for gender-based violence survivors, and for collecting data on this and other gender equality issues.

4.3.2. Gender equality policies

Almost all countries indicated the existence of a national-level strategy or action plan on the advancement of gender equality. Exceptions include Andorra, Azerbaijan, Germany, Malta, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. Moreover, not all of them have been effectively costed and budgeted. Several national reports, particularly in the EECCA sub-regions, revealed that gender equality initiatives over the last five years were limited to donor-led and -funded short-term projects, signaling a lack of political will.

Sub-regional consultations further pointed to the lack of

¹⁵⁸ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 11.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

implementation of laws and policies.¹⁵⁹ In Central Asia, this was attributed in part to a formalistic attitude and insufficient capacity within state structures to understand the concepts of gender equality, as well as to gaps in systematic accountability. A CSO report from Tajikistan also noted the failure to fully consider the structural causes of ¹⁶⁰ discrimination, as well as the lack of a differentiated approach to meet the needs of diverse groups of women.¹⁶¹

Similarly, the consultation process for the Western Balkans and Turkey concluded that there was a lack of gender-responsive and accountable institutions to implement these legal and policy reforms in the area of gender equality. It noted that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are merely mentioned on paper but not really used in practice, and that gender equality is not a policy priority, but is mostly mentioned as a “cross-cutting issue”.¹⁶²

While the NHRIs in most countries address women’s

¹⁵⁹ Three sub-regional consultation meetings were held for Eastern Partnership countries and Romania, the Western Balkans and Turkey and Central Asia in September 2019. The first was held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019; the second, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019; the third in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

¹⁶⁰ Held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019.

¹⁶¹ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan “From Equality de jure to Equality de facto” on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 8.

¹⁶² Held in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

rights within the scope of their mandate, in several countries *de facto* coverage was not apparent. For example, the children’s department assigned in 2014 to address women’s rights in Tajikistan’s Institute of the Commissioner for Human Rights was subsequently disbanded, and there is no information on women’s rights on the Institute’s webpage.¹⁶³

4.3.3. National financing for gender equality

The Beijing Platform for Action requires adequate, sustained and comprehensive financing for gender equality.¹⁶⁴ Gender equality financing derives from several sources, including national budgetary allocations, macro-economic policies and donor assistance.

The absence of sufficient financing for gender equality constitutes one of the biggest barriers impeding its achievement. Increases are essential to implementing both the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs. National budgetary allocations to support advances in gender equality are critical. As the national reviews revealed, countries in the region cover the

¹⁶³ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan “From Equality de jure to Equality de facto” on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 11.

¹⁶⁴ Beijing Platform for Action, para 345.

full spectrum regarding their financial commitment for women's rights. As an example of good practice, Iceland established a Gender Equality Fund in 2015 to fund projects and research to support evidence-based policy making. Several countries, particularly in Central Asia and in parts of Eastern Europe, the gender equality initiatives set forth in the national reports were almost entirely donor-supported and project-based. For these countries, gender has not been integrated at a most basic level into national policy, and the national reports revealed little political will to move beyond what appeared to be donor-initiated and supported programmes.

While most countries in the region were able to signal some or significant financial support to areas related to gender and social protection, especially related to child and elder care and shared parental responsibilities, few national reports mentioned policies addressing gender in broader economic policies. For example, of the countries employing austerity measures, which tend to increase women's unpaid care and domestic work, only a few had conducted a gender impact analysis prior to their implementation. Austria constitutes an important exception given its use of tax policies to foster shared parental leave and women's return to work after child birth, among others. The potential for public-private partnerships and gender-responsive budgeting to this end have not been fully capitalised upon.

As part of a more serious setback, several countries have seen a concerted effort to restrict funding through attacks on international donors, cutting public funding for progressive NGOs or shifting from providing institutional grants to tendering.¹⁶⁵ These structural changes in support mechanisms reflect a broader trend in diminishing civic space.

4.3.4. Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) involves analysing governmental budgets for their differential effect on genders. One of the aims of GRB is to ensure that gender equality commitments are realized. One-third of the countries from across the region reported applying some version of GRB, representing an

advance. For example, gender is tracked in budgeting processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina at both the state and entity levels, with the following results: BiH: 0,05%; FBiH: 0,05%; RS: 0,04%. With GRB processes in place, Sweden developed a methodology to monitor the impact of gender-responsive budgeting.

While a few countries have committed to GRB, others remain in the initial stages of implementation. In Albania, GRB has been incorporated into national and local finance strategies. In Canada, the 2018 Gender Budgeting Act requires gender budgeting in federal processes. Gender budgeting methodologies have been approved in Italy and Ukraine. A few countries have placed GRB within national strategy and policy documents, aiming for its future application. For example, North Macedonia adopted a Strategy on Gender-responsive Budgeting 2012-2017, and in Serbia, gender-responsive budgeting is required by 2020.

Several countries have also implemented gender impact assessments within legislative processes, such as Spain and Luxembourg. As of 2019, Portugal foresees a state budget requirement to conduct gender impact assessments.

A clear correlation could be drawn in the national reports with respect to governmental commitment to gender issues and national progress related to gender-responsive budgeting. Several countries, primarily in Western Europe, have already incorporated gender-responsive budgeting and impact analysis into their regulatory frameworks for financing, and have begun employing gender-responsive budgeting tools. Still, questions remain about the meaningfulness of this exercise in practice in a few countries.

Several countries in Eastern Europe and in the Caucasus have taken steps to incorporate gender-responsive budgeting into their legal frameworks, and have conducted pilot exercises on their application to a limited number of laws and policies. However, the sub-regional review for this region concluded that States are not implementing gender-responsive budgeting and are failing to assure transparency, accountability and equitable distribution of public finances for women's and men's needs. On the other end of the spectrum, several countries have not yet included the future prospect of gender-responsive budgeting into national strategies.

¹⁶⁵ UN Women, Andrea Krizsan and Conny Roggeband, Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics, Expert Group Meeting, 64th CSW, 2019, p. 22-23.

4.3.5. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is an approach to policy-making that takes into account both women's and men's interests and concerns in policy. Yet, this very basic notion of integrating women's issues and concerns into national policymaking has yet to be fully achieved in the region. Sub-regional reviews noted that gender is often mainstreamed into some policies, such as health and social protection, but not into all public policies.

Some advances include the adoption of federal and entity gender mainstreaming legislation in Belgium. Iceland boasts legally mandated GRB, gender mainstreaming into all policies since 2008, and the development of a handbook on conducting gender impact assessments in 2017. In Sweden, the Government Decision on gender mainstreaming 2016-2020 focuses on legislative and budgetary processes, governance and EU matters. Sixty agencies have been mainstreamed to date. Slovenia adopted Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in the Work of Ministries 2016-2020, yet in practice gender rarely forms part of the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating policies.

4.3.6. Sex-disaggregated statistics

The entire Regional Review process revealed an overarching problem in the adequacy of the collection, disaggregation and use of data across the region. In some sub-regions this challenge is due to a lack of political will, the inadequate allocation of resources and low capacity. The lack of sufficient data obscures gender inequalities and prevents the adoption of measures to address them.

The collection and analysis of statistics is central to developing evidence-based policies. Countries across the region collect data on gender, which is made available on web portals. In a best-practice example, the Gender Equality Barometer 2018 was published by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, conducted by Statistics Finland and coordinated by Centre for Gender Equality Information. It provides information on opinions, attitudes and experiences related to gender equality in various areas of life, and serves as an important tool in assessing gender equality in Finland. Questions are revised annually to reflect topical issues and the need for new data. For example, in 2017, revisions addressed considerations on the diversity of gender, relationships and families,

and on-line harassment. Data collected is no longer gender binary.

A few countries reported establishing on-line data on gender. Moldova introduced GenderPulse, an excellent online data platform. Georgia also established an online gender data portal, ensuring the accessibility of the collected information. Uzbekistan launched a website that includes gender statistics. The Czech Statistics Office produces an annual report with disaggregated statistics, as required by the equality strategy, and has established a working group for gender statistics. Although it has established gender indicators for international reporting, it has not undertaken time use surveys, nor does it collect data on unpaid domestic work, workplace sexual harassment or women in decision-making, among other issues. Also data on children is not disaggregated by sex.

In Sweden, for example, all individual data is sex-disaggregated. Over the last five years, it has increased the sex-disaggregated data collected from security institutions, and provided training for staff on sex disaggregated statistics. Statistics Sweden also cooperates in bi-lateral and multi-lateral assistance in the development of statistics on gender. In the U.K., gender has been mainstreamed into national statistics and data collection, and 80% of data sets are disaggregated by sex/gender. However, no robust data is being collected on sexual harassment, nor on intersectionalities. In Spain, the national statistics plan is accompanied by a gender impact statement.

In several countries the use of sex-disaggregated data remains a practical challenge, impeding effective evidence-based policymaking. In a few countries almost no sex-disaggregated data is generated, reflecting both a lack of capacity and political will, hampering government accountability for ensuring the realization of women's rights. For example, in Andorra and Romania, sex-disaggregated statistics are not collected across a range of fields. Switzerland also reportedly lacks gendered statistics, especially related to LGBTQ women.

4.3.7. Cooperation with and the involvement of CSOs

The role of CSOs, especially women's organizations, have been essential in ensuring the advances in gender equality across the region that have been made to date. They have and continue to serve as experts and advocates, to engage in monitoring, service provision



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

and project implementation, to provide education, training, counselling and legal support across a range of fields, and to ensure the rights of marginalised and vulnerable categories of women. Their contribution to the development and implementation of national laws and policies is essential to quality achievements, and reflects vibrant democracy.

In this regard, not all countries engaged in consultations with CSOs for the purpose of preparing their national reports; in a few, the consultation process was quite limited.¹⁶⁶ Consultation was often extensive in those countries where it was supported by UN Women or other inter-governmental organizations. CSO consultation is all the more critical as it was the only listed mechanism in national reports for ensuring the participation women and girls from marginalized groups in national Beijing +25 reporting processes. Where CSO consultation was lacking, such as in Lithuania, there was no mechanism for participation by vulnerable groups.

In some sub-regions, dialogue and cooperation between governments and civil society organizations to address gender inequality remain inadequate. In Tajikistan, for example, limited partnership between

CSOs and the state has been attributed to gaps in the legal framework, a lack of understanding of its importance and the low involvement and capacity of CSOs.¹⁶⁷

In addition to increasingly limited funding, restricted space for CSO space in some countries constitutes a concern. In a few contexts, there is only a façade of democratic consultation; in others, the state cooperates with groups that do not necessarily represent the women's movement. Increased state hostility in some countries, along with conservative and right-wing movements, have discredited gender equality as a goal.¹⁶⁸ These counter-movements have gained significant traction over the past five years, impeding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the protection of reproductive rights in several countries. As emphasised by participants at the Regional Review Meeting, these movements must be challenged with one voice in order to be effective.

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g., Aportaciones de ONG al informe de España a la ONU sobre la aplicación 2014-2019 de la Plataforma de Acción de la 4ª Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer "Beijing+25", p. o.

¹⁶⁷ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ UN Women, Andrea Krizsan and Conny Roggeband, Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics, Expert Group Meeting, 64th CSW, 2019, p. 25-25.

DIMENSION 5:

PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES



Despite the integration of gender into international (UN) policy documents on peace and conflict resolution, starting in 2000 with the series of Security Council Resolutions, meaningful implementation of these commitments remains remarkably lacking 20 years on. Lack of financing constitutes an important barrier to implementation. Experts have also noted the relative silence on “the underlying gender roles that celebrate masculine aggression and the socio-economic inequalities that make women more vulnerable during conflict and post-conflict situations”.¹⁶⁹

The concept of peaceful and inclusive societies encompasses an array of issues pertaining to the inclusion of women in obtaining and sustaining lasting peace, as well as “the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation

of cultural diversity”.¹⁷⁰ As noted in the Beijing Platform for Action, “[a]ggression, foreign occupation, ethnic and other types of conflicts are an ongoing reality affecting women and men in nearly every region”.¹⁷¹ It goes on to note the range of conflict-related human rights violations, including:

torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, summary and arbitrary executions, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, foreign occupation and alien domination, xenophobia, poverty, hunger and other denials of economic, social and cultural rights, religious intolerance, terrorism, discrimination against women and lack of the rule of law.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Jacqui True, *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda 25 years After Beijing: What Difference Could a Feminist Political Economy Perspective Make?* UN Women, EGM/B+25/EP.13, 2019.

¹⁷⁰ SDG Target 4.7.

¹⁷¹ Beijing Platform for Action, para 131.

¹⁷² Id.

Strategic Objective E.1 thus calls for governments to, *inter alia*: “promote equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women to participate in all forums and peace activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level,” as well as to “[i]ntegrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts and foreign occupation”.

In addition to SDG 4, fostering a culture of peace, human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, SDG Target 16.3 calls for promoting the rule of law at the national and international level and ensuring equal access to justice for all. SDG Target 16.7 aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

5.1. Women, peace and security

The women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, entails women’s meaningful participation in peace processes, including conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation and post-conflict recovery, and aims to ensure that women’s needs, interests and lived experiences are fully reflected in peace processes and in recovery efforts in the aftermath of conflict.

Meaningful implementation of WPS commitments remains weak the world over, including in the UNECE region across all thematic areas, in significant part due to lack of financing. Moreover, in much of the region, national security policies do not encompass the concept of human security. Yet, clear advances have been made throughout the region as several countries have explicitly declared feminist foreign policies, including Sweden and France, while Canada and the Netherlands apply feminist principles to their overseas development assistance (ODA).

At the same time, the role of extremists in conflicts affecting the region and their growth within countries in the region, pose a distinct challenge to the WPS agenda. Countries in Central Asia and Israel have been called on to stem religious extremism and conservative movements grounded in misogyny that limit women’s participation in public life and their freedom of movement.

A majority of countries in the region have developed strategies and national action plans related to WPS and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, et. al. Several countries have

adopted second and third iterations of their national action plans, indicating a long-standing commitment. In Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine, significant efforts have been made to localize national plans, and to engage in effective consultation with women in conflict-affected communities in order to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed.

Kyrgyzstan adopted a National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, but it has received no government financing. Reflective of political will, the lack of state financing in Kyrgyzstan and a few other countries constitutes a significant impediment to implementation, rendering the policy of marginal utility. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska withdrew its participation from the State-level Coordination Committee for the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Action Plan, impeding effective harmonization throughout the country. Malta has no national action plan to address WPS issues.

Other notable policy developments include the creation of a Gender Equality Observatory and Office established in the Spanish armed forces and police, respectively, and the Canadian Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence’s adoption of a National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence. Albania’s new National Strategy for the Control of Small Arms, Light Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives 2019-2024 addresses the use of firearms in domestic violence situations. In Israel, the Defense Service Law was amended in 2014 to preclude the exclusion of women from the Israeli Defense Force due to the integration of ultra-orthodox men.

5.1.1. Women’s integration into security sector institutions

With respect to the *de facto* integration of women into security-sector institutions, in Latvia, there are no restrictions on women serving in the military, and has the largest proportion of women in the armed forces for NATO countries (20.2%). In Slovenia, women hold senior decision-making and command positions in the armed forces, and women were integrated into UN and NATO military missions for the first time in Albania. All combat positions were opened to women in the military in 2018 in the U.K.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women comprise 8% of police structures at all levels, and only 1.3% of the highest

managerial positions. In Kazakhstan, women comprise 12% of internal affairs posts, and can only serve in auxiliary / support functions in the military. In Albania, women comprise 13% of military personnel. Ukraine adopted a national action plan on women, peace in security in 2016, and established an inter-departmental working group, placing it within the mandate of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. In 2018, a Ministry of Defense order opened approximately 300 military positions to women, including some combat positions. Yet, increased efforts are needed in Ukraine, where despite these advances, gender has not been effectively integrated into the security sector, and there remains a low level of women's engagement in high-level conflict negotiations.

5.1.2. Gender-responsive relief and recovery

Conflict tends to exacerbate existing structural inequalities and violence. Yet, less attention has been paid to relief and recovery in WPS commitments, and support has been largely focused on short-term post-conflict efforts. In the often dire economic situations after conflict, women experience extreme income inequality, often working in the informal economy and in the most precarious employment. They further suffer from exacerbated pre-conflict legacies of poor investment in gender-equal economic and social development with respect to education, health, housing, food security, water, property and land rights.

Increased long-term financial support should be foreseen for women's groups working on the frontlines in conflict and crisis response to capitalize on ensuring women's empowerment and participation in recovery processes.

With respect to structural determinants, actors in the field of conflict prevention have given attention to the gendered dynamics of radicalization to violence in preventing violent extremism agendas, and to the economic grievances and incentives that lead men and boys to join violent extremist groups. However, attention has yet to be paid to the political economy of gender inequality and gendered violence.¹⁷³ The lack of consistent and coherent policies on women and

¹⁷³ See, Jacqui True, *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda 25 years After Beijing: What Difference Could a Feminist Political Economy Perspective Make?* UN Women, EGM/B+25/EP.13, 2019.

children returnees associated with terrorist or extremist groups renders them prone to abuse. Women's and girls' association with violent extremist groups is due to a complex combination of factors, often involving, *inter alia*, coercion, co-option, enslavement, kidnapping or subjugation in their communities.¹⁷⁴

5.1.3. Women's meaningful participation in peace processes

Women's participation in peace and conflict negotiations remains low in the region overall, despite some relative progress.¹⁷⁵ For example, in Georgia, ten years on since the launch of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on the conflict in Georgia, women are still generally underrepresented around the negotiating table, comprising only 30%. That figure is the same for the lower-level Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). Both the government and donors have engaged in initiatives to train women public servants already or soon to be involved in negotiations. Regular information sharing meetings are also held between GID and IPRM participants and CSOs.

In contrast, a gender perspective has not been integrated into the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot delegations due to a lack of political will, the marginal role foreseen of the technical committee on gender equality and the absence of interaction women women's organizations on the island.¹⁷⁶

In Ukraine, there is a low level of engagement of women in high-level talks on the settlement of the international armed conflict in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, as well as in peacekeeping. Only one woman, (less than 10% of the delegation), was present in Minsk for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Moreover, women's organizations in Ukraine have called for a greater participation in the negotiations.

The sub-regional dialogues also revealed specific barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes. In Central Asia, participants noted the prevalence of the stereotype that negotiating peace is not a woman's business. Despite peace-building

¹⁷⁴ UN Women, *Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls*, 2019, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, *Peace Talks in Focus 2018: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷⁶ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, *Peace Talks in Focus 2018: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, pp. 78-79.

efforts carried out by women in border areas, they do not participate in peace-building negotiations at any level: local, regional and national. The consultation in Eastern Partnership countries observed the lack of sufficient dialogue and partnership between national decision makers, CSOs and donors to increase women's role in peace building in the region.¹⁷⁷

The Nordic Women Mediator's Network constitutes one of very few in the region. In 2018, Denmark hosted the Nordic Women Mediators Network. The Swedish Network of Women Mediators also forms part of the Nordic Mediation Network and offers technical assistance to other countries.

5.2. Irregular and forced migration and gender-based asylum and protection

As many women face persecution on gender-based grounds, Strategic Objective E.5 of the Beijing Platform for Action calls on states to recognize "persecution through sexual violence or other gender-related persecution, and provide access to specially trained officers, including female officers, to interview women regarding sensitive or painful experiences, such as sexual assault". It also calls for mainstreaming:

a gender perspective into national immigration and asylum policies, regulations and practices, as appropriate, in order to promote and protect the rights of all women, including the consideration of steps to recognize gender-related persecution and violence when assessing grounds for granting refugee status and asylum.

The issue of gender-based grounds for asylum and international protection took on heightened relevance into parts of the region since 2014 as over the next three years millions of refugees sought protection in Europe. Women and girl migrants face particular threats during each phase of the migration cycle and during humanitarian crises, including gender-based persecution driving migration, vulnerability to sexual and physical violence, sexual exploitation, human trafficking during migration and stigmatization,

discrimination and violence in the country of destination or upon their return.

Asylum systems are not uniform across EU States. The fragmented frameworks on the rights of women and girls across States exacerbated the existing vulnerability of migrants. As UN Women observed:

Terrible and multiple forms of gender-based violence have occurred during the wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, that have caused significant numbers of women to flee. Sexual abuse and exploitation, early and forced marriage, honour crimes, female genital mutilation ("FGM") and trafficking, are not only occurring in conflict zones, but are also ruining the lives of women and girls in other countries where the state provides no protection.¹⁷⁸

However, women who sought asylum on gender-based challenges faced numerous legal obstacles in obtaining the recognition of their refugee status, in particular due to judicial interpretations of the category "membership in a particular social group" as not applying to women and girls, as well as the refusal by judges to recognise rape and sexual violence as a form of persecution, rather than an individual crime.¹⁷⁹

As primary destinations, both Germany and Turkey expended significant resources to respond to the seven-fold increase in applications for asylum and international protection, and in the case of Germany to support migrant women's integration. In Sweden, women's asylum applications are examined separately, and payments to asylum seekers are granted individually, rather than on a family basis. In light of the absence of an asylum system in Andorra, a law providing temporary international protection on humanitarian grounds was adopted in 2018, recognizing gendered-based grounds for protection. The Netherlands developed a 'Gender and SOGI' module for assessing asylum applications.

Comprising 75% of Syrian refugees in Turkey, women and girls face gendered barriers to access to livelihood and education. Finland also noted the low employment rate for migrant women from conflict-affected

¹⁷⁷ Held in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 September 2019.

¹⁷⁸ UN Women, Report on the Legal Rights of Women and Girl Asylum Seekers in the European Union, 2017, p. 7.

¹⁷⁹ Id.

countries, especially women from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, and especially mothers.

5.3. Overseas development assistance

Tracking gender in overseas development assistance (ODA) is another means of ensuring adequate, sustained financing in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. OECD member states track the gender component of ODA pursuant to a policy marker that targets gender equality and women's empowerment as either a principal (primary) or significant (secondary) policy objective of bilateral aid. Notably, for 2015-2016, the percentage of bilateral aid from OECD states targeting gender equality as a significant or principal objective was 37%, or US\$ 41.7 billion—an all time high. However, bilateral agreements targeting gender equality as a principle objective was only 4%, or US\$4.6 billion.¹⁸⁰ In tracking ODA to fragile and conflict-affected countries, the OECD found that for 2015-2016 gender equality was a significant or principle objective in 40% of bilateral aid.¹⁸¹

Adopting a target of 15 percent of post-conflict peacebuilding funds to be directed toward gender equality programming and policy across the UN system was a positive step, although many UN agencies have yet to achieve this target.¹⁸² As one positive development, the Peacebuilding Fund¹⁸³ has surpassed the 15% target and has directed 20 percent of funding to gender responsive programming since 2016.

Of those countries in the region that provide overseas development assistance, some dedicated a significant proportion to gender equality (e.g., Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Canada, Italy and Belgium). Both Canada and Sweden qualify as feminist their international assistance and foreign policies, respectively. Norway provides significant financial support to diverse organizations on gender in humanitarian crises.

¹⁸⁰ OECD, Aid to gender equality and women's empowerment: An overview, 2018, p. 3, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Aid-to-gender-overview-2018.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ OECD, Aid to gender equality and women's empowerment: An overview, 2018, p. 3, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Aid-to-gender-overview-2018.pdf>.

¹⁸² Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8131Action%20Plan%20on%20Transformative%20Financing%20for%20GEWE.pdf>.

¹⁸³ <http://www.unpbf.org/>.

Switzerland focuses on gender and preventing violent extremism in its overseas assistance. Belgium contributes significant overseas assistance to women, peace and security issues, and Denmark supports efforts to combat SGBV in conflict-affected areas.

5.4. Access to justice

Effective access to justice constitutes an essential right, enshrined within the universal human rights protection system. The obligation not to discriminate against women and to achieve *de facto* equality between women and men is a fundamental aspect of this right. The CEDAW Committee, in its General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice has articulated six interrelated elements of access to justice that are considered key for a justice system that is responsive to gender.¹⁸⁴ These are: justiciability, availability, accessibility, good quality, accountability and the provision of remedies for survivors. This section addresses access to justice for conflict-related and systemic crimes.

A few countries in the region, as part of their ODA, provide support for international justice mechanisms. For example, Finland provides financial support to UN Women, the Trust Fund for Victims of the International Criminal Court and Justice Rapid Response. Austria is an active member of Group of Friends on 1325 and the Network of National Contact Points for the Implementation of Resolution 1325.

With respect to access to justice for gender-based crimes committed during conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina amended the State-level Criminal Code in 2015, removing reference to the use of force in the definition of rape as a crime against humanity. Entity-level legal amendments now regulate the rights of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including their access to reparations. In the Federation, the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Basis of Social Protection, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children in BiH 2016 foresees the establishment of an independent expert body to make determinations on civilian survivors of war in cases of rape and sexual abuse. In the Republika Srpska, the Law on the Protection of Victims of War Torture was adopted in 2018, regulating the rights of civilian survivors of war, including survivors of sexual violence.

¹⁸⁴ CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice, CEDAW/C/GC/33, 2015, para 14.

Similarly, in 2016, Croatia passed the Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence During the Armed Aggression Against the Republic of Croatia in the Homeland War. Prior to its adoption, war crimes victims could only receive indemnification through individual criminal proceedings brought against the perpetrators. The Act regulates the rights of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence to both indemnification and services. Despite the legal advances in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, survivors continue to be stigmatised through the lack of awareness and capacity of actors in the judiciary and other authorities.

In recognition of the structural nature of violence against women, two countries launched national inquiries into systemic forms of violence. In Canada, a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was launched in 2016. Ireland established a Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes in 2015, and a formal Government apology was extended to the former residents of the Magdalena Laundries.

Several countries, including Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Finland, among others, undertook to expand women's access to free legal aid in particular ensuring access to GBV survivors free of charge. In Georgia, for GBV survivors it is no longer means tested and can be accessed for related civil and administrative proceedings. Andorra modified regulations to recognize economic violence for the purpose of accessing free legal aid for DV survivors for criminal cases, as well as in civil cases for the purpose of separation and divorce.

Systemic barriers to women's access to justice were noted in Kyrgyzstan, where women face multiple rights violations in the justice system, including stigmatization, revictimization, and a lack of compensation. These systemic rights violations are attributed to the fact that an ethnic/religious subculture prevails over the rule of law. In Israel, ethnic minority women face barriers in accessing courts, among other systemic rights violations.

5.5. Women human rights defenders

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face the same types of risks as all defenders who work to uphold the rights of people, communities and the environment, but also, as women, they are exposed to gender-specific risks and are targets of gender-based violence. In a statement given on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, 29 November 2018,

by the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, women human rights defenders were recognized as key to the realization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

According to OHCHR: "Women, girls and gender non-conforming people standing up for human rights have been facing increased repression and violence across the globe."¹⁸⁵ In its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognizes that the stigmatization of women fighting for their rights is a factor impeding women's access to justice.

In his 2019 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst observed "a worrying rise in misogynistic, sexist and homophobic speech by prominent political leaders in recent years, normalizing violence against women and gender non-conforming persons. ... In some cases, State actors have engaged in direct attacks against women defenders and their families, including through defamation campaigns, judicial harassment and criminalization."¹⁸⁶ In particular, the report "expressed serious concern at the increasing use of the concept of "gender ideology" which, in various parts of the world, especially in . . . Eastern Europe, is presented as an attempt by feminists and LGBT rights defenders, to destabilise the social and political order".¹⁸⁷

Within the UNECE region, the report underscored specific egregious incidents involving WHRDs in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. It observed:

On 31 July 2018, anti-corruption campaigner Kateryna Handzyuk was attacked by an unknown man with sulfuric acid in Kherson, Ukraine, and died three months later. Ms. Handzyuk, a member of the executive committee of Kherson City Council, had exposed the corruption of local authorities, including the police. The killing was one in a series of brutal attacks against human rights defenders, for which few perpetrators have been brought to justice.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ OHCHR, Women human rights defenders face worsening violence, warns UN human rights expert, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24232&LangID=E>.

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 24.

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 31.

¹⁸⁸ Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 43.

[I]n March 2018, the Kazakh activist and blogger Ardak Ashym was forcibly placed in a psychiatric facility for over a month and subjected to psychiatric treatment, including with psychotropic drugs. She was accused of inciting social discord under article 174 of the Criminal Code of Kazakhstan and of insulting a State official through the mass media under article 378. She was released after international pressure and went abroad to avoid forced hospitalization.¹⁸⁹

With respect to WHRDs seeking asylum, it observed that in 2017 “opposition activist, journalist and blogger Zhanara Akhmetova, who had sought asylum in Ukraine, was detained for a month in a pre-detention centre in Kyiv because of an extradition request by Kazakhstan”.¹⁹⁰

The Special Rapporteur further noted the impact of restrictive donor policies on the situation of WHRDs, providing a concrete example from the U.S. where a “global gag rule”¹⁹¹ introduced in 2017 that requires NGOs receiving funding from the United States to certify that they do not engage in abortion-related activities, including counseling, referrals and advocacy on access to safe services

has had an adverse impact on women defenders working on sexual and reproductive rights, HIV, sexual orientation and gender identity rights and sex workers’ rights. It has reduced access to services for marginalized women, threatened the integration of health services and created division in civil society around the world.¹⁹²

Notably, the Council of Europe has submitted third party interventions in cases pertaining to WHRDs in Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation before the European Court of Human Rights.

As the sub-regional consultation for the Western Balkans and Turkey revealed, there has been an increase in hate messages on social media inciting violence against women in political and other leadership positions, as well as against feminist and LGBTIQ organisations. Women’s and feminist organizations are

increasingly under pressure. A number of organizations have had to close down and, in one of the countries, numerous women human rights activists have been imprisoned.¹⁹³

Violence further targets other women whose voices are expressed in the public sphere, including journalists. Daphne Caruana Galizia, an investigative journalist reporting on government corruption in Malta, was assassinated by a car bomb at her home in 2017. The house of a journalist investigating links between government officials and organized crime had her home sprayed with bullets while her children slept in August 2018. No arrests have been made.¹⁹⁴

Yet, few national reviews raised the issue of women human rights defenders, with the exception of the U.K, which in 2017, developed Guidelines for Working with Human Rights Defenders, including women human rights defenders. In Sweden, an Action Plan “Defending Free Speech” was adopted in 2017 to protect journalists, elected representatives and artists from hatred and exposure to threats.

5.6. Inclusion

SDG Target 10.3 calls on States to “ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard”. Several countries reported milestone achievements with respect to fostering gender equality and inclusion. For example, in Ireland, referendums led to constitutional amendments on marriage equality and divorce, and in 2015, the Marriage Act and Children and Family Relationships Act was passed, recognizing same-sex marriage and family relations. Malta also amended its constitution and the Marriage Equality Act to recognise same-sex marriage and civil unions. I also launched the second LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan and passed an Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Act, which protects against conversion practices.

In Belgium, as of 2016, married mothers are automatically recognized as parents without have

189 Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 55.

190 Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 53.

191 The policy is entitled Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance.

192 Human Rights Council, Situation of women human rights defenders, A/HRC/40/60, 2019, para 26.

193 Held in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 30 September – 1 October 2019.

194 Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 28.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

to undergo adoption proceedings, and transgender persons can modify their civil status without medical procedures. In June 2019, Iceland approved a bill enabling persons above the age of 15 to define their own gender. Cyprus also established civil partnership for same sex couples in 2015. Luxembourg and Portugal established a National LGBTI Action Plan and Action Plan to Combat Discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, respectively. In 2017, Denmark established a coordination mechanism for LGBTI policies headed by Minister for Equal Opportunities, and in 2019 an inter-ministerial working group launched a legislative review. In Andorra, an Equality White Book was elaborated, encompassing a broad equality framework.

In sharp contrast, in Kyrgyzstan a fatwa issued against the LGBTI community in 2014, reflecting an increase in religious radicalization and violent extremism and an attendant rise in traditional social norms. The Central Asian sub-regional consultation identified an urgent need to increase understanding of the definition of discrimination on gender as well as other grounds, such as ethnicity, religious affiliation and disability.¹⁹⁵ As described above, the rise of conservative movements

¹⁹⁵ Held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 18-19 September 2019.

primarily in Eastern and Central Europe have besieged the rights of LGBTI, women, ethnic minorities and migrants, and sought to limit inclusion. An increased incidence in hate crimes was reported for some countries in the region, such as Georgia and the U.S., including sexual and ethnic minority women, among others.¹⁹⁶ Many countries do not collect hate crime statistics,¹⁹⁷ and several of those that do do not disaggregate by bias motive (religion, LGBTI, ethnicity, etc.)

It should be reported that while numerous national reports indicated the creation of national action plans on Roma and other minorities, and persons with disabilities, often no information was provided on the ways in which such policies specifically addressed women. CSO reports clarified that the specific needs of women were not addressed, despite the numerous challenges faced by these groups.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ See, e.g., NGO national parallel report of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +25, Georgia, 2019, p. 15; ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting: United States, available at: <http://hatecrime.osce.org/united-states-america>.

¹⁹⁷ Of the Central Asian states, only Kazakhstan has reported data to ODIHR during the reporting period. See, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/>.

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania: Beijing +25, 2019, p. 15.

DIMENSION 6 - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

The necessity of environmental conservation and its links to climate change and disaster risk management is arguably the most pressing issue facing the region and the world. Environmental degradation and climate change have a decidedly gendered impact, displacing communities, interrupting income generation, increasing unpaid labour burdens and negatively affecting health, especially for women and girls.¹⁹⁹ Studies have shown that natural disasters kill more women than men, as they are the last to leave home, or decide to stay, due to gender roles.²⁰⁰

199 Beijing Platform for Action, para 247.

200 OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, p. 20.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that “women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns, and approaches to natural resource management”.²⁰¹ SDG Target 13.B calls on countries to improve “capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management ... including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities”.

One of the most striking aspects of the regional review was the marked absence of policies and initiatives related to gender and the environment, disaster risk

201 Beijing Platform for Action, para 246.

reduction and climate strategies across the region. Most countries provided no information on this dimension, leaving answers to the respective questions blank. The lack of response on this issue in national reports belies its importance for the region. To provide one example, in Central and Eastern Europe, the poorest continue to spend the largest portion of their income on electricity, water and energy. Energy poverty has a disproportionate affect on the most vulnerable, such as single parent households, primarily women.²⁰²

6.1. Women's participation in environmental protection, natural resource and disaster-risk management

Some positive examples include that the Finnish Ministry of the Environment adopted an Equality Plan 2018-2021, which has been mainstreamed into the national SDG plan. In addition, a 2017 Midterm Climate Policy Plan involved equality impact assessment trainings. Despite these policy advances, 75% of the current energy sector workforce is male in Finland. Gender issues have been mainstreamed into environmental policy in Serbia, and have been introduced into the disaster-risk management law. Gender was added to the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2019-2030 in Tajikistan.

In Sweden, a gender perspective was integrated into the Action Plan on a toxic-free everyday environment and in environmental assessments, as well as into trainings on disaster management and civil defence. Sweden has also engaged on these issues in international fora, by supporting the development of a Gender Action Plan for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and by advocating to strengthen women's participation in decision-making in climate change negotiations at COP23 Bonn. Canada adopted the Gender Action Plan of the UNFCCC and supported the participation of women from the Caribbean and Francophone Africa in climate change negotiations.

In 2016, the Minister of the Environment in the Czech Republic was tasked with incorporating a gender equality perspective into projects. Yet, the gendered aspects of environmental issues are often neglected, and gender is largely absent in discussions on climate change. In Lithuania, efforts were limited to the Ministry

of Environment encouraging women's participation in NGOs to address environmental concerns. Most countries in the region, like Georgia and Hungary, reported no gender mainstreaming into environmental, natural resource protection and disaster-risk reduction policies. Latvia observed that its Environmental Policy Guidelines 2014-2020 do not incorporate a gender perspective into any programmatic area. Albania reported a low level of alignment with SDGs on activities related to natural resource management.

Despite few exceptions, women's representation in positions in fields related to the environment and climate change remain low across the region, in part due to their low representation in STEM and related fields. For example, in Tajikistan, women represent only 37.1% of environmental science students, 21.9% of those studying environmental protection, 8.1% of agriculture students and 3.9% of land management students.²⁰³ In the energy sector, according to EIGE, men comprise 77.9% of the workforce, while women comprise 22.1%.²⁰⁴ There are no women in national policy-making positions on environmental protection and climate change in Kyrgyzstan, and women have low participation rates in natural resource management.

Latvia acknowledged that no efforts had been made to promote women's involvement in decision-making in the fields of national resource and environmental management, environmental protection and restoration, public services and environmental planning, nor urban infrastructure development. On a positive note, in Liechtenstein, women occupy high-level leadership positions related to environmental policy, including the Minister of the Environment. In Serbia, women comprise 68% of environmental agency staff, and 33% of decision-making positions.

Efforts have been made to increase women's participation and leadership in related private-sector enterprises, including the clean energy and technology sectors (e.g., Canada, Finland). At the same time, gender has been considered extensively in overseas assistance on environment, disaster-risk reduction and climate change by EU donor countries, including Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Two CSO-led initiatives include a women-organized Seed Savers Network

²⁰²OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, p. 13.

²⁰³ Alternative Report of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Tajikistan "From Equality de jure to Equality de facto" on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action+25, 2019, p. 37.

²⁰⁴See, OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, p. 14.



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

developed a seed bank in Kyrgyzstan and a region-wide CSO-led initiative on gender and water in Central Asia.

6.2. The gendered impacts of environmental degradation and disaster

Despite women's low participation rate in the development of environmental policy, they tend to be disproportionately affected by environmental contamination. A few *de facto* issues of concern were raised in the national-level reports. Rapid gender assessments conducted by UNDP and UN Women on the impact of flooding in 2017 in Albania revealed that damage to crops and land were a major concern to women, who suffered significant losses of products for both personal consumption and for sale, including the loss of livestock and feed. The assessments also revealed that:

domestic violence increased after the floods, and unexpectedly, women heads of household reported a higher incidence of violence (73,1 per cent) than women spouses. Women were found to be affected not only by domestic violence, but also by violence outside the home. Women reported having been treated differently than men as concerns the distribution of aid by municipality officials, where men had easier access to municipality staff and benefited more from state support.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Albania, National Review for the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action: Beijing +25, 2019, pp. 58-59.

Similarly, the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated the gendered impact of floods in 2014, opening up access to funds for the implementation of the gender action plan to address the gendered dimension of the disaster.²⁰⁶

Large-scale land degradation has resulted in decreased agricultural productivity in Uzbekistan. Chronic exposure to high concentrations of minerals and toxic pollutants through unsafe drinking water due to water scarcity caused by the Aral Sea Crisis in Kazakhstan has led to an increase in maternal morbidity and mortality, infertility and pregnancy and foetal development complications.²⁰⁷ The rise of breast and cervical cancer was documented in Zhytomyr as a result of the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine in 1986. The environmental impact of extraction industries on indigenous women was observed in Canada.

In sum, much more progress needs to be achieved in these fields in every country in the region, requiring significant political will at both national and regional levels. Incorporating a gender perspective and fostering women's engagement in these fields will require targeted data collection, increased research and knowledge building, as well as expanded opportunities for career development. It will require both public and private sector commitment, including with respect to pay and leadership positions.

²⁰⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Progress report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in BiH within the Beijing +25 process, 2019, p. 17.

²⁰⁷ OECD, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, 2018, pp. 9, 10.

CONCLUSION



Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Advances in the field of gender equality within the Europe and Central Asia region are clearly evident when viewed over the long-term. The last five years are no exception. Most countries remain committed to increasing women's labour and political participation, and to combating gender-based violence. Gender has been mainstreamed to some extent into health, education and social protection policies in many countries.

However, much remains to be done to ensure women's *de facto* equality in political participation, the labour market and environmental and climate change policies. Across the region, gender-responsive macro-economic policies, the application of temporary special measures for women's participation in public and private-sector decision-making, increased State financing for gender equality and meaningful gender mainstreaming across the full range of government policies, beyond social protection, health and education, remain necessary. The legislative and policy advances have not translated into meaningful increases in economic and political opportunities, nor into protection from and access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence.

The past five years has further seen the rise of conservative and populist right-wing movements that have resulted in concrete examples of gender backsliding in some Eastern and Central European countries, reversing hard fought gains in women's

rights. Retrenchment on gender equality in some countries has led to a weakening of the mechanisms and tools utilized to foster gender equality, including the reduction of staff and budgets and the demotion of gender equality bodies. Linked to democratic backsliding, increased conservative and populist movements have also resulted in reduced space and support for, and cooperation with, civil society actors. Organised opposition to gender equality poses fresh challenges to governments and advocates alike to ensuring progress in the years ahead.

What has also become increasingly apparent are the missed opportunities inherent in taking an incremental rather than a transformational, structural approach to gender equality. Incremental additions to women's participation will unlikely affect the changes necessary to ensure meaningful equality and inclusion. Moreover, the urgency of adopting transformational approaches to "business as usual" across a range of fields is fast becoming undeniable due to the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, as well as the role of ICT and the rise of artificial intelligence—fields in which a gender perspective has not been brought to bear despite their gendered impacts. To these and other emerging and ongoing challenges, the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contain tools designed to lead us in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dimension 1: Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Strengthen efforts by national governments and international financial institutions to apply a gender perspective to macro-economic policies to insure greater structural changes to support gender equality

Create accountability for the gender-responsiveness of all development outcomes delivered by governments

Develop programmes to foster the redistribution of unpaid domestic work

Expand the use of wage transparency laws for all employers to combat the gender wage gap

Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination laws for countries where it does not exist

Promote work-life balance through gender-responsive policies, such as parental and care-giver's leave

Adopt policies to recognise unpaid care and informal labour

Revise land ownership and registration laws to ensure women's *de facto* equal opportunity to own land

Improve rural women's access to water, equipment, seeds and finance

Support investments in physical infrastructure to support rural women's livelihood opportunities, and access to health and childcare

Dimension 2: Health, education and social protection and services

Conduct systematic gender audits of all public services with a special focus on health care and educational in order to adjust them on an ongoing basis to the real needs of beneficiaries

Guarantee universal access to quality healthcare services for all women, encompassing sexual and reproductive health, including in rural and remote areas

Expand accessibility of modern contraception, particularly to marginalised and vulnerable women,

such as ethnic minorities, migrants and those living in rural areas

Ensure the application of women- and newborn-centered birthing practices

Strengthen the capacity of health-sector actors to identify and provide care to survivors of gender-based violence

Ensure comprehensive age-appropriate sexuality education for youth

Increase women's and girls' enrolment in STEM studies and their access to employment opportunities in these fields

Develop internal policies to address gender-based violence in school

Remove all gender stereotypes from curriculae

Provide support services and enable the reentry of girls (and boys) who have dropped out due to child labour, pregnancy and early marriage

Increase the number of women employed as managers in higher education

Expand non-contributory social protection to address the needs of gender-based violence survivors and migrant women workers

Remove the glass ceiling for women working in the health and education fields

Dimension 3: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Countries who have not yet done so should ratify the Istanbul Convention

Universal ratification of the ILO Convention (C190) on Violence and Harassment

Continue to harmonise national legal provisions with the standards set forth in the Istanbul Convention, and meaningfully implement those standards to ensure protection and access to services and shelters for survivors

Given the critical importance of multi-sectoral service provision for survivors, the necessary resources

and authority should be provided to coordination mechanisms and service providers to enable them to work effectively

Increase budgetary allocations to CSOs providing services to survivors of violence against women on a permanent basis

Increased investment in specialist support services throughout countries that are accessible to all women in need, with a particular focus on women from marginalized groups, such as rural women, women with disabilities, ethnic and sexual minorities, elderly women, migrant and refugee women, etc.

Establish free legal assistance for all forms of violence against women, to ensure that all women receive support to access justice

Develop specialised protocols for providing the full range of services to women with disabilities and LGBTI women

Criminalise the violation of protection orders and ensure the application of risk assessment protocols

Criminalise coercive control

Enact national legislation to prohibit sexual harassment in the labour and education fields, in public spaces, and cyber-bullying

Criminalise the diverse forms of violence against women via technology, such as revenge porn and up-skirting

Ensure a victim-centred, gender-sensitive approach is applied in the implementation of anti-trafficking laws and policies

Develop complaint mechanisms and action plans to address violence against women in politics

Take action to prevent and eliminate harmful practices including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage, gender-based sex selection and so-called “honour” crimes

Recognise gender-based grounds for asylum and international protection pursuant to the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW

Ensure the application of proportional and dissuasive sanctions for gender-based violence crimes, and eliminate the application of fines

Take specific actions to prevent and punish femicide, and ensure data collection on the relationship between the perpetrator in the victim in all homicide cases

Improve harmonised data collection and analysis on gender-based violence through increased political will, resources and capacity

Engage the private sector as a key stakeholder in combating violence against women, including by requiring internal policies against sexual harassment and violence in the work place and the creation of internal complaint mechanisms

Adapt legislation and regulations to combat violence against women committed via new forms of media, such regulation should not justify the curtailing of freedom of expression or censorship, and should be formulated through a transparent multi-stakeholder process

Dimension 4: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Prioritise actions that increase women’s representation in decision-making

Parity in representation and policy making should be engrained in national constitutions (50/ 50)

Affirmative measures, and in particular quotas, are needed for all decision-making bodies and processes

Ensure the meaningful implementation of temporary special measures for women’s political participation at national and local levels through the imposition of sanctions for non-compliance. Parties sanctioned for non-compliance should be excluded from participating in parliament and government

Establish joint training programmes on gender equality for all members of political parties and all male and female candidates for elections, as all need to be educated on gender equality

Adopt political finance reforms to level the playing field for women in political processes

Improve capacities among all relevant stakeholders to engage in gender mainstreaming

Increased national budgetary allocations to gender machineries and for the implementation of gender equality policies

Generate opportunities for collaboration with and among women’s parliamentary caucuses and women’s political networks

Ensure gender mainstreaming across all national laws, policies and programmes

Continued expansion of gender-responsive budgeting legislation and protocols and meaningful application of these tools in countries where they already exist

Develop mechanisms for systematic data collection, at both national and sub-national levels to support decision-making (ex-ante) and policy implementation processes, as well as to measure the results and impact (ex-post) of implemented policies

Ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical data is disaggregated by sex, age, geography, education and disability, etc.

Create mandatory targets for parity in the decision-making bodies of public and private companies as part of legislation on gender equality, including quotas for women on the boards of large private and public companies

Ensure the meaningful inclusion and influence of women's civil society organisations in policymaking at all levels

Establish an independent international women's rights body, in addition to existing mechanisms, such as CEDAW and GREVIO, for the purpose of independent monitoring

Dimension 5

Ensure resource commitments and the establishment of specific targets so that humanitarian assistance post-conflict is transformed into long-term structural support for gender equality

Increase women's participation in peace and conflict negotiations

Prevent and eliminate violence against women in conflict, and ensure access to services and justice for survivors

Ensure long-term comprehensive programmes for the psychological and medical rehabilitation of conflict-affected/internally displaced populations

Increase protection for WHRDs and journalists, and provide them with access to free legal aid and services

Recognise gender-based grounds for asylum and international humanitarian protection

Ensure increased attention and support to

marginalised and vulnerable groups of women as those who face the most serious consequences of converging systemic crises, to ensure that no one is left behind

Dimension 6: Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

Ensure gender mainstreaming in all environmental and disaster-risk management related policies

Increase women's participation and leadership in policy-making and implementation to address the environment and natural resource management, including in the energy sector

Foster public-private sector partnerships to address climate change and environment degradation

Ensure that environmental policies and those regulating extractive industries do not have a disproportionately negative impact of minority and vulnerable populations (environmental racism)

Ensure that new obligations, such as managing the climate and waste crises, do not increase women's burdens

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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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