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## SERIES OF WEBINARS

### **A thousand ways to solve our problems: Preventing and responding to violence against women from an intersectional perspective**

#### ***Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds***

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE**  
**21 September 2020**

#### **I. Background and Context**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a form of gender-based discrimination and a human rights violation. Women experience disadvantage and discrimination based on their sex and gender, which is inextricably linked to other identities, factors, and experiences such as race, ethnicity, location, sexual identity, disability and poverty.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) requires state parties to address the specific needs of persons made vulnerable by particular circumstances (Article 12, paragraph 3). The convention recognizes the greater risk faced by groups of women who are subject to intersectional discrimination (e.g., refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities, minority ethnic women, etc.) and calls for effective cooperation of state agencies with civil society organizations (CSOs). States should provide responses that address the complex dynamics of any form of VAWG and its intersections with other issues and develop measures targeting multiple and intersecting inequalities and other forms of discrimination.

In addition to adhering to the Istanbul Convention, countries aspiring to join the European Union (EU) must uphold the values of gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights that are enshrined in EU foundational documents and policies. The EU monitors and supports adherence to the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the EU in the field of equal treatment of women and men and assists candidate countries and potential candidates with the transposition and enforcement of legislation. Gender equality acquis has become one of the central issues for all EU Member States, as well as for countries that are seeking EU accession. The EU acknowledges that, due to factors such as ethnicity, religion or belief, health, civil status, housing, migration status, age, disability, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, women may have specific needs and be more subjected to multiple discrimination, and this entails that they should be granted special protection.

Acknowledging the structural inequalities that lie at the intersection of gender with factors such as age, disability, membership of a particular ethnic group and nationality, among others, the EU-funded UN

Women Programme [“Ending Discrimination and Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”](#) places a strong focus on tackling multiple discrimination where gender aspects are involved, with a view to address gendered issues and their interaction with other forms of identity by adopting an intersectional approach to address VAWG.

The Programme has researched the situation of women from minority and marginalized groups in the Western Balkans and Turkey, with the participation of over 40 CSOs in the region resulting in a solid overview of the situation and a road map for action. [“A thousand ways to solve our problems: An analysis of existing violence against women and girls approaches for minoritized women and girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey”](#) (Imkaan, 2018) unveils the challenges that face ‘by and for’ organizations – those composed of women from the minority and marginalized groups that they serve – in their efforts to incorporate an intersectional approach to violence in their work, monitor and report to international mechanisms such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention, and engage with the EU accession process. Further to the research findings, three policy briefs addressing key issues raised by the research were produced: [“Funding intersectional violence against women and girls services”](#) (Imkaan, 2019), [“The value of intersectionality in understanding violence against women and girls”](#) (Imkaan, 2019), and [“Data collection by and for minoritized women”](#) (Imkaan, 2019). Furthermore, the Programme is also supporting CSOs to contribute and to produce shadow reports for the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and the CEDAW Committee on programme-participating countries’ progress and remaining challenges in implementing recommendations issued by both entities. [GREVIO baseline reports](#) have largely covered the specific forms of discrimination and violence faced by women from minority and marginalized groups in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as their difficulties to seek accessible and quality services and report violence.

Despite binding international legal framework, the policy briefs highlight the lack of available data on minority and marginalized women and girls and VAWG, preventing research grounded in the lived realities of minority and marginalized women. The lack of available data on minority and marginalized women nurtures already-limited state investment in intersectional work to end VAWG. In some parts of the region, women’s rights organizations have reported instances of withdrawal of state funding when the values of feminist organizations are at odds with state ideology.

Moreover, as revealed in the UN Women-EU rapid assessment [“Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on specialist services for victims and survivors of violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey”](#) (May 2020), the situation of minority and marginalized women and girls across the region has particularly worsened due to the pandemic and response measures, and outreach to them became particularly challenging.

With a view to support the adoption and implementation of the recommendations stemming from the research work done with full involvement of women organizations representing minority and marginalized women, UN Women, the European Union and the Council of Europe are organizing a series of webinars under the title [“A thousand ways to solve our problems: Preventing and responding to violence against women from an intersectional perspective”](#) and with the participation of key stakeholders working on ERAW in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

## II. Purpose and expected results

The series of webinars organized by UN Women, the EU and the Council of Europe is expected to celebrate the achievements and replicable success stories, exchange lessons learnt, and enhance the implementation of the recommendations laid out in programme-produced research, as well as in GREVIO baseline reports and CEDAW concluding observations related to minority and marginalized women, taking into account the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that disproportionately affected women from these groups.

The webinars will be held on the occasion of the following international days, inter alia: International Day of Rural Women (15 October 2020); International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December 2020); International Migrant day ( 18 December 2020); International Roma Day (8 April 2021); World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15 June 2021); and World Refugee Day (20 June 2021).

Each webinar will address issues related to the provision of intersectional EAW services and their funding; women's economic empowerment and human rights; and the lack of equal participation of women from minority and marginalized groups in decision-making, implementation and monitoring of action plans laws that aim to address their specific needs.

### Expected participants:

- Representatives of national and local governments in the Western Balkans and Turkey
- 'By and for' organizations – composed of women from the minority and marginalized groups they serve
- CSOs, including women's rights organizations
- General, state and non-state specialist services providers
- Parliamentarians and independent experts
- Ombudsman offices and other human rights relevant bodies
- European Union delegations in the region and other key development partners
- Regional institutions/organizations, including the Council of Europe and the European Institute for Gender Equality

## III. Organization of the webinars

**Webinar Platform:** Zoom

**Languages:** English will be the working language of the webinars. Considering the diversity of panelists and participants across the Western Balkans and Turkey, translations into local languages will be provided (Albanian-Kosovar, Bosnian-Serbian-Montenegrin, Macedonian, and Turkish).

**Registration:** Invitations will be sent via email to participants who have registered in advance for the webinars. Reminders will be sent a few days before the webinar, as well as on the day of the webinar, and will give participants the opportunity to ask questions in advance. To prevent cyberattacks, the links and the passwords of the webinars will be communicated separately by email to registered participants.

**Interactive features:** The survey/poll feature of Zoom will be used throughout the webinars to capture participants' feedback, understanding and opinions on the content of the webinars, as well as questions and thematic topics they would like to touch upon during the next webinars.

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