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# IMPLEMENTING NORMS, CHANGING MINDS

## WOMEN ACTIVISTS ACROSS THE WESTERN BALKANS STAND FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF ROMA WOMEN

Around 100 Roma women activists, civil society representatives and government officials from the Western Balkans and Turkey gathered virtually on International Roma Day to discuss best practices on preventing and responding to violence against Roma women at the webinar “Intersectional solutions to eliminate violence against Roma women and girls.” The webinar was the fourth in the series “A thousand ways to solve our problems: Preventing and responding to violence against women from an intersectional perspective in the Western Balkans and Turkey,” organized within the framework of the EU-UN Women programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.” [Read more.](#)



Photo: UN Women/ Daria Komleva

## INTERACTIVE MAP: WOMEN LEADERS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY CONFRONT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AMID THE PANDEMIC



The 2021 theme for International Women’s Day was “Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.” On this occasion, Phase II of the EU-funded UN Women programme is launching an interactive map to bring visibility to the leadership of women’s organizations in preventing and responding to violence against women even in the most challenging circumstances. The map features women leaders among civil society partners from the Western Balkans and Turkey - a light on their leadership

role in responding to violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click [here](#) to meet women leaders in a COVID-19 world.

#changingmindstoEVAW

## A NEW, FIRST OF ITS KIND SERVICE PROVISION HAS PROVED USEFUL IN PROTECTING SURVIVORS IN ALBANIA



Photo: UN Women

Minds,” funded by the European Union. [Read more.](#)

Woman Forum Elbasan, a local women’s organization, has been trying new ways of collaborating with the police and the courts to provide necessary services to women survivors of violence and their children. For the first time in Albania, a lawyer is called into police stations every time there is a case of violence to ensure immediate legal coordination and protection to survivors. This work is supported by the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing

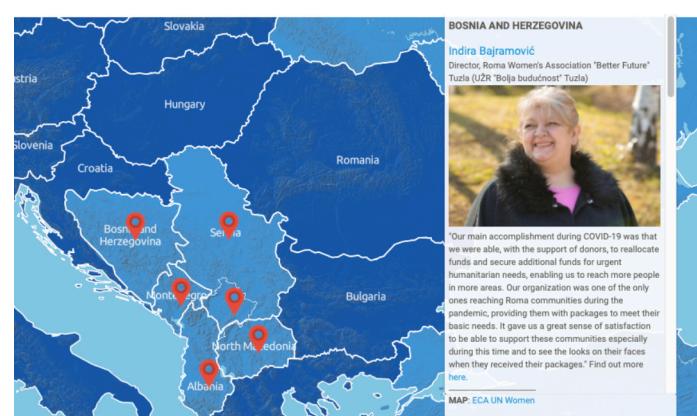


Photo: Personal archive

### IN THE WORDS OF SVETLANA ILIC: “ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION CAN IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ROMA WOMEN, ESPECIALLY SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE”

Svetlana Ilic is a Roma women’s activist working in BIBIJA Roma Women’s Centre, based in Serbia, a partner civil society organization of the UN Women regional programme, “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union. For the last 20 years, Ilic has led the organization of hundreds of workshops on Roma women’s rights to education, health, a life without violence and freedom of choice. She spoke to UN Women about why financial independence, education and self-confidence are key to leaving violent situations and are essential for every woman, including Roma women.

[Read more.](#)



### INTERACTIVE MAP: ROMA WOMEN ACTIVISTS TAKE BOLD ACTION TO END GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN ROMA COMMUNITIES

On the occasion of International Roma Day, 8 April, UN Women regional programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union, launched an interactive map to boost visibility of Roma women’s leadership in preventing and responding to violence against women, and gender-based discrimination. The map features women activists who relentlessly advocate for Roma women’s rights and provide much-needed support and services to Roma women and girls. Click on [the map](#) to meet the Roma women leaders across the Western Balkans.

## POLICE OFFICERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA SPARK A MOVEMENT TO FIGHT GENDER INEQUALITY



Photo: Association "Vive žene" Tuzla

at an important time, when there has been a drastic increase in the number of people who need protection and support due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more.](#)

In the north-eastern Tuzla canton of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the first time in history, a campaign has brought together 1,600 police officers to advocate for ending violence against women and challenge the harmful norms that contribute to gender-based violence. The campaign, entitled “You hear, you see, you know – REACT,” is organized by the Association Vive žene within the UN Women regional programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union. The campaign takes place



Photo: UN Albania/ Bevis Fusha



Photo: "Nace Bugjoni" high school

## HOW A GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN ALBANIA IS MAKING SURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

Building back better from COVID-19 requires investment in feminist and grassroots leadership. In this story, learn how an organization from Albania, supported by the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union, had tremendous impact during the pandemic by ensuring that Roma women have access to quality services and information to report and recover from violence.

[Read more.](#)

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH MACEDONIA EXPLORE NEW PATHWAYS TO AN EQUAL FUTURE

High school teachers and students across North Macedonia are empowered to reject harmful gender stereotypes and support women and girls who experience violence, thanks to the project “Creating a culture towards gender equality,” implemented by the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association and the Association for psychology and psychotherapy Psihoterapika, within the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union.

[Read more.](#)

## TAKE FIVE: “IT’S HARD TO SPEAK OUT WHEN YOU BELIEVE NO ONE IS THERE TO HEAR”



Photo: Personal archive

Bojana Jovanovska is a project coordinator at the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, one of the most active organizations in promoting the human rights of all vulnerable groups in North Macedonia. For the last five years, the organization has been a partner of the EU-UN Women regional programme “Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”. Jovanovska spoke to UN Women on how, for the first time in history, thanks to HCHR support, two Roma women filed a complaint to the Committee

on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) after they were denied access to sexual and reproductive health services because of their ethnicity. [Read more.](#)



Photo: Personal archive



Photos: Personal archive

## IN THE WORDS OF BLERTA CANI: “EMPOWERING YOUNG GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IS ONE OF OUR KEY MISSIONS”

Blerta Cani is the Executive Director of the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation. After participating as a key speaker at the webinar “Intersectional solutions to eliminate violence against women and girls living with disabilities,” organized within the regional UN Women programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union, Cani spoke to UN Women about how the organization’s field work is directly informing policy-making and law-development in Albania and what urgent actions are needed to prevent and respond to violence against women with disabilities, especially during the pandemic.

[Read more.](#)

## SYRIAN GIRLS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FOLLOW THEIR DREAMS AND CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION

Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has put Syrian girls at risk of dropping out of school, especially those who do not have access to the internet and technological devices, increasing the risk of child, early and forced marriage. The initiative “Girls at School, Futures are Safe” aims to ensure that Syrian girls continue their education and do not face child, early and forced marriage. The initiative is implemented by the Flying Broom Women’s Communication and Research Association within the EU-UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”.

[Read more.](#)

## IN THE WORDS OF NATASA MEDJEDOVIC: “THE SERVICES OF WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE TREATED IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES”



Natasa Medjedovic is the Executive Coordinator at the SOS Hotline Niksic in Montenegro, a civil society organization partner of the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union. Medjedovic spoke to UN Women about how, despite the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the functioning of women’s organizations and shelters, SOS Hotline Niksic has made every effort to stay available 24/7 as each

woman affected by violence has the right to be better protected. [Read more.](#)

## IN THE WORDS OF MARIJA RISTESKA: “THE RECOGNITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AS GOVERNMENT’S PARTNER IN THE PROCESS OF ALIGNING NATIONAL LAWS WITH THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION IS OUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT”

Marija Risteska is the Executive Director of Centre for Research and Policy Making, a civil society organization from North Macedonia, partner of the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,” funded by the European Union. Risteska spoke to UN Women about the changes brought by the new law on ending violence against women, adopted in January, and the new amendments to the Criminal Code, yet to be adopted. She also shares her insights on how civil society organizations must sit at the same table with government counterparts in order to ensure the advancement of women’s rights and gender equality in North Macedonia. [Read more.](#)



## TAKE FIVE: “IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL LAWS ARE HARMONIZED WITH THE OBLIGATIONS IN THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION”



Prior to serving as the Ombudsperson in Kosovo\*, Naim Qelaj was the National Coordinator against Domestic Violence. A lawyer by profession, Qelaj has been committed to making gender equality a reality throughout his career. Qelaj spoke to UN Women about the progress made towards ending violence against women with the support of the EU-funded regional programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.” [Read more.](#)

\* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND UN WOMEN BOOST THEIR PARTNERSHIP TO ADDRESS THE RISE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Photo: Nebojsha Gelevski

The European Commission and UN Women, joined by over 60 representatives from governments and civil society organizations, launched a new component within the EU-funded UN Women regional programme “**Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds**” to accelerate and strengthen the response to the surge in violence against women and girls amidst the pandemic in the Western Balkans.

[Read more.](#)

## UNITED WE STAND, TOGETHER WE ACT FOR ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the European Union and UN Women have collaborated with women’s rights organizations across the Western Balkans and Turkey and have kicked off 40 new partnerships to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the provision of specialist services for women survivors of violence. Watch the [video](#) developed within the UN Women regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey “**Implementing Norms, Changing Minds,**” funded by the European Union.



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