

OSCE THIRD GENDER EQUALITY REVIEW CONFERENCE

FINAL REPORT

27th - 28th October 2020

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Foreword

Concurrent with the milestone anniversaries of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the five-year marker of the SDGs, the OSCE Albanian Chairmanship, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Secretariat organized the Third Gender Equality Review Conference. The event focused on measuring the implementation of the [2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality](#).

As joint organizers of the third OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference in 2020, we are pleased to present a summary document, outlining highlights of the discussion and key recommendations.

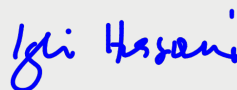
The broad national representation and the high level of technical expertise of participants at the Conference reflected the strong commitment of OSCE participating States to address persistent challenges

in achieving gender equality across the Organization's three dimensions of security. Participants thoroughly examined the application of the rich array of OSCE gender equality initiatives and tools. Held on-line in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the gendered impacts of the pandemic was also an important theme throughout the discussion.

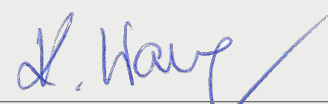
While there has been some progress towards achieving gender equality objectives over the past three years, the Conference identified worrying gaps and shortcomings. We call on all executive structures and participating States to strengthen their efforts to tackle them. Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, including in some respects a significant regression of hard-won advances, greater attention to gender equality and further action is more critical than ever.



Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä
Officer-in-Charge/Secretary
General, Director of the CPC,
Deputy Head of the OSCE



Ambassador Igli Hasani
Chairperson of the OSCE
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First Deputy Director/
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Introduction and Conference Summary

The year 2020 marks both the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It is in this context of global stocktaking that the OSCE held its third Gender Equality Review Conference (GERC). Organized by the Albanian Chair, in co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and with generous financial support from the delegations of Austria, Finland, Norway and Slovakia.

The Third Gender Equality Review Conference was held on-line in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, on 27 - 28 October. It served as a platform for experts to discuss progress and challenges, share good practices and lessons learned, and identify recommendations for moving forward with the implementation of OSCE gender equality commitments in a changing political and economic global context.

There were 324 registered participants, representing OSCE participating States and executive structures, international organizations, civil society, and academia from across the OSCE area. Seventy-four per cent of participants were women (240 women and 84 men) compared to 80 per cent at the Second Gender Equality Review Conference in 2017, with 200 participants joining the different sessions on average.

Four thematic Discussion Papers were shared with Conference participants preceding the event, which provided statistical and analytical information reviewing the progress made in the OSCE region on the implementation of gender equality

commitments. The Discussion Papers are annexed to this report.

Despite marked progress in a few areas, the overall assessment by Conference speakers, is that advances in gender equality have been too slow. Conference panelists and participants pointed to the 29 per cent representation of women in parliaments in the region, and substantially lower levels of women's participation in the security sector. Gender pay gap, occupational segregation and women's unequal share of unpaid domestic and care work were all highlighted, among other factors, as limiting their empowerment in the region. Violence against women in the political and public sphere, at work and in the home, was acknowledged as a significant impediment to women's advancement across thematic areas. The rollback of progress in gender equality occasioned by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a principle source of concern.

At the high-level **opening session**, presenters took the opportunity to recognize the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and its longstanding commitments to gender equality, highlighting the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality as a solid foundation for progress achieved. The Secretariat's Gender Parity Strategy and the [OSCE-led Survey on Well-being and Safety of Women](#), were acknowledged as two recent examples of significant achievements. The session emphasized the inherent interconnections between gender equality and security, democracy and prosperity, thus setting the conceptual framework for the forthcoming discussions. Attention was called to persistent gaps in implementation of

OSCE commitments, as well as a shortage of funding to address them, both within the OSCE and in participating States.

The **next session** was devoted to a review of achievements and challenges within the Organization since the Second Gender Equality Review Conference in 2017. It covered the gendered impact of COVID-19, including the rise of gender-based violence, and the effects on women's security, political participation and economic empowerment. It drew on the Secretary General's [Special Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality \(2017-2019\), Towards Gender Equality in the OSCE](#), to highlight specific achievements and mixed results of initiatives such as the Gender Parity Strategy and a 2019 perceptions survey on inclusiveness of the workplace environment (Safe Space Survey).

Field missions presented good practice models, such as: developing tailored gender equality strategies, improving the disaggregation of data, and in programmatic terms, extensive efforts to build the capacity of women in rural areas and at the local level. High staff turnover and low representation of women among mission members, especially in the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, were mentioned as limitations in effectively building capacity for, and mainstreaming, a gender perspective in field mission work.

Focusing on women's participation in political and public life, the **first thematic session** of the Conference, recalled that a critical mass is needed to change institutional culture, and drew attention to the significance, beyond numbers, of the roles that women play in political institutions. Political will, and the decisions made by political parties, particularly in the promotion and placement

of female candidates on electoral lists, were identified as decisive to women's advancement. Presenters described CSOs and OSCE efforts to build women's capacities to run for election and to hold office, at both national and local levels, and highlighted the importance of support by male colleagues. Ensuring the inclusion of the full diversity of women, and barriers to doing so, were also discussed. The balance of work and family life was identified as another challenge to women's political participation, as was the increased level of violence against women in the public sphere.

The **second thematic session** on women's participation in the security sector focused on what constitutes women's meaningful participation and how to promote institutional change in traditionally male-dominated institutions. The importance of gender conflict analysis and a diversity of perspectives from the field were emphasized. Speakers noted the need for an expanded framework for engagement: institutionally, by moving beyond working with the formal security sector to collaboration with government actors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and by expanding the concept of security to encompass a broader range of issues, such as access to food, housing and medicines. Speakers also highlighted the need to build reforms on evidence, intersectional analysis and data that is segregated by gender, race, and other grounds for discrimination. Specific tools were referenced, in particular those developed by the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR, as well as the creation of internal complaint mechanisms within security institutions. The discussion also addressed the negative impact of COVID-19 on women's participation in the security sector. Security sector personnel are considered "essential workers" and as such are

expected to be on duty. This has proven to be challenging for women who were unable to combine duty with family care obligations, forcing some of them to resign.

The potential economic growth that research suggests would accompany women's equal economic engagement, and conversely, the costs of their exclusion, were reiterated throughout the **third thematic session** on women's economic empowerment. This session approached women's economic participation and empowerment from diverse angles. The impact of COVID-19, especially the resulting increase in women's unpaid care and domestic work, on women's economic participation was emphasized as one of the most pressing current challenges. Barriers to women's participation in the ICT sector and women's entrepreneurship were also discussed, emphasizing the need to involve men in the quest for gender equality.

While recognizing that progress to date has been too slow, **closing session** presenters underscored the Conference as a platform for renewed commitment and the incoming Swedish Chairpersonship stated that it will place gender equality at the center of its agenda next year. Youth representatives offered concrete suggestions for raising the profile and voice of young women and men within the Organization and in the peace and security sector.

High - Level Opening

SAULI NIINISTÖ

President of Finland (video message)

OGERTA MANASTIRLIU

Minister of Health and Social Protection of Albania (video message) Ambassador Kelley Currie, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

ÅSA REGNÉR

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director UN Women

AMBASSADOR TUULA YRJÖLÄ

Officer-in-Charge/Secretary General, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center, Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat

KATARZYNA GARDAPKHADZE

First Deputy Director/Director's Alternate of ODIHR

MODERATOR: AMBASSADOR IGLI HASANI

Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE

The High-Level Opening speakers set the stage for the discussions by linking the OSCE's unique concept of comprehensive security to its gender equality commitments. They highlighted that gender equality is inseparably intertwined with achieving peace, security and economic development and prosperity in the OSCE region and beyond.

"I am alarmed by the ongoing attempts to challenge women's and girls' rights. We must make sure that gender equality goes forward, not backward."

Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland

The critical role of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004 GAP) was emphasized as the foundational basis for past and more recent achievements within the OSCE and its participating States. The Conference was appreciated as an important stock-taking

exercise for the OSCE community at a time of significant opportunities for reviewing global commitments in connection with the anniversaries of both the Beijing Platform for Action and UNSCR 1325. Two key OSCE achievements since 2017 were highlighted:

- [The 2018 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women](#), which has taken on particular relevance in light of the alarming increase in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic; and,
- A landmark OSCE-led [Survey on the prevalence of violence against women in Eastern and South Eastern Europe](#) both in conflict and non-conflict settings, which generated unique, comparable data and provides concrete recommendations to governments and civil society organizations to strengthen policies and actions to combat violence against women and girls.

The Conference was also seen as an opportunity to renew the OSCE institutional commitment, particularly in the face of the significant challenges that remain. Some of the key challenges mentioned included the following:

- While 70 per cent of the countries in the OSCE region have established 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs), only few of them have been budgeted.
- Women remain under-represented in the security sector and diplomatic corps.
- Women have made uneven progress in terms of economic empowerment with only 40 per cent of women economically active in the Europe and Central Asia region, compared to 70 per cent of men.
- Regarding women's political participation, women make up only approximately 29 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide, despite their high levels of education in many countries.

Another key challenge to surface has been the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of women's higher exposure as frontline workers, the exacerbation of pre-existing social and economic inequalities, including through women's disproportionate contribution to unpaid care and domestic work, and the increased incidence of violence against women. Amidst concern that the pandemic has had a negative impact on gains achieved in gender equality so far, increased attention was called to recognize and act upon these gendered implications, in order to mitigate their disproportionate impact on women.

“COVID-19 has revealed yet again that women need their own income, access to health and a means to escape domestic and intimate partner violence.”

Åsa Regnér, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director UN Women

In addition to the challenges presented by COVID, an exchange was held as to what is needed for a full and meaningful political participation of women, particularly in terms of addressing increased threats to women's safety in the public sphere. Women need to be safe from violence - at home and in the public sphere - in order to engage in political participation—not only politicians, but also human rights defenders.

A 2018 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), [Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe](#), found that 85 per cent of the 123 surveyed female members of parliament and parliamentary staff had suffered some form of gender-based violence and that half of them had received death threats or threats of rape or beating. The study signals the need for adequate protection mechanisms for women's engagement in public life. The concurrent shrinking space for women's movements further calls for protecting civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's rights actors and their engagement in the public sphere.

Finally, a significant cultural shift in society was recognized as necessary to disrupt the persistent drivers of gender inequality: unequal power relations, deeply-rooted gender stereotypes, and attitudes and behaviours that condone discrimination against women.

The OSCE was called on to lead by example by providing a work environment where all staff feel included, valued and supported, and where women and men have equal opportunities to contribute and succeed.

Review of Implementation of OSCE commitments

AMBASSADOR MELANNE VERVEER

Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues

AMARSANAA DARISUREN

Senior Gender Adviser, OSCE Secretariat Gender Issues Programme

MODERATOR: AMBASSADOR CLEMENS KOJA

Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje

This session provided an overview of progress achieved, current and ongoing challenges for advancing gender equality in participating States, and an assessment of progress and challenges related to the implementation of the three pillars of the 2004 GAP by OSCE executive structures since the second Gender Equality Review Conference held in 2017. Progress in implementing relevant Ministerial Council decisions on combatting violence against women, women in conflict prevention, crisis management, and post conflict rehabilitation, women's participation in political and public life and women's economic empowerment, as well as other decisions in key areas of work across all three dimensions of security were also discussed.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OSCE COMMITMENTS TO ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

Violence against women is a cross-cutting issue in gender equality, and reflected in all three thematic sessions of the Conference. Considering the high prevalence and the large scale of its consequences, violence against women constitutes one of the most entrenched issues of our time. It extracts

huge costs on women and society, including an economic toll due to its effects on productivity and the costs of response. The increased attacks on women in elected office correlate more generally with social instability, and violence against women is exacerbated during conflict and in post-conflict societies, both in the public and private sphere. At the same time, new threats have presented themselves through digitalization and technology.

While important efforts have been made across the region to improve laws, policies, criminal justice response mechanisms, as well as shelters and services for victims, pushback against the Istanbul Convention and the decriminalization of domestic violence in some countries in the region has resulted in less protection for women.

Consequently, increased awareness raising, including through the engagement of men and boys, remains necessary. Legislation must be updated to combat violence against women through the use of technology, and protective and complaint mechanisms must be established to ensure the protection of women from violence committed against them in the public sphere. Initiatives to combat violence against women, and

their financing, must also be bolstered in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and implemented across the conflict cycle.

Women's economic participation plays a decisive role in growing sustainable economies, given the multiplier effect of their spending, especially as they tend to invest in their families and societies through education and healthcare. Yet, in discourse on post-conflict and crisis economic recovery, gender remains an after-thought at best. Women continue to face access barriers to capital, markets, property ownership and inheritance rights. In some parts of the region, women remain barred from some types of employment, confront barriers to entering STEM professions, and face employment discrimination.

Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in the workplace, women's "second shift" responsibilities and lack of affordable childcare also constrain women's economic progress. Efforts must focus on eliminating the digital divide, gender stereotypes in education and employment, discriminatory legislation and the gender pay gap. At the same time, participating States should develop public policies to reconcile work and family life, such as by ensuring social protection for care providers and by undertaking 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.

The enactment of pay transparency measures, implemented in a few countries in the region, should be replicated. Furthermore, the new ILO Convention (C190) on Violence and Harassment ratified. Education and employment policies could foster women's increased participation in STEM professions

and the expansion of job opportunities in the "green" economy.

Progress in **women's political participation** remains uneven in the region, as only 24 out of 57 OSCE participating States have reached a level of 30 per cent or more women's representation in parliament—a target established by the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Agenda. While not parity, it represents progress. ODIHR's gender audits of political parties constitute an important tool in revealing the gaps that remain in the implementation of ministerial decisions on women's political participation.

“Democracy without women’s participation is a contradiction.”

**Ambassador Melanne Verwee,
Special Representative of the OSCE
Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues**

The pandemic’s disproportionate impact on women exposed and exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and threatens to

reverse progress achieved. The fact that the current economic recession has been termed a “she-session” clearly reveals the need for a gender lens to be applied to emergency response and long-term recovery efforts.

Yet, women’s leadership has been lacking in the COVID-19 response, as in disaster management generally.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTICIPATING STATES

- Increase women’s leadership and participation in crisis COVID-19 response mechanisms
- Increase support for multi-sectoral responses and services in the face of the uptick in domestic violence during lockdowns
- Improve laws, policies and programmes to effectively tackle violence against women, including new threats through the use of technology
- Integrate initiatives on combatting violence against women throughout the conflict cycle
- Establish complaint and protective mechanisms for victims of violence against women in politics and in the public sphere
- For conflict-and-crisis affected States, incorporate a gender perspective into post-conflict and economic crisis recovery plans
- Amend legislation and ensure the de facto elimination of barriers to women’s access to property ownership and inheritance rights
- Foster women’s increased access to capital and markets through tailored, gender-responsive economic empowerment programmes
- Eliminate the digital divide in education and employment, and foster women’s advancement in STEM fields
- Eliminate structural barriers and discrimination in hiring, recruitment, employment, pay for work
- Address negative gender stereotypes and promote equal sharing of unpaid household and care work
- Use gender audits, to measure the implementation of gender equality commitments

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2004 GAP WITHIN OSCE EXECUTIVE STRUCTURES

The 2004 GAP established gender equality as an institutional goal and identified gender mainstreaming as the principle strategy for achieving that goal, assigning a number of tasks to executive structures. The Special Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019), Towards Gender Equality in the OSCE, identified tangible progress made over the past three years.

The report highlighted three key achievements for OSCE executive structures: an improving gender balance in staffing; more research and greater availability of data; and stronger internal capacities for gender mainstreaming.

A number of significant baseline studies carried out over the last three years, and the adoption of methodological guidance leading to the development of new policies and initiatives were also highlighted.

With respect to staffing, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) was seen as the driving force behind the Gender Parity Strategy 2019-2026. The Strategy establishes clear objectives covering the entire Organization and aims to foster an inclusive, enabling work environment and a bias-free work culture, in order to enhance talent management and to increase leadership and accountability as mutually reinforcing streams of work.

The Strategy introduces more robust gender equitable selection processes and provides for systematic monitoring to hold

hiring managers accountable. Initial results have been positive, although the number of women in senior management positions (S4/P5 and above) remains low.

Advances were also made in generating available data and research for evidence-based organizational policies. A 2019 study entitled, “Myth Busting: Women, Gender Parity and the OSCE,” produced by DHR, explored the underlying reasons for the drop in the numbers of women in P3 to P4 positions.

With respect to ensuring a gender-sensitive and professional work environment, a joint UN-OSCE Safe Space Survey in 2019 revealed high levels of sexual harassment. Specifically, it found that 45.7 per cent of respondents had experienced sexual harassment within the OSCE; and 42 per cent had witnessed sexual harassment. In response, the Secretary General launched an action plan to prevent sexual harassment and to ensure a safe workplace in the OSCE. A number of other initiatives have been implemented, including, inter alia, trainings for staff members to become “fact-finders”/ investigators on alleged violations of the OSCE Policy on Professional Working Environment, and the introduction of mandatory on-line training for all staff. More flexible work arrangements across executive structures have yet to be further enhanced and implemented.

In order to strengthen leadership and accountability on gender equality, senior management within the Secretariat has benefitted from an Executive Gender Coaching Programme. Some Missions, including the OSCE Mission in Kosovo¹ and Mission to Skopje, have provided this training to senior and mid-level management.

¹ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

DHR also introduced mandatory gender-responsive performance objectives for all supervisors within the Organization, in-line with recommendations by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO). The use of these performance objectives in reducing reliance on individual staff commitment will be assessed in the coming years.

IMPROVING INTERNAL CAPACITIES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE WORK OF OSCE

The OSCE undertook a capacity assessment of around 1500 staff members to establish baseline data on their knowledge and capacity to mainstream gender into their daily work, policies, programmes, projects, activities with external stakeholders, as well as into internal processes, such as communications, human resources, and executive management. The assessment demonstrated that specific training is needed to build the awareness, knowledge and skills of staff on gender mainstreaming, as well as to address unconscious bias and gender stereotypes. The assessment found higher capacity in the Secretariat and ODIHR, with uneven capacity in the field, the SMM in particular.

At the same time, the OSCE has made progress in its ability to measure gender mainstreaming in the work of the Organization. For example, gender parity on panels at conferences and events serves as one indicator. A baseline assessment in 2018 determined that women only represented one-third of all speakers at OSCE conferences and events. There were a total of 36 male-only panels and 9 all-female panels. Events in the human dimension continued to have highest number of female speakers in 2019 (50,7 per cent) while in the politico-military dimension, women

make up 29 per cent of speakers and in economic and environmental dimension 34 per cent of speakers. A gender marker was introduced to evaluate the level of gender mainstreaming in projects and initiatives across all dimensions. A recent assessment of extra-budgetary projects from 2017-19 found a modest increase (8 per cent) in the consideration of gender in the design of extra-budgetary projects, ranging from a slight increase within the political-military dimension to a more meaningful increase (13-28 per cent) in the economic and environmental dimension. Notably, the expansion of the network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) has significantly strengthened the OSCE gender architecture.

Representatives from field missions also reported progress and challenges in the implementation of their specific gender action plans. Field mission priorities on gender equality included holding workshops on gender issues for Mission Members and external partners, improving work-life balance in light of COVID-19, offering webinars on gender issues during lockdowns, including gender within induction trainings and launching an executive training on gender, and disaggregating statistics to foster gendered analysis in reporting. Field staff indicated that capacity building, exchange of knowledge, materials and best practices within the OSCE and with other comparable, as well as high-level political support were all helpful in mainstreaming gender.

Programmatic activities that had gender equality as the principle objective included initiatives such as; the establishment of security sector women's associations and of networks of women's community initiative groups engaged in local decision making peace building activities, including in border areas; capacity building workshops

to support women's candidacies for local councils; women-for-women mentoring; a handbook for women in parliament; support for drafting a new gender equality law; and the establishment of employment centres that focus on women entrepreneurs, business planning and financial literacy. High staff turnover was cited as a challenge to internal capacity building for large missions, such as the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). Gender parity in

the SMM remains a big challenge. From 14 per cent women in 2017, staff now is still only comprised of 21 per cent women. This hampers the integration of gender into the Mission's monitoring work. Another Mission observed that decisions are taken by an all-male management.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OSCE EXECUTIVE STRUCTURES

- Increase gender parity among staff, particularly in field missions, and at decision-making levels
- Transform organizational culture that promotes equality through gender awareness trainings and leadership actions
- Ensure that working conditions across all executive structures promote equality for all staff
- Enhance accountability of managers to promoting gender equality
- Enhance the level of mainstreaming gender perspective in policies, programmes and projects across executive structures

Women's Participation in Political and Public Life

DR HEDY FRY

Special Representative on Gender Issues of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Member of Parliament of Canada

SENATOR TANZILA NARBAEVA

Chairperson of the Senate of the Oily Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan

DR DAMIR ARNAUT

Member of the House of Representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Parliamentary Assembly and member of parliamentary Gender Equality Committee

MODERATOR: AJLA VAN HEEL MERDANOVIĆ

ODIHR Gender Adviser

“If we are excluding half of our population from actively participating in decision-making and having a voice, we are compromising our democracies and ignoring skills and talent.”

Katarzyna Gardapkhadze, First Deputy Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Progress has been observed in women's political participation across the OSCE region, particularly in legislative bodies. Women's representation in national parliaments increased to the current average of 28. Seven per cent in the OSCE region, up from around 11 per cent when the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women took place in 1995.² Almost half of the OSCE participating States (24 out of 57) have reached the 30 per cent target established by the Beijing Platform for Action and the

SDGs.³ The thematic session on women's participation in political and public life focused on how to best move from numbers to substantially transformed institutions, and to ensure that politics and public office are safe for women. Progress was observed in women's participation in legislative bodies, with women currently representing an average 29 per cent of parliamentarians in the OSCE region, up from around 11 per cent when the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women took place in 1995. Despite progress, participants highlighted the need for more targeted efforts to overcome existing challenges and move from critical mass to critical power and influence of women in politics.

Discussion was based on a background paper (attached to this report) and focused on three country case studies (Uzbekistan, Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina), with

² Inter-Parliamentary Union, Percentage of Women in National Parliaments and archived data.

³ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, para 182.

complementary examples from Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan. The panellists observed that legal frameworks for gender equality exist in most participating States, yet their effective implementation is key to addressing different political realities. Caring responsibilities, unequal access to finance, stereotypes and violence against women, lack of confidence and opportunity to experience formal politics, and male-dominated political structures need to be addressed for women to enter, stay and lead in politics.

Main themes discussed for future action included: a) institutional change within parliaments and political parties; b) affirmative measures, including quotas to increase women's representation; c) support to women leaders, and d) political will to promote women and address violence against women in politics, along with proactive support from male allies. Parliaments' responsibility as a public institution to integrate gender equality and diversity aspects in their representative, legislative and oversight functions as well as in their role as public employers was highlighted. A number of parliaments in the OSCE region, including Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, have recently developed gender action plans for their institutions, as strategic documents to foster institutional change towards gender equality. Gender-sensitive legislation was also seen as crucial to ensuring that laws work and deliver for women and men, boys and girls, in all their diversity.⁴ Additionally, women parliamentarian groups were identified as important support structures. It was noted that their openness to all women, regardless of party affiliation, was essential to advancing

women's right though not always a given in all countries.

Political parties were repeatedly identified as key players and gatekeepers, enabling or hindering gender equality developments in political life. Supportive actions taken by parties, including the adoption of voluntary gender quotas, decisive backing by party leadership, funding for female candidates' party campaigning, and specific training for aspiring women politicians or the existence of party-internal women's networks are setting the grounds for increased and meaningful women's political participation. The process of ensuring equal participation and gender equality in political parties can be guided by ODIHR's online Gender Audit of Political Party, a self-assessment tool that enables a party to identify both strengths and shortcomings in its gender equality approach as well as provides recommendations for improvement.⁵

The issue of legislative gender quotas, introduced in 22 participating States in the last two decades, were identified as effective mechanisms to advance women to elected office, though only as effective as their formulation and implementation. A relatively high percentage target for the underrepresented sex, specific placement orders for candidates' lists, and effective sanctions for non-compliance are key to quotas' success. In Montenegro, when a 30 per cent legislative gender quota was passed, political parties placed women at lower positions on the candidate lists. The law was then amended to require one woman to be placed within every four candidates, and to be replaced by another woman in case of resignation during a parliamentary mandate.

⁴ ODIHR's publication *Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation* provides a step-by-step guide for parliaments on how to implement gender-sensitive legislation.

⁵ ODIHR's online Gender Audit for Political Parties is available in English and Russian language. Guide for parliaments on how to implement gender-sensitive legislation.

Similar challenges have been observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The electoral legislation is gender neutral and reserves 40 per cent of positions on candidates' lists for the "lesser-represented sex". However, due to the complexity of the electoral system, actual women's participation falls well below the quotas set forth within state legislation. Currently, women constitute only 23 per cent of the State Parliament (lower chamber). The situation is similar in the two Entity parliaments.

Support, awareness raising, and capacity building for women politicians and women aspiring to politics is key especially in countries with lower rates of women's representation. In Kyrgyzstan, since the recent introduction of a mandatory gender quota of 30 per cent for local councils, there has been a great level of interest and enthusiasm from rural women. The OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek's capacity-building support, offered in collaboration with ODIHR, provided women with knowledge and skills about running for political office. Participating women already had a standing in their communities, but lacked knowledge about the gender quotas and participating actively in politics.

Ensuring the participation of the full diversity of women in politics and public life will require increased awareness raising, as well as disaggregated data to assess how specific groups are faring. Mentoring and skills development, and gender-specific or gender sensitive financial support for political campaigning are also important.

Underscoring the critical importance of political will among decision-makers, recent changes in the political climate in Uzbekistan, including the passage of approximately 20 parliamentary acts on women's rights, gender equality and the SDGs, have

already resulted in a significant increase in women's political participation. Women's participation has expanded to mayorships and ambassadorships; and their participation in parliament has doubled. Women now constitute 23 per cent of senators and 22 per cent of deputies.

Another factor contributing to women's success in a male dominated environment is support from male colleagues. There were suggestions that men should engage in campaigns and advocacy to increase women's political participation. In Canada, training for parliamentarians, with a focus on training men rather than women, highlighted the importance of respectful behaviour, as well as the duty to report incidents of violence against women politicians.

Increased entry of women into the political arena has resulted in heightened violence against women in politics in all its forms, underscoring the need for "safe places" and protective mechanisms. One example of institutional response includes the protective service against violence or harassment provided by the Speaker of Parliament in Canada for anyone employed in Parliament, not just parliamentarians.

Data collection on violence against women in the public sphere was deemed important in order to know who is targeted. Parliaments, parties and social media play important roles in countering all forms of violence against women, including in politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARTICIPATING STATES FOR STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Identify and remedy discriminatory laws and policies to reinforce political participation of diverse and under-represented groups of women
- Promote institutional change in parliaments – mainstream gender aspects in all parliamentary roles and at all levels, for example by developing Gender Action Plans for Parliaments
- Ensure equal participation of women and men in political parties, for example guided by ODIHR's online gender audit for political parties
- Create support mechanisms and knowledge exchange for women politicians and those aspiring for politics
- Invest in human capital – support women leaders and women's organizations
- Strengthen political will and male support to promote safe and active participation of women in politics

Women's Participation in the Security Sector

CALLUM WATSON

Project Coordinator, DCAF Gender and Security Division

NINO LOMJARIA

The Public Defender (Ombudsperson) of Georgia

MIMI KODHELI

Chairperson of the Committee for Foreign Policy, Albanian Parliament

MODERATOR: LT. COL. LENA KVARVING

Norwegian Armed Forces, Gender Adviser/OSCE

The session on women's participation in the security sector focused on issues hampering progress and on evidence-based good practices for institutional change geared towards women's meaningful participation. Globally, women's participation in the security sector remains a major challenge. It is still unlikely for women to reach high level decision making positions, due to normative frameworks restricting their inclusion or informal barriers including non-conducive working environments for them to stay in service and advance through the ranks. Other examples include pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which often exclude them from management or operational responsibilities, as well as various forms of harassment they are subjected to. Women often decide to leave security forces due to their prevailing culture which disproportionately excludes women from power, leadership and privilege or holds narrow forms of masculinities as the defining paradigm of the security institution.

The importance of women's participation in the security sector is often understood in a limited way, and narrowed to responses to gender-based violence. Yet, women's roles in the security and defense sector go far beyond the issue of protecting women, as does the protection of women's human rights. Women have the right to serve on an equal basis, including in the armed forces. Moreover, a diversity of perspectives and contributions brought about by women in operational settings, including in conflict management, is necessary to ensure an effective and comprehensive delivery of security.

Good practices have emerged for promoting women's participation in the security sector. For example, in Georgia, the defense sector is comprised of eight per cent women and only two per cent of leadership positions are held by women. Women make up seven per cent of staff of the Ministry of Interior. Yet, important progress is being made. A Gender Equality Action Plan, including an internal complaint mechanism, was

adopted. Electronic training courses on gender equality and sexual harassment were established. Sex-disaggregated data is now being collected by the Ministry of Defense, which allows for a gendered analysis. The gender equality unit of the Public Defender (Ombudsperson) in Georgia has an important oversight function, monitoring the defense sector, including interviewing female staff, in order to strengthen its accountability. Particularly, it monitors the implementation of the 1325 NAP, identifying gaps, problems and specific needs. The Public Defender further promotes the principles of gender equality in the security sector, and has assisted in trainings and in the introduction of an internal response mechanism to sexual harassment. In addition, UN Women conducted an external gender audit of the Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutors Office's financial policies with respect to gender budgeting.

Achieving meaningful participation requires identifying and tackling traditional discriminatory gender roles and shifts in institutional culture. This entails analysing whether pre-conceived attitudes prevent women from participating, and whether or not women are included as equal members of teams. Social exclusion and harassment, often rooted in persistent gender norms and stereotypes, are mechanisms to exclude women. Addressing implicit bias calls for the elimination of discretionary decision making and establishing objective criteria in laws and policies. Establishing internal and external oversight and accountability often involves challenging hierarchy and power.

Women's meaningful participation requires equal access to resources. For example, funds need to be allocated to ensure

uniforms and equipment of security personnel are designed for women's bodies, in the same way they are for men's. Yet, women also need to be able to have an impact on the institutions where they work. This process can be arduous; therefore, good leadership is necessary. Gender markers can be important tools to provide information regarding the implementation and institutional commitment towards gender mainstreaming.

An intersectional approach is needed to foster the integration of women from different social groups. International actors can insist on diversity in negotiations. At the same time, greater diversity is also needed among international actors and oversight bodies. One example of an effort to ensure diversity involved a Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) training of trainers in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was conducted in different parts of the country as a means of ensuring diversity among participants. Disaggregated statistics are also essential for obtaining data on diversity.

National Action Plans (NAPs)⁶ on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 play an important role in accelerating progress to involve women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. For example, the 1325 NAP in Albania initiated co-operation among state institutions to create a regulatory framework that enhances women's participation. It also called for the creation of a Gender Equality Plan for Parliament, which established a framework for the inclusion of gender in parliamentary oversight processes. The Albanian NAP also strengthened the gender perspective in education and training programmes and increased understanding of

⁶ An OSCE study on the "Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region" was published in January 2020: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444577>

security needs of women and girls. It is important to have evidence-based information on situations on the ground before implementing UNSCR 1325 provisions in a certain situation. Assessments should be the first step to develop understanding of the local context with conscious consideration of the community that is built through the process. This enables increased willingness, capacity and understanding. There need to be defined trainings and follow-up tasks, such as coaching or mentoring, being linked to action plan objectives to prompt institutional change.

UNSCR 1325 has also fostered a different understanding of conflicts and their impact especially on the civilian population. For example, increased understanding has emerged in the past decades of the need to engage non-state security providers, including e.g. civil society organizations and grass root mediation networks in conflict prevention and management along with security sector institutions, addressing or mitigating conflict dynamics. Oversight mechanisms, such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), parliaments or civil society play a critical role in holding institutions accountable. In addition, NGOs, media and women's organizations can be invaluable in security oversight and in facilitating community-based resolutions by applying their expertise in gender conflict analysis. Similarly, crisis management should not only focus on the threat of physical violence, but also to access to food, shelter and medical supplies.

The gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is having significant implications on security sector personnel. In Georgia, for example, as in many other countries, due to deeply rooted social norms, family care rests upon women. Security sector workers, for

example prison guards, are often considered “essential workers” during lockdowns. Not being able to work from home often makes the situation untenable. When forced to choose, many women quit their jobs in light of their domestic responsibilities under the impact of quarantine restrictions. Achieving meaningful participation requires identifying and tackling traditional, discriminatory gender roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARTICIPATING STATES FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECURITY SECTOR AND PROMOTION OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

- Establish 1325 NAPs and budget them to accelerate progress
- Increase the number of women in decision-making positions in the security sector and invest in gender capacity building for male leaders to foster an inclusive work culture
- Promote inter-sectoral co-operation for women's meaningful participation in security sector institutions
- Create internal complaint mechanisms for discrimination and sexual harassment
- Continue to strengthen understanding of WPS within the security sector and armed forces
- Address all barriers to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, especially the role of social norms
- Engage men in fostering women's participation
- Provide mentoring opportunities for young women seeking a career in the security sector
- Identify training and re-training needs, and link them to follow-up tasks and action plan objectives
- Develop objective criteria for promotions of women in security sector institutions
- Use available tools like the DCAF, OSCE-ODIHR, UN Women Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit
- Use gender markers to provide data on the status of implementation of commitments
- Anchor interventions to evidence and an assessment process

Women's Economic Empowerment

CARLIEN SCHEELE

Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality

ŽYDRŪNĖ VITAITĖ

Co-founder of „Women Go Tech” (Lithuania)

LAZZAT RAMAZANOVA

Chair of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MODERATOR: AMBASSADOR JOHN MCGREGOR

OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan

Women's economic empowerment is a pre-requisite for, and leads to, fairer, more inclusive and sustained economic growth. In the EU, currently 67 per cent of women are in paid employment, compared with 79 per cent of men. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), having gender equality could increase EU GDP by more than nine per cent and create 10,5 million jobs by 2050.

The pandemic has posed increased challenges to gender parity in the work force. While men are disproportionately affected in terms of mortality, women will bear the brunt of the long-term social and economic consequences due to pre-existing gender inequalities. These are reflected in particular in unpaid care work. Prior to COVID-19 women spent 13 weekly hours more on unpaid care and domestic work than men. This “care penalty” holds women back economically. Approximately 7.7 million women remain out of the EU labour market due to care obligations, to the estimated cost of €370 billion annually. At the same

time, COVID-19 revealed how essential care workers are for a functioning economy despite the continuous devaluation of paid care work.

“If we do not consider gender broadly in our response to COVID, we miss the boat.”

Carlien Scheele, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The five occupations with the largest skills shortages (such as ICT and nursing) are the most gender segregated ones, and projected to grow in the near future due to an aging population and digitalization.

The ICT sector's need for talent and relatively small gender pay gap could represent economic opportunities for women. However, women remain significantly under-represented in the field. The limited pipeline of female applicants is attributed to gender stereotypes and segregation in education, as well as prevailing stereotypes in the

STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field. Only 20 per cent of ICT graduates in the EU are women despite similar levels of academic achievement by girls and boys. ICT is a high paid, mostly male sector. The lack of female role models in the sector due to the few women in positions of leadership and women's poor understanding of the scope of available roles in the technology sector also contribute to their low representation.

In Lithuania, women account for 25 per cent of staff employed in the technology industry, higher than in many other countries, and the talent gap was already estimated to be 15,000 persons prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The demand for women to enter into the field has only increased since COVID-19, offering an important opportunity.

Tech firms need to welcome women and be ready for them. This will require the industry to change its culture by examining its public discourse, the language it uses in advertising, as well as its recruiting and selection biases. Most mid-sized companies do not have resources to dedicate to gender inclusion. Women's entrepreneurship is an important element of their economic participation. In Kazakhstan, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken" supports women to engage in entrepreneurship activities, and a separate line of credit was opened for women only. Women are excellent at repaying credit, and have a 97 per cent repayment rate. Yet, women tend to remain stuck in less profitable micro-businesses because they lack skills and need training in financial literacy, and face gender stereotypes.

Kazakhstan has developed a databank on women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia,

with the aim of fostering cross-border trade. Kazakhstan needs transborder co-operation involving both male and female participation. The Kazakh President announced plans to increase the number of women at the decision making level to 30 per cent, starting with the government sector. This is even more important because it counts for about 70 per cent of the total economy. It is also essential to support women's businesses moving from the informal sector to the formal economy. Many women need training programmes to increase their competences.

“Women's economic empowerment relates to women's independence and thus to larger social issues.”

Lazzat Ramazanova, Chair of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Other approaches to addressing women's economic empowerment by the OSCE include a current study by the Presence in Albania on the gendered impacts of corruption. Public opinion surveys reveal a high-level of perception of corruption in Albania. Women and girls are most vulnerable to corruption due to lower levels of personal finance, and the fact that they are the primary users of public services. The study looks particularly at corruption at service delivery points. The study is the first of its kind in Albania, and aims to develop indicators and data that will be used for targeted interventions. Increased information is needed on corruption at points of hiring and in starting a business, and well as corruption in the health and education (university) sectors.

Another approach has emphasized the role of women's economic empowerment in the prevention of violent extremism and domestic violence, within the concept of comprehensive security. The Programme Office in Bishkek has trained over 8,500 women in marketable skills across 20 locations. It has also supported business resource centres to improve the entrepreneurial skills of women, and 14 Women's Resource Centres in rural areas to provide legal and social support, and increased financial skills.

Violence against women has always constituted an impediment to their economic participation. The spikes of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence that arose during lockdowns constituted another long-term impact of COVID-19 on women, as women frequently face the greatest danger in their own homes. Ultimately, the high costs of domestic and intimate partner violence is born by all citizens. In 2014, gender-based violence cost the EU an estimated €226 billion/year; including intimate partner violence, which amounts to €109 billion/year.

Current data collection efforts need to focus on the situation of shelters and specialist services, given their increased level of work while facing a decrease in funds. In many places, funds were cut before the COVID-19 crisis and extra funds have not been allocated to address the increased demand.

COVID-19 is a gendered crisis, having a disproportionate impact on women and girls, and more women are needed in decision-making levels in the crisis management bodies.

“COVID-19 has revealed a lot about women's economic empowerment and inclusion, opportunities and the impediments to capturing those opportunities.”

Žydrūnė Vitaitė, Co-founder of „Women Go Tech,” Lithuania

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARTICIPATING STATES ON INCREASING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:

- Collect and share data on the large costs of women's unequal economic participation
- Collect and disseminate data on the economic costs of violence against women
- Address gender stereotypes about women's and men's work and employment
- Recognize unpaid care and domestic work as impediment for women's equal participation in the economic sphere
- Promote men's equal sharing in care and domestic work to advance women's economic participation and empowerment
- Increase wages and improve working conditions for care workers
- Ensure gender responsive post COVID-19 economic recovery policies and plans
- Promote women's careers in ICT through professional requalification programmes
- Change ICT sector organizational culture through applying more inclusive terminology/language, promote professional opportunities beyond programming (project management, product development, analysis, engineering and software testing)
- Promote educational initiatives to attract more women to the STEM field by promoting technology in schools (from early age), requalification programs, mentor programs
- Establish a databank on women's entrepreneurship to foster its growth potential

Closing Session

AMBASSADOR IGLI HASANI

Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE

AMBASSADOR ULRIKA FUNERED

Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE

İLAYDA ESKITAŞÇIOĞLU

Member of the UN Women's Generation Equality Youth task force Bernhard Gollob, founder, HeForShe Graz (Austria)

MODERATOR: AMBASSADOR LUCA FRATINI

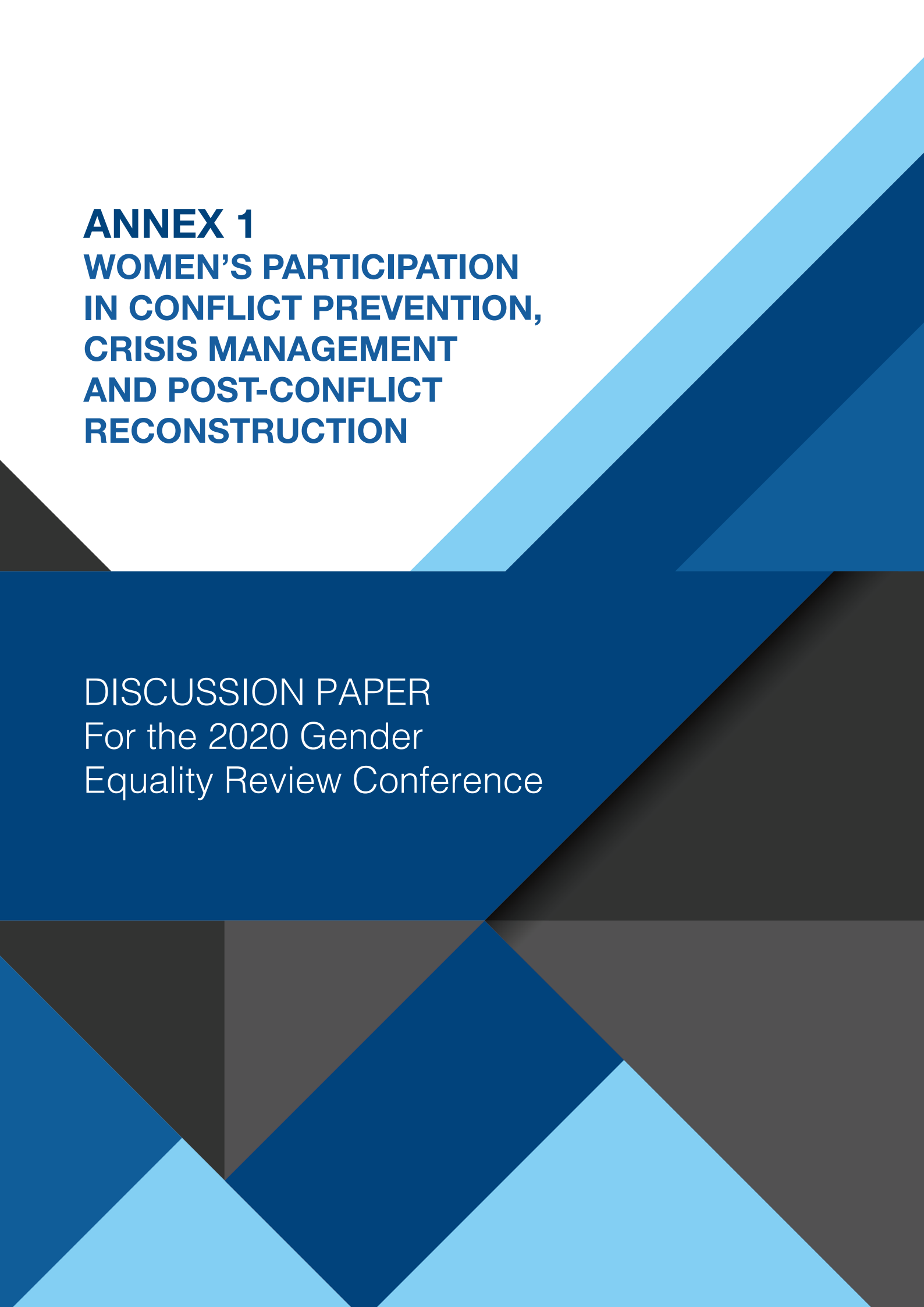
Director, Office of the OSCE Secretary General

Speakers at the closing session reiterated that despite progress, a long road lies ahead to ensuring gender equality. The slow pace of progress demonstrates the strong roots of the underlying causes of gender inequality, requiring a transformative approach.

Looking ahead, gender equality will occupy a central role in Sweden's upcoming Chairpersonship of the OSCE, which recognizes the Organization's vital role in fostering the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The Chairpersonship will translate this into equal and meaningful inclusion of women at all levels and processes of the security sector in full respect of their human rights, and support for women's peace networks. It also requires mainstreaming gender equality by all executive structures throughout the OSCE agenda, in all three dimensions and all forms of conflict prevention.

Youth representatives drew attention to UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, which requires attention to youth mainstreaming in the security sector.

Increased attention by the OSCE to grassroots organizations, activists, refugees and young women and men is needed, as well as increased direct dialogue with youth on the ground, in particular young women. Young women and men need both a platform and a seat at the decision making table.



ANNEX 1
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN CONFLICT PREVENTION,
CRISIS MANAGEMENT
AND POST-CONFLICT
RECONSTRUCTION

DISCUSSION PAPER
For the 2020 Gender
Equality Review Conference

2020 Gender Equality Review Conference

Discussion Paper

This series of four discussion papers was prepared to inform the Third OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, scheduled to take place on 27-28 October 2020. The event is co-organized by the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship 2020, the OSCE Secretariat, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The papers aim to provide a brief overview of the current state of progress with respect to the implementation of OSCE's commitments to gender equality. These working papers, including proposed recommendations, are meant as food for thought to stimulate discussion and debate at the Conference.

The first discussion paper provides a snapshot of major achievements, remaining challenges, and examples of good practices and recommendations to achieve key OSCE commitments related to women's political participation. It is based on data from various ODIHR resources on women's political participation, the OSCE's "Internal Report - Mapping Beijing +25 Implementation and OSCE Commitments", and other relevant sources.

The second discussion paper examines the levels of women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction, based

on OSCE studies, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), as well as other UN reports.

Equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere are the main focus of the third discussion paper, which relies on data from the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and regional reports by the UNECE for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review.

The fourth discussion paper provides an overview of the main achievements and remaining challenges in preventing and countering violence against women in OSCE participating States. It is based on data from country and regional review reports for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review, as well as other secondary sources.

All four discussion papers were prepared by gender advisers and staff in the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR. They highlight good practices, which were drawn from information provided by gender focal points in OSCE executive structures.

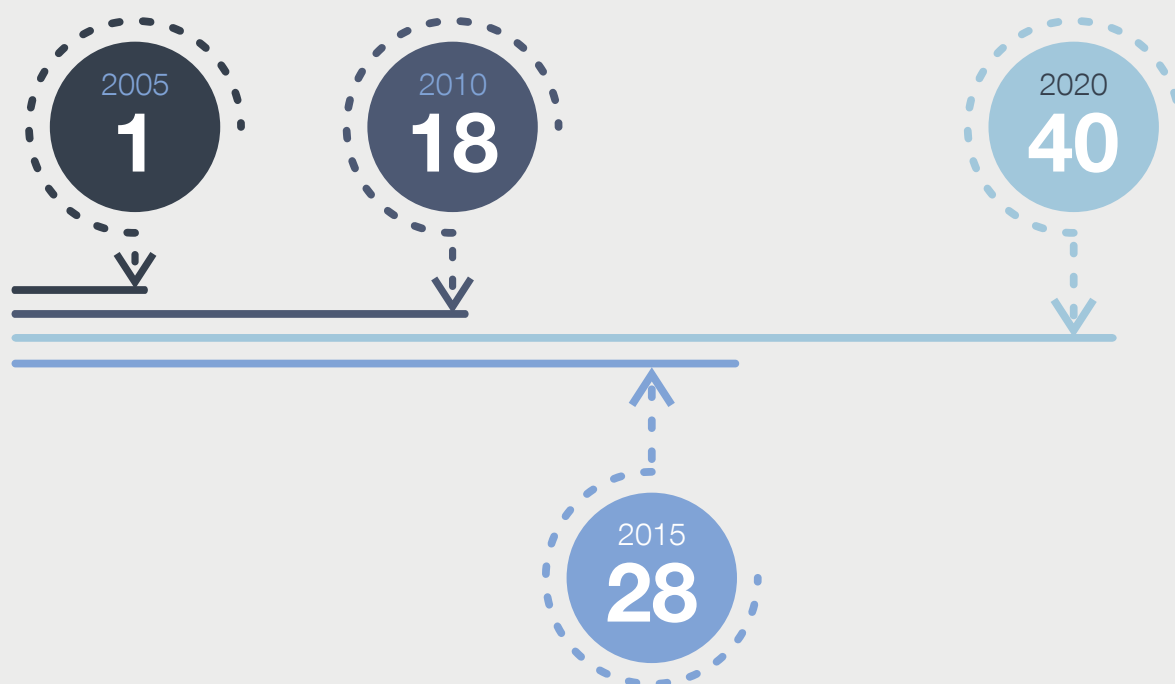
OSCE documents containing commitments pertaining to the participation of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction

- Ministerial Council Decision on the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (MC.DEC/14/05)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life (MC.DEC/7/09)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE's Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (MC.DEC/3/11)
- Ministerial Declaration on OSCE Assistance Projects in the field of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (MC.DOC/3/16)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (MC.DEC/10/17)
- Ministerial Declaration on OSCE efforts in the field of Norms and Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (MC.DOC/5/18)
- Ministerial Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that lead to Terrorism (MC.DOC/4/15)

OSCE commitments in the politico-military dimension and the OSCE's related work cover a wide range of topics, including disarmament, arms control, and preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT), to conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation. This paper will focus on a few topics where OSCE executive structures have played an active role in supporting the implementation of gender-related commitments in the politico-military dimension within the past three years. It also examines the levels of women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction on the basis of OSCE studies, data by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), as well as other UN reports.

All but one of the above OSCE declarations and decisions make direct reference to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), reiterating the OSCE's commitment to support the United Nations in implementing this global policy framework.¹ OSCE executive structures have supported the participating States in developing and implementing national action plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security that are widely recognized as effective policy tools to make progress in this area. The OSCE has published two studies on NAPs in 2014 and 2020,² and the Secretariat's Programme for Gender Issues, ODIHR and OSCE field operations have offered workshops and tools for the participating States to design and improve their action plans. Many examples in the below sections illustrate how the OSCE has supported the implementation of the WPS agenda in specific areas.

National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in the OSCE region



¹ From the above-listed OSCE documents, MC.DOC/3/16 is the only one that does not refer to one or more of the ten UNSC resolutions related to Women, Peace and Security.

² Both studies are available online at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444625>.

Inclusion of women in peace processes

The Ministerial Council decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation calls on “participating States and OSCE structures, as appropriate, to develop specific policies to encourage the full and equal participation of women and women’s organizations in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation, as well as to encourage and support the sharing of experiences and best practices and, further, to engage with women’s peace initiatives.” The Ministerial Council decision on Elements of the Conflict Cycle for its part urges “participating States to implement UNSCR 1325 *by ensuring increased representation of women at all levels in conflict resolution and peace processes.*”

Based on these commitments, the Mediation Support Team of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and the Programme for Gender Issues prepared a toolkit that provides guidance to OSCE participating States, special representatives of the OSCE Chairmanship and OSCE executive structures on how to include women in peace processes.³ A mapping of existing OSCE-supported formal negotiation processes carried out prior to the development of the toolkit showed that between 1992 and 2017 only one out of 52 OSCE mediators had been a woman. In late 2019, a woman was appointed to the position of Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group for the second time. There

are still very few women in the support teams of mediators or in leading positions in the negotiation teams. Another challenge revealed by the mapping is the lack of systematic interlinkages between the formal negotiation processes and informal peace initiatives that are often led by women from civil society organizations. The third prevailing challenge is the lack of a gender analysis and gender perspective in the negotiations.

NAPs on Women, Peace and Security offer insights as to how OSCE participating States plan to advance women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in their national contexts. Around two thirds of the 40 current WPS NAPs in the OSCE region set women’s participation in peace and mediation efforts as a goal.

Many NAPs only include a general commitment on female representation, but Switzerland and Norway have, for example, both made women’s inclusion in mediation and peacebuilding efforts a priority area in their NAPs and set out concrete targets and measures to be taken. Georgia’s NAP includes clear minimum targets for women’s participation in Georgia’s negotiation teams in the Geneva International Discussions (40 percent) and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings (33 percent), which were established following the August 2008 war in Georgia.

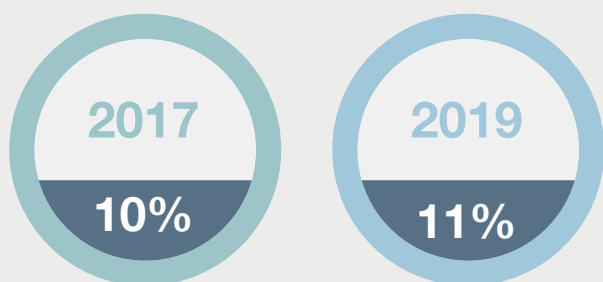
³ Leena Avonius, Meeri-Maria Jaarva, Ulrike Schmidt and Talia Wohl (2019): Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes – A Toolkit, Vienna: OSCE (<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/5/440735.pdf>)

In recent years, women mediator networks have emerged in several regions. At least five networks involving women from several OSCE participating States are active in the OSCE area.⁴ These networks can contribute to increase women’s participation in peace mediation efforts. They are, however, relatively new and have so far focused on building internal structures and capacities.⁵ Most women involved in peace dialogues or more widely in peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas either work in civil society or community-level initiatives. Many of these initiatives address the immediate humanitarian and human security needs of people living in conflict areas. Common challenges for such women’s initiatives include a lack of access to decision-makers—including in OSCE-supported official negotiation formats—and scarcity of resources to carry out their activities. The effective implementation of the OSCE toolkit can bring about significant progress in implementing OSCE commitments in this area in the future. The OSCE Mission to Moldova has started to map and analyze the gender aspects of the current issues under discussions in the working groups of the Transdniestrian Settlement Process and their different implications on women and men. Through this process, the Mission can better support the working group members in developing ways to address gendered challenges in the Process.

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE SECTOR WORK

The OSCE participating States have made several commitments to promote gender equality in the security and defence sectors. This includes the Ministerial Council decision on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, which notably urges the participating States to consider taking measures to create equal opportunities within security services, including the armed forces, and to allow for balanced recruitment, retention and promotion of men and women. Also relevant to women’s participation in defence and security is the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which highlights the responsibilities of participating States “to ensure that military, paramilitary and security forces personnel will be able to enjoy and exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Data collected for ODIHR’s 2018 baseline study on “Women in the Armed Forces”⁶ showed that around one in ten military personnel in the OSCE region were women, with figures ranging between two and 17 percent. In recent years, we have seen a growing trend whereby restrictions to women’s full participation in close combat roles have been lifted. In 2018, the United Kingdom opened all military positions to women. In the same year, Ukraine expanded the number of military roles and ranks open to women and recognized their right to serve on equal employment terms.



Number of women in armed forces

⁴ The Nordic Women Mediators, the Mediterranean Women Mediators, the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, the Women’s Peace Dialogue and the Regional Women’s Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe.

⁵ The Women Mediators Networks are part of the Global Alliance of Women Mediator Networks: “www.globalmediators.org”

⁶ Dr Susan Atkins (2018): Baseline Study Report Women in the Armed Forces in the OSCE Region, Warsaw: ODIHR (<https://www.osce.org/odihr/women-armed-forces-baseline-study>)

According to the above-mentioned 2018 ODIHR baseline study, more than half of the 28 participating States that took part in the study had taken strategic action to enhance gender equality and increase the representation of women across all positions in the armed forces. This includes tailored recruitment campaigns to attract more female applicants, obligatory trainings on unconscious bias for personnel (Sweden) and inclusion of women and men in recruitment and promotion selection boards (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, and Spain). The study also showed that many participating States have taken measures to adjust uniforms and equipment for women, incorporated gender considerations in the design and allocation of safe accommodation and washing facilities, and improved maternity and parental leave.

The study “*Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*”⁷ noted that in participating States with ‘inward-facing’ WPS national action plans, the role of security sector institutions, including ministries of defence and armed forces had a prominent role developing and implementing NAPs. Many of these action plans foresee activities that are in line with the above-mentioned policy commitments.

Thematic guidance on how to integrate gender into the defence sector can be found in the “*Toolkit on Gender and Security*”, published in 2019 by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), ODIHR and UN Women, which also features a tool on defence and gender.⁸

In terms of female representation in the police sector, a UNDP mapping in the UNECE region⁹ based on 2017 data shows an

average of 18.8 percent of women police officers in the surveyed countries. The figures range from 6.2 percent in Turkey to 38.6 percent in Lithuania, and point to a slight upward trend since 2013. More recently, the OSCE Secretariat’s Strategic Police Matters Unit compiled information on women’s participation in the police services of participating States hosting OSCE field operations. Comparable data has been difficult to come by, and remains limited to only a few participating States. The upward trend discerned in the UNDP mapping on women’s participation in police services has nevertheless been difficult to corroborate within the OSCE area.

Women also remain underrepresented in border management agencies, though members of the OSCE Gender Equality Platform for Border Security and Management highlighted a lifting of employment restrictions and a slight upward trend in women’s participation in recent years. Ukraine, Moldova, and Canada all provide good practice examples on how to improve the gender balance within border management. In Ukraine, formal restrictions on employing women within the state border service have been removed as foreseen in the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, allowing women to work in all ranks, positions and locations. Some 27.2 percent of all personnel (both military and civilian) are women, 21.3 percent of whom are military staff. Moldova has also set a target of 20 percent of women officers in border police by 2020. In Canada, 47.5 percent of the border services agency personnel are women.

The OSCE Gender Equality Platform in Border Security and Management was launched in 2017 and has more than 30

⁷ Henri Myrtilinen, Laura J. Shepherd and Hannah Wright (2020): *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*, Vienna: OSCE(<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444577>)

⁸ DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR and UN Women (2019): *Defence and Gender*, in: *Gender and Security Toolkit*, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women (<https://www.osce.org/odhr/447043?download=true>)

⁹ The UNECE region covers 55 OSCE participating States excluding the Holy See and Mongolia and including Israel.

members from 20 OSCE participating States. Since its launch, the members of the platform have been receiving gender-related guidance and support from the OSCE, including training programmes and study visits on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of border agencies. The OSCE has also made available an online training on gender mainstreaming in border security and management for public use in English and Russian. The OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe annually offers a Women Leaders' Course for mid- and senior-level female border and security management officials. In the last three years, 197 female and 382 male staff from border management agencies of OSCE participating States have graduated from the staff courses and 51 female managers have enhanced their skills due to the Women Leaders' Course.

Women in the security sector continue to face challenges. The ODIHR 2018 baseline study noted that contract expiry, family reasons and economic aspects were common reasons for both men and women to resign from the armed forces, but that servicewomen also leave because of an

unsupportive organizational culture and lack of career opportunities. OSCE experiences have indicated similar challenges for women in the police services. Supportive actions for women in the security sector, including mentoring and networking programmes, have been initiated in a few participating States, including through the establishment of women's police associations.

Formal and informal complaint mechanisms for gender-related harassment (including sexual harassment), violence, discrimination, bullying, and abuse are in place in most participating States. While the number of formal complaints remains low in many states, security sector institutions in participating States have officially communicated that harassment is a common problem— in particular for women. Further work to ensure that complaint mechanisms capture such harassment and that institutional cultures are able to address the root causes of harassment and discrimination should be considered.

The widely used anti-harassment trainings are often insufficient.

IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

OSCE Field Operations have supported their host countries to work towards more gender-balanced and gender-responsive security sector institutions.

The OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, closely co-operates with associations of women police officers and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association of Women Judges by providing relevant capacity-building. With the support of the Programme Office in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Association of the Women in the Security Sector was established in 2017. It includes representatives from all law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan and focuses on enhancing the capacity of women and achieving gender equality in the security sector. The OSCE Missions to Montenegro, in Kosovo and to Skopje support

women police associations with mentoring programmes. In Serbia, the OSCE Mission supports a mentoring programme for women working in the Ministries of Interior and Defence.

Experience from these interventions indicate that in order to achieve the necessary institutional change required for recruiting and retaining more women into the security sector, a holistic approach is required. Best practice is to conduct a comprehensive gender analysis or the institution prior to any intervention. This process should generate more buy in from management as the identified factors hampering a gender sensitive work environment is displayed in the analysis. Additionally, a gender analysis will provide important information in order to draft a work plan with clear targets, roles and responsibilities. There are several toolkits available to guide security sectors institutions in this process.

GENDER AND PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION THAT LEAD TO TERRORISM

The OSCE promotes a whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT). The OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration on P/CVERLT calls on the participating States and OSCE executive structures to take gender considerations into account in their efforts to counter terrorism and prevent and counter VERLT.

The OSCE supports the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that also highlights the importance of integrating a gender perspective and promoting women's participation in P/CVERLT efforts. In 2016, the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) called on all UN Member States to prepare a PVE-related national action plan. A 2017 analysis of PVE action plans showed that they generally lacked a gender perspective, and that many action plans referred to women mainly as victims, and not as agents of change.¹⁰

In 2020 the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism noted an upsurge in policy and programmes that address the gender dimension of violent extremism, but remained concerned that many of these programmes instrumentalize women for counter-terrorism instead of working towards genuine gender equality and women's empowerment.¹¹

The OSCE has actively focused on gender and P/CVERLT since at least 2014 when it launched a good practices document on the topic in co-operation with the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).¹² Since then, the OSCE has integrated gender aspects into the agendas of related national and international meetings as well as in other activities in this field. In line with OSCE commitments, executive structures have in the last years supported P/CVERLT efforts in participating States through capacity-building and awareness-raising activities and by developing knowledge and learning tools. Between 2017 and 2019, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan carried out awareness-raising activities related to VERLT for women in local Muslim communities, women police officers, the civil society, municipal officials and students.

In 2017, the OSCE's Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) conducted trainings for women leaders on P/CVERLT in South-Eastern Europe (the so-called LIVE trainings). TNTD has also developed the handbook "Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism – Good Practices for Law Enforcement" that helps law enforcement and security actors to create better and more gender-sensitive responses to VERLT. By 2019, at least fourteen OSCE participating States had adopted a national action plan or a national strategy on PVE. A gender analysis of these action plans could provide valuable information on how PVE policies have evolved in the OSCE region, and how the OSCE's support efforts could be improved.

¹⁰ See for example International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) (2017): National Action Plans on Preventing Violent Extremism: A Gendered Content Analysis, Washington: ICAN

¹¹ Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (2020): Human Rights Impacts of Policies and Practices Aimed at Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, UNGA Human Rights Council, Forty-third session (<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/46>)

¹² Global Counterterrorism Forum and OSCE (2015): Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, New York: GCTF and OSCE (<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/GCTF%20Good%20Practices%20on%20Women%20and%20CVE.pdf?ver=2016-03-29-134644-853>)

GENDER-SENSITIVE RESPONSES TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION THAT LEAD TO TERRORISM

The prevention of terrorism and VERLT are included as core elements in the security strategy, and while neither the strategy nor the plan of action against terrorism make specific reference to the role of women in preventing and countering VERLT, they acknowledge the need for gender-sensitive responses. A good example on strengthening the law enforcement capacities to address VERLT can be found in Kosovo¹³ that accounts for the highest per capita number of ISIL/Daesh foreign recruits in Europe. Some 360 men, women and children moved to Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2015. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the association of Women in Kosovo Police have jointly provided a series of workshops for women police officers to support their understanding of VERLT and increase their capacities to detect and address signs of radicalization towards violent extremism.¹⁴

DISARMAMENT, ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION

The OSCE participating States have adopted several documents related to the control of illicit trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) that pay attention to gender aspects. The 2017 Ministerial Council Decision on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SCA) and the 2018 Ministerial Declaration on OSCE efforts in the field of Norms and Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, for example, address the negative impact of illicit trafficking in SALW on women and children. They also promote the creation of equal opportunities for women's participation in policymaking, planning and implementation of actions taken to combat illicit SALW, including in the context of OSCE assistance projects in this field. The 2016 Ministerial Declaration on OSCE Assistance Projects in the field of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition also invites participating States to voluntarily exchange views and information and share best practices on how they address

the impact of excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW and conventional ammunition on women and children.

In 2019, the Forum for Security Co-operation Support Section of the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre developed a "Guidance Note for Practitioners on Mainstreaming Gender into the OSCE assistance mechanism for SALW and SCA". This note provides practical examples and tools on how to integrate a gender perspective throughout the assistance process.

Women's participation in security and confidence-building measures remains low globally. A research paper published by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in 2019 notes that while women's participation in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy has steadily increased over the last four decades, women remain underrepresented in this field.¹⁵ A gendered distribution of diplomats in the UN General Assembly Main Committees persists, and the lowest

¹³ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population in this Report should be understood in compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

¹⁴ See OSCE (2019): Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism – Good Practices for Law Enforcement, Vienna: OSCE (<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/420563>)

¹⁵ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølvi Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo (2019): Still Behind the Curve – Gender Balance in Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Diplomacy", Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

GENDER-SENSITIVE SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS CONTROL IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

South-Eastern Europe has made progress in promoting gender equality in fighting illicit small arms and light weapons. In 2018, a regional roadmap on SALW control was launched for the period 2018-2024, that is fully gender mainstreamed. The roadmap foresees that gender is taken into consideration both in policies and practices related to SALW, and that women's participation in controlling and combating the misuse of SALW is improved. Currently, women comprise between 14 and 29 percent of SALW commission members and chair one out of six commissions in South-Eastern Europe.¹⁶

proportion of women (33 percent) is found in the First Committee on disarmament and international security. Women rarely head delegations in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament forums, and there is an inverse relationship between seniority and women's representation in these areas. The report concludes that more efforts are needed to speed up the move towards more gender balanced representation in diplomatic forums.

In 2016, the OSCE CPC prepared a statistical overview on women's participation in verification activities conducted in the framework of the Vienna Document.¹⁷ It showed that women constituted just five percent of the total number of inspection team members and six percent of the total number of evaluation visit team members.¹⁸ Between 2011 and 2015 only four out of 468 inspection teams were led by a women, while no woman was assigned to lead an evaluation visit team. In order to address the scarcity of female experts in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, the OSCE has created

the Scholarship for Peace and Security programme that provides trainings for young female professionals in these areas. The initiative, carried out jointly with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), aims to increase women's participation in policymaking, planning and implementation processes on hard security issues. In 2018 and 2019, 170 participants took part in the programme.

Among its alumnae are young women who have subsequently pursued a future career in the field of security issues; carried out awareness-raising campaigns and organized trainings on disarmament and non-proliferation in their countries. Some have also participated in drafting the first national action plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in their country; and supported the creation of the first all-female demining team in Afghanistan¹⁹. Continued efforts will be needed to further support the programme's alumnae through networking and mentoring in the areas of arms control, conflict prevention and resolution.

¹⁶ The full text of the roadmap is available on the UNDP SEESAC website at <http://www.seesac.org/t/docs/News-SALW/Roadmap-for-sustainable-solution.pdf>. SEESAC supported the preparation of the roadmap. See also UNDP (2019): Women's Leadership in Decision-making in the ECE Region, note prepared for the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/AC.28/2019/12, 2019, para 31)

¹⁷ The Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) is a politically binding document that promotes predictability and military stability among OSCE participating States through transparency and verification measures, such as inspections and evaluations.

¹⁸ OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (2016): Participation of Women in the Vienna Document 2011 Verification Activities: Statistical Overview, (SEC.GAL/151/16)

¹⁹ OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (2020): Report on the impact of the Scholarship for Peace and Security on the alumnae and alumni 2018 and 2019, (SEC.GAL/36/20)



ANNEX 2
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

DISCUSSION PAPER
For the 2020 Gender
Equality Review Conference

2020 Gender Equality Review Conference

Discussion Paper

This series of four discussion papers was prepared to inform the Third OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, co-organized by the Albanian OSCE Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Secretariat, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), scheduled to take place on 27-28 October 2020. The papers aim to provide a brief overview of the current state of progress with respect to the implementation of OSCE commitments on gender equality. These working papers, inclusive of proposed recommendations, are meant to provide initial stimuli for discussion at the Conference.

The first discussion paper provides a snapshot of major achievements, remaining challenges, and examples of good practices and recommendations in attaining key OSCE's commitments related to women's political participation. It is based on data contained in various ODIHR's resources on women's political participation, the OSCE's "Internal Report - "Mapping Beijing +25 Implementation and OSCE Commitments", and other relevant sources.

In the second discussion paper, women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict

reconstruction are examined on the basis of OSCE studies, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as well as other UN reports.

Equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere are the main focus of the third discussion paper, which relies on data from the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and regional reports by the UNECE for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review.

The fourth discussion paper gives an overview of the main achievements and remaining challenges in preventing and countering violence against women in OSCE participating States. It is based on data from country and regional review reports for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review and other secondary sources.

All four discussion papers were prepared by gender advisers and staff in the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR. They highlight good practices drawn from information provided by gender focal points in OSCE executive structures.

OSCE documents relating to the economic empowerment of women

- Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere (MC.DEC/10/11)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Economic Participation in the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/ 8/17)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Human Capital Development in the Digital Area (MC.DEC/5/18)
- Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing Violence against Women and Girls (MC.DEC/4/18)
- Ministerial Council Declaration on the Digital Economy as a Driver for Promoting Co-operation, Security and Growth (MC.DOC/5/2018)
- The 1990 Document of the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe with commitments to “economic activity that accordingly upholds human dignity and is free from forced labour, discrimination against workers on grounds of race, sex, language, political opinion or religion, or denial of the rights of workers freely to establish or join independent trade unions”; “policies that promote social justice and improve living and working conditions”; and “environmentally sustainable economic growth and development”.
- The 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, which stresses the importance of developing human capital and ensuring basic social benefits such as safety nets for vulnerable groups.

Commitments in the economic and environmental dimension referenced in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality include:

Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities in the economic sphere is defined as a priority in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004 GAP). Almost all OSCE commitments on gender equality refer to the importance of economic participation of women. Access to employment is key in this respect. Yet, women's labour participation continues to lag behind in most countries. Combined with occupational segregation and unequal distribution of unpaid and domestic work, this *“translate[s] into lower current and future earnings, constraining choices and undermining personal independence”*¹.

For the purpose of this report, labour force participation² is selected as one of the key indicators of economic participation, which is discussed in conjunction with key factors influencing it, including:

- laws and regulations
- domestic work and care
- pay
- digitalization / fourth industrial revolution

Labour force participation

Increased female labour participation is not only important for the attainment of gender equality but also for the economy. A much-cited McKinsey report from 2015 argues that, if all countries matched the progress towards gender parity of the fastest-improving country in their region they could add as much as \$12 trillion—or 11 percent—to the global 2025 GDP. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) entitled “World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends for women 2017” estimates that under certain assumptions a 25 percent gender gap reduction in economic participation by the year 2025 would boost global employment by 189 million or 5.3 percent.

The overall picture of female labour participation and progress in achieving gender equality is one of considerable variation. Structural barriers and discrimination against women persist throughout the OSCE region, preventing women's full access to the job market. Women face discrimination in recruitment, training, employment conditions, promotions, remuneration throughout the region. The number and share of women and men employed in the informal sector differ between sub-regions and must be taken into account when interpreting labour force statistics.

¹ See United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2019): Gender-transformative economic and social policies to support the empowerment of women and girls in the ECE region, ECE/AC/28/2019/5, para 2, Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, 29 and 30 October, Geneva, 2019. (<https://undocs.org/ECE/AC.28/2019/5>). The 56 UNECE member states overlap with the OSCE participating states excluding the Holy See, and Mongolia which is a member state of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

² “The labour force participation rate is calculated by expressing the number of persons in the labour force as a percentage of the working-age population. The labour force is the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.” (ILOSTAT).

According to the World Bank gender statistics data bank³, female labour participation in the OSCE-area ranged between 85.5 percent and 29.3 percent in 2019⁴. The average and median values are 64.9 and 66.7, respectively — which is virtually the same as in 2017. The gender gap (i.e. the difference between male and female labour force participation) has slightly decreased from 12.86 in 2017 to 12.64 in 2019 (see figure 1 below).

the OSCE region has moved closer to the men's rate, but progress has been extremely slow (see figure 1). In fact, in all 51 OSCE participating States, for which data is available, the share of men participating in the labour force remains higher than that of women.

Between 2011 — the year when the Ministerial Council Decision on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere was adopted — and 2020, the rate of women's labour force participation in

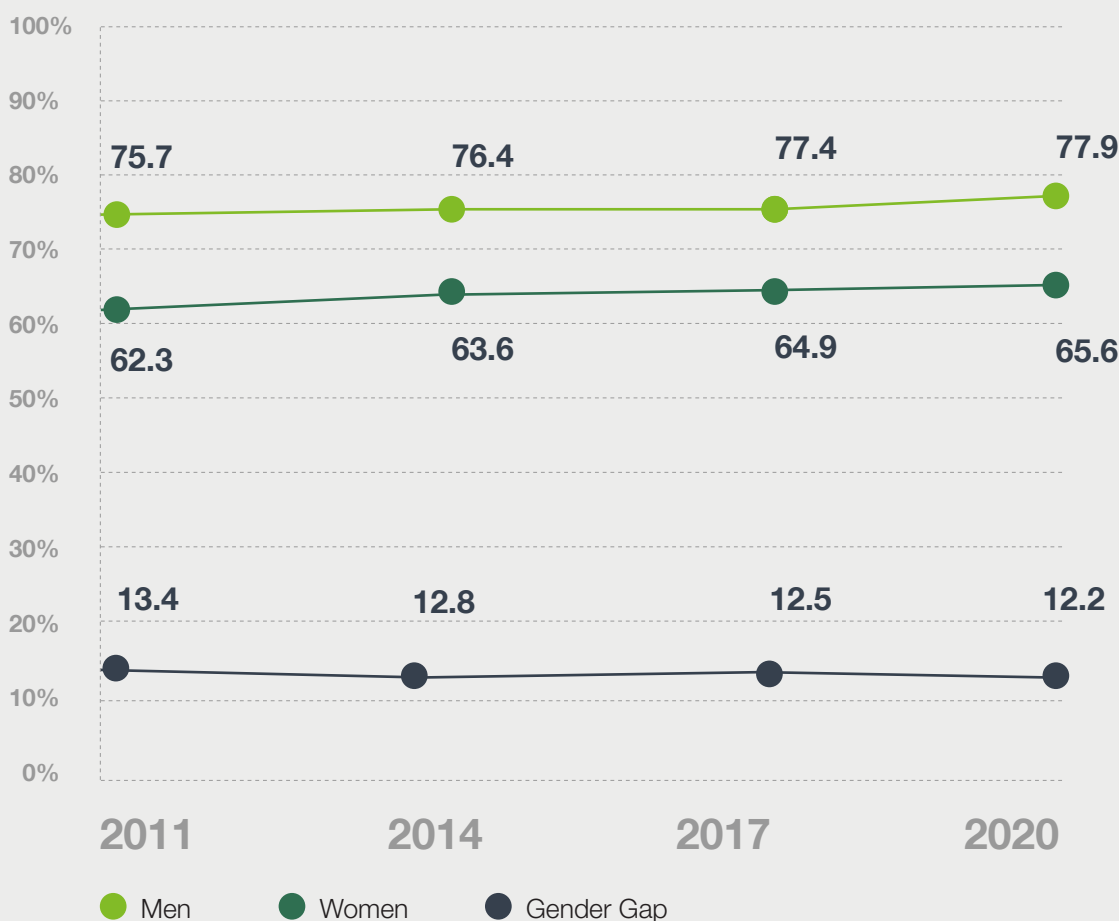


Figure 1: Labour force participation (in percent) by sex and gender in the OSCE region, population aged 15-67, 2017-2020. Calculations are based on ILO estimates available for 51 OSCE participating States. Source: ILO Statistics

³ World Bank DataBank: Gender Indicators Report (https://databank.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.FE.ZS?id=2ddc971b&report_name=Gender_Indicators_Report&populartype=series).

⁴ Includes data for all OSCE participating states except Andorra, the Holy See, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino.

Economic impact of COVID-19 on women

The COVID-19 pandemic is having different impacts on women and men in various aspects of life. While men represent a higher proportion of global deaths (58 percent according to the World Health Organization (WHO)), women are disproportionately affected by the resulting economic and social fallout.⁵

First, women are more represented in hard-hit economic sectors compared to men. Globally, women make up most of the workers in the formal and informal health and care sector. These professions are some of the most undervalued and underpaid jobs. Informal domestic workers are particularly at risk of economic hardship. Many are without a formal contract, which often implies precarious working conditions and limited access to social-protection rights. In Europe and Central Asia, informal workers have lost an average of 70 percent of their income during the first month of the pandemic.⁶ In addition, women are over-represented in temporary, part-time and precarious employment, which also generally involves lower pay and weaker or no social protection.⁷ For instance, over 70 percent of self-employed women face reductions in paid working hours or job loss.⁸

Finally, the closure of schools and workplaces due to global lockdowns has intensified the burden of unpaid care and household duties for women. While men's overall contribution to unpaid care work has increased, 70 percent of women have reported spending more time on at least one unpaid domestic work chore, such as cleaning, cooking or laundry.⁹ In this context, women are more likely than men to have difficulty in achieving a good work-life balance, particularly single mothers.

Overall, the pandemic's economic consequences, including job and income losses and a looming recession, is likely to further undermine women's economic resilience, thereby increasing their risk of poverty. In this respect, both in Europe and Central Asia, more women (60 percent) than men reported greater difficulties covering basic expenses, such as food supplies, rent and utilities.¹⁰

⁵ UN Women (2020): From Insights to Action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19, New York: UN Women (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (2020): Covid-19 and gender equality (<https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>).

⁸ UN Women (2020): The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary Results from a Rapid Gender Assessment. Istanbul: UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods#view>).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Laws and regulations

Women’s economic participation depends on an enabling environment, both in terms of laws and regulations, social norms and practices. The 2020 “Women, Business and the Law” (WBL) report¹¹ by the World Bank tracks laws that prevent or facilitate the full economic participation of women across six areas, namely mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship assets and pension. Although the report does not measure the implementation of laws, the WBL Index shows the degree of political commitment to gender equality. Of 52 OSCE participating States¹² examined in 2020, eight states score 100 on the index, meaning that there is no discrimination in the selected laws, and eight states score below

80 with 67 being the lowest score. In total, 42 participating States have at least one law in place that creates an obstacle to women’s economic participation. The report identifies reforms introduced between June 2017 and September 2019 aimed at improving gender equality in employment and entrepreneurial activity in 10 OECD economies.¹³ These reforms include a range of measures such as the introduction of legislation to combat domestic violence, the protection from sexual harassment in the workplace, parenting leave for fathers, women’s equal access to financial services, equal pay, equalization of retirement age, and removing barriers for women to enter certain jobs and professions.

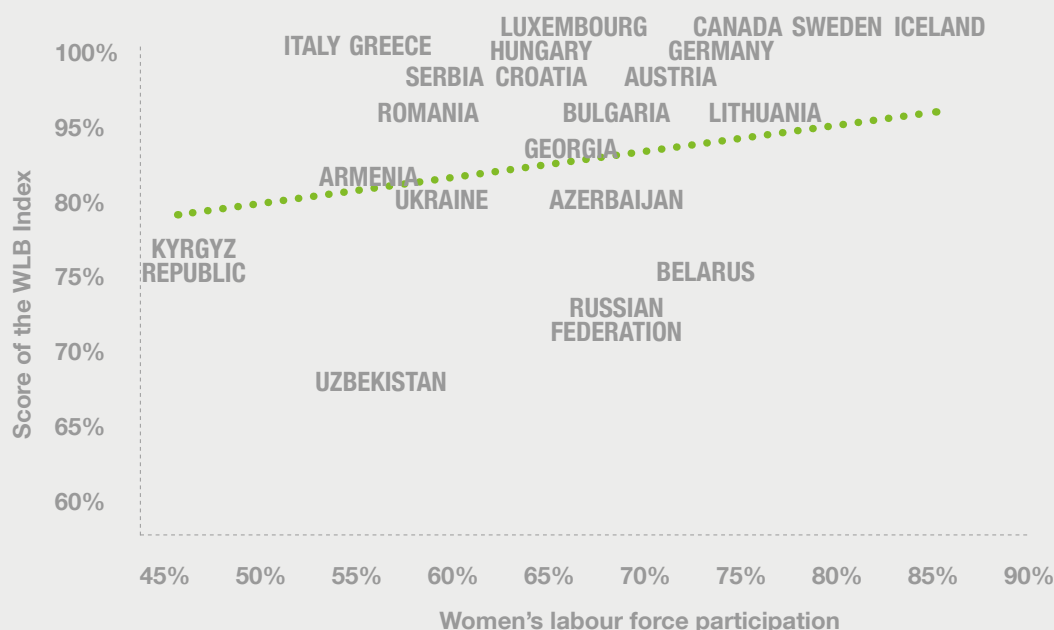


Figure 2: Percentage of women aged 15-64 in the labour force by participating State, and WLB Index scores (2020). Higher values on the WLB Index indicate less legal discrimination. Source: ILO Statistics 2020 and World Bank WLB Index 2020

¹¹ World Bank Group (2020): Women, Business and the Law 2020, Washington: The World Bank (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf?sequence=6>).
¹² Excluding Andorra, the Holy See, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Turkmenistan (<https://wbl.worldbank.org/>).
¹³ Armenia, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Moldova, Slovenia, USA (New York State). See WBL 2020, p 36-43.

Figure 2 shows that there is a link between laws ensuring greater equality of economic opportunity between women and men and higher female labour force participation. There is also a positive correlation with income levels, fertility rates and female education, as well as with the reduction of the wage gap. Increased incomes lead to stronger bargaining power within households and lead to overall better outcomes for women themselves, their children, and their families.

However, despite reforms aimed at the removal of legal barriers and closing loopholes in legislation, progress is uneven among the participating States and change has been slow in the OSCE region. And even though gender-sensitive legal frameworks contribute to women's higher participation in the labour force, discriminatory social norms and practices still play a significant role in confining women to their caring and reproductive roles.

The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)¹⁴ reveals the intensity and various forms of discrimination stemming from the unequal distribution of power between men and women in the family, the economic sphere and public life. This results in restricted physical integrity, lower access to financial and productive resources and civil liberties. Sexual harassment in schools and workplaces for example affects women's education and employment. The lack of child or elderly care facilities or the absence of family friendly job policies which result in an unequal distribution of domestic

responsibilities has a similar impact.¹⁵ "Time poverty" for women and girls results in less time for studies and paid work. Due to domestic responsibilities, 20 percent of Eurasian¹⁶ women aged between 15 and 25 are not in education, employment or training compared to only 2 percent of men.

A number of countries still impose restrictions on employment for women in certain sectors or types of jobs that are deemed hazardous, arduous or morally inappropriate. A large gender pay gap may also discourage women from seeking paid employment. Women are less likely to get bank loans and are more likely to pay higher interest rates or require higher collateral; in turn women's ability to provide collateral to secure a loan is restricted by the low rates of female land- and asset ownership.

GENDER WAGE GAP AND OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Gendered occupational segregation in employment remains a characteristic of the workforce across the region and is a perpetuating factor for the economic disadvantages faced by women, such as the gender wage gap¹⁷.

The gender wage gap remains persistent, despite OSCE commitments that call for gender equality in wages and other international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8 and 10¹⁸.

¹⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019): Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019 Global Report - Transforming Challenges into Opportunities, Paris: OECD Publishing(<https://doi.org/10.1787/bc56d212-en>).

¹⁵ See also section on domestic work and care.

¹⁶ SIGI 2019 Regional Report for Eurasia, OECD, 2019 <http://www.oecd.org/fr/social/sigi-2019-regional-report-for-eurasia-f6dfa21d-en.htm>. The 12 countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

¹⁷ The gender wage gap is calculated as the ratio of the wage of woman to that of a man in a similar position. See World Economic Forum (WEF) (2020): Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Geneva: World Economic Forum (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

¹⁸ SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities.

Many national mechanisms have been put in place—including national laws on equal pay—but to date, no country has closed the gender wage gap and progress in bridging this differential has either stalled or advanced very slowly both at global and regional levels (see figure 3). Gender wage gaps vary substantially within the OSCE area with the EU sub-region having the smallest gap of an average value of 14.8 percent¹⁹ in 2018 among the sub-regions.

The Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere calls on participating States to “establish effective national mechanisms for monitoring progress in this field, such as on closing pay gaps”.²⁰ Some participating States (including the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden and Denmark) have indeed implemented policies and regulations for greater transparency in pay. Iceland also amended its Gender Equality Act to include an equal pay provision requiring an equal pay certification from employers.

Vertical and horizontal occupational segregation disproportionately affect women

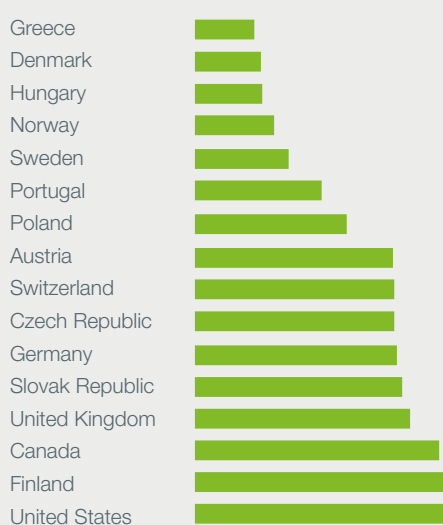


Figure 3: Gender wage gaps in OSCE participating States, 2018
Source: OECD

that are generally employed in lower-paid, non-technical jobs such as care and domestic work or who work in precarious conditions as is the case for part-time and seasonal employees. Working mothers tend to face the highest level of in-job discrimination where adequate work-family policies or paid parental leave are lacking. The ‘motherhood employment penalty’²¹ affects mothers as there are less of them in employment compared to women without children. Also, there is a tendency for wage gap between two categories of women. This penalty coupled with the uneven distribution of unpaid care work and childcare further exacerbate the differential in earnings and occupation not only compared to men but also to other women without dependents.

Women are also heavily under-represented in senior management positions across the entire OSCE region with the notable exception of Poland (41.2 percent), the Russian Federation (42 percent), Mongolia (43 percent) and Latvia (43.5 percent), where a high share of managerial positions are held by women (see figure 4).

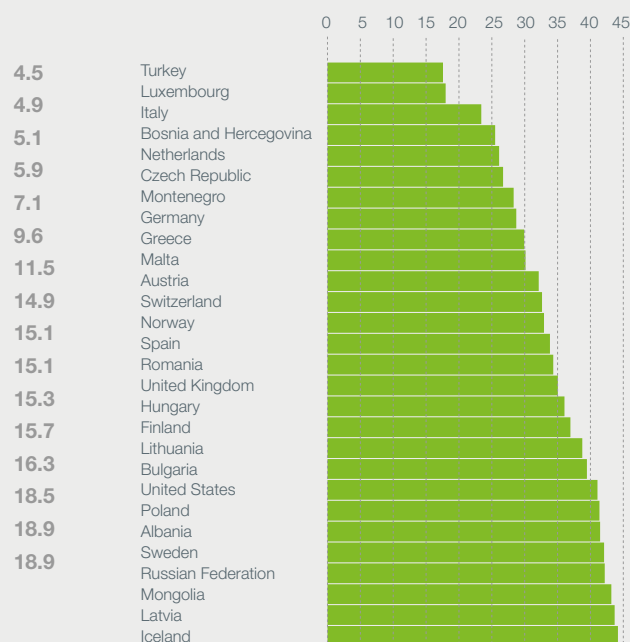


Figure 4: Women's share of employment in managerial positions (senior and middle management), in percent
Source: ILO Labour Force Survey (2019)

¹⁹ As percentage of male gross earning. See Eurostat Gender Pay Gap Statistics (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics)

²⁰ MC.DEC/10/11, para 5.

²¹ https://www.ilo.org/brussels/information-resources/news/WCMS_737634/lang--en/index.htm

DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE

The Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere calls on States to promote the sharing of domestic work, and parental and caregiver responsibilities, by expanding paternity leave; promoting non-discriminatory employment policies and practices and equal access to education and training; taking measures to facilitate combining employment with family responsibilities; and seeking to ensure that any structural adjustment policies and programmes do not have an adversely discriminatory effect on women.”

The 2020 Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum has measured the time spent on unpaid domestic work per day by women and men respectively. On the global level, the report finds that “[a]cross

advanced and developing countries there is a negative relationship between women’s relative amount of time spent on unpaid domestic work and economic participation and opportunity gender gaps”.²²

Gender inequalities in domestic work and care are striking, also in countries where the gender gap in labour participation is smaller.

The tendency is clear: the more hours women spend on unpaid work and care, the less they participate in the labour force.²³

A group of participating States (Sweden, Finland, Canada, and Denmark) has one of the highest shares of women’s labour participation (ranging from 75.1 to 81.2 percent), while having some of the lowest rates of time spent by women in unpaid work. In contrast, countries such as Turkey

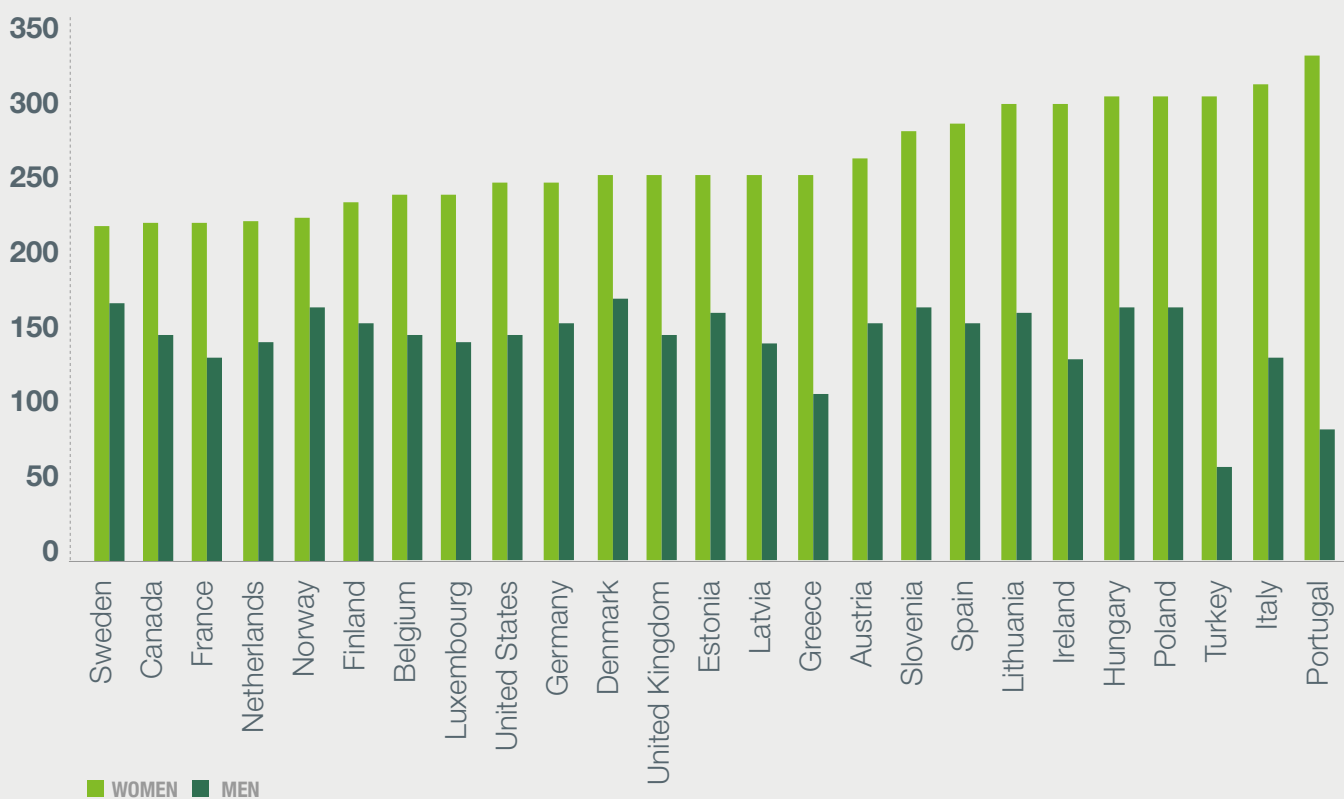


Figure 5: Time spent (minutes per day) on unpaid work by sex and participating State, population aged between 15-64, 2020. Source: OECD statistics

²² WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

²³ Exceptions are North Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan.

and Italy have low shares of women in the labour force (38.8 percent and 56.2 percent respectively) and high rates of time spent by women in unpaid care work. However, correlation is not always as clear cut: In Portugal or Lithuania, for instance, there is a relatively high percentage of women in the labour force (72.4 percent and 77 percent respectively) as well as high rates of time spent in unpaid work by women (328.2 minutes in Portugal and 292 minutes in Lithuania). Presumably, women’s labour force participation in these countries is influenced by other factors.

THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

Rapid digitalization and automatization will transform the labour market and represent crucial opportunities for women as more profitable, high-skilled jobs become available in the next years. Artificial Intelligence offers

great opportunities for women’s economic empowerment but could also reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination. Diversity among developers could help manage that risk.

The Ministerial Council Decision on Human Capital Development in the Digital Area encourages OSCE participating States to “promote education, vocational training and retraining, in particular for women and girls, and especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as a key measure to reduce digital divides and to advance the empowerment of women by promoting opportunities, including in the economy.”

According to UNESCO, the persistent gender disparity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education is

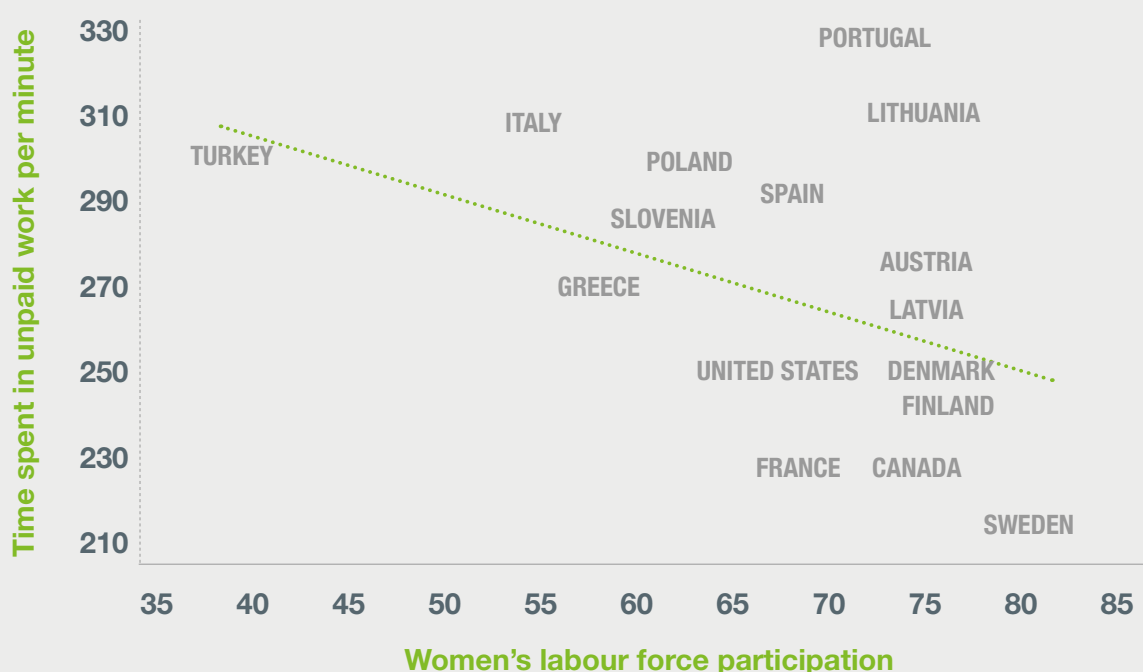


Figure 6: Percentage of women (aged between 15-64) in the labour force and time spent in unpaid care work per minute by participating State.
Source: OECD Statistics (2018) and ILO estimates (2020).

²⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Girls’ and women’s education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), (<https://en.unesco.org/stemed>)

alarming, especially as STEM careers are often referred to as the jobs of the future, driving innovation, social wellbeing, inclusive growth and sustainable development²⁴.

STEM attainment is an important indicator of progress achieved by the participating States in ensuring gender parity in the future of work. Research shows that “earning a STEM degree increases women’s chances to entering high-paying industries by 19% as well as the chances of advancing in the workplace”. According to World Bank data gathered from 42 OECD countries in 2016, an average of 34.2 percent of STEM graduates were women²⁵, but according to the European Commission there are still practically four times more men in ICT-related studies than women in European Union countries²⁶.

This is mainly attributed to the persistence of unconscious bias, which determines what is gender-appropriate and what is not in the labour market. It is also worth noting that many of the high scoring countries on gender equality indexes, like the Nordic countries, are at the bottom half of the list on male/female tertiary STEM education graduates in 2017²⁷.

As shown in figure 7, gender segregation in STEM education leads to gender segregation in employment with men holding the vast majority of jobs in sectors such as Cloud Computing, Engineering, Data and Artificial Intelligence.

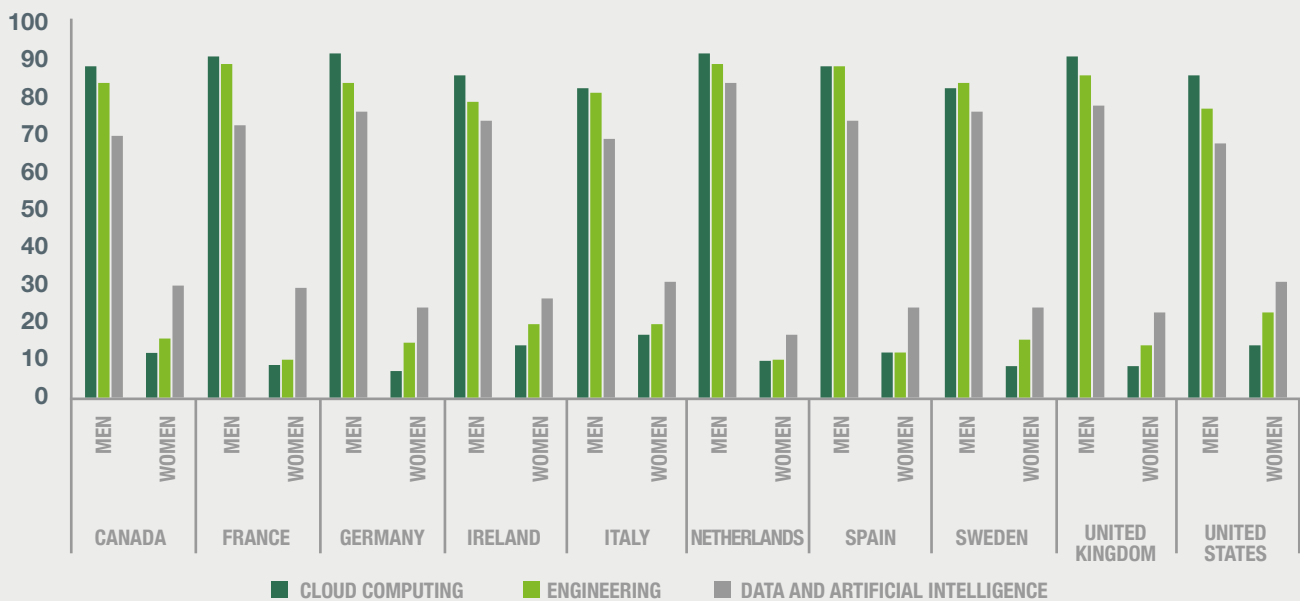


Figure 7: Share of women by professional cluster and participating State (2020)
Source: World Economic Forum (WEF), Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

²⁵ Data varies significantly among OSCE countries ranging from 48.7 percent in Albania, 44.33 percent in Georgia and 44.09 percent in Poland to 28 percent in Belarus, 26 percent in Austria and 22 percent in Switzerland.

²⁶ European Commission (2018): Women in the Digital Age, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/84bd6dea-2351-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>).

²⁷ WEF Global Gender Gap report 2020

GOOD PRACTICES BY OSCE EXECUTIVE STRUCTURES ²⁸

OSCE executive structures have contributed to the implementation of relevant Ministerial Council decisions by supporting participating States with the implementation of their commitments. This part of the briefing paper provides a non-exhaustive snapshot of how OSCE executive structures have contributed to national efforts to promote gender equality in the economic and environmental dimension of comprehensive security.

IMPROVING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The ODIHR's publication "Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender Sensitive Legislation"²⁹ offers a step-by-step guide on how to implement gender-sensitive legislation. It includes recommendations on how to conduct a gender needs analysis in a given sector, assess the gender implications of specific laws, integrate gender-focused activities in new legislative acts, and develop gender-sensitive indicators that can facilitate the monitoring of a law's implementation. The guide provides practical recommendations for creating enabling legislation for gender equality and can be applied in the economic and environmental sectors.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

As a result of the work of several OSCE executive structures, awareness of gender-related issues in anti-corruption work has increased. For instance, the exchange of good practices in the fight against corruption among men and women law-makers and relevant agencies from six participating States in the Western Balkans in the context of an OSCE-organized workshop contributed to greater knowledge of gendered impact of corruption. Also, anti-corruption messages

and equal representation of both men and women in addressing corruption were highlighted during an anti-corruption week organized by the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan. At the same time, a public information campaign drew attention to the need to increase access of women and girls to new technologies and innovative digital tools to fight corruption. The Gender Issues Programme of the Secretariat has also started exploring the gender dimensions of corruption aiming at deepening the understanding of the gendered impact on women and girls and identifying ways of addressing them in the OSCE's work.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SPHERE

Several good practices emerged with regard to the creation of conditions that are conducive for women to participate in existing markets, capacity-building to improve access to employment and empowerment to ensure their meaningful participation in economic decision-making. The OSCE provides a platform for local women's businesses to learn, exchange and network during national and international forums that allow to develop women's entrepreneurship through innovation and investment. This type of interactive learning has been offered by a number of OSCE field operations, namely the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, the Centre in Ashgabat, the Programme Office in Dushanbe, the Mission in Kosovo and other field presences. Another positive example is the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into disaster risk management in Serbia by working with partners to develop a gender-sensitive Model Plan for Managing Risks of Natural Hazards in Local Governance

²⁸ The information in this section is derived from annual reports of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019).

²⁹ Available at <https://www.osce.org/odihr/327836#:~:text=ODIHR's%20Making%20Laws%20Work%20for,of%20legislation%20on%20people's%20lives.>

Units. The model plan was implemented by local authorities to develop local disaster risk management plans that give due consideration to gender and vulnerability.

OSCE executive structures also made a difference for individual women by helping them to become entrepreneurs and find employment, in particular in the more remote, rural areas. The Programme Office in Nur-Sultan for example supported the economic empowerment of women from rural areas with a focus on the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. It facilitated women's involvement in the green economy,

and promoted the adoption of organic agriculture. Also, Women's Resource Centres and NGOs were supported by executive structures—including in Armenia, Serbia and Tajikistan—to deliver skills training in vocational education, strategic and financial management, marketing, and other relevant areas. Women from disadvantaged groups (women from rural areas and women with disabilities, and Roma women) have benefitted from such trainings and related mentorship programmes.

Recommendations for Consideration

1. STRENGTHENING OSCE COMMITMENTS TO PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

The existing OSCE commitments recognize multiple causes of the persistent inequalities in labour markets—including women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work—and call for the promotion of a more equal distribution of domestic work, as well as parental and caregiver responsibilities by expanding paternity leave. While calling for policy and legal measures and concrete action to promote women's economic empowerment, OSCE commitments also need to recognize the structural problems that are embedded in prevailing social norms and practices that prevent women's full and equal participation in labour markets. In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, the existing digital gender divide will further widen unless the participating States commit to addressing multiple structural problems across economic, social, political and cultural areas.

As progress in female labour force participation has been slow, numerous studies and assessments by experts have highlighted the need for transformative approaches to gender equality. Such transformative measures require further legal and policy reforms eradicating discriminatory laws and loopholes, as well as measures that foster deep changes in social attitudes and practices on gender roles in society. The shift in social attitudes and practices should start from early childhood education and continue throughout the life cycle. If men and women, boys and girls could change stereotyped visions of their respective roles in the family and society, they can make different choices for education, jobs and careers. Equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men will require re-thinking masculinities and changing men's roles around family life. The promotion of caring responsibilities by amending laws and policies on parental leave can be an important part in this regard and goes hand-in-hand with reforms in pay transparency legislation.

The OSCE should also consider strengthening and expanding commitments on violence against women and harassment at work, educational institutions in both the public and private sectors (see the Discussion Paper Four on Preventing and Combatting).

2. STRENGTHENING OSCE SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A number of OSCE MCDs calls for activities to women's economic empowerment. As this paper shows, the existing disparities in women's economic and social wellbeing are linked to the disproportionate distribution of domestic and care work. OSCE executive structures should develop and implement innovative approaches to awareness raising and support the efforts by participating States in addressing women's unpaid care and domestic work, fostering improved data collection, and legislative support to address macro-economic policies from a gender perspective.

In the digital era, OSCE executive structures should continue supporting development of human capital with a strong gender perspective in order to address existing digital divide. OSCE can provide a platform for sharing good practices on STEM education that promote gender equality, and continue investing in building skills and capacities of women and girls in priority economic areas with focus on digital skills.



ANNEX 3
PREVENTING AND COMBATING
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
IN THE OSCE REGION

DISCUSSION PAPER
For the 2020 Gender
Equality Review Conference

2020 Gender Equality Review Conference

Discussion Paper

This series of four discussion papers was prepared to inform the Third OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, co-organized by the Albanian OSCE Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Secretariat, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), scheduled to take place on 27-28 October 2020. The papers aim to provide a brief overview of the current state of progress with respect to the implementation of OSCE's commitments to gender equality. These working papers, inclusive of proposed recommendations, are meant to provide initial stimuli for discussion and debate at the Conference.

The first discussion paper provides a snapshot of major achievements, remaining challenges, and examples of good practices and recommendations in attaining key OSCE's commitments related to women's political participation. It is based on data contained in various ODIHR's resources on women's political participation, the OSCE's "Internal Report - "Mapping Beijing +25 Implementation and OSCE Commitments", and other relevant sources.

In the second discussion paper, the levels of women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-

conflict reconstruction are examined on the basis of OSCE's studies, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as well as from other UN reports.

Equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere are the main focus of the third discussion paper, which relies on data from the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and regional reports by the UNECE for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review.

The fourth discussion paper gives an overview of the main achievements and remaining challenges in preventing and countering violence against women in OSCE participating States. It is based on data contained in country and regional review reports for the Beijing Platform for Action+25 review and other secondary sources.

All four discussion papers were prepared by gender advisers and staff in the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR. They highlight good practices, which were drawn from information provided by gender focal points in OSCE executive structures.

OSCE commitments on preventing and combating violence against women

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04) identifies the prevention of violence against women (VAW) as a priority area for all OSCE participating States. The OSCE Ministerial Council has adopted three decisions on preventing and combating violence against women in 2005 (MC.DEC/15/05), 2014 (MC.DEC/7/14) and 2018 (MC.DEC/4/18). The OSCE commitments cover most of the core international standards on violence against women, such as:

- The recognition of all forms of VAW as a human rights violation, including harmful practices, trafficking in human beings, violence using information and communication technology (ICT), VAW in the public sphere and sexual harassment.
- The criminalization of VAW, and investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.
- The protection of victims—including in the form of emergency barring and protection orders—and the provision of shelters.
- A range of quality support services for victims.
- Access to justice for victims.
- Prevention, involving awareness-raising, capacity-building, and engaging men and boys in efforts to counter VAW.

As a cross-cutting issue, VAW is referenced in several other OSCE Ministerial Council decisions, including on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children (MC.DEC/4/13), and on the Safety of Journalists (MC.DEC/3/18).

International Conventions and documents referenced in OSCE commitments include the:

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979) (ratified by 55 OSCE participating States)
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women (DEVAW 1993)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women (1995)
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace, and Security
- Council of Europe Convention on combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011 ‘Istanbul Convention’) (signed by 45 participating States and the European Union, ratified by 34 OSCE participating States)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SDG 16 promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies).

Scope of violence against women and girls (VAWG)

VAW is a form of discrimination against women and a violation of their fundamental human rights. It is *“one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men”*.¹ The OSCE recognizes VAW as a threat to human security.²

Participants of the Beijing +25 Regional Review meeting, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in 2019, observed that despite the advances and the priority placed on the issue in the states of the region, VAWG remains far from being fully and effectively addressed. Instead, in the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, *“[VAW] is persistent and systemic, normalized and tolerated”*.³

The COVID-19 crisis affecting all OSCE participating States has increased the risks of VAW, especially of intimate partner violence. The social isolation measures and restrictions on freedom of the movement put in place to contain the spread of the virus have increased social and economic stress. Together with negative coping strategies— including substance and alcohol abuse by the perpetrators—, the disruption of social and protective networks, as well as limited access to essential services such as the police, courts, health centres, hotlines, crisis centres, shelters, legal aid and protection services, the ‘lockdown’ has left many women at the mercy of their abusers.

Many states have increased data collection on VAW thereby contributing to a better understanding of trends. However, gaps in comprehensive, disaggregated data on its various forms hinders a full comprehension of its scale.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (1993): Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)

² OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (MC.DEC/15/05)

³ Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting, Geneva, 29 October 2019.

Impact of VAWG

The 2018 OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women covering seven countries in South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe found that an approximate 3.25 million women were subjected to violence and suffered bodily injuries including bruises, wounds, broken bones, internal injuries and damage to sexual and reproductive health.

Eighty percent of the women who experienced serious physical and/or sexual violence developed a longer-term psychological condition, such as anxiety or depression.⁴ In addition to the profound personal impact at the individual level, there is a lasting impact on the society as a whole in terms of economic impact, including due to lost economic output of survivors and costs associated to the provision of key of services (health, psychosocial, legal, etc.).⁵



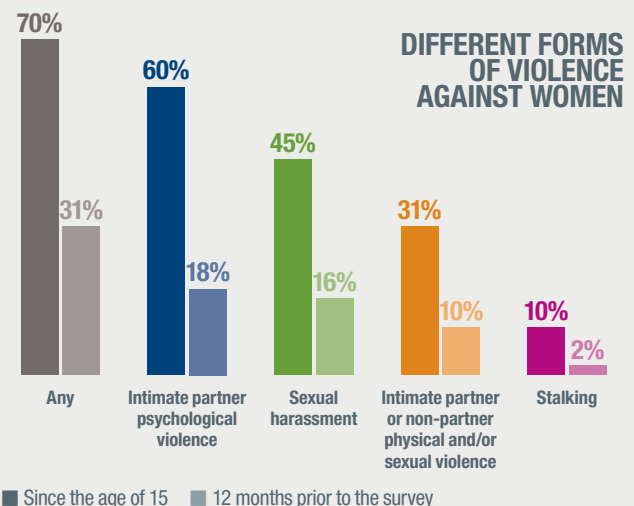
3.25 million* women in the region covered by the survey were left with an injury or physical consequence considering only the most severe cases of violence they identified during their adult lifetime.

***Approximate figures**

Base for psychological and physical consequences: All women aged 18-74 who identify a most serious incident of each form of violence - sexual harassment (3,514), stalking (885), current partner (1,068), previous partner (1,079), non-partner (1,298), any intimate partner/non-partner (2,763)

Forms and prevalence of VAWG

VAWG takes many forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, trafficking in human beings, sexual and other types of exploitation, and sexual harassment. Women belonging to specific groups may face multiple forms of discrimination, which increases their risk of being exposed to gender-based violence (GBV). OSCE commitments related to Roma and Sinti issues⁶ place particular emphasis on the need for states to ensure the security, well-being and health of Roma and Sinti women, youth and children.



OSCE-led VAW Survey figures for seven countries in South-East Europe and Eastern Europe, representative prevalence data collected from women aged 18-74, 2018

⁴ OSCE (2019): Main results report – OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, Vienna: OSCE (<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237?download=true>).
⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2014): Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/estimating-costs-in-european-union>)
⁶ In particular the Ministerial Council decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma And Sinti Women, Youth and Children (MC.DEC/4/13).

National reports submitted in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action+25 (BPFA+25) reveal the persistence of harmful practices such as child and forced marriage in Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe, Turkey, and the South Caucasus. Child marriage disproportionately affects girls in rural areas, within ethnic minority groups, and among the poorer segments of society. Other forms of harmful practices which put women in the OSCE region at risk include female genital mutilation (FGM) and so-called ‘honour’ crimes. There is, however, little reliable data on the prevalence and characteristics of these practices in the OSCE region.

Abuse, threats, and harassment (including sexual harassment) increasingly take place in the digital domain. Both young and adult women experience cyberstalking, as well as violence perpetuated through the use of technology at work, school, and in relation to their participation in politics and the public sphere. Forms of such violence include verbal abuse, threats of sexual violence, doxing, sextortion, trolling, upskirting and bullying.⁷ Growing attention must also be paid to VAW in the public sphere. Female politicians, artists, journalists, and women’s human rights defenders across the OSCE region experience high levels of violence related to their occupation, both online and offline.⁸

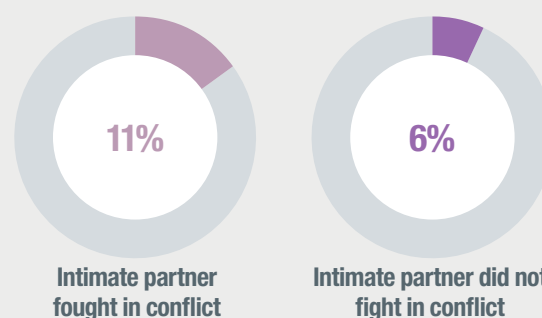
Gender-based violence and conflict

Conflicts, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises exacerbate the already existing patterns of gender-based violence and introduce new forms of abuses. The OSCE-led survey on VAW, for example, revealed that refugee and displaced women are more likely to experience physical violence (37% versus 29% for the general female population). The data shows that conflict-related violence includes more than sexual violence by a non-partner; it covers all forms of violence such as threats of violence, humiliating practices on the part of armed groups and sexual exploitation. The impact of armed conflict on women’s safety and wellbeing persists long after the conflict has finished: women whose current or previous partners have fought in conflicts and suffer from a resulting psychological consequence are twice as likely to experience sexual

and physical violence by their partner.⁹ The 2018 annual report by the United Nations Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence confirms that sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war that significantly affects women and girls.¹⁰

Prevalence of intimate partner violence is higher when partner fought in conflict

% who experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a current or previous partner in the 12 months prior to the survey



OSCE-led VAW Survey figures for seven countries in South-East Europe and Eastern Europe, representative prevalence data collected from women aged 18-74, 2018

⁷ ‘Doxing’ refers to the publication of private information on the Internet with malicious intent; ‘sextortion’ to the use of ICT to blackmail a victim; ‘trolling’ is the posting of messages for the purpose of annoying, provoking or inciting violence against women and girls. For more information, please see the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its Causes and Consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (2018) (<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641160?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>). The term ‘upskirting’ refers to people using cell phones cameras or any small camera to surreptitiously take pictures up women’s skirts (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/upskirting>).

⁸ For more information on violence against women in politics, see also the Briefing Paper on Promoting Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life.

⁹ OSCE (2020): Violence against women in conflict – thematic report, OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, Vienna: OSCE (<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444157?download=true>).

¹⁰ United Nations Secretary-General (2019): Conflict related sexual violence – Report of the United Nations Secretary-General, (S/2019/280) (<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/report/s-2019-280/Annual-report-2018.pdf>).

Legal and policy frameworks

The introduction and adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating VAW and domestic violence (“Istanbul Convention”) was a major drive for the improvement of the related national legal and policy frameworks in countries in the OSCE region. The Istanbul Convention has been ratified by 34 OSCE participating States.¹¹ Several countries that have signed but not yet ratified the Convention did engage in legislative and policy reform to align national law and practice with its provisions.¹²



**NO LAW ON
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE IN
PLACE IN
16.4%
OF PARTICIPATING
STATES**

Source:
<https://genderstats.un.org/>,
consulted on 23 September 2020.
NB: based on information on 55 out of 57 pS.

Criminalization and prosecution of all forms of VAWG

Despite references to growing resistance by conservative and religious groups to the Istanbul Convention in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in their national Beijing Platform for Action+25 reports, a clear trend was discernible in the last few years in countries’ efforts to improve laws, policies and programmes related to VAW. Several countries adopted new legislation, amended the existing one or introduced laws for the first time that criminalize domestic and intimate partner violence, including Andorra, Armenia, Croatia, Iceland,

Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia¹³, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Several countries made efforts to harmonize their laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention’s definition of violence. A few countries adopted national policy frameworks on VAW in the form of action plans and national strategies.¹⁴

At least five OSCE participating States do not have specific legislation on domestic violence or other forms of VAW (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Liechtenstein, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

45 participating States
signed

34 participating States
signed and ratified

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is the most comprehensive legal framework to tackle violence against women and girls.

Source:
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures> consulted on 23 September 2020.

¹¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures>, accessed on 10 September 2020.

¹² Including Armenia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine.

¹³ [https://asiapacificgender.org/sites/default/files/documents/Mongolia_\(English\).pdf](https://asiapacificgender.org/sites/default/files/documents/Mongolia_(English).pdf), accessed 7 Sep 2020.

¹⁴ Such as Denmark’s National Action Plan on Physical and Psychological Violence in Close Relations, 2019-2022; Italy’s National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2017-2020; and Sweden’s National Strategy to Combat Men’s Violence against Women 2016-2026.

Two countries have in recent years decriminalized offences commonly invoked in domestic violence cases, reducing them to administrative offences. Legal reform is ongoing in these countries as the law is being reviewed. The gendered nature of domestic and intimate partner violence is neither captured in the titles of national policies, nor in the content of national legislation in several countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Instead, these laws contain gender-neutral definitions of family violence, do not identify gender discrimination as a root cause of violence, do not extend protection to non-cohabitating and/or (ex)-intimate partners, and do not address stalking.

Some progress was made in recognizing and addressing specific forms of VAWG in national legal and policy frameworks:

- While **femicide**¹⁵ is not considered as a separate criminal offense in most countries within the OSCE region, several participating States have updated their legal frameworks or created special monitoring bodies on gender-related killings, including Croatia, Georgia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.
- Several countries took steps to criminalize **gender-based violence perpetrated through the use of technology**. For example, a few countries¹⁶ criminalized the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, upskirting, online child grooming, sexting directed at minors, cyberbullying and cyberstalking. Many countries address cyber violence as a national security threat

and/or as related to child pornography and sexual exploitation, but do so without a gender perspective and thereby ignoring the fact that women and girls are more likely to be affected by sexualized cyberbullying.

- Different legislative and policy reform initiatives addressed **harmful practices** as several countries across the region criminalized child and forced marriage thus harmonizing their legal frameworks with the Istanbul Convention.
- A few participating States in the OSCE region indicated in their national reports that **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** was not practised in their territory. Yet, it remains important to ensure that effective legislation is in place.
- Specific policy documents on addressing **customary forms of violence** were adopted in some States¹⁷, including action plans related to honour-related conflicts, social control, and harmful traditional practices.

The legal rights available to victims of diverse forms of VAW were bolstered in OSCE countries that are also members of the EU due to the implementation of the EU victims' rights directive. Several countries reformed legislation related to victims' procedural rights that were gender-neutral, which may obstruct the consideration of the specificity of gender-based violence.

¹⁵ The term 'femicide' refers to the gender-related killing of women and girls.

¹⁶ Including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

¹⁷ Including Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands.

¹⁸ Ministerial Council decisions on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (MC.DEC/15/05, MC.DEC/07/14 and MC.DEC/4/18).

¹⁹ Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting, 29 October, Geneva, 2019.

Comprehensive institutional frameworks for VAW

As set forth in the relevant OSCE commitments¹⁸, combating VAW requires a comprehensive institutional framework involving interagency co-ordination, adequate financing, capacity-building, and data collection. Gaps still remain though:

- Monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention by the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) has revealed that few countries in the region **disaggregate statistical data** by all relevant factors.¹⁹ Data gaps mask the true scale and nature of gender-based violence.
- Progress has been made in some countries in the allocation of adequate **human and financial resources** for the provision of services for victims and interagency co-ordination, including support for the work of civil society organizations (CSOs). However, state funding for such services remains insufficient in many countries.
- **Comprehensive and co-ordinated national policies** on combating all forms of VAW and encompassing all relevant actors were strengthened in some countries, though this remains a gap in most. Numerous countries across the region have fostered their collaboration with CSOs to prevent and combat VAW.

Capacity-building - key to implementation

The lack of capacity among professionals and frontline actors in responding to VAW is a significant barrier to the effective protection, prosecution, and provision of services. This includes not only a solid understanding of the nature and diverse forms of VAW and the cycle of domestic and intimate partner violence, but also the required gender sensitivity and victim-centered approach. Where these are lacking, survivors can be re-traumatized and experience secondary rights violations by the very actors designated to assist them. Among the primary obstacles to the implementation of laws and policies on

gender equality and VAW in particular, are existing bias, stereotypes and the prevalence of often-discriminatory informal social norms among those responsible for implementing these laws. Numerous countries²⁰ reported significant capacity-building efforts for a diverse range of stakeholders, including criminal justice sector staff, primary healthcare centres, family-planning centres, social services providers, school health services, mother and child protection services, HIV support centres, centres for migrant families, asylum officers, etc.

²⁰ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine..

Responses to VAWG: protection and services

SPECIAL MEASURES TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

In response to the increased risk of domestic violence as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the participating States most affected by the crisis, including Austria, Italy, Portugal and Spain, put in place special protection measures, including:

- the expansion of existing and introduction of new helplines, online support platforms and shelters
- public information and campaigns on how to report violence
- increased funding for providers of victim support, helplines and shelters

Concerns remain, however, that women and girls—especially the most disadvantaged such as women with disabilities, migrant and internally displaced women and women living in rural areas—are unable to access emergency protection and medical services, also because these services are not marked as essential in all participating States. Another concern relates to the redirection of funding for essential support services towards other COVID-19 crisis-related areas.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A few countries, including Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, and Switzerland have amended legislation to ensure that cases involving VAW are prosecuted *ex officio* (whether or not the victim withdraws her complaint). Many countries noted a rise in convictions though some also saw a decrease. Several countries expanded women's access to free legal aid.

PROTECTION

Several countries²¹ established emergency barring and protection orders for victims of gender-based violence during the reporting period. Others extended existing protection orders by widening the scope of persons entitled to seek protection. A few countries noted an increase in the issuance of protection orders since they had become available. The effective implementation of emergency barring orders requires that priority be placed on the safety of the victim and her/his children. Yet in several countries the removal of perpetrators from the home depends on whether they have access to

²¹ Including Armenia, Latvia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Romania.

²² Including Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Cyprus, Georgia and Ukraine.

NATIONAL INQUIRIES

A public national inquiry is a transparent, public investigation into systemic human rights violations. It involves the general public, and expert stakeholders, including from the government and civil society. Two countries reported on national inquiries into systemic human rights violations related to violence against women: Canada initiated a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Ireland formed a Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters. Australia, an OSCE Partner for Co-operation, conducted a national inquiry into sexual harassment in workplaces in 2019.

another accommodation and not on the victim's safety needs. Several states have not yet criminalized the violation of emergency barring and protection orders.

Between 2014 and 2019, several countries²² adopted protocols to guide the implementation of emergency barring and protection orders, including risk assessments and sanctions for non-compliance in line with the Istanbul Convention. Risk assessment protocols are life-saving tools which also help to ensure the efficient and effective use of limited resources because they support prioritization and prevent more violence with higher cost implications.

CO-ORDINATED MULTI-SECTORAL SERVICES²³

OSCE commitments related to combating VAW task the participating States to provide a wide range of services, including adequate protection, rehabilitation and reintegration support for women and girls who are victims of violence.²⁴

Important advances were made throughout the region in expanding the scope and quality of services available to victims of

gender-based violence, including in countries without a related legal framework. In some countries, services are now provided free of charge to victims of gender-based violence including legal aid, health care and social welfare assistance. Others developed standards for service provision and co-operation, as well as referral mechanisms for service providers. It should be noted that in most countries assistance is provided by civil society organizations with varying degrees of financial state support.

- **Shelters and crisis centres:** Not all participating States have temporary shelters for victims of domestic violence in place. Where they are available, service provision is often challenged by inadequate and short-term funding, a limited scope of services, poor physical condition of facilities and a lack of professionally trained staff. At least four countries²⁵ established specialized sexual violence crisis centres, but their geographical distribution remains limited.

- **Hotlines:** 24/7 hotlines were established in several countries and accessibility was broadened by offering the service in different languages. Still, professionalized responses and referrals are often only available during

²³ The multi-sectoral model for the fight against gender-based violence calls for holistic interorganizational and interagency efforts that promote the participation of people of concern, interdisciplinary and interorganizational co-operation and co-ordination across key sectors, including health, psychosocial, legal/justice and security. The multi-sectoral model explicitly highlights responsibilities unique to each sector.

²⁴ MC.DEC/4/18, para 1.

²⁵ Including Albania, Belgium, Hungary, and Kyrgyzstan.

standard working hours and not all operators have received the necessary training. Some countries established helplines for specific forms of violence, such as for revenge porn (United Kingdom) and violence and harassment in public transport (France).

- **Specialized services** for at-risk groups that take into account their specific needs and vulnerabilities were set in place in several countries within the EU. These are tailored to women with disabilities, the elderly, adolescents, migrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex individuals, and victims of specific forms of violence, such as sexual

violence, stalking, or online violence. Several countries noted advances in formalizing effective co-operation and referral mechanisms for assistance and services to victims. In South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, these systems have advanced, but several aspects remain under development and require institutional strengthening and stakeholder capacity-building.

In spite of the advances made, services remain inadequate in most countries in the OSCE region, both in terms of scope and quality.

Prevention of VAWG

VAWG is rooted in gender-based discrimination, social norms, gender stereotypes and systematic and pervasive gender inequality. While protection and response are required to address both imminent and ongoing violence, the prevention of violence is the best and most cost-effective policy for tackling the phenomenon.

The prevention of VAWG is set forth in several OSCE documents. The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality for example commits OSCE executive structures to assist participating States “*in developing programmes and activities aimed at the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence*”.²⁶ Around 90 percent of the OSCE participating States conducted public awareness campaigns, including on changing attitudes and behaviours.

Almost half of the countries also provided perpetrator programmes and specialized primary and secondary education programmes.

AWARENESS- RAISING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The 2014 and 2018 Ministerial Council decisions on Preventing and Combating VAW call on participating States to address negative stereotypes, attitudes, and prejudices which contribute to all forms of VAW and to organize awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of specific forms of violence facing women and girls, including through digital technologies, and on their rights and the support available for victims.²⁷

Many of the public awareness campaigns mentioned in Beijing Platform for Action+25 national reports refer to the UN-sponsored global campaigns “16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence” and

²⁶ MC.DEC/14/04, para V,44(c).

²⁷ The 2014 and 2018 Ministerial Council decisions on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women also call on States to “[t]ake measures to raise awareness of the vicious cycle of violence that might emanate from physical, sexual, and psychological violence experienced in childhood and adolescence” (MC.DEC/07/14 para 3, MC.DEC/4/18 para 4).

GOOD PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING MEN & BOYS

The Permanent Missions of Iceland and Suriname to the UN in New York developed the “barbershop” concept in the context of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The concept examines innovative ways for men to mobilize and motivate other men to address discriminatory stereotypes of masculinity. Ireland funds a national “MANUP” campaign aimed at engaging men to stand up against domestic and sexual violence, and a White Ribbon campaign focusses on engaging men as advocates against such violence.

Albania developed a national action plan for the involvement of men and boys for the period 2014-2019.

“HeForShe”. In many countries, national authorities also engaged in country-specific prevention campaigns to address diverse forms of violence. Almost all country-specific campaigns targeted youth. Several countries have engaged in awareness-raising on specific forms of violence, including cyberbullying, targeting youth in particular, child marriage and sexual violence. Specific education programmes on cyber violence with a dedicated gender component, and on gender stereotypes were also developed in some countries. There is, however, no information available on the impact and sustainability of these awareness-raising and education programmes.

WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS

The 2014 Ministerial Council Decision on VAW calls on participating States to develop programmes to work with the perpetrators of VAW, both during and after their sentence in order to avoid repeat offenses.²⁸ Several countries established perpetrator programmes during the reporting period, including Albania, Belarus,

and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Similarly, in the Czech Republic, legal amendments now require the participation in anger management programmes for domestic violence perpetrators. Only few countries run programmes for sex offenders.

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

The 2018 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating VAW calls on participating States to incorporate initiatives into relevant national level policies and strategies to promote the engagement of men and boys in preventing and combating VAWG, and addressing negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that perpetuate such violence.²⁹

Involving men and boys and tackling harmful masculinities are important strategies to prevent and counter VAW. While several countries explicitly recognize the need for such programmes, only few have introduced concrete initiatives.

²⁸ MC.DEC/07/14, para 3.

²⁹ MC.DEC/4/18, para 8

OSCE-LED SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The OSCE-led survey, implemented by the Gender Section in seven countries in South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe, provides unique and comparable data on the different forms of violence against women. The survey also covered gender-based violence in the context of conflict.

The project website contains all the local and consolidated results reports, as well as thematic reports on the experiences of disadvantaged women and violence against women and conflict. An interactive data explorer and links to online resources containing help and information are made available. A targeted regional social media campaign “End the Silence” reached more than 35 million persons at the end of 2019.

<https://www.osce.org/projects/survey-on-the-well-being-and-safety-of-women>

Good practices by OSCE executive structures

The Ministerial Council decisions on combating and preventing VAW task OSCE executive structures to support participating States with the implementation of their commitments. This section provides a non-exhaustive snapshot of how OSCE executive structures contribute to national efforts to combat VAW.

IMPROVING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Several OSCE executive structures support national stakeholders in drafting legal provisions on gender-based violence. The OSCE Mission in Skopje, for example, supported the drafting of the new **Law on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the new Criminal Code** (both in 2019), ensuring that commitments of the Istanbul Convention are incorporated.

TRIAL MONITORING

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supports local women’s NGOs in **conducting trial monitoring of gender-based violence cases, including conflict-**

related sexual violence in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to assess the judicial response by courts. This kind of trial monitoring has contributed to improving the technical aspects of investigation, prosecution, and adjudication, as well as the approach of investigators, prosecutors and judges to survivors of sexual violence.

PROMOTING CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION

In Moldova, the OSCE Mission organized a series of events and trainings to **bring together different actors working on combating violence** such as NGO representatives, shelter staff, social service providers, psychologists and lawyers from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River. The events provided opportunities to discuss common challenges and build confidence between the Sides of the Transdniestrian settlement process.

These initiatives have led to an increase in the number of referrals of victims of violence to support services. They also contributed to

the inclusion of domestic violence issues in the negotiation agenda of the Human Rights sub-Working Group within the framework of the settlement process.

STUDIES AND TOOLS

In August 2019, OSCE/ODIHR released a publication focused on preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty. The booklet is for use by state actors, civil society organizations and the international community and improves their understanding of how such violence manifests in places of deprivation of liberty and how relevant safeguards can be created.

AWARENESS-RAISING

In 2019, the Mission to Skopje in collaboration with local CSOs, initiated an **anti-rumour campaign** to break down negative prejudices and stereotypes on grounds of sex and gender. Emphasis was placed on Roma women, women with disabilities and rural women. The campaign reached some 980,000 people online and 15,000 participants during live events.

The Mission to Moldova held a **public lecture series** on gender equality and domestic violence for 1,200 teachers and students of vocational schools throughout Moldova, which addressed beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. ODIHR organized two expert roundtables on gender-based hate crimes and on intersectionality and hate crimes with a focus on their gender dimensions in 2019.

The roundtables produced guidance for CSOs, governments, and international organizations on how to address gender-based hate crimes and apply an intersectional approach to these crimes.

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING OF PROFESSIONALS

Several OSCE executive structures built the capacities of police and criminal justice sector actors in addressing gender-based violence. The Strategic Police Matters Unit of the Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department **developed a training or trainers package** which was delivered to police officers, prosecutors, judges, and social workers to better respond to gender-based violence cases in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.

The Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine supported the national police to **form and train multi-disciplinary domestic violence response teams** named "POLINA". In addition, local police hotline operators, covering nearly half the country, underwent training in identifying domestic violence cases.

The Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supports **capacity-building** and organizes regular trainings for police officers, focusing on how to address domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence and how to deal with gender-based discrimination in police structures.

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan supports a leading women's rights NGO in **providing personalized support, information about resources and services**, free legal aid and psychological counselling for women who have experienced violence.

In Tajikistan, the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe has supported the **establishment and running of Women Resource Centres** that provide free legal aid and

support to victims of domestic violence and women at risk. The Women Resource Centres have reached 60,631 persons between January 2017 and the end of 2019.

ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media implemented different activities in

the context of 'Safety of Female Journalists Online' project to **highlight the experiences of women journalists who have been affected by online harassment**. The campaign included the production and screening of a documentary on the topic, as well as workshops and conferences.

Gaps and challenges

Based on the national reports to the Beijing Platform for Action Review and the findings of the OSCE-led survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, several gaps and challenges significantly contribute to the continued prevalence of VAWG in the OSCE region.

GENDER-NEUTRAL LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS fail to take into account the root causes of domestic violence and do not adequately recognize their disproportionate impact on women and girls. This also applies to national responses to cyber violence, which often fail to adopt a gender perspective despite the fact that this kind of violence disproportionately affects women and girls.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS REMAINS WEAK Ensuring the effective implementation of protection measures has been and remains a challenge for many countries, both in the initial and the more advanced stages of developing systematized forms of victim protection.

Capacity-building with an emphasis on gender-sensitivity training remains an ongoing need. The effective implementation of risk assessment protocols by law enforcement

officers was noted as a significant challenge in many countries and some countries have not yet adopted risk assessment protocols.

GROWING RESISTANCE AND BACKLASH

Resistance to initiatives to combat VAW and promote gender equality were particularly noted by countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This has, among others, prevented some countries from ratifying the Istanbul Convention.

LACK OF RELIABLE AND DISAGGREGATED DATA

Reliable data remains difficult to obtain in many countries in the region. The information provided by existing data is also limited due to significant under-reporting. Additional concerns relate to the protection of survivors in data collection and exchange of practices. 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. Most States still fail to comprehensively disaggregate data on violent crimes.

SOME FORMS OF VIOLENCE ARE NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED

- OSCE commitments have not specifically addressed the issue of femicide yet, albeit they do explicitly cover all forms of VAW as well as hate crimes, which can result in murder based, inter alia, on sex/gender bias.
- Gender-based hate crimes are not fully conceptualized and addressed by OSCE participating States.
- Combating VAW perpetrated through technology poses a distinct challenge for those countries in the region that have

yet to criminalise form of violence, and in those countries where evidence derived from technological communications remains inadmissible in court.

- Gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty is not adequately researched, reported and prevented

MULTI-SECTORAL SERVICES REMAIN INADEQUATE AND UNDERFUNDED in many countries in the region, both in scope and in quality. Ineffective response and services of poor quality serve to further re-victimize beneficiaries, resulting in secondary rights violations.

Recommendations for consideration

STRENGTHENING OSCE COMMITMENTS TO PREVENT AND COMBAT VAW

Even though OSCE commitments explicitly cover all forms of VAW, they do not specifically address the issue of femicide, including hate crimes that can result in murder motivated by, inter alia, sex/gender bias. Similarly, gender-based hate crimes are not fully conceptualized and addressed by OSCE participating States. In addition, gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty is not adequately researched, reported and prevented.

Participating States should consider including explicit provisions related to femicide gender-based hate crimes and gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty in future OSCE commitments. The OSCE has an opportunity to fill an important gap with respect to the legislative framework, data collection and specialized services related to femicide.

STRENGTHENING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

- All forms of VAWG should be defined and criminalized in the law and appropriate criminal sanctions applied. Participating States should either introduce new or improve existing legal and policy frameworks to cover all forms of VAW, including—but not limited to—femicide, gender-based hate crimes, violence perpetrated through the use of technology and sexual harassment. Combatting VAW perpetrated through the use of technology poses a distinct challenge for those countries in the region that have yet to criminalise this, and in those countries where evidence derived from technological communications remains inadmissible in court.
- Gender-neutral legal and policy frameworks fail to consider the root causes of domestic violence and do not adequately acknowledge the disproportionate impact

they have on women and girls. This is equally relevant for national responses to cyber violence, which do not always adopt a gender perspective despite the fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by that kind of violence.

Participating States should include a gender perspective in their national approaches to cyber violence. With a strong collaboration across executive structures, the OSCE is poised to play an important role in addressing the current gap in most States in approaching cyber violence from a gendered perspective.

- The issue of VAW and gender-based violence should be integrated into the OSCE's work on Security Sector Governance and Reform and across the conflict cycle.
- All OSCE participating States should strengthen and expand their respective commitments (including protection) related to violence and harassment at work. The 53 OSCE participating States that are also Members of the International Labour Organization (ILO) should consider ratifying the 2019 ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment Convention (No.190).
- The ratification of the Istanbul Convention should be considered by participating States not having done so yet.
- OSCE participating States should step up measures to prevent gender-based violence and specifically intimate partner violence in conflict and other crisis situations, including when addressing the Covid-19 pandemic.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF MULTI-SECTORAL SERVICES

- Multi-sectoral services remain inadequate and underfunded in many countries in the region, both in scope and in quality. Ineffective responses and services of poor quality re-victimize beneficiaries and result in secondary rights violations. Systematic co-operation and co-ordination of multi-sectoral support services should be ensured and overseen by relevant national institutions, including by establishing standard operating procedures.
- Comprehensive and specialized services for victims/survivors of VAWG should be expanded in each participating States, ensuring that women from disadvantaged groups and minority women have access to appropriate support.
- The provision of sufficiently resourced psychological and rehabilitation assistance based on international best practice should be strengthened as an essential component of enabling women to escape violence permanently and to rebuild their lives, especially in times of emergencies.
- Increased national budgetary allocations to combat VAW are needed, including through gender-responsive budgeting.
- The establishment of sexual violence crisis centers should be supported in countries where they do not yet exist.

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Ensuring the effective implementation of protection measures has been and remains a challenge for many countries, both for those in the initial and the more advanced stages of developing systematized forms of protection for victims of VAW. Capacity-building, with an emphasis on gender sensitivity training, remains an ongoing need. The effective implementation of risk assessment protocols by law enforcement officers was noted as a significant challenge in many countries and some have not yet adopted risk assessment protocols. Increased capacity-building for legislators, security and justice sector, and service providers is needed on the application of international standards and in particular on applying a victim-centred, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive approach. Specialized units on VAWG should be established in each institution.
- In collaboration with other intergovernmental organizations as well as national and international NGOs, OSCE executive structures should support the ongoing capacity-building of frontline actors in gender-based violence response and the effective implementation of national legislation in line with international standards.

PREVENTION

Addressing the root causes of VAW and gender bias by promoting equality in education and through public campaigns with the aim of changing the mindsets and attitudes of boys and girls, women and men requires a systematic approach. The OSCE can support participating States in developing transformative and innovative strategies, programmes, and initiatives to promote the engagement of men and boys and to tackle discriminatory stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.

DATA COLLECTION

Reliable data remains difficult to obtain in many countries in the OSCE region. The information provided by existing data sets is also limited due to significant under-reporting. The collection and publication of data on VAW should be improved, e.g. through increasing the capacity of national statistical agencies to conduct surveys, by developing a set of national indicators and creating a consolidated database on all forms of VAWG. Additional concerns relate to ensuring the data protection rights of survivors of violence in data collection and sharing practices. There is a particularly glaring data gap related to femicide and gender-related killing despite repeated calls by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for such data to be collected. In addition, most OSCE participating States fail to comprehensively disaggregate data on violent crimes. OSCE participating States should consider closing the data gap by collecting data related to femicide and gender-related killings and disaggregate data on violent crimes.



ANNEX 4
PROMOTING WOMEN'S
PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

DISCUSSION PAPER
For the 2020 Gender
Equality Review Conference

OSCE commitments related to the promotion of women's participation in political and public life

This paper was prepared by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), providing a brief snapshot of key OSCE commitments related to women's political participation, major achievements and challenges, examples of good practice, and recommendations towards achieving gender equality in political and public life. It is based on country reports to the Beijing Platform for Action+25, data contained in various ODIHR Key Resources on Gender Equality and Women's Political Participation¹ as well as additional secondary sources. It is part of a series of four papers prepared ahead of the OSCE Third Gender Equality Review Conference, to take place on 27 and 28 October 2020.

In Moscow in 1991, the participating States recognized gender equality as a cornerstone of security and democracy in the OSCE region. Equal and meaningful political participation of women and men in decision-making is key to effective democratic institutions, good laws and policies, as well as long-term peace, stability, and the prosperity of OSCE participating States. Despite progress in improving equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for women and men, much remains to be done towards achieving gender equality in politics and decision-making in the OSCE region.

OSCE commitments call for gender balance among elected public officials at all levels of decision-making and across all branches of

government, as well as for women's equal participation in political parties and electoral processes.² They also call on States to consider adopting legislative measures to improve gender balance, and to encourage shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men in order to facilitate women's political participation.³

The 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan tasks ODIHR specifically to “assist participating States in developing effective measures to bring about the equal participation of women in democratic processes, [...] developing best practices for their implementation, [...] and monitor(ing) and report(ing) on women's participation in elections as part of its Election Observation Missions.”⁴ The 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti recommends that OSCE participating States “[t]ake into account in all measures and programmes, the situation of Roma and Sinti women, who are often victims of discrimination on the basis of both ethnicity and sex. Roma women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men in consultative and other mechanisms designed to increase access to all areas of public and political life”.⁵ The 2018 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women acknowledges that “women engaged in professional activities with public exposure [...] are likely to be exposed to specific forms of violence or abuse, threats, and harassment, in relation to their work”.⁶

¹ ODIHR, Key Resources on Gender Equality and Women's Political Participation.

² OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, paras 1-3.

³ Ibid, para 9.

⁴ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 14/04 - 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, para 44(d).

⁵ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 3/03 - 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, paras 19 and 98.

As described in the 1995 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”.⁷ The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further call for “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels,” as well as the social, economic and political inclusion of all.⁸

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Progress has been observed in women’s political participation across the OSCE region, particularly in legislative bodies. Women’s representation in national parliaments increased to the current average of 29 percent in the OSCE region, up from around 11 percent when the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women took place in 1995.⁹ Almost half of the OSCE participating States (24 out of 57) have reached the 30 percent target established by the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs.¹⁰ The Council of Europe (CoE) recommends a minimum of 40 percent representation of either women or men in decision-making and only 10 OSCE participating States have reached this target.¹¹

There is a wide variation in women’s representation in legislative bodies among the participating States, ranging from 47 percent to only 12 percent women parliamentarians in a few states. The Nordic countries lead the way in gender equality in politics with an average of 42 percent women parliamentarians. The achievements among the remaining sub-regions of the OSCE are fairly similar with 31 percent women

parliamentarians in South Eastern Europe and in the European Union, 26 percent in North America, 25 percent in Eastern Europe, 24 percent in Central Asia, and 18 percent in the South Caucasus. Looking at parliamentary leadership, only 19 out of 78 parliaments (22 of which are bi-cameral) in the OSCE region are led by women spetakers. With a few exceptions, women chair parliamentary committees mainly on topics that are traditionally perceived as women’s issues, such as family, education, social affairs, and culture.¹³ Women from ethnic minorities and Roma and Sinti women in particular, remain severely under-represented in the European, national and regional parliaments, regional and municipal councils, governments and posts of responsibility in political parties.

Despite the existence of legal frameworks that ensure equality between women and men in most participating States, the political reality across the OSCE region differs. Caring responsibilities, unequal access to finance and a persistent pay gap, stereotypes and violence against women, lack of confidence and opportunity to experience formal politics, and male-dominated political structures all impede women’s abilities to enter, stay and lead in political and public life. The actual and perceived barriers to politics vary between women and men, influenced by cultural and political realities in societies, as shown below. These barriers are even more difficult to overcome for women from traditionally under-represented groups, such as women belonging to minorities, especially Roma and Sinti, young women, migrant women or women with disabilities.¹⁴

⁶ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (MC.DEC/4/18), Preamble.

⁷ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, para 181.

⁸ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, target 10.2 and target 16.7.

⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Percentage of Women in National Parliaments and archived data.

¹⁰ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, para 182.

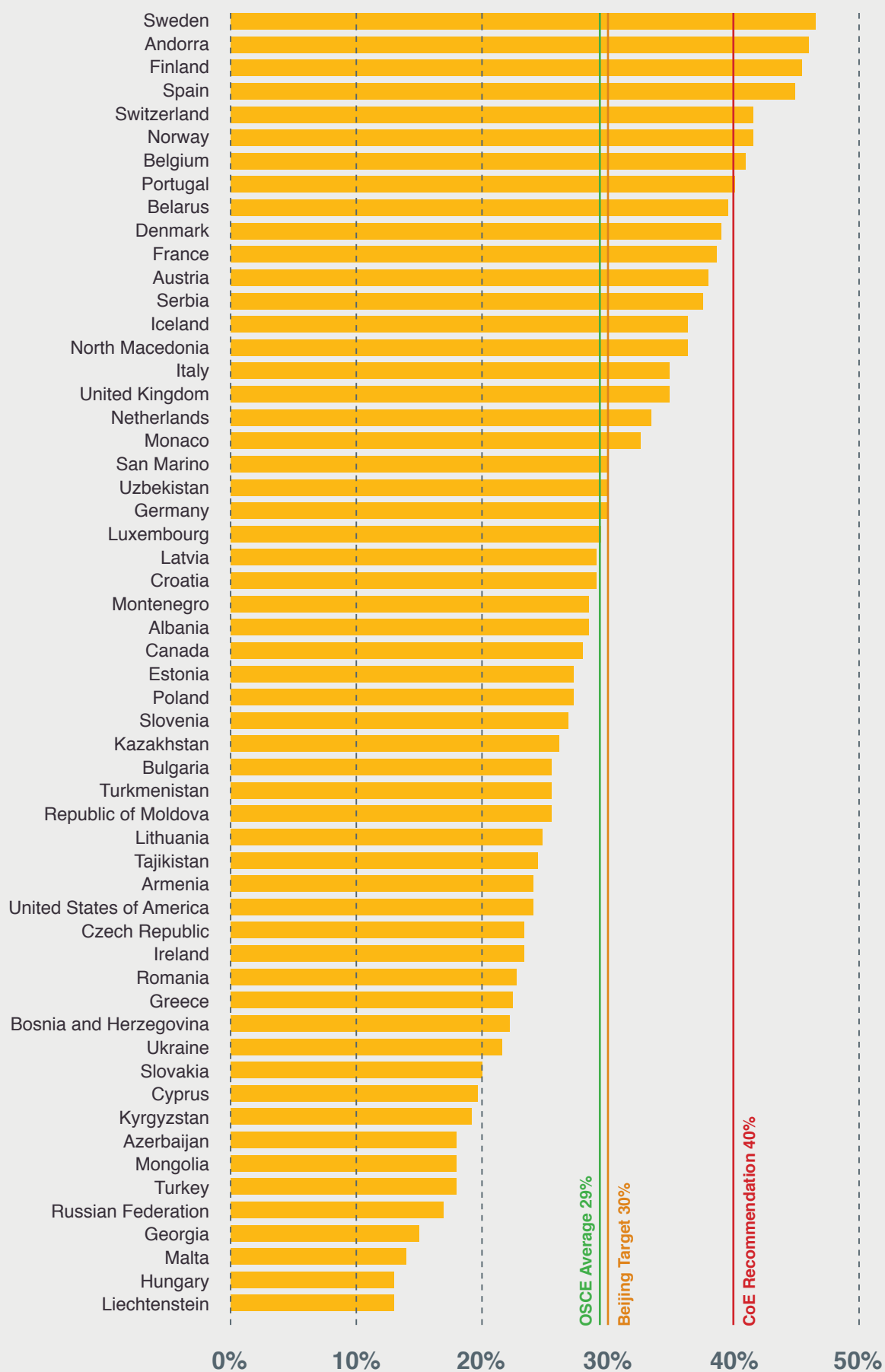
¹¹ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation 2003(3) on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.

¹² Inter-Parliamentary Union, Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, data as of 1 August 2020.

¹³ ODIHR data as of March 2020 and ODIHR Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region, 2013.

¹⁴ ODIHR, Compendium of Good Practices for Advancing Women’s Political Participation in the OSCE Region, 2016.

Percentage of Women in OSCE Parliaments (lower chambers/unicameral)¹²



Top five barriers to entering politics for women and men



Participants in sub-regional consultations of the Beijing +25 Regional Review identified political parties as an important target for overcoming the persistent barriers to women’s political advancement.¹⁵ ODIHR’s gender audits of political parties demonstrate that candidacy selection procedures in political parties across the OSCE region remain largely non-transparent to the detriment of aspiring women candidates.¹⁶

As noted in ODIHR’s “Third Status Report - Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area - For Roma, With Roma”, Roma and Sinti women “remain under-represented in politics, and mainstream political parties are still resistant to fielding Roma and Sinti candidates”.¹⁷ Parliaments are increasingly aware of the need to integrate gender equality and diversity aspects in their institutions, both in

terms of their representative, legislative and oversight functions as well as in terms of their role as public employers. Gender-sensitive legislation, for example, can ensure that laws work and deliver for women and men, boys and girls, in all their diversity.¹⁸

The implementation of temporary special measures has had a positive impact on women’s political participation in the OSCE region, in particular legislative gender quotas designed to fast-track women’s nomination and election to political office. To address inequalities, almost 40 percent of OSCE participating States (22 out of 57) have introduced some form of legislative gender quotas in the last two decades. In the OSCE region, the quotas address national or local elected office, and in some cases both, with the prescribed percentage of women’s representation ranging between 20 and 50 percent.¹⁹ Quotas also differ in terms of

¹⁵ OSCE Internal Report Mapping Beijing +25 Implementation and OSCE Commitments.

¹⁶ ODIHR, Handbook on Promoting Women’s Participation in Political Parties, Warsaw, 2014.

¹⁷ ODIHR, Third Status Report - Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area - For Roma, With Roma, Warsaw, 2018, p. 9.

¹⁸ ODIHR, Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation, Warsaw, 2017.

¹⁹ International IDEA, Gender Quotas Database.

whether they specify placement provisions for candidate lists, which is the case in about half of the OSCE states that have introduced quotas. The sanctions for non-compliance with quota provisions vary and can result in non-registration of candidate lists or financial penalties. Other participating States have opted for the introduction of financial incentives to encourage adherence with quota provisions.²⁰ In terms of overall impact, the proportion of women elected to national parliament rose at a faster pace in those OSCE participating States that have legislative gender quotas compared with those without such measures.²¹ Still, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms undermines the impact of legislative gender quotas. Furthermore, gains should not be attributed to quotas only, since many other policy initiatives and cultural trends, such as voluntary party measures or measures to ensure good work/life balance, can also be effective in advancing gender equality in elected office.

With the #MeToo movement gaining traction in recent years, growing attention has been paid to violence committed against women in the public sphere.²² Female politicians, artists, journalists and women's human rights defenders across the OSCE region are exposed to violence, reflecting the possible confluence of increased political polarity across the region with the ongoing pervasiveness of misogyny. A recent study by the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that 85.2 percent of the surveyed women parliamentarians

suffered psychological violence while in office, with 46.9 percent receiving death threats or threats of rape or beating. Additionally, 58.2 percent were the target of online sexist attacks on social networks, and 24.7 percent were subjected to sexual violence.²³ Younger members of parliament and those working on gender equality issues reported they were often singled out. Many of the surveyed women underscored the absence of a mechanism or service to which they could direct their complaints and seek support. This topic is addressed more broadly in the Briefing Paper on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region.

The current Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates the continued under-representation of women in decision-making that affects them. A significant gender disparity is found in the composition of Covid-19 taskforces in the OSCE region.²⁴ While women may be better represented in public health and advisory groups, their representation is particularly low in roles of political decision-making.²⁵ Failure to integrate gender perspectives in crisis planning and response to Covid-19 is likely to exacerbate existing gender inequalities and result in policies that may not adequately respond to the needs of diverse groups of women and men. In this context, it is concerning that only a few participating States have reported to be conducting gender impact assessments to guide more gender sensitive Covid-19 policies.²⁶

²⁰ ODIHR, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 8 and International IDEA, *Gender Quotas Database*.

²¹ ODIHR, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 54.

²² According to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, "violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life,' Istanbul, 2011, art 3.a.

²³ Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*, 2018.

²⁴ ODIHR, *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*, 2020.

²⁵ For instance, the Covid-19 taskforce of the United States and Italy did not initially include any women. Hungary's taskforce included one woman out of 15 task force members. For an overview of different countries' task forces, see here.

²⁶ Based on the information published by the Council of Europe, only Serbia and Sweden initially reported to be conducting gender impact assessments.

Good practices and OSCE work

ODIHR has been leading the OSCE's efforts to advance women's political participation by supporting institutional change, awareness-raising, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing. Over the last decade, ODIHR has implemented projects and activities, provided and facilitated expert support, and supported the production of knowledge tools related to improving women's political participation in 40 OSCE participating States across the various sub-regions. Much focus was placed on gender equality in parliaments and political parties and support to political participation, as well as capacity building of women, including those from marginalized groups such as Roma and Sinti, young women and women with disabilities.²⁷ The ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) has consistently addressed this topic, by engaging politicians, Roma and Sinti civil society activists, experts, women and youth in various activities and ensuring their active involvement and participation in OSCE human dimension meetings, side events and debates. Since the low level of women's representation in elected office is often a consequence of an uneven playing field during elections, ODIHR's election observation missions also examine women's participation as voters, candidates and elected representatives, making recommendations on how electoral laws and practices can be improved.²⁸ Following elections, national authorities benefit from tailor-made technical assistance to implement those recommendations.

Out of 16 OSCE field operations, 13 have been implementing programmes, projects, or activities that advance gender equality in politics. Other OSCE structures, including the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its Special Representative on Gender Issues, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, have also addressed gender issues in parliaments, the political participation of national minorities, and the online safety of female journalists, respectively. The OSCE Chairs-in-Office and their Special Representative on Gender actively support the OSCE's work on women in politics through joint events, country visits and dedicated reports. This section provides a snapshot illustration of how OSCE executive structures contribute to efforts to promote the participation of women in political and public life.

²⁷ ODIHR, *Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities*, Warsaw, 2019.

²⁸ ODIHR, *ODIHR, Gender Equality, and Women's Rights: A Factsheet*, Warsaw, 2017.

Institutional change: Promoting gender-sensitive and inclusive

Across the OSCE region, the legitimacy of representative democracy is facing challenges that are fuelled by a growing public perception of parliaments as being corrupt, elitist, and male-dominated.²⁹ ODIHR and OSCE field Operations, working together, supported the parliaments of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia in their efforts to become more gender-sensitive and enact laws that recognize the different needs and priorities and are therefore effective for both women and men. Consultations and assessments of the current level of gender sensitivity in parliamentary and legislative

processes were followed by workshops for parliamentarians, based on ODIHR's publication "Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation".³⁰ This has resulted in three state-of-the-art gender action plans developed for these legislatures. Upon request by participating States, ODIHR also reviews draft and existing legislation to assess its compliance with OSCE commitments, gender equality standards and international good practice and publishes its legal opinions on Legislationline.org.

GOOD PRACTICE: GENDER ACTION PLANS FOR PARLIAMENTS

Gender action plans for parliaments represent a new era in democratic governance and parliamentary processes. These strategic documents aim to foster institutional change towards gender equality, inclusion and efficiency in parliaments' representative, legislative and oversight roles and in leadership processes, as well as parliaments as gender-sensitive public employers. In the long run, such plans can lead to inclusive and efficient parliaments, delivering good laws, policies, services, and jobs for women and men in all their diversity.

KNOWLEDGE TOOL: GENDER-SENSITIVE LEGISLATION

ODIHR's publication *Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation* provides a step-by-step guide for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on how to implement gender-sensitive legislation, explaining what it is, why it is important, and how it can be integrated into routine parliamentary work.

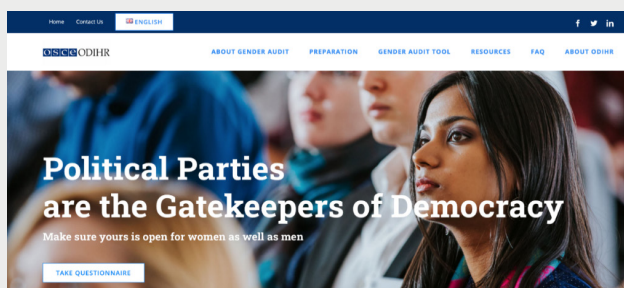
²⁹ Transparency International, *People and Corruption: Citizen's Voices From Around The World*, 2017; Pew Research Center, *Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy*, 2017; and Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament*.

³⁰ ODIHR, *Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation*, Warsaw, 2017.

While gender parity has not yet been achieved in most parliaments in the OSCE region, women do manage to have a significant impact on political landscapes and decision-making. Women's caucuses in parliaments are initiated by women parliamentarians across the OSCE region, to promote solidarity, strengthen capacities in parliaments, and advance women's policy interests.³¹ Over the last decade, ODIHR and OSCE field operations have supported the establishment and work of

parliamentary women's caucuses in a dozen States, including Albania, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Ukraine. Targeted and collaborative efforts between women inside and outside parliament, often under the leadership of parliamentary women's caucuses, have resulted in several laws and policies on gender equality, domestic violence, family or social affairs and similar issues.

Collective awareness-raising: Engaging with political parties on gender equality



Political parties are considered to be gatekeepers of democracy. OSCE commitments “encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties...to achieve better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making.”³² Engaging with political parties on concrete measures to advance gender issues facilitates access of women to candidate nominations and elected office, but also benefits the parties themselves. By diversifying the composition of a political party, it is possible to widen its support base and outreach to voters and potential candidates. In turn, gender mainstreaming in political parties can be a win-win situation.

ODIHR has developed the Gender Audit for Political Parties -an online self-assessment tool- for political parties to identify gaps and opportunities in their approach to gender equality.

To date, ODIHR and OSCE field operations have supported gender audits of 48 political parties in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan. The resulting reports and 400 recommendations issues are used by political parties to develop party gender action plans, important strategic documents to increase women's participation and sensitize internal policies and procedures. Examples of implementation of gender action plans include the establishment of local women's councils or advocating for the introduction of voluntary party quotas for women candidates.

³¹ ODIHR, Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region, 2013, p. 6.

³² OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, Art 3.

GOOD PRACTICE:

GENDER AUDIT OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The Gender Audit of Political Party is a self-assessment tool that enables a party to identify both strengths and shortcomings in its gender equality approach. The audit findings will point to the activities that a party can undertake to mainstream gender equality in party structures, programmes, and documents. This process can be used by party leaders and activists for the development of gender action plans, to outline measures for institutionalizing gender equality and women's empowerment in the party and beyond.

Individual capacity-building: Supporting women leaders and gender equality advocates

Women's political participation is fostered by the support of women leaders and gender equality advocates in developing their skills and capacities and facilitating access to knowledge and networking opportunities.

ODIHR and OSCE field operations across the OSCE region engage in various programmes and activities to build capacities of women

leaders, aspiring candidates, young activists, and gender advocates. For example, in 2019 the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek delivered trainings on women's political participation in four regions of Kyrgyzstan, contributing to a record number of 43 percent local councils seats going to women.³³

GOOD PRACTICE:

DIALOGUE ACADEMY FOR YOUNG WOMEN

What started as the "Follow Us" initiative - bringing together prominent women from Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade - has evolved into the OSCE Dialogue Academy empowering young women through education and dialogue. Organized annually, the Academy gathers young women from both societies to learn about mediation, negotiation, and women in politics. Engaging young women provides for an alternative form of dialogue, capacity-building and outreach on gender equality and women's leadership, which is particularly useful in politically sensitive environments. The OSCE Dialogue Academy is present on Facebook, reflecting its target audience and providing alumni and current participants with an opportunity for continued exchange.

³³ The Project received the OSCE Gender Champions Award in 2019.

Supporting progress by knowledge-sharing

Over the last decade, OSCE executive structures have organized and supported national, regional and international conferences and events on women's political participation, providing platforms for knowledge exchange and networking among women leaders and activists, international, nationally, or sub-regionally. For example, the OSCE Secretariat, ODIHR, and the OSCE Chair-in-Office organize regular Gender Equality Review Conferences, gathering government representatives and civil society activists.

The conferences include a dedicated session on women's political participation. Supported by ODIHR and OSCE field operations in Central Asia, international forums of women leaders have been held regularly in Belarus since 2016, providing women leaders and activists from Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the South Caucasus with a platform for knowledge exchange and networking.

OSCE field operations in South Eastern Europe host, on a rotational basis, an Annual Meeting of Women Parliamentarians from the

region, with a different thematic focus every year. Supported by ODIHR, national forums of women leaders have been organized in Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine in recent years. ODIHR is currently implementing a project to support participating States in South Eastern Europe in their efforts to follow up on election observation recommendations in areas related to election administration, voter registration and media coverage during election campaigns, including from a gender perspective.

ODIHR also hosts an annual workshop for OSCE staff on women's political participation, engaging in joint strategic planning and building capacity for future OSCE work in that area. Women's power breakfasts and lunches have been organized by various OSCE executive structures on the margins of large OSCE events, providing a dedicated platform for women's voices to be heard.

Recommendations

Gender equality in political and public life is not only required to improve the representative nature, accountability and quality of democracies, but it also has a profound impact on the way politics is done

in terms of policy-making agendas and political content.³⁴ To achieve gender equality in political and public life, the following actions are needed:



Identify and remedy discriminatory laws and policies to reinforce participation of diverse and under-represented groups of women

OSCE participating States should strengthen women's political participation by identifying and remedying discriminatory laws and policies, ensuring that all laws and policies are gender-sensitive and sharing good practices for women's engagement in democratic processes. Consideration should be given to introducing and improving legislative measures or financial incentives to achieve gender parity in politics. Political participation of diverse and under-represented groups of women should be promoted, including national minorities, especially Roma and Sinti, as well as young women, migrant women and women with disabilities.



Promote institutional change- mainstream gender aspects at all levels

OSCE participating States should promote institutional change towards democratic institutions that are inclusive, representative, and gender-sensitive at all levels. Parliaments, for example, should mainstream gender aspects in their representative, legislative and oversight functions and in leadership processes, as well as ensure that they are gender-sensitive public employers. Structures and initiatives that enable women to influence policy and legislative agendas, such as parliamentary women's caucuses or women's organizations, should be strengthened.



Ensure equal participation of women and men in political parties

OSCE participating States should encourage all relevant political actors to "promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, to achieving gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making."³⁵ As gatekeepers of democracy, political parties should conduct self-assessments on gender equality within their structures and programmes, to strengthen internal party democracy, institutionalize gender equality, and facilitate women's empowerment in the party and politics more broadly.



Create support mechanism for aspiring women politicians

OSCE participating States should create support mechanisms for (aspiring) women politicians to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, in order to foster their participation. Efforts should be made to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, including in political and public life as well as online, by creating adequate complaint and support mechanisms.



Invest in human capital-support women leaders

OSCE participating States and OSCE executive structures should support women leaders in strengthening their skills, capacities, and confidence for politics, facilitating their access to knowledge and networking. Raising the awareness of men leaders and engaging men in advancing gender equality is crucial for future progress.



Strengthen women's organizations

OSCE participating States and OSCE executive structures should actively support women's organizations, women human rights defenders, and gender equality advocates in their important work as they play a key role in ensuring that women's needs, priorities, and voices are heard and considered in policy-making processes that affect them the most.

³⁴ ODIHR, Compendium of Good Practices for Advancing Women's Political Participation in the OSCE Region, 2016, p. 82.

³⁵ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, Art. 3.

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