

# WOMEN AND MEN: working together for equal rights

WARSAW, Poland | 5-6 December 2023



## Concept Note

### OSCE Conference

#### *“Women and Men: working together for equal rights”*

#### Background

OSCE is dedicated to supporting the efforts of OSCE participating States in achieving full gender equality. As the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality approaches, significant progress is noted with regards to gender mainstreaming of policies, capacity building of state and non-state actors, and empowerment of women. However, such progress has proved to be fragile, demonstrating the need to increase engagement of all actors in society on the topic of gender equality. While often gender equality is narrowed as a women’s problem, it affects all members of society and the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality is of key concern, including in the OSCE region.

The support by both women and men in partnership for gender equality is acknowledged in the OSCE Moscow document (1991): “Full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society.” The Ministerial Council Decisions 7/14 and 4/18, acknowledge the role of men in addressing violence against women and girls and encourage participating States to *“take appropriate measures to increase the engagement and participation of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence”* (7/14). The MC.DEC 4/18 specifically recognizes the importance of actively engaging men and boys in efforts towards elimination of discrimination

and all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence and by raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can underlie and perpetuate discrimination and violence.

The importance of engaging men and boys in gender equality is regularly discussed in the OSCE, and several networks of engaged men at delegation and executive structures were established. Notably, the OSCE MenEngage Network contributed to raising awareness about the important role that men and boys can play in the elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls.

Two OSCE flagship projects focusing on gender equality, [WIN](#) and [CHANGE](#), work with male allies and actively involve men in the discourse on gender equality and action to support tangible improvements in society. The OSCE Gender Issues Programme WIN Project conducted a mapping of existing OSCE activities, as well as a mapping of networks of men that aim to promote gender equality in the OSCE region. The mapping identified good practices which have been translated into the [OSCE Toolkit to Engage Men in Gender Equality](#) published in 2022. This toolkit provides lessons learned and practical recommendations to inform the future work of the OSCE in this area.

As part of the overall efforts to engage new allies, contribute innovative approaches and support breakthrough leadership for gender equality, the CHANGE project designed a capacity building training curriculum seeking to empower male networks (allies) to contribute to gender equality. The curriculum builds gender competence of men in the public sector and civil society and sensitizes them as representatives of key social structures to the point when they can start acting as male allies. Furthermore, through an innovative co-creation process, the CHANGE project engaged a group of 12 experts in freedom of religion or belief and non-discrimination in peer review of the capacity building curriculum with the scope to adjust it to the needs and opportunities of male allyship development in religious and traditional communities. This tailored methodology was successfully pilot tested in North Macedonia in 2023 with representatives of the five constitutional religious groups and with representatives of the women's movements, and examples of emerging good practice as well as specific actionable ideas were generated.

Capitalizing on the experience, WIN and CHANGE have joined efforts to host the **OSCE Conference “Women and Men: working together for equal rights”** – a catalytic event seeking to strengthen male engagement, provide new energy and tools for the existing practices and raise awareness on good practice examples within the OSCE region.

## Conference objectives

The conference is organized with an aim to:

- Bring together formal and informal networks working with men for gender equality for an exchange on good practices and lesson learned on what are the drivers and bottlenecks in engaging with men for gender equality.
- Identify opportunities for advances in institutional structures, including OSCE internal structures and policies that reinforce the engagement of male allies.
- Prepare a series of recommendations on how to progress across the OSCE work with regards to engaging men across the OSCE's three dimensions.

## Participants

The participants of the event include individuals and organizations working on engaging men, representatives of national gender equality mechanisms in the OSCE region, human rights defenders and civil society organizations working on gender equality, academics, practitioners, as well as representatives of the delegations of the OSCE participating States and staff of OSCE executive structures.

## Dates and location

The conference dates are **5-6 December 2023**. It is a 1,5-day event held in **Warsaw (Poland)**, which will be also complemented by an art exhibition.

The meeting will be highly interactive, and all participants are encouraged to share their good practices, lessons learned and recommendations throughout the different plenary and working group sessions. No national statements are foreseen.

## Language

The working language of the conference is English.