

**Number: 10-37-2-2202-2/21****Date: 30 September 2021****Ms. Carla Kraft****United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women****carla.kraft@unwomen.org****Subject:** Information on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”

Dear Ms. Kraft,

Responding to your request for Information on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”, please find below information, presented according the issues listed in your request.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has a very complex administrative structure with several tiers of legislative and executive power. BiH consists of two entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS), and the Brčko District (BD BiH). The FBiH is further divided in ten cantons. The constitutions of BiH, the RS, and FBiH and the Statute of BD BiH clearly regulate the competencies of different tiers of government for certain areas of social life in BiH. The area of labor and employment is mainly regulated by the institutional and legal framework at the level of the entities and the BD BiH. The key gender institutional mechanisms at the executive level are the BiH Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH (AGE BiH) at the level of BiH, and the Gender Center of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (GCFBiH) and the Gender Center of the Republika Srpska (GCRS) at the level of BiH entities. With regard to the constitutional organization of the country and the need to provide important information regarding various tiers of government, this report exceeds the required maximum six-page limit.

1. Strengthening normative and legal framework (paragraphs 40 (a) to (j))

In 2018 the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CoM BiH) adopted the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina (GAP BiH) for the period 2018 - 2022. This is the third consecutive strategic document on gender equality, and contains strategic goals, programs and measures to achieve gender equality in BiH. The GAP BiH contains measures for developing, implementing and monitoring programs of measures for the promotion of gender equality in government institutions by priority areas; building and strengthening systems, mechanisms and instruments for achieving gender equality; as well as establishing and strengthening cooperation and partnerships. Labor, employment and women’s access to economic resources is one of the priority areas of GAP BiH. The main objectives pursued by the measures envisaged is to eliminate gender discrimination in work, employment and the labor market, and to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in accessing economic resources, including poverty reduction through new macroeconomic and development strategies. Every year, the institutions of BiH, FBiH and RS adopt and implement the annual operational plans for implementation of GAP BiH. All ministries in the Governments are involved in the implementation by participating in the work of the Coordination Committees for the implementation of the operational plans.

The Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GEL BiH) prohibits gender discrimination at work, employment and access to resources. It also prohibits gender discrimination in the field of social protection, and provides an obligation for equal pay and other benefits for women and men. Labor laws in BiH also prohibit any type of discrimination based on sex.

Labor laws of the FBiH and RS, adopted in 2016 and amended in 2018, contain general prohibition of discrimination of persons seeking employment or employees per “open” list of grounds, which includes gender. They define direct and indirect discrimination, determine the grounds and types of discrimination in labor and employment, they prohibit discrimination on grounds of marital status, family obligations and pregnancy, among others, and provide for protection in cases of discrimination. With the aim of being harmonized with the GEL BiH, these new laws for the first time treat the gender and sexual harassment, violence and mobbing, and determine the legal protection for such cases. The laws contained previously the prohibition for an employer to refuse to employ a woman on account of her pregnancy, or terminate her labor contract during her pregnancy. The amended laws expand this prohibition in as much as explicitly prohibiting termination of employment during maternity leave, or the time a parent exercises the right to work half time under certain conditions, and the exercise of right to absence for the purposes of breastfeeding.

In October 2019, the CoM BiH adopted the Information on Mechanisms for Effective Prevention and Protection against Gender-Based Harassment and Sexual Harassment in the Institutions of BiH. Attached to the Information was a Guide for Taking Effective Measures to Prevent Harassment based on Gender and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in the Institutions of BiH. The CoM instructed all institutions to adopt the Decision on the policy of zero tolerance for acts of sexual harassment and harassment based on gender in the workplace and the Decision on the appointment of counselors on gender and sexual harassment prevention. To date, 58 BiH institutions (out of total of 63) have appointed the counselors and the decisions on zero-tolerance. AGE BiH and Agency for Civil Service of BiH organized two rounds of trainings for the counselors (first round – basic level) and one advanced training. In order to introduce this practice at the level of the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of BiH, the AGE BiH called on the BiH PA to regulate, in accordance with the GEL BiH, the issue of protection against gender-based harassment and sexual harassment and prevention for persons working in the Secretariat or the PA of BiH, and the members of the Parliament. This initiative has been accepted, and in the coming period, the AGE BiH will work together with the PA BiH on its implementation.

High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina has undertaken the activities to monitor adequately discrimination cases with respect to information on various grounds of discrimination, and has upgraded Automatic Case Management System (CMS) Code Book by adding legal basis of discrimination, type of discrimination, basis of discrimination and form of discrimination. Data entry by the Courts is ongoing for all cases currently pending. In the forthcoming period, it will be possible to obtain adequate information on cases before courts, given different forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on sex and gender, and sexual harassment.

Aware of the huge risk of the extraordinary measures concerning COVID-19 having a specific impact on women, the AGE BiH has taken several measures to mitigate the impact. The measures range from systemic recommendations for gender mainstreaming of the government measures during pandemic, to the direct support to safe-houses and economic empowerment of women. In March 2020 the AGE contacted the Women's Network and the safe houses and collected information on emerging challenges caused by the pandemic. Based on this, in 2020, the AGE allocated grants in the amount of approx. 80,000 Euro to eight safe houses, as an emergency assistance to ensure functioning of the safe houses during COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, in 2021, the AGE issued the second Grant Program for non-governmental organizations in the total amount of approx. 60,000 EURO. One part of the grant is used to support projects to women's economic empowerment through the development and strengthening of women's entrepreneurship, especially in the context of responding to the consequences of the pandemic, and strengthening women's economic security.

In April 2020, the AGE BiH issued Recommendations for Gender Mainstreaming in the process of Planning, Decision-making and Implementation of the Plans to combat the COVID-19 Pandemic. The recommendations were sent to all the authorities in charge of coordination and management of the COVID-19 pandemic, competent ministries and bodies at all levels of government in BiH. The AGE BiH pointed out the priority areas of social life in which it is necessary to be particularly sensitive to the

specific impact that the crisis caused by the pandemic has on the position of women and girls, namely: prevention and protection from gender-based violence, economic consequences of the pandemics in sectors that specifically employ women, and gender equality in decision-making bodies.

In 2020, the Government of the RS adopted the Draft Law on Protection from Harassment at Work of the RS, which passed the procedure of public debates with the adoption in the Assembly expected by the end of 2021. Among other, the Law regulates protection against harassment at work and the procedure for exercising the right to protection. The law defines harassment at work as any behavior towards a worker, group of workers or an employer, that may cause harm of a physical, mental or sexual nature. The provisions of this Law apply to all employers, regardless of the nature of ownership and forms of organization, including the entire public and private sector, ministries, administrations, administrative organizations, professional services, local self-government units, public services and the like. Protection from harassment is provided to all persons, not only to persons who are employed, in terms of regulations governing the field of work, but also to persons engaged outside employment in the work process (persons engaged on the basis of employment contracts, temporary and occasional jobs, persons in vocational training and development, etc.), and other persons who on any basis participate in the work process and persons seeking employment.

During 2020/2021, the Ministry of Energy and Mining of the RS conducted a survey of employees' perception of gender equality in the ministry, in context of the implementation the Action Plan for implementation of the Common Assessment Framework. The results of this assessment are detailed and provide a basis for planning measures of the Ministry regarding the adoption of bylaws that would elaborate on the issues of violence prevention, harassment and sexual harassment, rewarding employees, equal representation of women and men in commissions, delegations and the like, improvement of human resources management, transparency of all data and classification by gender, and especially raising awareness of employees and training on gender equality, which proves to be a key factor in (non) application of applicable legal standards for gender equality.

2. Strengthening education, training and skills development (paragraphs 40 (k) to (n))

In 2019, the Federal Employment Institute (FEI) developed a Program for co-financing employment. The Institute determined an increase in subsidies by 10% for an employer who hires an unemployed person from the category of a victim of domestic violence in all active policy programs (i.e. "First work experience", "Opportunity for all", "Periodic employment", "Employment of women", "Contribution 500", "New opportunity", "Public works" and "Looking for an employer"). As part of the organization of training programs for women with the aim of training for self-employment and entrepreneurship development in 2020, the FEI supported the training project "Strengthening Entrepreneurial Competences of Women and Youth to start their own business". Between September and December 2020, 21 persons were included in the Project. Within the eight modules, the following thematic units were covered: affinity analysis; analysis of business idea, vision, mission and goal; business plan development; market and competition analysis, basics of accounting; price formation; sales techniques; marketing plan; team formation. The trainings were led by competent educators from the business community.

Ministry of Education and Sport of the FBiH 2017 allocated EUR 7,500 to vocational and secondary technical schools, institutions and organizations that carry out and implement programs of retraining and additional training, in order to provide easier access to labor market for adults, and especially for women in need of retraining and additional qualifications. Ministry of Education and Culture and Bureau of Adult Education of the RS put significant efforts in creation of legal and institutional preconditions for establishment of adult education and training system, introduction of entrepreneurial education programs into educational programs, as well as establishment of a system of cross-sectorial cooperation of social partners in education.

Measures of the RS in the field of labor and employment within the Employment Strategy of the RS 2016 - 2020, among other things, envisage, in the medium term, reforming the education system with

the aim of its greater connection with the labor market, as well as introducing support schemes for first-time job seekers with aim to discourage working in the gray economy, and prevent lower income returns, as a basis for calculating and paying taxes and contributions. One of the strategic goals, derived from the analysis of the situation on the labor market is to increase employment and economic activity in the RS, which contains the operational goal “Ensuring greater connection of the education system with the labor market”. This goal is achieved through implementation of the following measures: improving the system of professional orientation and career counseling; development of the system of student internships and international exchange; development of professional practice in the system of secondary and higher education; development of local councils for education and employment; improving the education system in order to increase the competencies of pupils and students, and establishing a system and mechanism of communication of key actors in the field of education and the labor market.

In August 2021, a preliminary draft of the Employment Strategy of the RS for the period 2021 - 2027 was prepared. Within the Strategic Objective 2: “Increasing internal mobility and availability of labor force”, the following priorities and measures are envisaged: “Coordinating the development of the education system, economy and labor market”, “Preparation of an interdisciplinary study on the needs, possibilities and preconditions for harmonizing the development of the education system, economy and labor market” and “Strengthening the employability of the middle-aged and elderly workforce, including training, additional training and retraining program, adult education and lifelong learning program”. The gender perspective is not specifically specified within these measures, but it is expected that it will be taken into account in the implementation of measures.

In December 2020, the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the RS, in cooperation with the partner organizations, organized a two-day online training for women entrepreneurs on financial management, attended by 27 participants from various businesses, public institutions and associations. Also, in June 2021, the Ministry organized trainings on brand development and export management in two municipalities, for women entrepreneurs and those who want to become so, attended by over 40 participants. The trainings were interactive with many examples and concrete tools that can be used to improve business and exports.

The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the RS and the Gender Center of the RS (GCRS) concluded an Agreement on Support to the Implementation of Gender Equality in Entrepreneurship: "Strengthening the Competitiveness of Entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska" within the financial support provided from the Financial Instrument for Implementation of the Gender Action Plan of BiH (FIGAP II Program 2018-2022, supported by Swedish Government). Within this program, the Ministry, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of the RS, organized an online training for women entrepreneurs on the following topics: human resources management, brand development, internationalization and business development, application of “Six Sigma” model for business process improvement, innovation management and development of new product and digital transformation.

3. Implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (o) to (mm))

The AGE BiH conducted a survey on the impact of gender division of the family and household chores on the professional life of employed women in BiH. The survey was conducted on a sample of 500 women from all parts of BiH, who are employed and married, or live with partners. The findings showed that in as many as 93.8% of the relationships, all or most of the routine household chores are performed exclusively by women, and in most relationships (80.8%) it is the woman who does all or most of the work related to child care. The findings were presented to the public, and they will serve as an empirical basis for policy-making for addressing work-life balance in BiH.

GAP BiH foresees the activities in advancing the measures for balance between professional and private life, including the protection of motherhood and fatherhood, enhancement of provisions on paid maternity/paternity leave, and special measures that help employees to strike a balance between

professional and family obligations. In that regard, initiatives and activities of BiH gender institutional mechanisms were directed to amendments of the relevant legislation.

BiH is committed to introduce a harmonized minimum level of maternity leave benefits and protection throughout the country, including harmonization of definitions of leave for mothers, fathers and parents. As an instrument for achieving this goal, the Framework Guidelines for the Protection of Maternal Human Rights and the Development of Parenthood in BiH were developed by the AGE BIH. This document analyzes and presents the current situation in this area, emphasizing all the limitations, but also the possibilities for development of new or improving existing policies for protection of mothers through legal acts at all levels in BiH (in cooperation with relevant bodies and in accordance with constitutional competencies in BIH).

In response to problem of uneven maternity benefits, House of Representatives of the FBIH Parliament adopted in 2019 a Proposal of the Law on Support to Families with Children in the FBIH thus marking a significant leap towards equalizing rights exercised by unemployed new mothers. The new law, which is in line with international standards, harmonizes conditions for exercising of right - compensation for unemployed mothers. This is regulated as "Financial Assistance for Unemployed New Mothers" in amount of 30% of average salary in the FBIH over 12 months, taking into account current financial capacities of cantons and FBIH.

The Labor Law of the RS specifically regulates the employment relationship with domestic support staff, as well as the minimum salary for this work in the amount of at least 50% of the employee's salary. This type of work arrangement prescribes the obligation to conclude a contract, which regulates all the rights and obligations of the contracting parties. For women employed on a fixed-term contract, as well as for women working in household chores, given that they have concluded an appropriate employment contract, the Labor Law guarantees and enables social insurance and access to social services under the same conditions as the permanent employees.

The Law on Child Protection of the RS established the right to maternity allowance as a new right, the right to pro-natal benefit for a third-born and fourth-born child, for which the amount was increased, becoming legally obligatory. The aim of these provisions is to establish as soon as possible the approximate equalization of the position of unemployed mothers with children in relation to employed mothers. Additionally, it is important to mention the amendments to the Law on Child Protection of the RS, which referred to the categories of unemployed persons, foster parents or caregivers who care for children with disabilities or persons with disabilities, and are not able to establish employment and thus provide themselves and their families with the means to meet basic living needs. In that way, the position of families caring for children with disabilities has improved. Therefore, support for the biological family has been improved, and the introduction of a new right for children with disabilities also represents the prevention of the placement of children with disabilities in social protection institutions. As a result, the financial situation of children with disabilities has improved, and children remain in their families.

The Recommendations for Integrating the Gender Equality Perspective into the Process of Planning, Making and Implementing Decisions, Measures and Plans in the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic, issued by the AGE BIH after the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic, drew employers' attention to unpaid domestic work performed by women. It was recommended to the employers to adjust working hours and adequately valorize the additional engagement and the crucial role that women have in the fight against the pandemic. Executive authorities at all levels were recommended that the adoption of measures to mitigate the economic effects of the crisis, support and economic incentives be based on gender analysis, i.e. that it is necessary to analyze how the final effects of the measures will affect the position of women affected by the current crisis.

As part of the activities of developing and implementing programs of measures and activities to eliminate discrimination based on gender in the field of labor, employment and access to economic resources, the Federal Employment Institute (FEI), in cooperation with cantonal employment services,

implements employment and self-employment programs every year. Special social and gender sensitivity is employed in planning and implementing the employment policy measures, such as “Employment co-financing program 2020 / Measure for Employment of women 2020”, for which funds in the amount of around 3 million EURO have been insured and made available to applicants. Self-employment co-financing program “Start up 2020 / Entrepreneurship measure for women 2020” is another example, with the funds in the amount of 1,2 million EURO secured and made available to applicants.

In 2018, the FBiH Government adopted the 2018 - 2020 Women Entrepreneurship Development Program, setting the strategic goals of "Promoting Entrepreneurship of Target Groups", the "Incentives for Women Entrepreneurship". This represents the operationalization of the Small Business Act's principle “Creating a conducive environment for entrepreneurship development”. Within the framework of the regular budget, the FBiH Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts allocates a grant for the development of women entrepreneurship in the amount of 434,500 EUR annually.

The FEI conducted a survey of labor market trends (employers' surveys) in the FBiH. The survey of employers included 1,033 employers registered in the FBiH with five or more employees, of which 670 or 64.85% of surveyed employers expressed the need to employ 4,728 workers in 2020, of which 40% refers to vacancies while 60% referred to new jobs. Regarding the willingness of employers to hire an unemployed person from one of the more difficult to employ or specific categories, with the possibility of multiple choice of answers, the willingness to employ women victims of domestic violence was expressed by 18.01% of employers.

In May 2021 a webinar on "Women and Railways" was held on the topic of professional participation of women in railways, and how to ensure that rail transport in the Republika Srpska be more accessible, cheaper and more environmentally friendly. Representatives of France, Austria and a representative of the International Transport Forum shared their experiences. Transport services are professionally dominated by men, while women use public transport more often. It was noted that the following measures needed to be taken: 1. It is very important that the authorities recognize gender issues as a priority in order to enable the employment of women through action plans or other policies; 2. Promote the professional participation of women in rail transport; 3. Develop internal indicators, measure the success of introduced measures through employee surveys; 4. Work on the education of management staff, employees, prescribe mechanisms against harassment, harassment reports; 5. Ensure equal employment conditions; 6. Provide protective equipment for women. The Republika Srpska Railways, in cooperation with the World Bank, conducted a Gender Equality Analysis during the restructuring. Survey activities have been conducted and an analysis report is expected.

4. Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers (paragraphs 40 (nn) to (qq))

One of the key measures to promote the transition from informal to formal employment is the legal regulation and policies that cover all forms of employment, as exemplified above by the Labor Law of the RS. Main objective of the FBiH Employment Strategy (2018 - 2021) is to increase formal employment in private sector and to provide opportunities for decent jobs for all women and men, especially if they are disadvantaged.

The Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises of the RS, undertakes activities to encourage women to start or to improve their own businesses. By gaining membership in European Enterprise Network, numerous opportunities have been opened to support women's entrepreneurship in the RS. Business planning trainings have been organized for women who want to start their own business, and for existing women entrepreneurs. The Entrepreneurial portal was launched as an on-line platform, which brings together all relevant information for starting, growing and developing a business. In addition to all information on SME development, the portal also contains information on women's entrepreneurship.

5. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (rr) to (ss))

Every year in April, BiH marks International Day of Women and Girls in ICT. In particular, AGE BiH, GCRS and GCFBIH, and non-governmental sector mark this important day to encourage interest of girls and women, to increase their visibility, interest and participation in education, as well as professional careers in innovation, technical, technological and ICT fields. AGE BiH publishes a public announcement on girls and women in ICT, drawing attention of the BH public on importance of policies for increasing coverage of girls and women in the field of ICT and role of ICT in economic empowerment of women. Girls Day in ICT has been included in the official list of important dates on human rights which is adopted every year by the CoM of BiH.

In the RS, the GCRS dedicates an entire week in April to celebrating the International "Girls' Day in ICT" every year. In cooperation with schools and colleges that provide education in the field of ICT, the "Open days" are organized for girls and boys to encourage them to take an interest in the field of ICT and to get better acquainted with all the opportunities offered by new technologies. A specific goal is to encourage girls to increase their interest in greater participation in education for ICT professions. This campaign is recognized worldwide by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as every year the GCRS are included in the calendar and map of all countries that organize activities to mark this day through the portal GIRLS IN ICT DAY. A close partnership was established with the IT company "LANACO" Banja Luka, which provides every year support for the celebration of this day, through various courses for girls that are certified worldwide and upon completion of which participants have the opportunity to enter the labor market in ICT. This way of cooperation has provided economic empowerment of women, as well as further training in this area, which is currently one of the highest paid in the country. This model of cooperation has proven to be very useful and important not only in the form of promotional activities, but also resulting in concrete actions for the direct inclusion of women in the labor market.

6. Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making (paragraphs 40 (tt) to (aaa))

In March 2021, the AGE BiH organized the Conference "Gender Equality after 2020: Empowering Women and Building a Safer Environment". The aim was to remind the BH public, and especially political decision makers, of the importance and obligations of BiH for promoting gender equality in society, arising from positive laws and international documents, especially the Beijing Declaration and the UN CEDAW. It is recognized that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic had a specific impact on women, both in the workplace - especially in the health sector, trade and services, and in the private sphere, i.e. at home. It is required that the competent authorities respect and implement the Recommendations for gender mainstreaming in the process of planning, making and implementing decisions, measures and plans in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, issued by the AGE BiH at the beginning of the pandemic, and submitted to governments, civil protection crisis headquarters and ministries of health at all tiers of government in BiH.

Organized by the AGE BIH and the Regional Coordination Board for Gender Equality, in December 2020, a regional virtual round table on the topic "Representation of gender issues in election campaigns and political programs" was held, in the presence of over 30 participants from the countries of western Balkans, including state officials, parliamentarians, activists and academia. The reason was the elections that were held in 2020 in all countries in the region. The round table resulted in significant recommendations towards the political parties, decision-makers, election authorities and the media.

AGE BiH supported from the FIGAP II funds for 2021 the implementation of the project "Leadership Academy" (Leadership Academy) of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Sarajevo. It is an educational program aimed at strengthening the leadership capacities of women in BiH, which takes place in the form of two cycles of education. It is divided into six modules focused on strengthening the leadership potential of women in politics within the cross-cutting areas, defined by the GAP BIH, which

includes media, improving the position of multiple marginalized groups of women, work-life balance and the role of men as allies in achieving gender equality. In particular, the main goals of the program are as follows: strengthen the leadership potential of women in politics, empower political leaders to strengthen and actively use their political influence with the aim of proactive action in society, respect for human rights and improving the well-being of all citizens in BiH, empower political leaders as role models for other young women to motivate them to engage politically and take action, create a network of policy leaders at the level of BiH and promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5 on gender equality. The second cycle of the project is currently underway.

In the period 2017 – 2019, the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship, the Chamber of Commerce of the RS, the Development Agency of the RS and the GCRS organized three international conferences of women's entrepreneurship in the RS, under the auspices of the European Entrepreneurship Network. The main goal of the conferences was to exchange experiences in the field of women's entrepreneurship and improve cooperation between women entrepreneurs in the region. Over 700 women participated in the conferences. The Ministry also supported the establishment of the first "Club of Business Women of Republika Srpska" with the aim of networking and cooperation among women entrepreneurs, concluded a Memorandum of Business Cooperation with the Club and supported the organization of a conference of the Club "Women Leader in the Digital Age" with over 100 participants.

7. Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (bbb) to (eee))

As a response to the problems women face in the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, the AGE BiH issued a Public Call for Proposed Actions regarding the impact that pandemic has on women and the economic hardship that women are going through as a result. The call was targeted to the civil society, including the associations of women-entrepreneurs that are actively working on the issues of economic empowerment of women. Based on the feedback, the Agency developed a Plan of Intervention Measures to Support Victims of Gender-Based Violence and a Concept Note for Economic Empowerment of Women. The AGE BiH has initiated specific activities for the reallocation of donor funds within the projects it implements, with the aim of implementing the planned measures outlined in these documents.

During 2019, the Government of the FBIH adopted the Action Plan for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in the FBIH for the period 2019 - 2020, with one of the strategic goals being to encourage entrepreneurship of target groups (women and youth as priorities). The GC FBIH, in partnership with the Association of Women Entrepreneurs, launched a one-year project "Empowered Women for Strong Communities - Supporting the Creation of an Environment that Encourages Women's Entrepreneurship in the FBIH" worth approx. 25,000 EURO. The project was implemented in six municipalities, in partnership with local authorities. The project resulted in exemplary models for the development of women's entrepreneurship that can be applied in other municipalities of the FBIH, with special emphasis on the start-up support for women entrepreneurs affected by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Development of women's entrepreneurship in the RS has been recognized as very important for economic and social prosperity, and it has been supported especially by the current Law on Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. The Law, among other things, defines the principles for adopting policies and programs in the field of small and medium enterprises. "Development of women's entrepreneurship through the adoption of support programs, training, better access to finance and association of women entrepreneurs" is one of the policy principles. Systematic support for the development and promotion of women's entrepreneurship is provided by the Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises of the RS for the period 2021 – 2027, as well as the previous Strategy.

In July 2019, the Government of the RS adopted the Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship of the RS for the period 2019 - 2023. The activities planned by the Strategy are expected to result in the growth to 30% percent of women entrepreneurs in the total number of SMEs by

2023, as well as the growth of the number of employees of women entrepreneurs by 10% in 2023, compared to 2019.

GCRS and the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the RS have concluded an Agreement on Support for the Implementation of Programs of Measures to achieve Gender Equality in the Economy: "Support to self-employed women in Republika Srpska" from the UN WOMEN donor funds. Based on the Agreement, a one-time financial support for women entrepreneurs in the amount of 250 EURO was provided, and 40 women entrepreneurs were covered through a public call.

Within the project "European Act on Small Business as a framework of strategies and policies for SMEs in BiH", the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the RS supported the project "Ethno-Entrepreneur" with the Humanitarian Association of Women (HAW) "Duga" of Banja Luka. The project resulted in the Development Strategy of the HAW "Duga" for the period 2020 – 2025 and created a network of women entrepreneurs consisting of 28 members from six associations from different cities of the RS. The "Ethno-House" was also renovated and equipped, an online store of ethno-products was created, over 60 women were directly acquainted with the Strategy of HAW "Duga" and the network of women entrepreneurs, while successful stories about women's entrepreneurship were presented through the media and social networks. In 2019, the Ministry supported seven associations of women from different areas of the RS. The associations were supported with the aim of organizing training, product promotion at fairs and initiating the procedure for the registering with UNESCO of the traditional woolen socks ("priglavak") from the Romanija mountain.

**MINISTRY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES OF BIH
AGENCY FOR GENDER EQUALITY OF BIH**