



Date: 20 May 2024

Subject: Information on the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions A/RES/75/161 and A/RES/77/193 on "Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: gender stereotypes and negative social norms" in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This report cover current trends, concerns, and developments in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls since 2022 with a special focus on violence against women and girls in digital contexts and the impact of technological change on all forms of violence against women in online and offline spaces in Bosnia and Herzegovina as per General Assembly resolutions A/RES/75/161 and A/RES/77/193 on "Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: gender stereotypes and negative social norms"

The framework for the systematic resolution of the problem of violence against women is provided through the Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which regulates, promotes and protects gender equality, guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment of all persons regardless of gender, in the public and private spheres of society, and regulates protection against discrimination based on gender. This Law, among other things, prescribes obligations and mechanisms for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, among other things based on stereotypical roles of men and women. Also, one of the mechanisms is the gender action plans, which are defined by this Law, and include, among other things, stereotypes and prejudices as the main cause of gender inequality and discrimination based on gender, both in the media and in the private and professional life. Since gender-based violence, i.e. violence against women, is one of the forms of discrimination, special laws on protection against domestic violence in the entities Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina stipulate the obligation to adopt a strategy for the prevention of domestic violence in which are defined strategic goals as well as mechanisms for their implementation.

In 2023, the Council of Europe launched the project "Fight against digital and sexual violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina", whose board includes representatives of gender institutional mechanisms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bearing in mind the findings of GREVIO and the recommendations of the Committee of Parties of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, as well as the General Recommendation of GREVIO no. 1. on the digital dimension of violence against women, this project focuses on solving deficiencies in legal frameworks, policies and support frameworks related to sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on new forms of violence against women such as digitally facilitated violence against women.

The Strategy for Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence 2024-2027 is in force in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This strategic document aims to reduce violence, which should be achieved through three priorities (systemic prevention, protection of victims, improvement of investigative and judicial actions) and eight measures. One of the measures is the promotion of tolerance, non-violence and gender equality in the family and society. Also, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and Recommendations of the Committee of Parties resulted in establishment of the Coordination Team to monitor the implementation of the Recommendations

of the Committee of Parties to the Istanbul Convention. The process of harmonizing the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is underway, in which, among other things, it is proposed that the provisions of the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina incriminate various types of violence that take place in the digital space, and which are often intertwined, represent an extension and deepen gender-based violence and violence in the family, in accordance with the General Recommendation No. 1 of GREVIO on the digital dimension of violence against women, which was adopted on October 20, 2021. The Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo and the Gender Center of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out research that resulted in the study "Violence in the family and gender-based violence in high education: between theory and practice". The research primarily analyzed the curricula and programs of social and humanities faculties at the University of Sarajevo on the representation and scope of teaching contents that deal with the issue of gender-based violence and domestic violence, as well as the attitudes of students and teaching staff on these issues. The analysis of the situation is the starting point for monitoring the impact of the implemented measures within the framework of the Strategy for the prevention and fight against domestic violence in this area. Through the improvement of curricula and programs through non-stereotypical content and promotional media campaigns, work is being done to challenge gender stereotypes. In this regard, the Coordination of Ministers of Education and Science in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina conducts an analysis of the representation of gender sensitivity both in teaching content and in textbooks that are aligned with the Framework Curriculum for nine-year elementary schools in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The goal, among other things, is to obtain gender-sensitive and non-stereotyped curricula and accompanying textbooks and teaching materials. The Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a Decision on a policy of zero tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment in federal administrative bodies, federal administrative organizations, services and other bodies founded by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Law on Higher Education of the Canton Sarajevo includes the principles of gender equality, encouraging the inclusion of vulnerable groups, equal access to education and the prohibition of discrimination, the possibility of introducing temporary measures aimed at eliminating discrimination, provisions on equal representation of the sexes in the bodies provided for by the Law, the promotion of equality is foreseen in development strategy of higher education, provisions on protection mechanisms against discrimination, harassment based on gender and sexual harassment, classification of data by gender and recognition of the rights of students with special status to single parents, pregnant women and women in labor, on the basis of which this law is fully harmonized with By the Law on Gender Equality in BiH.

The implementation of the Strategy for Combating Domestic Violence in the Republic of Srpska (2020 - 2024) is underway and on an annual basis the Government of the Republic of Srpska adopts an Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, in which all competent institutions and NGOs participated in the development. During 2022, the General Protocol on dealing with cases of domestic violence in the Republic of Srpska was adopted, which introduces further strengthening of cooperation between institutions in the protection, assistance and support of victims of domestic violence and coordinated activities to suppress and prevent violence. As for the development of referral mechanisms, the General Protocol on handling cases of domestic violence is in force in the Republic of Srpska, whose signatories are the relevant ministries. Up to day protocols have been signed and bodies for coordination and cooperation in cases of domestic violence were established in over 60 % of local self-government units. A large number of educations and activities were conducted both by the Gender Center of the Republic of Srpska and non-governmental organizations that run safe houses in the Republic of Srpska. In the Republika Srpska, the Strategy for the Improvement of Sexual and Reproductive Health in the RS (2019-2029) is in force. One of the main goals is improved clinical management in cases of violence, with special reference to cases of rape, including emergency situations. Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Srpska in 2023 significantly improved the legislative framework for the prevention of gender-based violence and alignment with the Istanbul Convention. Namely, two new criminal offenses were introduced, Unauthorized publication and display of other people's files,

portraits and recordings and Misuse of photographs and videos with sexually explicit content, which aim to prevent domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence through information technology. Also, the amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska resulted in an additional harmonization of the criminal offense of sexual harassment with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Namely, the subordinate relationship of the victim in relation to the perpetrator has been removed from the description of the nature of this criminal act, and now sexual harassment is prohibited regardless of the mutual relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. The National Assembly of the Republika Srpska, at its session held on October 13, 2023, adopted the Draft Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, which for the first time introduces the definition of femicide into the legal framework of the Republika Srpska. Also, in addition to domestic violence, the Draft Law additionally harmonized with the Istanbul Convention in such a way that protection is extended to victims of all forms of violence against women, not only domestic violence, as is currently the case according to current legal regulations. The draft law increases the focus on early recognition of all forms of violence, coordinated and clear action of competent institutions, as well as additional training for all competent institutions. It is also planned to establish a Committee for monitoring violence against women and femicide, which will monitor these forms of violence from an analytical and phenomenological perspective with the aim of future prevention. With regard to safe houses, the Draft Law made a shift compared to previous solutions in the part of providing funds for the operation of safe houses, where it is now foreseen that the budget of the Republika Srpska will cover both fixed and variable costs of temporary accommodation and care of the victim in the amount of 100 % of the determined price of the victim's accommodation. The Draft Law for the first time defines the functioning and work of the SOS line for helping victims and foresees that funds for its work will be provided by the budget of the Republic of Srpska. The Government of the Republika Srpska adopted the Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations from the Report of the GREVIO Committee for BiH in the Republika Srpska for the period 2024-2025.

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