



# #FEMINISTS WANT SYSTEM CHANGE

## BEIJING+25

January 2020

Civil society forum compilation report on Declaration and Platform for Action for the UNECE Region



**GENERATION  
EQUALITY** REGIONAL CIVIL  
SOCIETY FORUM

GENEVA | 28 OCTOBER 2019

Women's  
Major Group  
Creating a Just & Sustainable Future

# Impressum

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Part 1 – Synthesis</b>	
Introduction to the UNECE Beijing+25 CSO Forum report	4
Synthesis statement by the young feminist group	7
<b>Part 2 – Regional perspectives</b>	
About	19
Priorities from the Central Asian sub-region	20
Priorities from the Caucasus sub-region	23
Priorities from the Eastern European sub-region	27
Priorities from the Western Balkans & Turkey sub-region	31
Priorities from the European Union, Norway and Switzerland sub-region	34
Priorities from the United States and Canada	39
<b>Part 3 – Thematic perspectives</b>	
About	44
<b>Ending discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity</b>	
Rights of LGBTI & gender non-conforming women and people	46
Migrant, refugee and undocumented women's rights	56
Indigenous Peoples' rights	61
Widows	64
Women with disabilities	68
Older women	71
<b>Guarantee equal participation and decision-making</b>	
Women's political participation	80
<b>Ensuring women's bodily autonomy, sexual reproductive health and rights</b>	
Sexual reproductive health & rights	86
Sub-group: SRHR with specific focus on sex work	91

<b>Ensure feminist economic policies and climate justice</b>	
Addressing economic structural barriers for economic justice	98
Tax justice and gender equality	103
Corporate and institutional accountability to the Beijing+25 process	106
Rural women & economic empowerment	110
Climate & environmental justice, this is our feminist demand	113
Women in labour movements	118

### **Ensure peace, justice and accountability**

Peace, security and displaced women	125
Accountability and monitoring, a global independent body for women's rights	129
Financing for implementation of BPFA	132

### **Ending violence against women, girls and women human rights defenders**

Violence against women & girls (VAWG)	138
Addressing anti-women's rights groups, shrinking spaces, neoconservatism and women human rights defenders	142
Sub-group: eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking	146

### **Ensure women's rights in media, education and technology access**

Women in the media	153
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## **Part 4 – Annex**

Agenda of the civil society forum	158
Participants list, by organisations and country	160
List of speakers at the official UNECE Regional Review Meeting	171
#Artivism for gender equality	172



## Introduction

In 1995, governments committed to the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (BPFA), the most visionary agenda on women's rights and gender equality. In the run up to the year 2020, and the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the BPFA, the governments and civil society from the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe, met in Geneva to review progress on this milestone from 1995.

This report is a compilation of the perspectives of feminist and civil society organisations from more than 45 countries in the region that participated in the preparations and during the civil society forum itself, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2019 in Geneva.

The Women's Major Group (WMG) for the UNECE region was asked to take on the organisation of the civil society forum in close cooperation with UN Women. UN Women's regional office for Europe and Central Asia organised and funded the venue and provided travel grants for some 60 participants. The UN Women team also prepared the conference bags, provided exhibition stands and collaborated with WMG on the Artivism for Gender Equality exhibition. A great thank you to regional director Alia El-Yassir and her entire team! WECF International as the secretariat for WMG in the UNECE region and the NGO-CSW Geneva co-organised the Beijing+25 civil society forum and managed to fund another 20 participants, most of them being young feminists from Central Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as the civil society forum reception. A great thank you in particular to Valerie Bichelsmeier, and to all the donors that supported the CSO forum; Canton of Geneva, GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the German Ministry of Economical Cooperation, European Commission, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WECF, Women2030, NGO-CSW Geneva and UN Women.

Other co-organisers, that helped with the travel selection and arrangement, with the media and outreach, with the exhibition space and the public event, and the safe space team include Soroptimists international, Gender Centre Moldova, Forum of Women NGOs Kyrgyzstan, ALGA Kyrgyzstan, WECF Germany, WECF Georgia, WECF France and l'Associacio Drets Sexuals I Reproductius Spain. A great thank you to all of them!

The WMG is a coalition of feminist organisations that self-organise and give input into the United Nations processes on the Sustainable Development Goals as well related processes. The WMG has 25 years of civil society engagement and is facilitated by members that are elected at global and regional level. The WMG for the UNECE region, is currently facilitated by Hanna Gunnarsson of Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) with support from Valentina Bodrug of Gender Centre Moldova. The WMG asks all participants in their UN related processes to adhere to the [WMG principles and values](#) for cooperation in a spirit of solidarity, diversity and always with a human rights-based approach.

The process of preparations for the civil society forum on Beijing+25 started in March 2019 with more and more interested participants signing up to the email listserve, joining in conference calls, organizing sub-regional meetings and online thematic working groups, culminating with 700 people registering for the CSO Forum, of which 409 finally participated.

Even though there was only 1 day available for the civil society forum, the participants already partly new each other from the preparation process, including a young feminist meeting that took place the day prior. In total 6 regional and 22 thematic working groups were held during the civil society forum, which each presented about three key recommendations to be shared with the governments at the UNECE Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting the following days.

In this report, the positions of these working groups are published. We are still waiting for a few to be finalised and will update this compilation report once they are. The thematic presentations have been clustered under seven overarching demands:

1. Ending discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity
2. Guarantee equal participation and decision-making
3. Ensuring women's bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive health
4. Ensure feminist economic policies and climate justice
5. Ensure peace, justice and accountability
6. Ending violence against women, girls and women human rights defender
7. Ensure women's rights in media, education and technology access

In addition to the working groups, the civil society forum organized a rally in front of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, held an Artivism (Art + Activism) Exhibition with artists from all over the region, and reached more than [4,1 million people](#) directly via social media. We are also very thankful to the hosts of our Feminists Want System Change [podcast](#), Young Feminist Europe and The Beam Magazine.

All the amazing work of the participants of the civil society forum had a very positive impact on the intergovernmental Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting the following 2 days. The governments embraced the call for the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and spoke out in support of civil society organisations working for women's rights and gender equality as well as feminist movements.

20 participants from the civil society forum spoke in all the official sessions and their input was put together in online documents accessible for all and built on the collective preparatory work. Furthermore, the WMG and other civil society organisations, organized and contributed to a number of the official side events, on protecting women human rights defenders and on ending violence against women and girls.

We are convinced that the cooperation of the feminist and women's rights organisation of the 45 countries that participated, with its very diverse backgrounds and priorities, will help to mobilize governments and the public at large, to take more and stronger steps to achieve women's rights and gender equality, in the UNECE region, and globally.

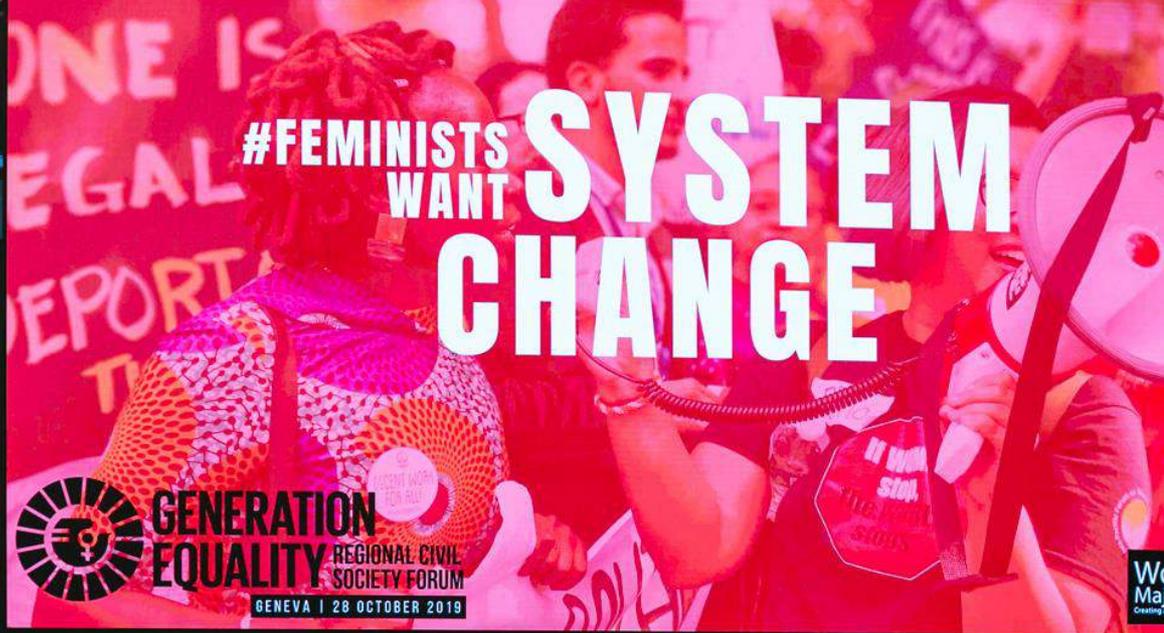
In solidarity!

For the Women's Major Group of the UNECE region

Sascha Gabizon and Hanna Gunnarsson, WECF International







# SYNTHESIS REPORT

## the amended Opening Statement

### About

The following statement has been put together by the young feminists working group and is their synthesis of the discussions and main recommendations from the civil society forum in Geneva on Beijing+25 CSO Forum.

A shorter version of this statement was presented by the lead author, İlayda Eskitaşçioğlu, during the opening session of the UNECE Beijing+25 review meeting, at the United Nations in Geneva, 29 October 2019.

The synthesis statement addresses all the sub-regional and thematic areas that were covered during the working groups at the civil society forum on Beijing+25 in Geneva, 28 October 2019.

The synthesis report does not represent a consensus statement.

The young feminists have made a great effort to integrate as much as possible the views of all the civil society forum participants. On a few issues it was not possible to achieve a consensus, yet we believe the young feminist group did a fantastic job to try and integrate the varied positions raised at the forum. [All the endorsing organisations can be found here.](#)

We thank İlayda and all the young feminists for their amazing work.

### Contributors to the opening statement (synthesis report)

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## Synthesis report

### Beijing+25 - UNECE Regional Review Meeting 29 October 2019

Thank you, honourable chair.

My name is İlayda Eskitaşçıoğlu and I am a 26-year-old lawyer and a PhD student at Koç University in İstanbul researching International Human Rights Law. I am also a member of the Beijing+25 Global Youth Task Force, and today I am speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group.

This opening speech has been prepared collectively with other young feminists like myself and informed by more than 410 civil society members from 45 countries in the region.

I am grateful that they have given me, a young feminist, the floor to deliver this message. I was a 2-year-old baby when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted, yet it continues to be the most progressive blueprint for achieving gender equality and advancing the rights of all women to date. However, almost 25 years have passed, and we are still miles away from fully realizing the commitments made in 1995.

In fact, we face critical challenges today that threaten to roll-back the many achievements we have gained and continue to live in a world in which patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, ageism, racism, heteronormativity, and xenophobia drive women's oppression and inequality. We face a climate crisis that, if not dealt with right now, will leave us all with no future to speak of.

Having said this I would like to share with you some of the key messages that we retained from the Civil Society Forum that took place yesterday. (28 October 2019)

## **MESSAGES FROM THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS**

The core messages of the thematic working groups can be divided into three main categories: 1. Inclusion, 2. Emerging and Structural Problems and 3. Areas that need focus and the way forward in Beijing +25 process. They are as follows:

### **1. Inclusion**

The cross-cutting themes in all working groups representing disadvantaged, marginalized, and vulnerable groups of women were: 1. The lack of disaggregated data focusing on intersectional identities, 2. More female inclusion and participation in politics and decision-making, 3. More funding and concrete steps for the implementation of legislative frameworks. Having mentioned these cross-cutting recommendations, we can now move on to specific recommendations for each group.

Let's start with the importance of engaging young feminists.

#### **Engaging young feminists**

Youth activists clearly face barriers in regard to accessing to international platforms and spaces like this very room. In order to facilitate this, more direct funding to youth led organizations is needed. We demand structural changes and suggest 30 percent involvement of young feminists under 30 in decision making processes, and a transition from hierarchical to horizontal structures to foster more collaborations and co-creation. It is important to build digital infrastructure for better networking and connection with grassroots youth organizations who may not be able to travel.

#### **Rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LBTI) and gender non-conforming (GNC) women and people**

Concerning the rights of LBTI and gender non-conforming women and people, it is vital to repeal laws and policies which directly or indirectly criminalize people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression. Furthermore, legislation and policies which explicitly protect LBTI and GNC women and people from discrimination and violence must be enacted, which include access to employment, education, housing, healthcare, and other social services. In addition, States must provide access to legal gender recognition on the basis of self-determination and ban all non-consensual, harmful, and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children.

#### **Rights of women with disabilities**

Developing effective measures to mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities in policies, programs and measures, is the key, this must involve women and girls with disabilities in the development and implementation of such policies and programs. Further, the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities must be ratified by all States. The commitments that have been set in the CRPD must be upheld, including the Optional Protocol and General Comment 3 on women and girls with disabilities.

#### **Rights of migrant women**

For the rights of migrant women, we recommend strict measures and penalties against racial profiling, to fight against institutional and structural racism. Safety from gender-based violence in dangerous migration routes and detention centres must be ensured. Residential citizenships

should be given to all children of migrant women after arrival, and migrant women who report abuse in their informal work environments should be protected from deportation and sanctions.

### **Rights of Indigenous and Roma people**

To achieve gender equality we must recognize Indigenous, Roma and Sami women's rights and the importance of their voices that have been historically silenced. Specific funding, time and spaces are needed to support this community and its advocates, as well as in the provision and funding of public services and social protection systems. Financial, practical, social, and policy barriers, which include racism and lack of health insurance and identity documents, must be removed in their access to sexual and reproductive health care.

### **Rural women and economic empowerment**

Young rural women are the future, they are in the intersection of gender equality, food security, and sustainable development. We need to tackle the isolation problem of rural women, listen to rural women, ensure their safety, health and education, invest in their existence, strengthen rural-urban communication, and protect their right to financial inclusion, to land, property, and productive and natural resources.

### **Rights of widows**

The rights of widows are a critically neglected human rights issue. The numbers of widows are increasing exponentially in the region due to conflict, migration, natural disasters, harmful traditional practices, and longer life spans. Widows' rights to inheritance, land and property must be enshrined and enforced in law, and legal documentation, resources, and special attention to their access to services is urgent. Widows are of all ages and include young refugee women.

### **Rights of older women**

Older women routinely have their rights and needs denied due to ageism, stigma, poverty, and violence perpetrated against them. Recognition of their economic and social contributions is essential. Resources must be committed to ensuring their economic security, safety, and dignity. Furthermore, intergenerational solidarity must be affirmed as the bedrock of all age-inclusive policy planning and service delivery to improve the lives and dignity of people of all ages, and to ensure that older women are seen as rights holders with equal entitlements. Inadequate data for women over age 49 is a key driver of the denial of older women's rights, therefore disaggregated data by age, gender and disability with five-year intervals over age 49 until death, is needed, and must inform all policies.

## **2. Emerging problems and structural challenges**

### **Addressing anti-women's rights groups, shrinking spaces, neo-conservatism and women human rights defenders**

One of the most critical issues we face as women's rights activists, is how to respond to the increasing effects of anti-rights agendas, shrinking space for civil society, and systematic attacks on human rights, in general, and women's and marginalized groups' rights in particular, driven by neo-conservative governments, the private sector, and well-resourced and globally well connected fundamentalist faith based organisations. We are calling on governments and intergovernmental bodies to renew their gender equality commitments (such as calling the EU to ratify the Istanbul Convention), to reaffirm the principle of non-regression, and increase

accountability among international organizations and governments contributing to transparency, ensuring human and women's rights, and reducing implementation gaps and impunity. Furthermore, all economic policies must be aligned with international human rights law, women's rights frameworks, and in promoting the rights of those traditionally marginalised.

### **Climate, environment and women's rights**

The climate crisis is having devastating impacts on the rights of women on the frontlines, in particular rural and indigenous women, whose needs and participation must be prioritized in national climate programs and in climate funding to achieve the Paris Agreement. Governments must divest from extractive and fossil fuel sectors and invest in sustainable local sectors that have committed to gender equality, set and fulfil targets for women's participation and leadership in sustainable energy and climate policy decision-making and climate actions, and protect environmental and climate defenders who suffer from violence and harassment due to their gender.

### **Structural economic barriers**

In order to overcome structural problems, especially economic barriers, we need to disrupt and redefine what we value and how. We call for a complete overhaul of the current economic system, moving away from extractive and profit-driven capitalism. We need to move towards a care economy focused on people and planet and create measures that value social progress, recognizes unpaid care work as "work" that gives right to social protection, connects social protection and taxing systems to individual rights, and addresses gender-based violence at work.

### **Violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

There are many dimensions to violence against women and girls. Deeply ingrained patriarchal structures reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and violate women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy. The main recommendations focus on improving access to justice and removing barriers to reporting. We also call for national action plans on violence against women based on gender equality, gender mainstreaming and budgeting, including steps for prevention through education and awareness, starting from pre-school age. Faster investigation and prosecution processes, better coordination among state agencies in cases of emergency, preventing impunity of perpetrators yet also rehabilitating them with a purpose of transforming toxic masculinity, multisectoral teams of well-trained health staff are important. Governments must focus on implementing policies to combat all forms of gender-based violence, domestic violence, cyber violence, femicide, female genital mutilation, human trafficking and other harmful practices.

The ratification and implementation of existing comprehensive international legal frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention, and International Labour Organization Convention No. 190, adoption of domestic non-discrimination legislations, preparing comprehensive national action plans on violence against women and gender equality, trainings and awareness-raising including men and boys, the adoption of an intersectional approach, ensuring confidentiality of the proceedings, and addressing the data gap on violence against women are crucial.

Human trafficking, as a subsection of violence against women in the Beijing Platform for Action, remains a prevailing issue within the region. Governments must take the appropriate measures to guarantee the support and protection of victims of trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, and trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, as well as address torture by non-state actors. Besides protection, governments need to focus on prevention and prosecution.

## **Women's political participation**

Women's political participation can be ensured through two areas: promotion and protection. States must introduce, where not present, and implement in full, affirmative measures in legislation and regulations (also within political parties) to ensure parity and equal participation of women at all levels of decision making. These measures must include sanctions for non-compliance. Importantly, women and girls active in political life must be protected against all forms of violence, abuse, and sexism.

## **Tax justice**

As for tax justice, we need to raise tax revenues through progressive taxes with a bottom up perspective to redistribute wealth and power which would automatically contribute to gender equality. We also need better, comprehensive macro policies to tackle tax evasion and tax avoidance to establish financial justice.

## **Women in the media**

Regarding women in the media, comprehensive legislations, regulations, and mechanisms (not only by States but also through codes of conducts by multinational media corporations) are needed to promote gender balance in media decision-making at all levels, and to tackle online harassment, gender bias and implicit discrimination in Artificial Intelligence, algorithms, and Automated Decision-Making, as well as to combat the impunity of social media corporations and advertisement sectors. We need to ensure digital and media literacy for all, so that women can use digital media as an educational tool and to transition from passive consumers to active content creators.

# **3. Areas that need more focus & how to pave the way forward in the Beijing+25 process**

## **Accountability and monitoring**

There is a need for substantive protection frameworks (with enforcement authority) and resources to reduce the obstacles and risks women and women's NGOs face due to increasing governmental threats, violence, and structural inequalities. Existing accountability bodies are not responsive to women's human rights, and women and women's NGOs all around the world do not have a truly 'Independent Body' that they can appeal to, expect fair decisions from and interventions for improvements of their lives. We need a Global Independent Women's Body to which women can appeal to without any barriers, which has independent investigative, decision making, and enforcement powers, to demand accountability and reparations from those that commit gender-based crimes.

## **Sexual reproductive health and rights**

Growing opposition or roll-back to sexual and reproductive rights is of grave concern in the region, fuelled by the harmful gender norms, stereotypes, assumptions and stigma that undermine women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. States must mainstream mandatory, age-responsive, standardised, evidence-based and scientifically accurate comprehensive sexuality education curricula across the education system including into ordinary school curricula. Abortion laws must be brought into line with human rights standards making them safe and legal. All barriers to accessing sexual reproductive health services for women, including legal status, migrant status, among others, must be removed, and women

must be freed from all stigma and discrimination related to their choices around their sexuality and respected for exercising their right to bodily autonomy. Moreover, States must provide a full range of health services to all women, including those who are sex workers, that are confidential, non-conditional, free from violence, stigma and discrimination, and that respond to and recognize their diverse identities, experiences, working conditions, and needs.

### **Peace and security and displaced women**

Regarding peace, security and displaced women, we need to clarify that peace is not possible without meaningful and equal participation of women, CSOs, displaced groups, and former combatants. We demand the expansion of the definition of security to include and focus on human security, with categories such as environmental and food security, political security, community and personal security. We also demand effective systems of early warning, conflict prevention, mitigation, and security for those who promote the peace agenda in their countries and communities.

### **Women labour movements**

Regarding Trade unions and women's labour movements, the ILO Convention 190 and accompanying Recommendation 106 on violence and harassment at the workplace must be ratified urgently, with a particular focus on sectors which are more exposed to violence against women such as care, domestic work, media, and informal work. Over-representation of women in precarious employment, low wage employment, and the informal economy must be addressed by ensuring universal access to a living wage and social protection, a global care crisis must be averted by committing a minimum of 2% of income to public care services.

### **Education, Knowledge Transfer and Access to Technologies**

We call on governments to ensure free quality education that is well resourced and accessible for all throughout early childhood to further, higher, technical, and vocational education. It is important to have an educational paradigm which focuses on global citizenship, that is inclusive of peace and reconciliation, human rights, trauma-informed education, community development processes, and includes comprehensive sexuality education.

### **Financing for Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

In order to move forward in Beijing +25 and the implementation of BPFA, we need more than speeches and commitments, we need financing. Legal reforms should be enacted to ensure obligatory, transparent, and accountable budget allocations for the effective implementation of commitments on women's rights and gender equality, supported by monitoring and gender-segregated financial data.

### **Corporate and Institutional Accountability to the Beijing+25 Process**

A core part of the way forward in the Beijing +25 process is corporate and institutional accountability. UN Women should actively hold corporations accountable for gender equality issues and the gendered impact of their operations. The collective efforts and negotiations for the draft UN binding treaty on business and human rights should accelerate, with a focus on gender-impact assessment and due diligence, gender-sensitive remedies and justice mechanisms, and creating an enabling environment for women human rights defenders.

## **MESSAGES FROM THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS**

We had 45 countries represented in our CSO Forum. Each sub-region has its own history, reality, advances and barriers, and each sent important recommendations for the development of women's rights as a whole in the region.

Firstly, recommendations from **Central Asia and Russia** focus on the need for States to provide mechanisms to regulate growing religious fundamentalism, to review domestic legislations on violence against women, including on domestic violence, with an effort to harmonize laws and policies with international standards, to involve more women in peacebuilding in accordance with the SC Resolution 1325, and to ensure women's access to economic, educational, and natural resources, mainly, to land and water.

The urgent message from the **Caucasus** region includes the need to modify social and cultural practices to combat gender stereotypes, for States to enact legal frameworks for full implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and to ensure comprehensive, mandatory, sexual and reproductive rights education in school curricula.

Recommendations for **Eastern Europe** focused on the biggest barriers undermining gender equality progress, which are: political instability, military conflicts which disproportionately affect women and girls, gender dimensions not being integrated in all development policies, and the underfinancing of gender equality implementation. As a priority, we demand implementing gender-based budgeting, elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, an increase in sexual and reproductive rights budget, and ensuring the inclusion of all women in peacebuilding processes.

Demands for **Western and Central Europe** include that States employ effective measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, with immediate ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, focusing on intersectional forms of discrimination and cyber violence. We call for the adoption and implementation of a robust political strategy to achieve gender equality in line with obligations under CEDAW and the commitments of the 2030 Agenda, with ambitious goals, targets and benchmarks, strong institutional mechanisms and resources, which are subject to regular monitoring.

Demands for **North Americas, Israel and Palestine** call on States to develop National Action Plans to eliminate gender-based violence, recognising the systemic violence towards marginalised and historically discriminated communities, including indigenous women, women of colour, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming women and people and other vulnerable minorities.

We call on governments from **Western Balkans and Turkey** to learn from the women's movement about local and regional cooperation, gender transformative participation, and women's economic empowerment. Women should participate in politics, peace building and reconciliation, as equal citizens, grounded in constitutional guarantees.

## Conclusion

All in all, we have hope, we have anger, and we call for immediate action! We are encouraged by the mobilization and enthusiasm of young people, and are inspired by new and progressive developments, despite concerns for roll-back on sexual and reproductive health and rights all over the world.

We are dismayed by the worldwide trend of anti-women and anti-gender equality discourse and actions, and the pushback we are receiving, not only from populist governments, but also from many other sections of society. Our space is shrinking, yet we need to push back against the pushback.

We are calling on you to put considerable time, effort, and funding into implementing the commitments that you have made as States. Let's walk the talk. As you move on with the sessions today, please pay attention to, and keep in mind, these core messages from civil society representatives. They are the heart and soul of the fight for gender equality.

Thank you very much.



IF WOMEN  
stop,  
the WORLD  
stops

#FEMINISTS  
WANT  
SYSTEM  
CHANGE

M  
B

# REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

## About

The following chapters are a compilation of sub-regional factsheets. They reflect the perspectives of the authors and contributors as stated at the top of each factsheet. These are not negotiated consensus positions but give an overview of priorities and the diverse views of women's rights and feminist movement in the UNECE region.

Participants at the Beijing+25 Civil Society Forum in the UNECE region started sharing their priorities in the months prior to the forum. They were asked to prepare sub-regional factsheets addressing 1) structural barriers, 2) governments commitment to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, de jure and de facto, 3) recommendations for the future. The factsheet coordinators worked in a collaborative manner with those that expressed interest, prior and during the CSO forum. They were asked to ensure a fact-based and human rights-based approach.

The factsheet coordinators received many comments and additions, prior to and during the Civil Society Forum. They were asked to keep the factsheets short, 2 to 4 pages, and to agree on 3 key priority recommendations for the synthesis report. The factsheets needed to be short and concise to have a greater advocacy impact. Due to the limited space, not all the input and comments were taken on board in the final versions of the factsheets that are presented in this section. Contributors were asked to confirm their names on the final versions or to withdraw.

We thank all the factsheet coordinators, authors and contributors for their hard work.

# CENTRAL ASIA

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

- The existing patriarchal foundations, where traditionally women should take care of the home, children, relatives, do not allow them to engage in productive labour and actively participate in political and social activities;
- Existing progressive laws, policies and action plans on gender equality are not supported by adequate financing;
- Access to high-paying jobs is limited, mostly women are employed in low-wage areas (education, health care, provision of services);
- Social protection system does not fully provide protection to the most vulnerable groups of women ( women with disabilities, families with many children, the elderly) and to women on maternity leave with adequate child benefits.
- There is a lack of gender expertise of educational programs, teaching aids, textbooks, which contributes at a great degree to the reproduction of gender stereotypes in all educational institutions;
- Public health services do not respond to needed quality standards. Low level of awareness of women and men in the field of reproductive health and nutrition, as well as inadequate access to family planning services is one of the key factors that cause complex problems during pregnancy and delivery;
- Commercialization of medical services make them unaffordable for the majority of women with low income. Poor infrastructure and inadequate conditions for medical services still exist in rural areas (for example: lack of heating in winter, lack of medical equipment).
- More than half of abused women and victims of gender-based violence still do not report on their cases and do not apply for legal protection. In 98% of cases, domestic violence is committed by the husband, partner or close relative.
- Increase of illegal polygamous and child marriages are followed by increasing domestic violence.
- There is gap in collecting of official data on the cases of bride kidnapping (“al-kachuu”), child marriages, sexual harassment and on injuries in the cases of domestic violence.

- The emergence of new forms of violence - the sale of women for sexual and labour coercion, and violence and pressure on women during elections and political activities;
- There are only few women in law enforcement agencies, employees, and men in these agencies are not sufficiently gender-sensitive to issues of violence.
- The existence of stable stereotypes regarding daughters-in-law in families, a large physical, psychological burden on a woman adversely affects her health, moral and psychological relationships in the family, creates risk of violence and discrimination;
- Women are not recognized as equal actors and not included in decision-making and negotiations during conflict situation and its resolution.
- Women's participation in economic planning and making strategic decisions is still limited.
- Existing measures to support women in politics are not supported by effective mechanisms of motivation, in particular for political parties to ensure gender quotas, as well as lack of mechanisms to monitor their implementation.
- There is a certain imbalance and dominance in promotion of patriarchal values in the activities of journalists and media editors, as well as the presence of hidden gender discrimination.
- Lack of development of legal norms regulating the procedure and conditions for placing socially important media products - social advertising, documentaries, etc.
- Common problem for all Central Asian region - low awareness on the climate crisis and lack of participation in environment protection and adaptation. Lack of access to clean water, alternative energy and adequate sanitation, which significantly affects the health and amount of time women spend on domestic and productive work;



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

No country in the region has managed to achieve gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The only evident achievement since the Beijing+20 review was progress in law and policy making. As for the advancement of actual gender equality and opportunities for full realization of women's and girls' rights, there are still many challenges and problems.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- To ensure intersectoral cooperation for women's access to resources: natural (land and water), political (women's participation at all decision-making levels and in politics), economic (finance) and educational;
- To provide the mechanisms to regulate the growing religious fundamentalism;
- To review and align with international law the criminalization of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and qualify acts of such violence as criminal offenses;
- To prevent conflicts and to secure peace and security in the region by involvement of women into peacebuilding processes and monitoring the implementation of UNGA S/RES/1325 resolution.
- Development of legislation that equates unpaid work and domestic work with paid work.
- Improving primary health care and related infrastructure in remote regions.

- Improvement of legislation in the field of reproductive and sexual health of women.
- Enhance national legislation on protection of women and girls from GB violence.
- Creation of a full-fledged system of social protection for women on maternity leave, for older women and women with disabilities.
- To provide a comprehensive approach in the development and implementation of the strong measures for the prevention of child marriage, early pregnancy, maternal and child mortality.
- Strengthening the role and participation of women in decision making and negotiation processes on peace and security.
- Formation of women's assets through access to land and property rights.
- Providing better access to jobs variety for women, improving working conditions and benefits.
- Electoral legislation to ensure the participation of women in local Councils and national Parliaments with the provision of 30% to 50% quotas for women.
- To provide, in a legislative way, measures to support representation of women in government bodies, in a leadership positions. Develop measures for prevention of violation of this provision.
- Conducts mandatory gender monitoring of the implementation of gender quotas for candidates for elected bodies and prioritizing women on party lists.
- To amend the Criminal Code on the issue of responsibility for violence and discrimination against women during elections and during the implementation of political activities.
- Promote a positive attitude to the image of a woman politician on live cases from the history of countries and contemporaries through the media, school, university, art and literary works.
- Conduct political education, training for women politicians, women leaders in special Schools of political leadership.
- Strengthening the status of national gender institutional mechanisms, raising them to the level of the Commission / Committee / under the Government.
- Conduct gender expertise of the existing legal framework and mechanisms for its implementation to fully ensure realization of women's human rights in practice.
- Monitoring of the implementation of legislation, ensuring the of women' and girls' rights.
- In the state media, to demonstrate the image of a woman without stereotypes, a balanced image of a woman and a girl, and her many social roles.
- Inclusion of gender sensitivity trainings for future journalists at the universities.
- Establish the responsibility of journalists for publishing or displaying in the media materials that discriminate against women and girls, as well as depicting women as disabled people and using the image of a woman as a sexual object.
- To enhance development of state gender policy experts on ecology, environmental issues and climate crisis impacts.
- Introduce gender-sensitive indicators in state programs for the prevention of emergency situations and adaptation of the communities to the climate crisis;
- Increase the potential and functional literacy of women and men in the context of the necessary adaptation to the climate crisis through expanding access to information and training technologies and consulting resources, especially in rural areas;
- Ensure women's access to services and technologies for water supply, sustainable agriculture, alternative energy, as well as for family care, housekeeping and enterprises;
- Strengthening the capacity of women's organizations, and civil society networks to advocate on their needs and priorities in sustainable development and adaptation to the effects of the climate crisis.
- Promotion of laws in the Central Asian countries that limit harmful production, including the production and use of plastics and foams.
- Creation of waste Establishment of restrictions for chemically harmful products for their importation into the Central Asian countries.

# CAUCASUS

## Lead

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This factsheet assesses how countries in the Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - meet their commitments under Beijing +25 and the areas requiring further action. It relies on information provided by civil society, national reports on B+25, as well as recommendations and assessments by international human rights mechanisms, such as CEDAW. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent states after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The countries have ratified most of the international and regional human rights treaties and are, to a varying degree, aspiring to democratic reforms.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

The predominant patriarchal culture, structural inequality and unequal distribution of power and resources among men and women and within various groups, particularly those residing in rural areas, are pervasive in the political, social, cultural, economic and private spheres in all 3 countries. Deeply rooted gender stereotypes, traditions and practices that are discriminatory towards women and girls are still prevalent. Even though some significant steps were undertaken to protect women's rights (particularly in Georgia and to varying degrees in Armenia), there still is an overwhelming lack of awareness and genuine commitment to combatting gender-based discrimination, VAWG, and harmful gender stereotypes among law enforcement and state institutions.

In Armenia, the existence of radical and nationalist groups propagating anti-human rights and women's rights discourse in some cases result in attacks on women's rights defenders and activists. The emergence of radical nationalist groups has also appeared to be a problem in Georgia in the last few years. There is an increasingly shrinking space for civil society in Armenia. While in Azerbaijan, human rights organizations are under constant pressure, and human rights defenders and journalists have faced fabricated charges. There has been verbal bashing of human rights NGOs from the side of politicians in Georgia also. In all states in this region, there is a need for legislation, policy and practices on women's rights to be reviewed and amended in line with international human rights standards, such as the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW jurisprudence.

## Particular issues which need to be immediately tackled are

- Inadequate legislation on violence against women and domestic violence (Azerbaijan and Armenia), as well as problematic implementation of existing laws, which fail to protect the rights of survivors and bring perpetrators to justice (all three countries);
- Criminal law provisions on sexual violence failing to comply with international human rights standards and provide justice for survivors, as well as the lack of gender-sensitive investigation and prosecution procedures (all three countries) (1);
- Ineffective Government policy to combat harmful practices, including child/forced/early marriages/bride kidnapping (all three countries);
- Lack of anti-discrimination and sexual harassment laws (Armenia and Azerbaijan), as well as lack of awareness of and information on existing legal mechanisms in the public (all three countries);
- Violations of sexual and reproductive health rights - lack of access to services, including access to safe abortion and contraception; sex selective abortions and male child preferences; absence of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights education in schools (all three countries);
- Limited number of shelters and support services for gender-based violence victims and insufficient resources allocated to them (all three countries);
- Underrepresentation of women in political and public life (all three countries).
- Women from marginalised groups (ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, internally displaced women, women in prostitution, LBTQI) facing intersecting forms of discrimination and lack of access to services provided by the state (all three countries).



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

**Armenia:** Significant gaps remain in regard to women's rights policy, law and practice, and the existing legal framework continues to fall short of international standards. Even though the law on domestic violence was adopted in 2017, it still lacks sufficient guarantees for the accountability of perpetrators, falls short of international human rights standards (e.g. emphasises the importance of reconciliation and traditional values rather than the rights of the survivor) and is insufficiently implemented. There is a lack of a comprehensive state policy in combatting gender-based discrimination, lack of anti-discrimination legislation, and an inadequacy of laws regulating gender-based and sexual violence. Reproductive health policy is not prioritized in the country.

**Georgia:** Since 2014, the government, with the support and pressure from CSOs and international organisations have made significant steps in fighting violence against women and promoting gender equality. Laws have been amended and introduced to combat VAWG, gender-based and domestic violence (e.g. amending domestic violence law, adopting anti-discrimination law, outlawing sexual harassment and stalking) and the Istanbul Convention has been ratified. However, there are still significant challenges in translating the existing laws into real life, improving gender equality policies and ensuring substantive equality. Women's economic empowerment, political participation and protection from all forms of violence remain as urgent issues. Extremely low reporting and prosecution rates of rape and other forms of sexual violence are alarming, and further amendments are needed to the Criminal Code to ensure compliance with Istanbul Convention for sexual violence crimes. There is a lack of adequate and gender-sensitive investigation and prosecution procedures and holistic services for survivors of sexual violence.

**Azerbaijan:** Despite the state's commitment in Beijing, CSOs claim that the Government largely fails in meeting its women's rights obligations. The government has brought legislation on the prevention of early marriage in line with international standards but there is ineffective implementation. A large section of society still supports early marriages and do not consider them a crime, indicating a lack of awareness of the legislation. Some CSOs even attempted blocking the introduction of the criminalization of bride kidnapping. Despite growing urbanization, a significant proportion of the population live in rural areas where gender inequality is more pronounced, there is poor infrastructure and lack of Internet access. Further, due to limited access to basic services and adequate educational opportunities, girls are particularly vulnerable to leaving school early, child 'marriage' and likely to experience violence. The government has also not addressed the sharp decrease in the birth rate of girls as a result of male-sex preferences. As there is a high dependence on agricultural production, a large number of women work as unpaid family workers.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- Take proactive measures to modify gender stereotypes and social and cultural patterns that endorse superiority of one sex over the other;
- Amend criminal law provisions on sexual violence to bring them in compliance with the Istanbul Convention, covering all forms of violence against women, especially sexual acts committed without the victim's voluntary, genuine and willing consent;
- Ensure gender-sensitive methodology for the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence, free from all stereotypes, including on the basis of disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation, including with respect to gathering evidence and witness interrogation processes;
- Adopt effective mechanisms and policies to implement existing gender equality laws; effectively implement domestic violence laws to ensure deterrent sanctions for perpetrators and effective access to redress and justice for survivors;
- Improve coordination among all institutional duty bearers (education, healthcare, law enforcement, religious authorities) to prevent VAWG, particularly child marriage and domestic violence;
- Design and implement effective criminal and other policies to fight child marriages and bride kidnappings, especially among marginalised communities;
- Enhance trainings for legal professionals (investigators, prosecutors, judges, lawyers) and service providers on gender equality, non-discrimination and VAWG;
- Collect disaggregated statistics (including on the basis of sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity) on all forms of VAWG;
- Create/improve specialised support services for women who are subjected to all forms of violence;
- Introduce comprehensive sexuality education in school curricula and ensure training for teachers/educators on these issues;
- Take substantial measures to ensure women's economic empowerment and increase women's public and political participation;
- Design specific policies to make sure that vulnerable women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination have access to justice and support services offered by the state, including ensuring access to health care and education, particularly for women with disabilities, LGBTQI women and other marginalised communities;

- Intensify efforts to provide access to quality education to girls living in rural areas by providing well-trained teachers, improving infrastructure and access to the internet;

#### **Armenia (additionally to the common recommendations outlined above)**

- Adopt anti-discrimination law to address all forms of discrimination and provide redress for survivors; criminalize domestic violence, outlaw stalking and sexual harassment; amend laws on abortion and reproductive rights to ensure effective access to services for all groups; ratify the Istanbul Convention;
- Review state pro-natalist policy aimed at increasing the population growth and replace it with rights-based population policies;
- Protect women human rights defenders.

#### **Georgia (additionally to the common recommendations outlined above)**

- Take measures to ensure that legal regulations outlawing sexual harassment are adequately implemented and enforced;
- Adopt a law on mandatory gender quotas to increase women's political participation and raise awareness about the necessity of such a law.

#### **Azerbaijan (additionally to the common recommendations outlined above)**

- Create an enabling environment for civil society to mobilize resources and freely operate, and remove legislative and practical restrictions on CSOs, WHRDs and female journalists;
- Ensure that all internally displaced women and girls have adequate access to health care services, freedom of movement and education opportunities;
- Adopt an anti-discrimination law to address all forms of discrimination and provide redress for survivors; outlaw all forms of violence against women, stalking and sexual harassment; amend laws to make sure that there is mandatory, public prosecution for all sexual violence crimes and for domestic violence; ratify Istanbul Convention.

#### **Priority recommendations for Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan put together during the CSO pre-regional forum for UNECE:**

- Modify social and cultural practices and patterns of behaviour that give priority to one sex/gender over the other, and combat gender stereotypes through formal, vocational and non-formal education;
- Bring laws in full compliance with the Istanbul Convention, particularly criminal provisions on sexual violence (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), ratify and fully implement the Istanbul Convention (Armenia, Azerbaijan);
- Introduce comprehensive sexuality education as a mandatory school curricula and ensure training for teachers/educators on SRHR issues, as well as access to SRHR services and products.

#### **Useful sources**

1. See Equality Now's 'Roadblocks to Justice: How the Law is Failing Survivors of Sexual Violence in Eurasia' 2019

# EASTERN EUROPE

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Our countries suffer from political instability. This hinders the continuity of public reforms in the field of gender equality in general, and specifically in the field of women's economic empowerment.
- The implementation mechanisms for the laws are very unsteady, for these reasons the good laws that the 7 states have, do not provide the desired results;
- The gender dimension is not integrated into all public policies for all development areas and implementation of programs for gender policies are always underfinanced, and are not among the financing priorities of the governments;
- Low level of dialogue and cooperation between governments and civil society organizations in addressing women's problems and implementing gender-oriented development policies;
- Lack of corporate culture of monitoring and evaluation of public policies implementation towards gender equality achievements;
- A strongly stereotyped mindset of the society and low-level actions done by stakeholders to make the society understand the value of equality between women and men in building a democratic society and society development;
- Significant women's underrepresentation on Politics in Parliament, Government, Regional and Municipal Councils;
- Economic empowerment and financial independence of women is one of the most important triggers that can help eliminate violence and support healthy families. Nevertheless, countries fail to recognize its importance. There is a need to have a broader approach to women's economic empowerment;
- Public employment policies do not have sufficient focus on unemployed women, especially among those from the most disadvantaged groups. Despite the efforts of the Governments to reduce unemployment, women are still "leading" in the unemployment statistics. Little is done to focus on improving women's access to decent jobs, which can also reduce the level of emigration among women and help preserve families;
- Lack of sex-disaggregated statistical data in most areas of development policies. Our countries are weak in collecting sex-disaggregated data to make women voice heard and gender inequalities to be seen. Without data, big or small, all initiatives are doomed

to failure in the long run. Insufficient attention to gender analysis simply means that women's contributions and concerns remain too often ignored.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

### Civil society organizations appreciate:

- The steps undertaken by the Government of Armenia to enshrine equality between women and men in the national Constitution, and to develop policies to fight domestic violence and human trafficking;
- the actions of the Government of Azerbaijan to create a countrywide online database on domestic violence against women, to improve the collection, analysis, and the use of data; and to implement national programmes to increase women's economic empowerment. As a result, the percentage of women entrepreneurs has increased by a factor of seven, from 4 per cent to 29 per cent;
- The efforts of the Government of Belarus to increase women's participation at the decision-making level. The proportion of elected members of parliament who are women is 32.5 percent, and that of members of local councils is 48.2 percent. It should be mentioned that the system for protecting victims of violence has also improved: this includes protective orders and the obligation on the perpetrator to temporarily leave the premises of the victim of violence;
- The significant actions of the Government of Georgia to emphasize in the Constitution real equality and to improve the legislative framework on gender equality, violence against women and girls and women's rights; to strengthen Georgia's national institutional framework for monitoring and advancing women's equality including at municipal level, and to ratify of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention);
- The achievements of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to improve the legal framework on gender equality that include: introducing 14 calendar days of paid paternity leave; prohibiting sexist language and sexist images in advertising; strengthening the institutional mechanism to ensure gender equality at central and local level; and introducing a 40 per cent gender quota in electoral and decision-making processes;
- The significant actions of the Government of Romania to adjust the national legal framework to meet international standards by incorporating distinct provisions and measures regarding compliance with equality of opportunities and treatment for women and men in the labour market, participation in decision-making, education, culture and information, elimination of gender roles and stereotypes; and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention);
- The efforts of the Government of Ukraine to expand anti-discrimination legislation, including the legal framework on gender equality; to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security"; to strengthen the national mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men by introducing coordination of government efforts on gender policy in the mandate of the Vice Prime Minister and by creating the post of Governmental Commissioner for Gender Policy; and to develop a new system for preventing and combating domestic violence and gender-based violence.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Investing in women's economic empowerment, political participation and ending violence against women are among the most urgent and effective means to drive progress on gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Based on the above-mentioned challenges, the following proposals/recommendations are developed:

- Integrated gender dimension into all public policies for all development areas;
- Provide/allocate sufficient funds from national budgets for the implementation of programs for gender policies;
- Implement gender-based budgeting and public procurement based on gender data.
- Collect systematically data, at the national and regional level, to support decision-making and policy implementation at different stages of implementation;
- Strengthen gender focal points in governmental agencies and/or establish where they do not exist. Extend this practice into the public administration at the local and regional level. Central and local authorities need to get involved in combating any anti-gender action that reinforces the inequality between women and men and prevents gender education in schools;
- Introduce gender quotas in electoral legislation with strong enforcement mechanisms and enhance the national legal framework from gender perspectives, for countries where it does not exist;
- Improve national legal frameworks for encouraging political parties and parliaments to eliminate gender discrimination and harassment and/or address such incidents accordingly;
- Strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between governments and civil society organizations in addressing women's problems and implementing gender-oriented development policies;
- Develop policies and action plans focusing on the advancement of women entrepreneurship.
- Offer state-supported scholarships for women choosing STEM careers;
- Develop infrastructure at the local level that will help women become more economically active
- Improve and extend access to family planning and health care programs for women in rural and remote areas;
- Strengthen primary medical and health care services and develop the road infrastructure from and to remote areas, thus increasing girls' and women's access to educational, health, social, employment and other qualitative public services;
- Conduct systematic gender audit of all public services, with a special focus on healthcare, educational and employment services to permanently adjust them to the real needs of women;
- Ensure ending sexual harassment practices, stalking, bullying and alike, by offering continuous training, monitoring for both women and men on the job, at schools and universities. Women must feel safe!
- The states and its servants need to seriously assume responsibility for the prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV), protection of victims and punishment of perpetrators to send a clear message of zero tolerance to VAWG not merely through statements, but through concrete actions;
- Constantly check how policies secure rights for most vulnerable categories and enrol them in consultations;
- Elaborate and implement mechanisms for the protection of women living in conflict-affected areas;

- Develop mechanisms for multiplication of the good practices in women peace and security areas;
- Strengthen the capacities of directors of media outlets in the field of gender equality, who are responsible for the directions the media promotes. Also, continue with building capacities of media on gender terminology, on gender equality and equip media and journalists with arguments to explain to the public at large why gender equality matters.

# WESTERN BALKANS

## and Turkey

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Patriarchal culture and traditions still prevail, underpinning unbalanced power and discrimination of women and girls reproducing diverse structural gender inequalities in key areas of life: political participation, education, health, armed and police forces, access to economic resources, economic participation and division of responsibilities in family life, living standard and quality of life. As the most severe means of maintaining this social structure violence against women and girls is used at different levels of the society in public and private relations.

### Common legacies

These are post-communist societies with specific legacy: despite authoritarian rule, there were significant achievements in women's access to education, employment and participation in public life. However, strong private patriarchy persisted, manifested through unequal division of responsibilities for family which underpinned recent trends of re-patriarchization.

These are post-conflict societies: war conflicts and social and economic crisis had severe consequences for gender equality since the breakdown of socialism. They weakened position of women in public sphere and pushed them to private sphere to take care of family during hard times. They widened economic inequalities with adverse impacts on women's and girls' human, social, cultural and economic rights. They contributed to the high prevalence of violence against women and girls in public and private sphere: violent discourse against women in public life (politicians, journalists, etc.); high prevalence of sexual harassment, high prevalence of intimate partner and domestic violence with severe consequences for wellbeing of women, girls and high femicide rates.

### Key common contemporary structural barriers

Lower access of women and girls to important social resources: jobs (huge activity and employment gender gaps); property (women are left without land, housing, production means, due to patriarchal inheritance patterns); segregation in education which reflects in the labour

market segregation with women concentrating in care related sectors, social services with lower employment prospects and lower salaries; wage and pension gender gaps leading to higher risks of poverty among women, particularly older, single mothers, migrant, rural, Roma and Egyptian women, and other marginalized groups; lower access to political, economic and social power positions, obstacles in decision-making participation related to intra-political party clientelist mechanisms, exchange of favours and resources which mainly leave women out of exchange; disproportionate responsibility in performing unvalued unpaid work related to the family care; prominent intersecting inequalities, with numerous minority and marginalized groups of women which face even higher obstacles for social inclusion.

Dominant political discourses and cultures across the region reproduce gender stereotypes and gender inequalities. Renewed rise of authoritarianism, antifeminism, far-right, populist and movements opposed to the principles of gender equality, girls and women's freedoms, are on the rise in the Region and globally, manifested, among other things, as attacks on feminism, abortion rights and LGBTIQ rights with justification of 'protecting the family' and traditional local values. Role of media is the crucial in reproducing prejudice, stereotypes and representing women in inappropriate ways, controlled by political elites. Education programmes and contents are not gender sensitive and gender responsible there is lack of holistic sexual-reproductive health and rights education. Gender studies are few and not sufficiently supported. Feminist movements and organizations are struggling to provide sustainability due to the scarce funding promoting competition rather than cooperation among organizations. On the other hand, the organizations promoting "family agenda" and the "right to life" seem to blossom and network among themselves, regardless of potential religious differences. Their funding they receive and the mobilization power they have surpass the capacities of the feminist organisations, and their activities/initiatives are supported by the governing structures. These organizations seem to be connected to similar organizations worldwide, promoting conservative ideologies, especially in the context of human rights of women and minorities. In the Balkans, however, their agenda and funding sources are inadequately explored by the domestic feminist organizations. (1)



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Legislative and policy reforms are formal, insufficiently effective due to the lack of gender responsive and accountable institutions to implement these legal and policy reforms. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also missing in many cases or are simply mentioned on paper and not really used into practice.

Deinstitutionalization processes of Gender Equality mechanism are present at all levels. Despite provisions in national legislation and policy documents, the role of gender machinery in some countries is still weak, structures are under-funded lacking staff or other resources. Despite some legislative improvements, the bastions of traditionalism and patriarchal structures in political life are in fact political parties who resist reform and public control. Women's alliances in politics are weak and can be easily divided or controlled from men leadership in political parties, local and national parliaments, etc.

Gender equality is not policy priority - national key programmes rarely include gender equality as a priority, it is mentioned as cross-cutting issue which is never adequately mainstreamed.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Governments in the Western Balkans should learn from the women's movement about local & regional cooperation, gender transformative participation and women's economic empowerment. A greater emphasis is needed on gender responsive natural and financial resource sharing and inclusion of women in higher value-added economic sectors, such as, STEM, innovation, digital entrepreneurship.

- The Western Balkan and Turkey need to speed up process of peace building and reconciliation through establishing transitional justice to redress the victim/survivor and restore their dignity and to move up internal justice for women survivors of conflict related sexual violence, to boost regional cooperation, reconciliation, and empower women in local peace building.
- There is an urgent need to enhance the impact of international mechanisms that will make governments more committed, responsible and effective in promoting gender equality and women's human rights. In addition to CEDAW and GREVIO, it would be beneficial to establish Independent Girls and Women's Bodies that will be free of the cumbersome bureaucracy and hierarchy of international policy making processes. Beijing+25 processes can allow to strategies about such a mechanism.
- Independent monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of CEDAW and GREVIO instruments should be more supported, enabling stronger pressure on governments to implement the recommendations more effectively.
- To strengthen national and local mechanisms for gender equality to more effectively design, implement and evaluate policies.
- To increase political and public life participation and representation of women at all levels, legal arrangements such as 'parity laws' should be regulated to ensure equal access of women and men to political office and high-level decision-making positions.
- To take decisive and systematic action in changing cultural patterns through education, public campaigns, public responsibility of traditional and digital media as well as responsibility of politicians and influential people in their public discourse on women and gender equality, relying on the standard 'zero tolerance to violence.
- To adopt and effectively implement a comprehensive programme for economic empowerment of women, with specific focus to marginalized women, which are often absent from national policies.
- To more effectively combat gender-based violence against girls and women, particularly LBTQI, migrant, ethnic minorities, women from rural areas, women and girls with disability, sex workers etc. and provide comprehensive protection to survivors.
- To provide systematic intersectionality of policies and measures in order to improve the position of women from marginalized groups.
- To support girls participation in decision-making, by creating safe and participatory spaces where rural and urban girls can freely participate, contribute, benefit and get empowered to speak and decide on their behalf and of their peers;
- To adopt legislation and implementation mechanism that will guarantee the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights for all women, adolescents and girls, including their right to bodily autonomy and integrity.
- To support local feminist organizations/movements in strengthening their local and regional networks and cooperation, to combat the initiatives aiming to roll back human rights, especially those of women and minorities.

### Useful sources

1. <https://www.epfweb.org/node/690>

# EUROPEAN UNION

Including Norway & Switzerland

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Efforts to achieve gender equality in the EU is progressing at a snail's pace. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (1) has developed a Gender Equality Index (since 2013), which measures equality between women and men in six main domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power, health) and, due to the lack of reliable and comparable data, two 'satellite' domains: violence against women and more recently is integrating intersecting inequalities in each domain. The Index provides reliable and comparable data from national statistical bodies and as well as national factsheets and provides a composite Index for the European Union (EU). On a scale of 100 (full equality between women and men), in 2019, the EU scores 67.4, an increase of only 1.2 percentage points since 2015.

### Unpaid care burden, unemployment and female face of poverty

- Women and girls continue to face inequalities within the formal employment sector throughout their life cycle. The gender pay-gap, pension- and poverty-gaps remain significant and unpaid care and domestic work remains largely unrecognised in an entrenched male breadwinner model. Stringent austerity measures have disproportionately impacted women who already face multiple forms of discrimination: women in poverty, women from ethnic minorities, women of colour, women with disabilities and older women. In addition, there is a consistent lack of gender sensitivity in welfare and tax systems in EU member states.
- Women in the European Union (EU) do on average 13 hours MORE UNPAID CARE work than men per day. As a result of this unpaid care burden 7,7 million women in the EU are not in official employment (compared to 500.000 men) and 9 million women can only take on part-time employment.
- The employment rate has risen, but the gender employment gap remains at 11.5 percent. The gap is wider for women with disabilities: 4 out of 5 are unemployed, leading to a lifetime in poverty. Disabled women are at risk of lifelong poverty and disability benefits rarely cover extra costs related to disability.

- Women in traditionally male-dominated fields, face disproportionate rates of sexual harassment and less opportunities from leading in executive, managerial or high-level decision-making roles.
- Poverty rates are particularly high among single mothers, poor women, Roma women, migrant women, women with disabilities and older women. Evidence shows that 33% of all households in the EU face financial difficulties because they can hardly afford childcare.

### **Migrant and refugee women are not sufficiently protected and supported**

Migrant women are more at risk of poverty, unemployment and to not have access to education or training. EIGE data show that 50% of migrant women are at risk of poverty, 50% of migrant women are not in employment and 20% of young migrant women are not in education, employment or training.

Women and girls seeking asylum face challenges, including lack of gender-sensitive processes in reception centres and higher risk of gender-based violence. The EU's migration program under the Dublin III Regulation (No. 604/2013) and its externalisation policies are not enforced. Lack of due diligence under international and EU law including the 1954 Refugee Convention lead to cumulative harm on vulnerable women and girls, including those who are asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, undocumented and stateless. Women and asylum-seeking girls face multiple forms of discrimination, lack single-sex facilities and services in camps and reception centres (as per GREVIO recommendations).

Many EU countries exclude undocumented migrant women from access to affordable and quality maternal health care due to a range of legal and policy, administrative and financial barriers, making them more prone to violence and trafficking. The lack of sex-disaggregated data collection in migration flows at state and international level makes it especially difficult to monitor and prevent violence against asylum seeking women. Deportation of asylum-seeking women seen as "economic migrants" is not acceptable as countries considered "safe" are mostly not safe for women.

### **Gender based violence (GBV) against women and girls**

GBV is far too high everywhere in Europe and spread through social media. The situation of women in Europe is very alarming:

- 50 women are murdered every week by a partner or ex-partner, making femicide a wide-spread phenomenon.
- 50% of women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment and 80% of women parliamentarians experienced psychological violence. The #MeToo movement demonstrated the widespread nature of sexual harassment in the workplace, where 75% of women in top management positions in the EU [OB1] declared having experienced sexual harassment at work.
- One in two women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 and 20 % of them have experienced online harassment.
- Women with disabilities are many times more likely to be victims of violence than non-disabled women. There are 46 million women and girls with disabilities in Europe, representing 60% of the overall population of persons with disabilities. 28% of older women had experienced some kind of violence and abuse at home in the 12 months prior to a survey.
- Women from marginalized groups face a greater risk of violence, fuelled by sexism as well as racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. E.g. Roma women are more likely to face early marriages and attacks on their physical integrity.

- 8 EU Member States have not yet ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence the Istanbul Convention. In many EU countries where the Istanbul Convention has been ratified there is no full enforcement and no adequate funding in place. Despite EU's signature to the Istanbul Convention in 2017, its ratification remains blocked by the EU Member States.
- Lack of systemic change across societies that are still grounded in harmful patriarchal values contribute to restrictions of government funding from providing much needed support services to female victims of violence. Only 50% of the needed number of beds in women's shelters is available, victim support often is not accessible and women's access to justice is impeded by stereotypes, high costs of legal proceedings and judiciary gender-bias.
- This also flows into the digital space, where online violence of women and girls is heightened, and used as an unregulated platform for trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- In many parts of Europe women's sexual and reproductive health, autonomy, integrity and decision-making remains threatened and violations of women's sexual and reproductive rights continue. In some countries, laws and policies still violate, restrict or undermine women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). For example, a number of countries maintain highly restrictive abortion laws.

### **Women remain structurally under-represented in decision-making**

Women's representation in economy, sports and diplomacy decision-making posts is 20% or less than men. Only a few countries in the EU have implemented legally binding quotas, but it is not widely spread and there are no legally binding measures at the European level. The European Commission's 2012 legislative proposal on 'Women on Boards' to increase 'women's presence on boards to 30% by 2015 and 40% by 2020', has failed to be adopted. (**Note:** based on input from EIGE, European Institute for Gender Equality received with thanks.)



## **Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action**

At the EU level, we are beginning to see pivotal changes towards gender equality, both at the structural level and in mind-sets. The results of the European Parliament Elections in May 2019 saw an increase of elected women representing a positive shift towards parity democracy, notably through women's participation and representation in key political decision-making positions. For the first time, the European Union (EU) welcomes its first woman President of the European Commission leading a Commission with an almost balanced representation of women and men. Increased women representation in EU decision-making represents an opportunity, which needs to be translated into transformational change for women in Europe.

Another great advance is the new regulation on '**Work Life Balance**' that has been adopted by the European Union as recent as mid 2019. This provides legislative measures for statutory parental, paternity and carers' leave. It also calls for much stronger measures for public services that aim to reduce the unpaid care burden on women, amongst others. The EU Member States have three years to transpose this Directive into national law. However, the issue of payment and the level (during leave) remains controversial and will need to be monitored very carefully. This regulation ensures much stronger measures for parental leave and state services that aim to reduce the unpaid care burden on women, amongst others.

Also in the area of **international cooperation**, the **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** of the European Commission (DEVCO), which is now going into a third period with an expanded GAP being developed, has been important in ensuring that more and more of the substantial funding for international cooperation is gender-responsive, and even gender-transformative (the EU provided more than 50% of all international development cooperation funding globally).

The **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development** is an important framework to ensure coherence between progress on **gender equality (SDG5)** in the EU and through its international cooperation, but more needs to be done to make gender-just Sustainable Development a key priority for all areas of policy making, and to address the contradictions between unsustainable economic production and consumption patterns, and gender-just and climate-just development. The **Green New Deal**, which the new EU Commission will be developing, is an important step.

At the national level, individual EU member states have taken further measures, for example Sweden has developed its '**Feminist Foreign Policy**' and other countries have been developing similar policies, for example France. While, in other countries, women's human rights, which are guaranteed by the European Union, are being questioned by populist, conservative governments, including the right to safe and legal abortion is under pressure in for example Poland.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Governments in the EU, Norway and Switzerland need to reaffirm their commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 2020 marks a critical moment in assessing the visionary agenda of the BPFA, a quarter of a century after its adoption. As we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creation of UN Women, the full implementation of the BPFA must remain a priority for the future. It is also a critical moment to assess the fifth year of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goal 5, ensuring that no girl and woman are left behind. The implementation of the BPFA and the SDGs by both the European Union (EU) and its Member States must remain at the top of the political agenda, supported by powerful institutional mechanisms, including resources.

**Priority 1** - Take effective measures to prevent and eliminate **all forms of gender-based violence**, including violence against women of all ages and girls, recognizing the continuum of violence wherever it takes place including sexual, cyber and online violence as well as harmful practices. We call for the immediate ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention. We also call for all measures to eliminate violence against women and girls in all their diversity to take account of all multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination and the needs of survivors of violence throughout the life course. and other human rights instruments.

**Priority 2** - 25 years after Beijing gender mainstreaming efforts have yet to bring about systemic change to **guarantee full equality for all**. We call for the adoption and implementation of a robust political strategy for gender equality in line with obligations under CEDAW and commitments under the SDGs with ambitious goals, targets and benchmarks and strong institutional mechanisms and resources to subject to regular monitoring and

assessment of progress against disaggregated data, including annual ministerial meetings to monitor progress. The strategy should also be consistent throughout the EU's internal and external policies, reflecting the continuum of inequalities faced by women within and outside the EU, and in the context of the universal principles of the SDGs.

**In addition, all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland must:**

- Ensure strong support to effective Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that promote equality between women and men and women's rights and hold governments accountable when they threaten these, including through EU funding.
- Set an EU-wide gender-parity target for executive government as well as boards of public and private companies: balanced representation of women and men in different areas of life, as well as equal representation of women's and men's concerns and interests in decision-making is essential to be recognized as a right.
- Effectively implement existing law and, if relevant, create a specific instrument at EU level to tackle anti-gender/women's right forms of cyber violence against women and girls. Recognize, register and persecute all cases of online abuse and expand the definitions of harm on online platforms to acknowledge violence against women.
- Transpose the Council of Europe's international legal instrument to stop sexism ([link](#)) into EU and national legislation as per COE Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combatting sexism.
- All European funding, including European Structural and Investment Funds as well as new funds and allocation from the general budget (e.g. 20% to climate) need to ensure gender-responsiveness in design and implementation, and based on monitoring and evaluation, strengthening of their gender transformative impact
- Fully transpose the ILO convention to end violence and harassment in the workplace into EU and national legislation ([link](#))
- High quality, relevant, comparable and comprehensive sex disaggregated data collection to accurately assess progress against various gendered challenges facing the EU.
- Adopt stringent measures, including new legislation on equal pay, with particular attention to 'equal value' to move beyond the gender segregated labour-market in sectors where women work, which are often undervalued and underpaid.
- Deliver a feminist economic model for the wellbeing of all, putting the care of ourselves, each other and the planet at its core. Carry out gender impact assessments of economic policies, including tax policies and structural reforms prior to the adoption of policies in these areas.
- Develop and invest in the care economy; set targets to meet different care needs throughout the life course.
- Establish a European working group of feminist economists to support policies to move beyond GDP and towards long-term sustainable development.

# UNITED STATES & CANADA

## Lead

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

The 1995 BPFA identified 12 critical areas of concern with a call for **urgent** action. While there is evidence of limited progress, there is little evidence of urgency. The biggest barrier to women's equality is patriarchy. Patriarchy is threaded throughout the lack of progress in every critical area. While creating opportunities for women to collude with power, it marginalizes the voices of those who don't. Patriarchy creates an environment where individual rights supersede the rights of women and girls collectively.

The U.S. and Canada have both unique and common structural barriers that burden progress on women and girls' human rights. In the US, many areas of the Platform are determined by the 50 states, rather than national decisions. Hence, women and girls have lost progress in many areas while benefiting in others. This Sovereignty determines ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, limits the right to abortion, and sets the legal age of marriage, for example. Poverty, education, health care, affordable housing, funding, access to abortion, human rights, judicial equity and pay equity are among the areas legislated in the states. Racial inequities are also an issue for the US.

In Canada, health and education are in provincial jurisdiction and throughout the country women's access to abortion and other health services are not consistent. Colonialism in North America has meant that Indigenous women's traditional societies were disrupted, and patriarchal worldviews imposed upon Indigenous societies. In Canada, this was legislated through the Indian Act which stripped Indigenous women of their political and familial roles. The impacts of this reach far and wide and are evidenced by the marginalization of Indigenous women and girls.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

**Women in poverty:** Women in North America (NA) are more likely to be living below the poverty line than men across all racial and ethnic groups, with single mothers twice as likely to be poor than single fathers. 26.6% of U.S. women who are poor are single with dependent children. Nearly 15% of CDNs with disabilities live in poverty, 59% are women; Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented among the homeless population in almost all urban settings. Indigenous women's incomes in Canada, were 55% of non-Indigenous men, meaning there is a 45% income gap between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men, as a result 25.1% of Indigenous women lived in a low-income situation. The U.S. ranks 51st in the world in gender gap parity and ranks 94th in economic parity trailing way behind CDN which ranks 16th in global gender parity and 27th in economic parity.

**Violence against women and girls:** U.S. intimate femicides are increasing, primarily because of gun violence, after almost four decades of decline. Gun-related domestic killings increased 26 percent from 2010 to 2017. In 2017, 926 gun-related femicides were inflicted by partners with guns; in 2014, it was 752 of 1,321 women. In CDN 85% of victims of intimate partner violence are female with femicide occurring every six days. Violence disproportionately affects half of Indigenous women in CDN including the most severe forms of violence/non-state torture - sexual assault, beatings, choking, or threats with a deadly weapon such as a gun or knife. 50% of trafficking victims are Indigenous women and 25% are underage girls yet Indigenous Peoples in CDN represent only 4.7% of the population. The Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, highlighted high rates of violence against Indigenous women in Canada including sexual violence, human trafficking, missing and murdered Indigenous women, forced sterilizations, and high rates of child apprehension by children's aid societies. The report also noted a shortage of shelters for victims of abuse, particularly for Indigenous women.

The criminal justice system allows perpetrators to act with impunity, while victims are often left without support. More and more traffickers solicit young women and girls for sexual exploitation. Pornographic violence against children report in 2009 shows 83.0% of images were of girls and involved babies, with torture, bondage, and degradation; the U.S. produces 55% of child pornography globally.

**Health care:** The U.S. does not provide universal healthcare or nationally mandated paid maternity/paternity/family leave. The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate among wealthy nations, and women of colour are 3 to 4 times more likely to die as white women. Women's reproductive rights remain at risk. In the U.S., state legislatures have enacted a number of extreme abortion restrictions. The U.S. Congress has also passed abortion restrictions and denied public funds for abortion funds overseas. In addition, the President has implemented a gag rule, prohibiting providers of Title X funds for family planning services from even verbally discussing abortion. Finally, while abortion in CDN is legal at all stages of pregnancy, it remains an issue which is often debated by federal and provincial parliamentarians. Smoking, vaping and opioid use have become serious health risks in both countries. Many political leaders in NA (notably in the U.S.) deny that there is a climate crisis and climate change exists despite scientific evidence, including the impact on women's health. The climate crisis has been associated "with an increase in asthma in adolescent girls; higher risk of acquiring lung cancer and heart disease in mid-life as well as heart attacks, strokes, and dementia in older women." Indigenous women's health is intimately connected to the climate crisis and the resulting environmental impacts. Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted as many are still living off the land and need

access to strong sustainable forests. Food insecurity is a result of the degradation of traditional lands. Health issues facing Indigenous women include higher rates of chronic diseases, poor mental health and addictions stemming from trauma.

**Education and training of women and girls:** CDN's overall SDG Gender Index Rate for education in 2019 is 36 with the U.S. at 28. In NA young women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and computer science (STEM) fields. In U.S. academia, only 31% of full professors and 27% of college presidents are women. (Women's Leadership Gap). Young women find themselves saddled with huge debt and their jobs do not compensate the high expenditure. Locally there are funding and educational inequities such as a lack of access to quality education, racial justice, teacher salaries. Safe and affordable transportation, financial support and social services such as childcare and housing must be provided for women who are married and/or head of their households in order to work or further their education. The digital gap which still exists for women or girls must also be eliminated. In Canada there are persistent barriers for Indigenous women in terms of education, including underfunding of on-reserve schools, ongoing impacts of the Canadian Residential School system and multiple socioeconomic factors limiting access.

**Women, economic justice, and the economy:** The gender gap in (CDN) is 87 cents per dollar earned by men and 80 cents for the U.S., with the gap widening for women of colour, Latina and Indigenous women. Economic justice is also widening in (NA), and its negative impact on the global economy must be acknowledged. There are several reasons why women experience this wage injustice which include, women's disproportionate share of unpaid work; women are more likely than men to work part-time due to these responsibilities which is also related to unavailability of affordable, quality childcare; many women also work in female-segregated sectors in historically undervalued and low-paying jobs which are valued less. Women also face implicit and explicit discrimination in the workplace and in hiring, promotion and compensation practices of corporations.

**Recognizing the destructive role of (NA) companies on human rights and the environment, through trade and other policies and practices, change must occur before the planet and women or girls' human rights are destroyed.**

**Climate emergency:** It is estimated that there is now a one-in-twenty chance per decade that heat, drought, and flood events will cause a simultaneous failure of maize production in the world's two main growers, China and the U.S. Microplastic fibres are found in 83% of the world's tap water. Parents aware that their children may become part of the statistic of one child dying every minute from contaminated water may migrate to an area where this is not a threat. Climate crisis induced displacement will increase the magnitude and frequency of natural disasters affecting billions, with women and girls most affected. Women's lower incomes relative to men, their gendered roles and social statuses, and the ways in which these interact with changing environments and related policies and programs affect women's experiences of the climate emergency. Their capacity to cope with the effects of natural disasters may be impaired by prevailing inequalities in loss of property, economic income-generating activities, access to vital health services, and heightened risk of gender-based violence as a result of the climate crisis. Indigenous women throughout Canada and the US are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Their traditional roles as the primary caregivers, users and managers of natural resources, and keepers of the home mean their livelihoods depend on resources that are put most at risk by the climate crisis. Indigenous women have experienced the effects of the climate crisis for generations. They have also been leaders in conserving the environment, and their knowledge and unique experiences greatly contribute to the climate crisis adaptation and mitigation actions in their communities.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

### Renew urgency for action in all 12 critical areas of concern and to the SDGs

Develop National Action Plans in each country, including Indigenous Women's Specific Action Plans, to eliminate violence against Women and girls. Plans should also include responsible & effective gun laws, non-state torture, and the recognition of the targeted violence towards marginalized and historically discriminated against communities including widows, elderly and disabled, Indigenous, migrant, other racialized women.

- Recognize the importance of a strong women's rights movement in each country through the provision of sustainable core funding for women's organizations doing advocacy and service provision to ensure the protection of women's human rights including sexual and reproductive rights, consent-based sex education, as well as strong, universal social services.
- Comply with all sections of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially articles 5 & 7, legislate against non-state torture; CDN government to ensure that Indigenous Women lead the implementation of the National Action as related to MMIWG.
- Develop action plans to implement SCR 1321. Develop and implement plans to eliminate violence against women and girls using strategies in the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, and consider the Every Woman Treaty.
- Adopt a universal healthcare system in the U.S. that provides equal access for women and girls, especially in underserved and rural areas.
- In the U.S., ratify and implement the ERA and CEDAW and sensible gun control laws. NA governments should support and sign the Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights.
- Support life-long learning and education for all women and girls through the provision of free or affordable education at all levels including day-care, prekindergarten to post-secondary, increase access for women and girls to STEM education and to non-traditional fields.



My  
Body

BEING FORNIA  
SILL  
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#FEMINISTS  
WANT  
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# THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES

## About

The following chapters are a compilation of thematic factsheets. They reflect the perspectives of the authors and contributors as stated at the top of each factsheet. These are not negotiated consensus positions but give an overview of priorities and diverse views of women's rights and feminist movement in the UNECE region.

Participants at the Beijing+25 Civil Society Forum in the UNECE region started sharing their priorities in the months prior to the forum. They were asked to prepare thematic factsheets addressing 1) structural barriers, 2) governments commitment to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, de jure and de facto, 3) recommendations for the future. The factsheet coordinators worked in a collaborative manner with those that expressed interest, prior and during the CSO forum. They were asked to ensure a fact-based and human rights-based approach. These were self-organised, and participants could add new thematic factsheets as long as they ensured substantial additional input to existing factsheets. All factsheets have been checked on these points. Some thematic teams have been continuing their work into 2020, updates of this part of the compilation report are expected at a later stage.

The factsheet coordinators received many comments and additions, prior to and during the Civil Society Forum. They were asked to keep the factsheets short, 2 to 4 pages, and to agree on 3 key priority recommendations for the synthesis report. The factsheets needed to be short and concise to have a greater advocacy impact. Due to the limited space, not all the input and comments were taken on board in the final versions of the factsheets that are presented in this section. Contributors were asked to confirm their names on the final versions or to withdraw.

We thank all the factsheet coordinators, authors and contributors for their hard work.

# **1. Ending discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity**

# RIGHTS OF LGBTI

## and gender non-conforming women and people

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While progress on the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LBTI) and gender non-conforming (GNC) women and people, has been made in the region, gross human rights violations persist and exist in every UNECE country. These violations include killings, violent attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, so called “corrective rape”, conversion therapy, hate crimes, honour killings, forced marriage, infanticide, denial of rights to assembly and expression, and family or intimate partner violence, and harassment by state authorities.

Notably LBTI and GNC women and people continue to face violence, exclusion and discrimination perpetrated on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. Furthermore, barriers to critical dimensions of development, such as education, employment, and housing, access to health and social services, continue to be woefully under addressed.

Systematic attacks across the region on all women’s human rights, including on sexual reproductive health and rights, driven by conservative, populist, and fundamentalist agendas, fuelled by sexism, racism, and xenophobia, have a direct impact on the lives of LBTI and GNC women and people. Furthermore, ideological divides, nationalism, declining democracy, and increased undermining of regional and multilateral institutions continue to have far-reaching implications on the rights and lives of LBTI and GNC women and people.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

Structural barriers across the UNECE region are diverse and national social, cultural, and legislative contexts across the region vary significantly. However, common human rights

violations and mechanisms of exclusion from critical areas of development among LGBTI and GNC women and people are ubiquitous.

### **Punitive legislation and climate**

Laws that directly or indirectly criminalize LGBTI and GNC women and people, such as laws criminalizing same-sex sexual acts between women, “anti LGBTI propaganda” laws, laws which restrict comprehensive sexuality education, sex work, or abortion, and laws against “cross-dressing,” increase LGBTI and GNC women and peoples’ vulnerabilities and their risk to violence and discrimination.(1) In Russia, after the adoption of an anti-propaganda law targeting LGBTI people more widely, attacks against LGBTI people and activists became more violent and brazen; the law was used to ban street demonstrations and cultural events, as well as to close web-resources; it has been used to harass LGBTI teachers, particularly those who were LGBTI and GNC women and people; and to threaten LGBT parents, especially mothers.(2,3) Notably, after an “anti-LGBT propaganda” law was tabled in Kyrgyzstan, local LGBTI human rights organization, Labrys, reported a 300% upsurge in violent attacks against the wider LGBTI community.(4) Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Ukraine, have all also considered similar laws. (5) Even in countries where laws guarantee and protect LGBTI rights, such as in the Western Balkans, the legal norms remain largely unenforced. Lack of access to protective legal structures and deep-rooted homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia among law enforcement, exacerbates the situation, leaving LGBTI and GNC women and people highly vulnerable and without access to proper recourse or redress. The response to these violations is often inadequate, underreported, and rarely properly investigated and prosecuted, leading to widespread impunity, and lack of justice, remedies, and support for victims. Human Rights Defenders that defend the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and GNC women and people suffer specific and escalating challenges, violence and discrimination, and restrictions are imposed on the organizations they represent.

LGBTI and GNC women and people frequently experience hate crimes and hate speech and do not have access to justice and reparation due to lack of legislation which explicitly recognises hatred motivated by SOGIESC as an aggravating circumstance and because of discriminatory attitudes among law enforcement officials. For instance, according to a survey organised by the Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative, “Feminita”, 44% of LBQ women declared that they had experienced violence or negative attitudes because of their sexual orientation, with 14% having faced physical violence. At that, 71% never took any actions to access justice or report the incidents. (6) Trans women, and especially trans women of colour and sex workers, are particularly vulnerable. For example, according to the 2016 report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs in the US, transgender and gender non-conforming people, particularly transgender women of colour, made up a majority of the homicides reported to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. (7)

### **Legal gender recognition**

A historic ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in 2017 found that requiring sterilisation in accessing legal gender recognition (LGR) violates human rights law. This legal precedent required that all remaining 22 countries in Europe, which continued to enforce sterilization in order to access LGR, amend their laws to reflect this decision. However, currently, within the EU and in the wider European and Central Asian region, the organization Transgender Europe (8) (TGEU) reports that sixteen countries still require sterilisation of transgender persons seeking legal gender recognition. (9) Only five countries in the region, Norway, Ireland, Estonia, Malta, and Denmark, currently have gender identity recognition policies that are based on the principle of self-determination without any medical requirements.

TGEU finds that, access to LGR is only possible in some European and Central Asian Countries, and out of the 53 countries reviewed by TGEU, only 42 countries had LGR laws. (10) Furthermore, of the 42 countries reviewed, “36 prescribe a mental health diagnosis...22 require a divorce... and 33 countries impose age barriers, making access to legal gender recognition harder or impossible for minors.”

Inaccessible legal gender recognition laws for young people contribute to high levels of stigma and social exclusion, and negative impacts on mental and physical well-being, even leading to higher rates of suicide among trans youth, and violates their rights to identity, privacy, education, and highest attainable level of health. (11) In the region, only Malta and Luxembourg do not have age restrictions on access to LGR, while some States explicitly restrict LGR for minors including, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

### **Ban on unnecessary, non-consensual surgeries on intersex infants**

The practice of non-consensual and unnecessary genital surgery on intersex infants remains an underrecognized and underserved issue, notably, Malta and Portugal remain among the only countries in the world to ban non-consensual and unnecessary medical interventions on intersex infants. Intersex people continue to be subjected to irreversible surgical interventions that share many of the same impacts of female genital mutilation – including physical and psychological suffering, scarring, a reduction or erasure in sexual pleasure, function, and fertility. Medical needs are often cited as justification for these surgeries, however evidence supporting this notion is extremely limited. Multiple United Nations treaty bodies and human rights experts have recognized that harmful, forced, coercive, and non-consensual procedures on intersex persons violates their rights to bodily integrity and to be free from torture and ill treatment.

### **Family and intimate partner violence**

Discrimination in education, housing, health, and employment, compounded by patriarchal social and legal environments, can make lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and GNC women and people further economically dependent on male relatives and increase their risk to violence. This includes abuse at the hands of their family members and intimate partners, going so far as to being forced into marriage, marital rape, harassment, and violence. In countries like, Tajikistan, where domestic violence or marital rape is not criminalized, individuals who face domestic abuse lack adequate social protection systems, services, and sustainable infrastructure. (12) Additionally, many countries in Eastern Europe do not recognize domestic violence as a category of crime, this can be partially attributed to pressure from religious entities and lack of political will to adopt laws that would allow investigation and prosecution of domestic violence as a specific crime, such as is the case in Belarus and Russia. (13)

Many societies in this region view family and domestic violence as private and internal affairs, safeguarding family honour and protecting family honour therefore take precedence over reporting abuse or violence. This leads many LGBTI and GNC women and people to suffer in silence, avoid reporting violence, and fear coming out. Social conservatism and the need to protect family honour may lead to gross human rights violations such as honour killings of LGBTI and GNC women and people, such as has been reported in Chechnya and the wider North Caucasus region, and other parts of the UNECE region. (14,15)

### **Family**

The right to family is a fundamental human right for every human being. Families exist in all diversities, which all require respect and protection under the law. LGBTI and GNC women and people, however, continue to face violations to their right to family, including through non-recognition of non-heterosexual couples as forms of family, but also barriers and restrictions to guardianship, recognition of same-sex co-parenting, equal access to parental leave, adoption, assisted reproduction including artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, and surrogacy, and access to reproductive health and rights. As an example of discrimination, in Zurich, Switzerland, same-sex couples have to pay 3'000 CHF per child for stepparent adoption, and in Russia, the Family Code has recently been amended to explicitly prohibit adoption and custody for those who are in same-sex marriage or partnership. There have been cases of children being separated from their parents, specifically lesbian couples, because of this restriction. Furthermore, in many countries, trans individuals who want to access legal gender recognition have their rights to a family denied by the explicit need for them to be either single or to divorce before they can go through with LGR. Furthermore, requirements of sterilization for trans individuals for LGR also disable them from having children. Other restrictions also exist for trans parents, in regard to non-recognition of identity and denial of custody.

In a sign of progress, to address restrictions on the freedom of movement of same-sex couples and their families in the EU, on 5 June, 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union confirmed that the term 'spouse' must be interpreted as being inclusive of same-sex spouses of EU citizens. The judgement means that all EU Member States must treat same-sex couples in the same way as different-sex couples when they exercise freedom of movement rights, which includes being fully recognised and granted residence rights on an equal basis.

## **Health**

Punitive and violent environments which marginalize people based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics create significant barriers to accessing health resources. In such contexts, service providers that work with these individuals are also often impacted and forced to stop working due to retraction of funding, harassment, or fear of persecution. Individuals may not disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status to medical professionals for fear of judgement, malpractice, harassment, exclusion, or detention.

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and GNC women and people lack health insurance coverage, preventative health services, a secure income, access to culturally competent health and social service providers, and face cultural beliefs that decrease utilization of available services. Therefore, they are less likely to seek routine medical care such as mammograms and pap smear tests, and have higher risks for heart disease, cancer and depression. Transgender women also lack access to hormonal, surgical, psychological, or other specific health needs and services. Studies indicate that suicide or attempted suicide by lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and GNC women and people are relatively common, due to compounding stigma, isolation, and acute mental stresses. In Eastern Europe, political decisions to limit information on sexual health among the wider population as well as information about sexual and reproductive health for young people, has contributed to this region being the only in the world to have a 27% increase in HIV infections between 2010-2018. (16) Conservative legislation on same-sex relationships, sex work, and drug use, have also increased stigma and stunted HIV responses among key populations. This epidemic is the most concentrated in Russia and Ukraine.

Despite ample research demonstrating the inefficacy of so-called conversion therapy on changing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, States, religious groups, and anti-LGBTI groups continue to endorse this harmful practice. So-called conversion therapy can

include aversion therapy, shock therapy, talk therapy, and other forms intended to change, “correct,” or “cure” an individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity or expression to align with heteronormative and/or cisgender standards. (17,18) It has been discredited on multiple grounds, including by mental health professionals, including in the United Kingdom and the United States. Survivors of conversion therapy have time and time again spoken out against the practice, speaking of experiences and exposure to physical and mental abuse. (19) In 2014 the United Nations Committee Against Torture also issued a public statement against the practice and elevating it as an international human rights concern. (20) Conversion therapy has been internationally debunked as faulty psychology that is driven by anti-gay bigotry. Yet, in a 2018 report produced by the government of the United Kingdom, one in five LGBT people surveyed, amounting to tens of thousands of individuals, have been exposed to conversion therapy. (21) A Williams Institute Report also published in 2018, found that, “698,000 LGBT adults (ages 18-59) in the U.S. have received conversion therapy, including about 350,000 who received treatment as adolescents.” (22) After receiving information from civil society, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Poland end the practice of “conversion therapy.” (23,24)

These kinds of practices contribute to the exclusion, discrimination, violence, even torture against individuals who are LGBTI and GNC. In 2016, Malta became the first country in the world to ban any form of so-called conversion therapy and remains the only country in the region with a national ban.

## **Education**

Young people commonly face discrimination and violence on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in education settings. Homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic bullying, including cyber bullying, leads to unsafe environments for youth who are or are perceived to be lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex. This leads to higher absenteeism, and negative impacts on school performance and mental and physical well-being, such as self-esteem issues, depression, and suicide.

Trans and GNC youth are subjected to elevated rates of violence, harassment, and bullying by peers and educators. For example, young girls have reported being expelled from school or beaten by peers for appearing too masculine. Trans, non-binary, gender variant and intersex students also face additional barriers when it comes to having their gender, gender marker, or name recognised in the education institutions, especially in relation to binary gender segregated spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, toilets, etc.)

In the United States, a 2017 government survey found that “high school students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) report having been bullied on school property (33%) and cyberbullied (27.1%) in the past year”, a prevalence that is higher than their heterosexual peers (17.1% and 13.3%, respectively.) (25) In the United Kingdom, organization Stonewall UK, found that transgender students are twice as likely to commit suicide, with two in five have attempted to do so, and one in five lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. (26)

Schools lack comprehensive sexuality education programmes inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. The affirming inclusion of LGBTI and GNC identities and realities across curricula and learning materials ensures that teachers have many opportunities to discuss diversity. Likewise, IGLYO’s Inclusive Education Index shows that teacher training comprehensive programmes are lacking in most countries. (27) Many teachers still report that they lack the confidence and knowledge to discuss sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics or to support LGBTI and GNC learners.

Not only do schools and their staff lack knowledge and skills to discuss sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, or to react to the bullying, in many countries in the UNECE region, education is one of the main sources of instilling prejudice and stereotypes against LGBTI and GNC women and people. For example, textbooks used in schools can be outdated or explicitly depict non-heterosexual and cisgender sexual orientations and gender identities as “unnatural” or as “mental disorders,” despite medical evidence that says otherwise. This is made worse by homo/transphobic statements of members of academia, as well as by religious education available or mandatory within schools. Intersex people in these textbooks are still referred to as hermaphrodites and no discussion on human rights, at all, is encouraged within the educational system.

Situations are made worse for lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and GNC youth who may be forced out of their homes by their families, leaving them vulnerable and without housing.

### **Employment, economic security, social protection**

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and GNC people experience exclusion from the formal labour market, discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, remuneration, and report losing employment or job opportunities due to their gender expression or for being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Transgender women face systemic discrimination in employment and high rates of workplace harassment, in conjunction with other forms of anti-transgender bias, leading to disproportionate rates of poverty.

Discrimination in education, housing, health, and employment can make lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and GNC women and people further economically dependent on male relatives and coerces them to enter into heterosexual relationships. This increases risks of physical abuse and sexual violence by partners or family members, further decreasing access to public services, social protection systems, and sustainable infrastructure. Studies indicate that suicide or attempted suicide by this group is relatively common, due to compounding stigma, isolation, and acute mental stresses.

LBTI and GNC sex workers face restrictions on their agency and right to freely choose their employment due to paternalistic and discriminatory laws which criminalize consensual sex work. Faulty laws which are veiled in arguments on the protection of violence against women, such as the Nordic Model, perpetuate institutional and systematic persecution and discrimination against sex workers, exposes this community to heightened police surveillance and harassment, and deters or prohibits LBTI and GNC sex workers from accessing public health and social services. (28,29) A form of these prejudiced laws exists in, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Canada, France, and Ireland. Sex work also continues to be criminalized in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Russia, Tajikistan, Macedonia, and Ukraine. (30) The decriminalization of consensual sex work has positive impacts on the dignity, safety, and health and well-being of LBTI and GNC sex workers, and fights against the stigma of this community; positive results that have been publicly researched and reported. The decriminalization of sex work has also been recommended to many countries listed above by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

### **Restrictions on civil society**

NGOs in many parts of this region face continued and systematic attacks from politicians, work in an increasingly restrictive legal environment, and face high barriers to funding or decreased funding opportunities. (31) Politicians and government authorities in places such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia and Romania have engaged in public smear

campaigns targeting NGOs leading to greater stigmatization and deterring local support in activities or donations. (32) In countries where NGOs working on LGBTI and GNC women and people's issues are already stigmatized and receive marginal, if any funding, consequences on the human rights and well-being of LGBTI and GNC women and people are high. Furthermore, the imposition of restrictive laws and bureaucratic policies in many countries, such as in Hungary, Romania, and Russia, make it harder, or even impossible, for NGOs to operate and receive foreign funding, thereby limiting their already restrained capacities and increasing burden. (33)

Within the EU, there are virtually no cross-regional funding mechanisms or access to EU funding for NGOs operating in non-Development Assistance Committee funding States, making it impossible for some NGOs, especially those operating in hostile countries, to access financial support. In a regional environment where democracy, human rights, and formal or informal State secularism are deteriorating, mechanisms must be put in place to assist organizations working on fundamental rights issues, such as those working on the rights of LGBTI and GNC women and people's issues.

### **Human rights protections**

The human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming women and people are not new or special rights, it is the application of existing international human rights law equally to everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.

Over the past 20 years, all United Nations treaty bodies have addressed violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. The Human Rights Council appointed its first Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, confirmed by the universal membership of the General Assembly, in 2016, and has approved three resolutions on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Many reports from the Human Rights Council, United Nations Secretary General, and Special Procedures across the UN system, highlight violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people; multiple General Assembly resolutions on extrajudicial executions and Human Rights Council resolutions also note these concerns.



## **Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action**

In order to achieve any of the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action, Member States must adequately address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence faced by LGBTI and GNC women and people. In the national reports submitted by states to discuss their progress on the commitments, several UNECE Member States included reference to National Action Plans and government sponsored initiatives addressing issues LGBTI and GNC women and people face. However, in order to fully implement the commitments and achieve gender equality, States must outline precise and detailed ways in which LGBTI and GNC women and people are inherently included in discussions on implementation of each of the commitments and address the numerous violations still experienced by the community in every State in the region.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

In order to fully comply with the commitments and spirit of the Beijing Platform for Action, Member States must commit to specific recommendations that ensure the full integration of LGBTI and GNC women and people's lived experiences. These recommendations include:

- Annul legal provisions that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, including laws that directly or indirectly criminalize LGBTI and GNC women and people, such as “anti LGBTI propaganda” laws, or laws which restrict comprehensive sexuality education.
- Adopt gender identity laws that recognize the right of trans persons to rectify their name and gender component on birth certificates, identity documents and other legal documents.
  - Gender identity laws should guarantee expeditious and simple procedures, based on self-determination, without the need for medical or psychological/psychiatric evaluations or certificates or limiting access to other rights.
  - Gender identity laws must guarantee the right of all, including adolescents, access to gender identity recognition procedures, always seeking autonomy, protection and the development of the personality of all adolescents.
- Prohibit any unnecessary medical intervention on intersex children without their free, prior and informed consent.
- Commit to ending stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics in provision of healthcare services including in prevention, promotion and treatment.
- Ensure that LGBTI and GNC women and people are actively and meaningfully participating in framing health policy that is responsive and respectful to the needs of LGBTI people.
- Ensure that healthcare professionals are technically trained and supported to responsively address health needs of LGBTI and GNC women and people in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Ensure that sexual and reproductive health programs are tailored to the specific needs of LGBTI people, including hormone therapy, routine sexual and reproductive health screenings, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, and family planning services responsive to diverse family forms.
- National governments should ban all forms of so-called conversion therapy
- End all forms of gender-based violence and adopt protective legislation that also includes domestic and sexual violence as a crime.
- Ensure that families in all of their diversity are respected and protected under the law including through recognition, equal access to parental leave, adoption, assisted reproduction, including in vitro fertilization and surrogacy, and access to reproductive health services.
- Include human rights and comprehensive sexuality education in school curriculum with a SOGIESC perspective.
- Train education professionals in order to create a school environment for LGBTI and GNC women and people free from discrimination.
- Decriminalize consensual sex work, guaranteeing the dignity, safety, and health and well-being of LGBTI and GNC sex workers.

- Collect data disaggregated according to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics to continue to capture accurate and up to date information related to the lives of LGBTI and GNC women and people.
- Support civil society and LGBTI and GNC women and people through targeted and robust funding opportunities to ensure that those furthest left behind are meaningfully included in the achievement of the Beijing Platform for Action commitments.

### Three priority overarching recommendations:

- Repeal laws and policies that sanction violence against and which directly or indirectly criminalize people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and or expression, and sex characteristics, including laws which criminalize same-sex sexual behaviours, “anti-propaganda” laws, laws against cross dressing, loitering, sex work, vagrancy, and public morality laws, among others.
- Adopt and enforce legislation and policies which explicitly protect LGBTI and GNC women and people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, including in access to employment, education, housing, healthcare, and social services, by adopting legal gender recognition laws based on self-determination, and recognizing LGBTI and GNC women and people and their families before the law.
- Ban all non-consensual, harmful, and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children.

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# MIGRANT, REFUGEE

and undocumented women's rights

## Lead

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Migrant women include female refugees, undocumented workers, trafficked, women on the move and children of migrant women. There is no abstract migrant woman. Each woman is unique and can face additional barriers or discriminations, for example because of their age, ethnicity, their status for example as a widow or as a single women refugee traveling through Europe and other intersections. When we refer to migrant women here, we mean all these different women, without spelling out each time the different intersections and groups of migrant women (meaning refugees, etc.).

In the preparation and during the UNECE Women's Civil Society Forum this working group concluded with the following recommendations that came out of a larger group discussion (these recommendations are not repeated in the detailed review):

- We all agreed that **migrant women face racism in their treatment by institutions**, such as immigration offices or social workers, but also when they work or want to access work. Strict measures and penalties should be taken on racial profiling; the deconstructing and addressing institutional and structural racism is our first recommendation.
- **Migrant women face exclusions not only from the legal system due to their status, but also from political rights.** Ensuring women's access to political rights is not only about formal regulations, but also about ensuring participation of migrant women and enabling transparent structures for self-representation of migrant women in decision making processes.
- **The routes of refugee and migrant women who are on the move are very dangerous**, in which women face huge risks of exploitation and abuse or lack of decent living conditions. The governments should do much more to secure adequate safety and security measures for those who are at camps, 'hotspot' centres and other ad hoc transit points in Europe. Government must ensure access to their rights when they suffer violence regardless of their status. Because of severe laws on asylum (for example Dublin Regulations), a lot of women are forced to choose to live undocumented, which increases their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and other

forms of exploitation (being exposed to criminal networks). **Governments should fully implement the Istanbul convention on addressing Violence against Women and as well as CEDAW convention; and in some cases, governments should sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention.**

- **Residential citizenship** should be given to all children of migrants after a short time of arriving in the UNECE countries or when they are born in these countries.
- **Migrant women that report abuse and exploitation** in their formal or informal workplace should be protected from any deportation or other sanctions resulting from their witness report.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

**A central injustice is the unequal citizenship status** in which many migrant women are trapped, by either having no status or a status that provides limited rights. Sometimes the legal status could offer protection, but the governing bodies or women are unaware, unable (language) or unwilling (in case of some governing bodies) to protect the migrant's rights.

We see the following common threads of breaches and/or abuses of women's migrant rights that are not or only partially addressed through law, policy and its implementation:

- **Violence against migrant women.** In addition to what is already mentioned, migrant women are also vulnerable due to limits in laws protecting domestic migrant workers, for example the law in Spain on Violence Against Women in domestic situations comes with a deportation from the country in case a claim of a migrant women without a permanent residence of violence in a court case leads to a no-guilty verdict for the person accused of the crime.
- **Migrant women face barriers in accessing basic services and public goods** that are affordable and adequate which is the result of many factors.
- **Migrant women's sexual and reproductive rights are often breached.** In many countries undocumented migrant women are excluded from access to affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health care due to a range of legal and policy barriers as well as language, cultural and other barriers. Some important legal barriers are severe laws on asylum (Dublin Regulations) that force a lot of women choose to live undocumented, which increases their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation (criminal networks). Excluding women from access to adequate reproductive health care, in particular throughout pregnancy, and specialist FGM clinics and aftercare, exposes women to increased risks to their health and lives.
- **Migrant women face exclusions** not only from the legal system due to their status, but also from political rights. One example is provided in Spain where not even 1 % of non-EU foreigners can vote for the municipal elections.
- **Migrant women face a multifaceted racism** in their treatment by institutions, such as immigration offices or social workers, but also when they work or want to access work, or through media stereotyping.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

- Governments in the regions should do more to achieve progress on Sustainable Development Goals 8.8 that stresses **the right to decent work** in particular for women migrants and those in precarious employment.
- The BPPFA calls for the implementation of the Protocol 29 relating to the Status of Refugees, **including persecution through sexual violence or other gender-related persecution, as well as to provide access to specially trained officers, including female officers, to interview women** regarding sensitive or painful experiences, such as sexual assault and FGM. There are still significant gaps in the region in fully implementing this protocol.
- International human rights law and standards unequivocally affirm that **human rights are universal and apply to everyone, including non-nationals**. They should be applied and in particular **CEDAW General Recommendation 26 should be implemented** in law, policy and practice Furthermore, governments have made commitments in the context of the SDGs to ensure universal access to reproductive health care, including maternal health care, in order to improve gender equality and reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. This should be ensured for migrant women as well.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

We subscribe to the [Marrakech Women's Rights Manifesto](#) with its recommendations on Participation, Non-Discrimination, End to Violence, Safe Pathways, Labour Rights, Rights at International Borders and Equitable Development.

### In terms of political and civic rights we call for:

- **Residential citizenship** that allows full access to exercise active and passive suffrage. Full citizenship rights should be provided to all children of migrant women born in the country of residence and for migrant women after a short time of arriving in the UNECE country.
- Enabling citizenship includes aspects such as making sure institutions with a public purpose are opened during times that allow the participation of migrant women who work in the paid domestic sector or have family or care responsibilities.
- Public bodies should also promote the inclusion of migrant women within their institutions, in particular they should **create and assure inclusive and transparent structures for self-representation in decision-making processes** at all levels of policy and decision making, including national, regional, and international governing bodies.
- Governments should **recognize and offer financial support to migrant women's associations and self-organized community groups of women** that mobilize their own time and resources to take part in political life or provide support to the (for example economic) integration of migrant women. Provided support should enable

migrant women to give structure to their own civic and political priorities. An example of a good method is the co-sponsoring or doubling of funds raised by migrant women.

- States should promote norms & values of **tolerance, peaceful and harmonious coexistence, anti-discrimination, etc. in their institutions, esp. education, and through culture**. In order to do this, states should make available more financial resources to implement:
  - The OHCHR Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, international instruments adopted by UNESCO, on Education, and (international) Cultural Co-operation.
  - In particular: judicial and policies bodies should be sensitized. **Racist profiling and raids should be eradicated**.
  - States should include an **intersectional approach** on all levels and all services and programmes provided to migrant women.
  - States should ensure the rights of migrant children, providing them a good life with their parents without separating them as a result of residence issues.

#### **In terms of gender-based violence we demand:**

- In accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, states must take necessary measures to **end violence against women in displacement** on the European and Central Asian soil and **ensure access to support for survivors of violence, regardless of their legal status**.
- **States should sign and ratify the ‘Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence’ (the Istanbul Convention)**.
- A comprehensive approach should be followed to end to **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**. This policy should not only be punitive but also promote prevention and reparation, including offering free reconstruction of organs in the public health system.
- **End the practices of child, early and forced marriages**, which requires in some UNECE countries increasing the minimum age of marriage.
- **Closure of Foreigner Internment Centres**: no women should be detained against her will as a result of being on the move.
- Make asylum procedures simple and short, as much as possible. The threat and experience of Gender Based Violence should be enough to get an asylum.
- All reception facilities and asylum processes must be resourced by states in a way that enables them to respond to gender-related needs, as well as provide a dignified livelihood, it should include safeguarding mechanisms for women and girls against, among others, violence.
- **States should ensure the access to services, to the legal system** in order to ask for justice and the police for migrant women victims of sexual and gender-based violence, without any discrimination, and combat the sexual and gender-based violence against migrant women.

#### **In terms of employment we demand:**

- **Signing and ratification of ILO Convention 189** on decent work for domestic workers for those countries that haven’t done it. As well as **ILO Convention 97** on migration for employment and **ILO Convention 143** on migrant workers. Implementing standards includes labour inspection in sectors where migrants, particularly women migrants, are employed.
- **A minimum wage** that allows for a minimum decent livelihood should be provided and enforced for all types of labour provided, including and especially for migrant domestic workers, women working under cultural programmes such as being an au-pair in Denmark, workers in precarious forms of service provision, etc.

- **Migrant women that report abuse and exploitation in their formal or informal work should be protected** from any deportation or other sanctions resulting from their witness report.
- The adoption of public policies that guarantee the right to decent care for its citizens, as well as those that guarantee decent working conditions for those who carry out care work.
- States should establish a mechanism that allows for an easy recognition of the level of education of migrant women.
- States should create a decent labour conditions and better regulations on domestic work especially for women who are working for 24 hours per day. Domestic workers shouldn't be discriminated against by law.
- States should sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

**In terms of health we call for:**

- Public and **Universal Health care** for all migrants, especially women, girls and boys regardless of their legal status, including those needed HIV treatment. This means the elimination of user fees and conditionalities.
- Address systemic barriers that may impede migrant women's access to services. These include discriminatory laws and policies, gender stereotypes, negative social norms and attitudes, harmful practices, and women's lack of autonomy and decision-making power over their health and rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights. States should also remove reporting obligations on health care providers or other public authorities to ensure that undocumented migrant women who seek access to health care are not reported to immigration or criminal justice authorities.
- The involvement of associations and groups of immigrants in awareness raising and prevention activities and in the design of specific policies aimed at victims of gender-based violence, and other programmes offering support and healthcare.
- **Training in interculturality and intersectionality** to public service personnel (legal, social, psychological, medical, etc.)
- States should ensure **the basic living standards of all asylum seekers.**

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Indigenous women in Canada continue to be uniquely impacted by historical and ongoing colonialism. Canadian colonial policies such as the Residential School System and the Indian Act were deliberate attempts to eliminate Indigenous people. Indigenous women were specifically targeted as a part of this process. Indigenous women have been dehumanized and systematic attempts to undermine their roles as mothers and leaders have been a big part of historic and current colonial policies. Colonialism has and continues to disrupt relationships with land, families, communities and nations and has created the conditions in which Indigenous women are marginalized, impoverished and subjected to extreme levels of violence in their homelands. With colonization also came the imposition of patriarchal structures, systems and norms on Indigenous women and their communities. This continues to be a significant barrier to the realization of Indigenous Women's rights.

**Missing & murdered indigenous women & girls (MMIWG):** The number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada speaks to the extreme levels of gender and racial violence that Indigenous women continue to face. Indigenous women are **12 times more likely to be murdered** or missing than non-Indigenous women in Canada and **16 times more likely than Caucasian women**. We know that Indigenous women are roughly seven times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be murdered by serial killers.

**Extreme poverty and housing:** In urban centres, the lack of supply of affordable, adequate, safe housing from the private sector, coupled with sexism and racism are the predominant causes of core housing need for Indigenous women. The data proves that systemic barriers to advancing education, gaining meaningful and equitable employment and earnings directly affects the median income for Indigenous women. **Indigenous women aged 15 and over on average earn \$19,289, which is about \$5,500 less than the median income for non-Indigenous women**. These barriers, when compacted with having to flee violence, and caring for both themselves and their children contribute to an inability for Indigenous women to access safe affordable housing. Indigenous women in rural and remote areas living in poverty face additional challenges fleeing violence due to a lack of access to personal vehicles and non-existent transit which means they often have to rely on hitchhiking.

**Child welfare:** Indigenous women have been targeted through legislative policies that have directly impacted their ability to maintain their role as mothers. The crisis of child welfare involvement and apprehension of Indigenous children is rooted in systemic poverty. In Canada, **52.2% of children in foster care are Indigenous, but account for only 7.7% of the child population.**

**Human trafficking:** Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of those sexually exploited in Canada. Poverty, racism and sexism, trauma and discrimination create environments in which Indigenous women are targets of violence. The child welfare system has been grooming Indigenous girls for human trafficking as they are removed from the protection of their family and communities. Many children are moved very far away from their home communities with no or very little access to their families, community and culture.

**Sexual violence:** Indigenous women are **3 times more likely** than non-Indigenous women to experience sexual assault. Sexual violence is one of the unspoken tragedies in many Indigenous communities that needs to be addressed. The over-sexualization of Indigenous girls and women has targeted their sacredness and sexual violence has become normalized.

**Family violence:** Indigenous women are more than **three times more likely** than non-Indigenous women to experience spousal violence – **almost 60%** of those Indigenous women who experienced spousal violence reported experiencing sexual assault, being beaten, choked or threatened with a gun versus 32% of non-Indigenous women. Family Violence negatively impacts all family members and community and increasing supports and services are needed to address these issues. In Canada, many women are turned away from women's shelter houses, particularly Indigenous women due to the geographic accessibility of shelter houses.

**Justice:** The fastest-growing prison population in Canada is racialized women, particularly Indigenous women. More than **one in three** women in federal custody are Indigenous. Indigenous women are more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators and experience **higher rates** of violent victimization. Despite the fact that men are more likely to be perpetrators of crimes than women, the representation of Indigenous women in custody is **greater** than it is for men. Indigenous women's involvement in the justice system is tied to intersecting factors of discrimination based on both race and gender.

**Indigenous women's health** is connected to environmental impacts. Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis as many are still living off the land and need access to strong and sustainable forests. Indigenous women face food insecurity when their traditional lands are degraded. This, coupled with trauma, poverty, and lack of access to social determinants of health manifests itself in high inequities in chronic disease, mental health and addictions. We look at the violence against mother earth and the resulting impacts on our communities and we make direct links to the many types of violence against Indigenous women. We cannot look at the violence against mother earth without seeing the connection to violence against Indigenous women.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- To achieve gender equality, we must recognize the importance of Indigenous women's voices and create spaces within society at large, the women's movement and the Beijing +25 process for Indigenous women's voices. Specific funding, time and space needs to be allocated to support Indigenous Women, Roma Women and Sami Women's rights advocates. True equality gives space for women to speak on their own behalf. Women are the experts in the issues facing them and have the knowledge to develop their own solutions. True allyship gives up space to create space.
- Restore balance through critical investments in marginalized women's groups (Indigenous Women, Roma Women and Sami Women) and fund public services and social protection systems led by the women affected by the issue, based in community. For example, through investment in health and healing specific services and programs (for example in Canada the reinstatement of The Aboriginal Healing Foundation). Indigenous Women, Roma Women and Sami Women need to represent themselves and have investments into their political and social development to address the extreme levels of violence and poverty they face daily due to the intersection of Race and Gender. We need to invest in women in order to make systemic change
- Restoring safety through the restoration of voices of women that have been silenced. The more racialized women are more likely to be targeted for violence. The over sexualization coupled with the dehumanization of Indigenous Women, Roma Women and Sami women is a root cause of this crisis. Women need culturally specific services in their communities which meets their needs. Women need a coordinated, integrated approach to addressing sexual violence that includes healing and accountability based on community needs.

### **SRHR of Roma women**

Sexual and reproductive health outcomes for Roma women in Europe are consistently poor. In addition to experiencing ethnic segregation and racial harassment and abuse in maternal health care settings, as mentioned above, Roma women also face racist and sexist verbal abuse and harassment in other sexual and reproductive health care settings in Europe. Financial, practical, social and policy barriers also have serious implications for their access to sexual and reproductive health care. Roma women are regularly denied access to relevant health services due to their perceived inability to pay medical bills or travelling lifestyle, a lack of health insurance or relevant identity documents. Roma girls experience disproportionately high teenage pregnancy rates and, in some contexts, face high rates of early or child marriage.

# WIDOWS

## Lead

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## Contributors

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## Structural barriers, negative trends and progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

WIDOWHOOD issues have relevance to every one of the twelve action areas of the BPFA, although widows are not mentioned in the Plan, and regrettably have been rarely referenced in the many years of CSW Agreed Conclusions regarding its implementation. This invisibility must stop. Widowhood is one of the most neglected of all human rights and gender issues.

Widows for Peace and Democracy (WPD) and its partners considers the Beijing +25 review process a unique opportunity to lift this blanket of invisibility on the cross-cutting, intersectional issues of widowhood, which have remained largely ignored in the UNECE region. It is imperative that this 64<sup>th</sup> CSW review of implementation of the BPFA identifies and addresses the huge gaps in policies that leave so many uncounted millions of women and girls, such as widows of all ages and their children, truly "left behind" and vulnerable to diverse forms of extreme discrimination, violence and abuse.

Widows of all ages and wives of the missing or forcibly disappeared (half-widows) are the fastest growing group among the diverse and various sub-sects of women. Their exponential increase is due to a number of factors, including armed conflicts; revolutions; migration, death of male migrants in flight; natural disasters; the rise of fundamental extremism; harmful traditional practices such as child marriage to older men and the common age differences between marriage partners; HIV and AIDS; and the longer life expectancy of women over men, often due to men's deaths through violence, industrial accidents, and alcoholism.

These bereaved women and their children are often among the very poorest of the poor. They may also experience, especially if they are mothers of many children, or are older women, in migrant communities, disabled, displaced, in refugee and IDP communities, the non-income poverty of isolation, loneliness, lack of respect and stigma leading to depression, ill health, even suicide.

The suffering of widows is multi-dimensional; exacerbated and caused by extreme poverty, ageism, violence and abuse, marginalisation and stigmatization. Nevertheless, only two of the 36 UNECE National Reports on Beijing plus 25 review mentioned widows: Belarus and the Ukraine.

In Ukraine there are about 300,000 widows, mostly older, who live in small villages in Ukraine. In these villages there is no doctor, or pharmacy, and the widows' right to health care is being denied. Volunteer groups are being set up to communicate with family doctors and provide care. This experience is useful for other countries but should not detract from state obligations to respond to the rights of widows of all ages. (1)

In Belarus, to relieve widows' poverty and isolation, the governments support a scheme for families to "adopt" a widow, providing her with the companionship and support that she so needs to be able to live a decent life.

### **Gap in data collection and national statistics**

Across the UNECE region there is a dearth of up to date statistics on widowhood, which denies the issue visibility and serves to disenfranchise widows from the essential services and legal support they have a right to. It is, therefore, imperative that the cross-cutting, intersectional widowhood issue and the status of the millions of bereaved women of all ages, religions and ethnicities living in our region be urgently addressed and good practices exchanged by the countries of the UNECE region.

### **Documentation is essential**

Birth certificates make girls visible to the State. Birth, marriage, and husbands' death certificates make widows visible not just to the State but to civil society and to the UN. Such documentation enables widows to have access to essential services such as shelter, health, education, social protection, pensions, and most importantly, access to justice. The disaggregation of data must include "marital status".

### **Erroneous attitudes, stereotyping of widows**

Within the UNECE countries there is an assumption that widows are mainly older women who are cared for by their families and enjoy adequate pensions. However, older women are suffering because of austerity cuts and political instability which, in some countries, have reduced the value of pensions, cut essential services and left many widows isolated, unable to collect pensions and economically and socially vulnerable to violence and abuse, within their families, in the community and in institutional care. But today there is the growing phenomena of young women subject to early and forced marriage who are widowed at a young age.

### **Conflict afflicted widows**

Moreover, with the unprecedented movement of people, many UNECE countries today accommodate large numbers of migrant women refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers, among whom are many widows of all ages, including child widows. Many come from countries where widows are routinely demonised and denied their rights and are subject to harmful traditional practices. Some of these practices still prevail, though hidden in their host country to which they have migrated far from their homelands and are unable to seek remedies or escape from such violence out of fear.

Widowed migrants and their daughters may be particularly vulnerable in these countries to economic and sexual exploitation, trafficking, NST and low paid work as domestic workers. Some also are exploited in informal, non-regulated work. Lack of adequate documentation, language skills, ability to describe traumatic events that led to their needing to seek refuge in UNECE countries, fear of the stigma of citing sexual violence and rape, prevents many widows from obtaining the asylum they are entitled to.

Best practice in the asylum policies relating to women and girls, is the Canadian Immigration bureau's policy to seek information on the status of widows in a particular country from WPD through its NGO partner network of widows associations who can verify the widow applicant's account of harmful traditional practices she has experienced, or is threatened with.

In conflict and post conflict zones (such as Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) widows may end up as beggars, prostitutes or sequential wives in polygamous marriages in order to support their children and survive. Years after conflicts have officially ceased widows who have survived horrific events, seen their husbands and children killed, been victims of rape, still wait to get justice, and reparations, or see their persecutors made accountable for their crimes against humanity and war crimes.

25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is time to end the stigma, stereotypes and marginalization of widows of all ages, everywhere, including in the UNECE Region.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- Birth, marriage legal documentation for all women.
- Records of husbands' deaths and disappearances.
- Women to be listed jointly with their husbands on property titles.
- Inheritance, land and property rights must be enshrined in law and all available means must be used to ensure real implementation, so that widows can surmount the barriers caused by corruption, bureaucracy, illiteracy, cost and locality barriers to accessing restorative justice.
- National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement UN SCR 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions must include widows in their targets and indicators and require widows' representatives to be at the peace tables.
- Widows should be supported to form their own associations, with funding, and training in capacity-building so they can collectively articulate their needs and describe their key social and economic roles as sole parents, as breadwinners, farmers, workers, and caregivers.
- Governments should work with widows associations to map and profile widows and wives of the missing, providing numbers, ages, their survival and coping strategies, and gathering information on their needs, roles and hopes.
- UN CEDAW Committee should develop a General Recommendation (GR) on widows, a UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Widows and a UN Independent Expert on Widows.
- UN Women should open a special desk to address the cross cutting intersectional issues of widowhood.

- The UN should commission a special report on Widows in Conflict, Post Conflict, and Displacement.
- The UN should appoint a UN SR on widowhood.

### Useful sources

1. <https://youtu.be/IZUb6pimFB0>
2. Margaret Owen - director.wpd@gmail.com; [www.widowsforpeace.org](http://www.widowsforpeace.org)
3. Link to the Widows Statement for CSW64:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U8LPnqsFNK2W-n2CskpKG6A9OASXiv9L/view?usp=sharing>

# WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

## Lead

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Women and girls with disabilities constitute 1 in 5 women worldwide. In Europe, women with disabilities are 16% of the total population of women, and 60% of the overall population of persons with disabilities.

Despite their prevalence in the population, women and girls with disabilities face multiple and intersectional discriminations in all areas of life: social isolation, violence (as they are 2-5 times more likely to experience violence than women without disabilities and this is particularly the case for migrant and refugee women with disabilities), forced sterilisation, forced--or lack of access to-- abortion and contraception, lack of access to community support services, low-quality housing, forced treatment and institutionalisation, denial of legal capacity, inadequate health care and denial of the opportunity to contribute and engage actively in society, including unequal access to education and employment leading to a higher risk of living in poverty and barriers in accessing justice, redress and/or engaging in formal complaint mechanisms.

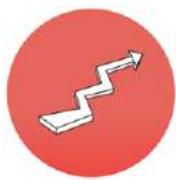
They also face barriers in communication and information, such as lack of sign language interpretation, easy to read, braille, augmentative and alternative formats of communication, and all other accessible modes, means and formats of communication, including electronic ones.

Mothers of children with disabilities also lack access to adequate support services, and often face discrimination based on being associated to their child with disabilities regarding hiring procedures, salary and social security payments and to promotions.

The status of women with disabilities is not only worse than that of women without disabilities, but it is also worse than that of men with disabilities. This is especially so in rural areas, where patriarchal and primary economic systems, with fewer services and opportunities for women with disabilities than in urban environments, are still predominant.

Although the women's movement has done important work to advocate for change, empower and prepare women for the struggle for equality, the same cannot be said for women with disabilities. On the one hand, the mainstream women's movement has still very limited knowledge of the needs and barriers faced by women with disabilities. On the other hand, the disability movement has also failed to focus sufficiently on these needs and barriers, despite the gendered lens some organizations have attempted to integrate in their various programs. Consequently, women and girls with disabilities remain on the fringes of all human rights movements and remain bogged down in a clearly disadvantageous position within society.

Moreover, women and girls with disabilities and their representative organisations are not involved nor closely consulted in all levels of policy making, particularly with regards to decisions that affect their lives.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

180 countries worldwide have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This includes the EU and all its member states. The CRPD calls in its article 6 to 'take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women'. In addition, 189 countries worldwide, including all EU member states have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Under both CRPD and CEDAW, states have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women with disabilities in relation to their sexual and reproductive health and rights and to address and eliminate all forms of discrimination faced by women with disabilities. They should adopt measures to ensure respect for women with disabilities' ability to make autonomous and informed decisions in their lives, including about their health.

In addition, both national policy makers and the EU are bound by the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. However, the rights of women and girls with disabilities are not mainstreamed in national and European efforts on SDG 5.

The EU and its Gender Equality Institute have adopted indicators for the follow up of the Beijing Platform for Action since 1999 and reviewed its implementation. Amongst its three strategic objectives, there is "ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice" to under which the rights of women and girls with disabilities should be protected. However, the intersectional discrimination has not been taken into account in these objectives and women and girls with disabilities' concerns have not been included.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- to develop effective measures in order to mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities in gender policies, programmes and measures, as well as to design and develop specific positive action measures to achieve the advancement of women and girls with disabilities;
- to fully involve women and girls with disabilities and their representative organisations in developing and implementing policies on gender equality and women's rights;
- to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and ensure that the perspectives of women and girls with disabilities are included in all policies preventing and combatting violence, including prohibiting forced sterilisation and abortion;
- to include in all legislation and policies implementing the Beijing Platform for Action an intersectional approach and guarantee the human rights of all women and girls with disabilities;
- - to establish an EU mechanism to monitor the commitment made at the Cairo and Beijing conferences, education programmes and actions;
- to support and fund research at European and national level on intersectional discrimination and social exclusion that women and girls with disabilities face- to this extent, sex and disability indicators should be included in all research and reports on non-discrimination and equal opportunities;
- to utilize quality gender- and disability-disaggregated data to comprehensively inform state action and ensure the rights of women with disabilities are protected and upheld in all policies, legislation, and action plans;
- to abolish systems of guardianship that allow guardians or others to make important decisions about the lives and health of women and girls with disabilities without their consent. In place of these systems, establish regimes that connect women and girls with disabilities with support services, when requested, to make their own decisions and to participate in justice mechanisms;
- to uphold the commitments set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), including its Optional Protocol and General Comment no.3 on women and girls with disabilities, in light of their objectives and purpose.

# OLDER WOMEN

## Lead

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## Contributors

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## Structural barriers, negative trends and progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Ageing issues are for all generations. Older women account for 54 percent of the global population aged 60 years 61 percent of those aged 80 years and above and 24 percent of the world's women aged 50 and above (in Russia, for example, there are three times more women than men aged 80 years and older).

Despite their numbers older women are too often ignored, uncounted in statistics and invisible, subject to ageism and routinely denied their rights to health, decent work, housing, life-long learning, rest and leisure, social protection, and the power to make life choices. Older women suffer from the stigma and myths of ageing that only paint a picture of frailty and dependence. Gender policy and implementation of SDG 5 must therefore consider not just the needs and concerns of older women but also recognize their value and rights and support their capacities, competencies, and contributions to family, community and society.

The world is ageing at an unprecedented pace, with greater numbers of women *than men* living into older age. Globally there were 962 million people aged 60 or over in 2017, making up 13% of the population with most living in low- and middle-income countries. By 2030 this will rise to 1.4 billion. Generally, women live longer than men by an average of five years, but this does not mean they are all living their later lives in good health and with adequate resources.

Every person has an equal right to health, food security, housing, decent work, rest and leisure and social protection. For many older women, these basic rights and the power to make life choices have been denied them.

Data collection remains an integral part of evidence-based and rights-focused policy making and must reflect diversity among older persons, similar to that of other cohorts. Disaggregation of data by age and other dimensions is essential for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and

Target 17.18 and the Beijing Platform for Action. Inadequate data for women beyond age 49 is a key driver of the denial of older women's rights. Disaggregated data by age, gender and disability by five-year intervals until death beyond age 49 is not routinely collected or available; in many countries, data on intimate partner violence ends at age 49. Few prevalence studies on domestic violence against women within population-based studies include women older than 49 in their samples. Increased participation by and support of National Statistical Offices on age inclusive data processes, including the Titchfield Group on Ageing Statistics, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission is recommended.

A review of 38 current UNECE Member State reports for Beijing plus 25 highlights governments' concerns about social protection, and retirement issues. But the reports overwhelmingly concentrate on issues of older women's health, frailty and care systems, the high risk of poverty and abuse, and discrimination in old age. The reports focus on the challenges of ageing and do not recognize how older women's competencies and contributions to the economic and social well-being of their families, their communities and society as a whole can be enhanced and supported. Although several mention specific projects for older women, they fail to cover the many interesting examples of lifelong learning, intergenerational housing and environmental protection projects, training for entrepreneurship and digital skills development, time banks and participation within communities.

A life course perspective to economic and social policy is required both to highlight and address cumulative disadvantages faced by women as they age, which include discrimination, ageism, and prevalence of family and intimate partner violence and abuse. Economic and social policy planning will be made more sustainable with the recognition of the contributions of older women, not only as recipients of services but also as a valuable resource.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Recognition of the resourcefulness of older women is essential to fully implementing the Beijing Platform and the SDGS. Sustainable development depends on ensuring girls and women of all ages are recognized as valuable contributors to their societies across the life course.

Wellbeing, thriving economies and sustainable development that protect people and planet require the full involvement of and attention to older women, and the full protection of their rights. Older women are not a homogenous group. Some are vulnerable and in need of assistance and care, much like any other social group, no matter their age. Many are active, healthy and vibrant contributors to their families, communities and society. Many lead independent and autonomous lives. Many are active agents of change. It is therefore important that there is knowledge transfer from two perspectives - that of developing the skills of older women to meet up to date requirements, and that knowledge is transferred in a systematic way from older to younger women.

Member States are obliged to uphold universal values shared across continents and cultures and to ensure, in the context of Beijing +25, the equal rights of all women across the life course in line with the principles and standards of international human rights treaties. Older women must therefore be better protected by legislation and public policies that are aligned with human rights principles and standards, that have a life course perspective, are age inclusive, tackle ageism and address older persons' rights and needs.

## Recommendations for Government action:

- Recognize and combat ageism. Ageism coupled with gender discrimination is the key driver of social and economic discrimination and inequalities in older age, denying older women their rights and restricting the potential of millions of women now and in the future to contribute to sustainable development.
- Ensure age, disability and gender-equitable social protection and pension systems for all older women together with affordable, high-quality, person-centred and accessible social services, housing, health and long-term care adequately funded by gender-equal tax laws and budgets.
- Ensure older women have a presence and voice in all planning and decision-making processes, have information on their rights and entitlements and have access to specific financial and other resources to facilitate their contributions and their organisations
- Provide and facilitate the collection of statistics and data collection which is disaggregated by age, gender and disability in 5-year cohorts from the cradle to the grave, and use this data for legislation, policies and programmes and their monitoring.
- Create a policy pool of good intergenerational practice across the UNECE region to address cumulative discriminatory practices and the economic, social, civil, and cultural disadvantage and the denial of rights that women of all ages and girls experience over the life -course.
- Legislate for care quality standards and training for long term and palliative care to support family, home based and institutional carers
- Affirm intergenerational solidarity as the bedrock of all age-inclusive policy planning and service delivery to improve the lives and dignity of all people, of all ages, everywhere, so that older women are not considered a burden on the state but as rights holders with equal entitlements to dignity, care and respect.
- Acknowledge the positive impact on families, communities and society when older women have access to life-long learning, the labour market and entrepreneurship by resourcing a lifelong learning framework within the institutional system, backed up by methodological manuals on intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- UN CEDAW to take specific action in response to the dramatic rise in widowhood due to wars, conflicts, diseases, migration and displacement, child marriages, natural disasters, the climate crisis and women living longer across the UNECE region. This can encompass a Committee General Recommendation on Widows, a UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Widows and putting in place a UN Independent Expert on Widows.
- Agree and put in place a binding international legal instrument to protect the human rights of older persons.

## Addendum: Implementation of the 12 areas of the Beijing Platform for Action since 2009

### Older women and poverty

Poverty is particularly high for older women who are single and live alone. Cumulative disadvantages over the life course for girls and women contribute to high levels of poverty in later life. While interventions at earlier ages can help to mitigate this, it is essential that accessible and adequate social protection floors and affordable health care is available for all older women. Older women are often at the centre of their households and communities. They are not just recipients of care but also key providers of care to family, friends and community; services that are uncompensated and unacknowledged as work. Poverty is also due to gaps

in pension due to years out of the formal employment sector due to childcare and inadequate pay for so called 'women's work' in the care economy. Female carers in nursing homes and home care aides are poorly paid, leading to their own impoverishment in old age. Achieving the Beijing program of action will require affirmative actions to recognize, promote and protect the rights of older women to an adequate standard of living in line with the UDHR and Sustainable Development Goal 5's clear recognition of the importance of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment for all.

### **Education and training of older women**

While everyone has the right to education, the low educational level of many older women, particularly those who have not had educational opportunities in their youth because of nationality, class and gender discrimination, inhibits their full participation in everyday activities that require reading, writing and technology skills, and constrains full participation in public and political life. Learning opportunities can be provided to older women through a systematic approach, and support given to pass on their knowledge to young people. An example is to establish the practice of the "Academy of Experience" or "Folk College for Knowledge Transfer." In many countries older women are knowledgeable about natural, sustainable lifestyles and traditions which can be shared with younger women, knowledge which otherwise will be lost. Discrimination in education at all levels based on age as well as gender and/or disability must be eliminated. Life-long learning, which includes knowledge and skills gained in formal education and training, as well as learning that occurs in informal ways, such as volunteer activity, unremunerated work and traditional knowledge, must be part of adult education policy.

### **Older women and health**

Older women's quality of life and full participation in society is compromised without responsive actions to their physical, functional and mental health conditions. Non-communicable diseases including dementia, arthritis, diabetes, cognitive decline and other chronic conditions occur disproportionately in older age groups, affecting older women particularly. Post-menopausal conditions including osteoporosis can disproportionately affect older women and without adequate treatment can lead to otherwise preventable disabilities. Health services for HIV prevention should be available to women of all ages, to prevent infection and to alleviate the burden on older women providing care to family members ill or orphaned by HIV. Some 50% of older women have a disabling condition and can be assisted to make successful adjustments toward optimal functioning as they age.

### **Violence against older women**

Elder abuse and neglect are rampant. One example is that of domestic violence (DV) against older women. Because DV prevalence surveys routinely fail to include subjects over the age of 49, they present misleading findings that suggest older women are not subjected to violence either by intimate partners or family members. Studies by Luoma et al (2011) focusing on older women demonstrate that DV prevalence is as high as 38% in some EU countries. Garcia-Moreno et al (2013) have developed a methodology for estimating life course rates of violence for older women, which are found to exceed 20%. This also considers the trauma that older women are forced to live with when the violence they experience throughout their lives, often perpetrated by family members, is unacknowledged and/or dismissed as negligible or of little consequence.

## **Older women and armed conflict**

Older women make up a significant part of every refugee population and are among the most vulnerable groups of displaced persons. Armed conflict as well as conditions created by civic unrest, natural disasters and poor economic conditions may result in forced migration, which comprises significant numbers of older women, often responsible for children, among the most vulnerable groups of displaced persons. Research studies by HelpAge International and other international aid organizations have documented sexual and physical violence against older women, as well as forced homelessness, poverty and hunger resulting from displacement and conflict. There is a misperception that older women are not subjected to the kinds of sexual and physical mistreatment that girls and younger women experience, which is compounded by the stigma older women face by disclosing such acts.

## **Older women and the economy**

International development programmes, policy and discourse often overlook older women's economic contributions to family and community. The intersectionality of ageism, sexism and toxic stereotyping particularly disadvantages older women. A glaring example is the denial of employment opportunities because of age. Time and again, including in the reports of governments for this review, we see only the conflation of old age and frailty/dependency, which provides a misleading picture of women in later life. Most older women are active and engaged with their families and communities, providing essential support for primary wage earners, and are primary carers of older and younger dependents. Many perform unpaid care work, allowing other family members to bring in income, some are farmers, have careers, are entrepreneurs, are educators, and are mentors. They contribute to the economies of their countries directly (including payment of taxes) and indirectly (providing essential services that the state does not offer). But their significant informal contributions to their societies are rarely recognized or counted. Properly recognizing the worth of unpaid care work as essential to the economy and to individuals' health and wellbeing has been widely identified as key to tackling the systemic inequalities that constrain all women. This applies equally to older women who, as carers, should be able to live fulfilling, dignified lives as individual rights holders, recognized by governments and the international community as economic contributors who should not be held back by ageism and stereotyping.

## **Older women in power and decision-making**

Enabling participation of older women in policy making is spasmodic. In the UNECE region there are some examples of good practice at local level, for example, the Irish Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Network's Big Conversation (2017). Overall older women's voices are rarely asked for or heard in national policy development. Given the scale and speed of ageing in all countries of the region and the increasing numbers of older women, this is a significant policy failure.

## **Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of older women's rights**

Twenty-five years ago, the Beijing Declaration recognized age discrimination as one of the factors contributing to the barriers to women's empowerment and advancement. Older women were specifically mentioned in the Beijing Platform for Action with regard to their poverty, health, violence against them, obstacles they face in entering the labour market, discrimination at work and as a civilian group particularly affected by armed conflict. The need for age-disaggregated data, particularly in light of the increasing numbers of older women, was emphasized. Recommendations for government action were made in each of these areas, resulting in a non-binding CEDAW General Recommendation on the rights of older women

(No. 27, 2010). At the same time, gaps were noted, including the complete omission of widows and widowhood.

Even with General Recommendation 27, progress on the rights of older women has been negligible. Despite the growing body of evidence on discrimination affecting women in older age, the challenges older women face and their unrecognized contributions to the national economy were almost entirely absent from the national 25-year reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The focus was mostly on older women as passive recipients of services.

### **Human rights of older women**

The gap between the existence of legal rights and the effective enjoyment of them by women in older age derives from lack of commitment by governments – duty bearers - to promoting and protecting older rights holders - older women - and the failure of governments and other stakeholders to inform older women about their rights. The lack of appropriate recourse mechanisms at national and international levels, and the inadequate resources at both levels compound the problem. Age is not one of the forms of discrimination that is explicitly mentioned in the CEDAW convention. General Recommendation no. 27 on the rights of older women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2010 is non-binding, as is the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) adopted by the GA in 2002. The Open-ended Working Group for the purpose of Strengthening the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons, which has held 10 annual sessions since 2010 is mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/139 to propose the main elements that should be included in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons. To date no final decision has been reached. The 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Open-Ended Working Group for the purpose of Strengthening the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons will be held 6-9 April 2020. UNECE governments, National Human Rights Institutes, UN Women and civil society organizations are urged to actively support a BINDING international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.

### **Older women and the media**

Ageism is an invidious structural barrier facing all older people, marginalizing and excluding them in their communities and negatively impacting their health, well-being and dignity; The intersectionality of age and gender portrayed in the media creates an especially challenging and noxious barrier for older women, as it combines stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination not only on the basis of age but also relating to gender. Even though women outlive men and in the main live active and productive lives well into old age, later life for women is largely portrayed as something to be denied and feared, which leads to routine and erroneous conflation of old age with physical and mental decline, incompetence, frailty and dependency. The media have an important role to play in correcting negative stereotypes and not amplifying them. Guidelines can and should be developed with the media on how to tackle issues related to ageism. And given the importance of social media for all generations, older women as a major stakeholder should be involved and included in the development of these guidelines. Alongside the media the advertising industry has a major influence in forming opinions and attitudes, including that of the younger generation towards older women, so therefore the industry should also adopt guidelines – with the input of older women - on how to include and portray older women.

### **Older women and the environment**

Having access to a sustainable environment and decent living conditions is a fundamental human right. However, although older women may play an important role in serving as

managers, consumers and producers at the household level, they have been largely absent at the level of environmental policymaking and decision-making. The practical and specialized knowledge they may have about ecological linkages and fragile ecosystems is not routinely sought. Older women who are isolated, living alone or unable to live independently often suffer from lack of basic housing and clean water. Man-made and natural disasters, as well as the impact of the climate crisis leads to desertification, has a devastating impact on rural older women in particular. Lack of appropriate housing and living environments also creates undue hardships for older women, in spite of efforts such as the age friendly cities and communities movement initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO).

### **The girl child**

Earlier reports for Beijing state that in 1990 eighty million girls had no access to primary school and without education these girls are doomed to an old age of poverty. These girls are the older women of today and tomorrow, yet there is no mention of how these and subsequent cohorts of women are provided for in government policies and practice today. Interventions for girls is only part of a two-pronged strategy: interventions for older women who were once girls and who experience discrimination and are living with its consequences must also be part of an inclusive strategic plan to achieve gender equity for all. The age cohort-specific section in the member state reports for Beijing elicited significant government comments and focus on the girl child. Adding a section specific to older women (60 years of age and older is the UN designation for old age) will help generate the same attention for older women

### **Urgency of statistical data on women disaggregated by age and sex**

Data collection remains an integral part of evidence-based and rights-focused policy making and must reflect diversity among older persons, similar to that of other cohorts. Disaggregation of data by age and other dimensions is essential for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Target 17.18 and the Beijing Programme of Action. Inadequate data for women beyond age 49 is a key driver of the denial of older women's rights. Disaggregated data by age, gender and disability by five-year intervals until death beyond age 49 is not routinely collected or available; in many countries, data on intimate partner violence ends at age 49. Few prevalence studies on domestic violence against women within population-based studies include women older than 49 in their samples. Increased participation by and support of National Statistical Offices on age inclusive data processes, including the Titchfield Group on Ageing Statistics, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission is recommended.



## **2. Guarantee equal participation and decision-making**

# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

## Lead

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Across the diverse UNECE region of 56 countries, despite some progress, unequal participation of women and girls persist at all levels of political life. Women are underrepresented at ministerial level and other executive bodies. As of February 2019, only in 5 (Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Malta) women were heads of state, and only in 6 (Germany, Iceland, Norway, Romania, Serbia, the UK) heads of government. The progress in attaining political power in legislatures has also been slow. In the past 5 years, the percentage of women in legislature increased by 2.5% and ranged from 12 to 50, with average 27.8%. In 35 countries women's representation is below 30%. This is below the make-up of the average national population. Since 2014, a percentage of women in legislatures decreased in one out of five. This happened despite the fact that electoral quota to promote women's participation in parliaments are one of the most popular affirmative measures across the region and adopted in 40 countries.

Women and girls continue to operate on unequal terms with men and face a range of interconnected structural barriers. To eliminate them a multidimensional approach and a comprehensive strategy is required.

### Structural barriers include

- Patriarchal socialisation gendered social roles and expectations reduce the number of women and girls willing to enter and pursue a political career. This is further strengthened by religious fundamentalism emerging in some parts of the region.
- Temporary affirmative measures such as quotas are often limited to parliamentary elections. Imperfect laws leave many loopholes that for instance allow for women to be replaced by men in legislatures or political parties not meeting the elector quota requirements and not facing any sanctions for non-compliance.
- Institutional infrastructure and working patterns (including political parties) designed by men do not serve the needs of women and girls. That includes unaffordable or unavailable childcare, inadequate maternity and paternity leave arrangements, working hours.

- Violence against politically active women and girls that takes a wide range of abuse and harassment (in person and online abuse, physical and verbal; direct and indirect). This is coupled with lack of legal framework to protect women politicians against all forms of violence.
- Poverty, economic dependence and inadequate financial resources prevent women from actively entering and participating in public life and politics.
- Insufficient state's commitment, resources and women's machinery to enhance women's representation at all levels of decision-making.
- Lack of inclusive measure to ensure that women and girls from minority groups such as LGBTQIA+, indigenous, Roma, migrant and refugee and IDP women, and women and girls with disabilities, actively and meaningfully participate in politics.
- It is also fundamental to recognise that women, because they are not a homogenous group, face many different forms of discrimination in their everyday life - on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age, possible disability... - that are amplified when they attempt to exercise their right to political participation.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

In the UNECE many countries have a range of legal provisions and temporary special measures to ensure women's equal political participation (constitutions, laws, regulations, and temporary special measures such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets). However, this de jure progress is not translating into de facto expected progress. Therefore, countries are called to take additional and measurable steps to increase women's real and equal participation in power and decision-making.

Identified in the BPFA barriers remain in majority of our countries. All these barriers work against gender balance in managerial positions. Much stronger are barriers for women's political participation in local elected bodies. Another set of barriers exist in women's participation in decision-making of Business sector.

Lack of Gender equality reporting Gap between political and financial commitments. Review of the implementation helped to show one of barriers on the road to the full and effective women's participation in political processes as formulated in the BPFA – underfinancing of women's rights and gender equality.

Government commitments on Beijing, have they progressed or are they going backwards (de jure & de facto) Incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making is in process but still in many countries SDG strategies don't include this as a standalone goal and as crosscutting issues.

Legal reforms, introduction of Quotas sometimes with sanctions for non-compliance have been introduced. Affirmative actions, ensuring Financing led to improvement in the region. 19 countries reached 30% goal in national Parliaments, 15 % in western Europe, 4 of them in Eastern Europe (Macedonia–37,5 Slovenia – 36,7 Belarus – 34,5 Serbia – 34,4). Similar status of women in ministerial positions in the region. In some countries like Kyrgyzstan it is going backwards: decreasing in the national Parliament from 20% in 2015 to 15,8 % as of today and in local elected bodies from 15 to 11 %.

The use of quotas alone is not sufficient to ensure high levels of female political representation other forms of affirmative action is needed, especially concerning party lists. Applying the "zipper system" (alternating the sexes on the party list) is very successful in some countries such as Tunisia, Sweden. Its success can be seen not only in the high level of female parliamentarians but also in municipal councils in local elections. Several countries after reaching the gender balance in political positions are taking measures to increase the number of women in management positions and boards with a Target population -private and public sector companies.

In the region there was work on Implementing capacity building, skills development and other measures and Providing opportunities, mentoring and training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, assertion of one's rights and political campaigning. But the majority was done by women's organizations, not by the State.

Financing is a challenge for majority of sub-regions. But there is work done by some few States beyond direct financing.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

To introduce, where not present, and implement full affirmative measures in legislation and regulations (also in political parties) to ensure parity and women's equal participation at all levels of decision-making. It is critical that those measures include sanctions for non-compliance.

- To legally protect women and girls active in political life against all forms of violence, abuse and sexism.
- Development of effective Plan of and effective accountability mechanisms.
- Integration of the women's rights and gender equality into national SDG strategies and Programs.
- Advocate and ensure Financing. SMART investments to these strategies and plans.
- To follow up BPFA commitments taken in BPFA articles 190 (a), 190 (d), 195: (a), 195: (c) Adjust electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems.
- Encourage greater involvement of indigenous, migrant women in decision-making at all levels.
- BPFA Strategic objective G.2. still needs high level of attention of all development actors so that effectively increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.
- To continue legislation reforms consistently and organize harmonization of the legislation. Because reports showed that very few State have taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics to fill this gap.
- There is a need to work systematically on these kinds of intersectional analyses in implementing and following up gender equality policy.

## Conclusions

BPFA Strategic objectives G. are Partially in the whole region, partially implemented in the whole region, with 2/3 of the countries of the UNECE region lacking real reforms in legislation, social norms, practice and accountability. One of the UNECE sub-region – Central Asia - is officially recognized as one of the worst in women's rights and gender equality status.

Unfortunately, the status of women's participation in political processes in the 1/3 of the UNECE region demonstrate that women's political rights continue to be abused and women still have the same concern as in t was in 1995; Now after 25 years, the BPFA article 182 remains a critical area of concern for women's movement. Regionally, low per cent of the members of legislative bodies and a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Barriers to women's participation in political processes in the big part of the region remain as they were in 1995 and new barriers appeared (religious fundamentalism, weakening social infrastructure. In this light, the region's women's movement fully supports the SDG 5.5 and calls for effective accountability for reaching it.

## Useful sources

- BPFA section G. Women in power and decision-making
- CEDAW General Recommendation 23
- CEDAW
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- Governmental report Beijing+25
- Dtatfrom <https://theworldonly.org/women-in-politics/>, IPU
- Альтернативный отчет коалиции общественных объединений Республики Таджикистан «От равенства юридического – к равенству фактическому» по реализации Пекинской платформы действий +25». ДУШАНБЕ-2019.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a tan jacket and a black backpack, is holding a red octagonal sign. The sign has white and black text in French. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

**Si LES FEMMES  
s'arrêtent,  
LE MONDE  
s'arrête.**

# **3. Ensuring women's bodily autonomy, sexual reproductive health and rights**

# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE

## health and rights

### Lead

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### Contributors

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Sexual and reproductive health and rights, according to the Guttmacher-Lancet definition (1), are an integral part and parcel of the human rights framework. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) recognized that “[t]he right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their fertility, is basic to their empowerment”. The conference reaffirmed the goals and standards on SRHR set out in the ICPD but elaborated on women's interests, stating that “[e]qual relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences”. Furthermore, the Beijing BPFA also directly called upon UN member states to review their laws, especially those laws which still imposed punitive measures upon women who “have undergone illegal abortions”.

During the last decade, important gains have been made in allowing women to exercise agency over their lives and bodies and in increasing their independence and autonomy more generally. However, women continue to face discrimination and stigma when deciding freely and without coercion on all matters related to their sexuality. In many UNECE countries, laws, policies and practices continue to violate women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, by restricting their freedom to decide how many children to have and whether to have children in the first place, impeding their choice of contraceptive, limiting their access to information on relationships and sexuality, preventing them from obtaining timely and non-judgmental health care, dictating who they should love and marry, and whether they should have sex before or after marriage, among other things. These policies, both de jure and de facto, undermine women's dignity and equal rights and contribute to their exclusion from decision making processes.

There are stark disparities in the region and a lack of conformity to commitments from the Beijing BPFA among Member States. Growing opposition or roll-back to sexual and reproductive rights is of grave concern, and while some of it is based on ideology or religion in other contexts, it also derives from austerity measures attacking many social protections, including health systems all over the UNECE.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

Despite progress made during the past 25 years, structural barriers to the attainment of sexual and reproductive health and rights remain. While these barriers differ across the region, there is a general trend of regression or stasis in the following areas: (provision of care, discrimination, information and education, political support). More specific challenges are:

### Provision of care

- Denial of sexual and reproductive healthcare has been recognized as a form of violence against women but too often, women are unable to access the care they need because legal, financial, geographical barriers and pervasive stigma.
- In some countries state regulation and enforcement failures regarding conscience-based refusals by medical professionals to provide sexual and reproductive health care undermine women's timely access to care with serious consequences for their health and wellbeing.
- A small number of countries continue to criminalize and severely restrict access to safe abortion care. Such laws force women to seek unsafe care, to travel to receive the care they need and at times to continue a pregnancy against their will and as such exposes women to risks to their health and lives. Such laws contravene human rights law and standards. Furthermore, even in contexts where abortion is legal, many countries limit women's autonomy in decision-making by introducing mandatory waiting periods and biased counselling. Safe access to abortion is also jeopardized by the existence of websites and facilities that intentionally mislead women on issues related to abortion care.
- There is a stigma associated with abortion care which can be aggravated by biased attitudes among healthcare professionals and in media representations of abortion care. This stigma frequently becomes a decisive factor in denying accessibility of abortion care for women and girls.
- There is a lack of access to modern contraceptive methods in many countries. Access to modern contraceptives is also impeded by discriminatory policy barriers that exclude contraceptives from public health insurance and subsidization schemes, affordability and availability barriers and lack of access to evidence-based information.

### Discrimination

- Some groups of women face disproportionate barriers in accessing care, such as care services throughout a pregnancy, which aim to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity, as well as access to safe and legal abortion services. This is particularly challenging for women living in rural areas, LBT women, women living with HIV, unmarried and single women, ethnic minority, including Roma women, older women, young people and adolescents, sex workers, women with disabilities, migrant or refugee and asylum seeking women who have difficulty accessing medical services due to legal barriers (such as parental consent) their distance from medical facilities, the expense of getting to these facilities or a lack of information on their function or whereabouts.
- Many healthcare professionals demonstrate discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards specific, disadvantaged groups, which affects not only the effectiveness of services but also the willingness of people belonging to these groups to subsequently

visit the doctor. Many consequently avoid visiting gynaecologists, thus endangering their wellbeing and denying them their right to health in many countries of the region.

### Information and education

- There is insufficient disaggregated data on sexual and reproductive health, where data should be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, race and socioeconomic status.
- Many countries fail in their obligation to provide evidence-based, comprehensive and youth-friendly information and education on sexual and reproductive health to young people in and out of school. The consequences of this violation of the right to education are evident in many countries of the region with limited use of modern contraceptives exposing young persons to STIs and HIV. Restrictions on sexuality education also impede young people's ability to protect themselves against violence and abuse as well as harmful practices, where sexuality education is key for their understanding of consent and respect and equips them with the skills needed to identify abusive behaviours. The growth in opposition to the inclusion of CSE in schools has been another fallout from the attacks on SRHR and gender equality more broadly. Laws criminalizing the teaching of CSE to minors have been proposed and considered by national legislatures. (2)

### Political context

- Pro-natalist policies are applied by some countries of the region focusing on fertility and population growth instead of on women's autonomy and SRHR. In addition, these policies often discriminate race and ethnicity, promoting the population growth of certain ethnic groups over others.
- A rise of coercive movements which seek to deny women their SRHR, and the human rights of LGBTI people amongst others. As a result, there has been an increase of attacks by both state and non-state actors on organizations working on issues considered sensitive, such as SRHR, LGBTI rights, migration and women's rights, as well as women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in the region.
- The availability of funding for organizations working on these issues has decreased due to among others, donor disinterest, shifting political priorities and concerted efforts to redirect funding flows from rights-based organizations to ones promoting 'traditional' or 'family' values.

In order to deliver the Beijing Platform for Action, UNECE States must urgently address all barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Governments from the UNECE Region should take action according to the specific SRHR needs of their countries' populations, with attention to disparities in the attainment of SRHR that exist among population groups.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

- Reaffirm the ICPD Agenda and the outcomes of its subsequent review meetings, including the Declaration adopted on April 1th, 2019 during the 52nd session of the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) that reaffirmed the importance of the ICPD Program of Action for guiding population and development policies and programs, within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and

pledged to undertake further actions to ensure its full, effective and accelerated implementation.

- Take immediate effective and positive action, including through public information, awareness-raising and training programs, to address discrimination on the basis of sex, gender and other grounds, including by combating harmful gender norms, stereotypes, assumptions and stigma that undermine women's sexual and reproductive rights.
- Mainstream mandatory, age-responsive, standardised, evidence-based and scientifically accurate comprehensive sexuality education curricula across the education system including into ordinary school curricula in accordance with the UNESCO Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education. Guarantee that teachers receive the appropriate training on CSE, free from stigma and discrimination.
- Using international best practices and human rights standards, reform the laws on abortion by removing all barriers to safe and legal abortion services for all groups of women. Decriminalize abortion and remove residual procedural requirements applicable to legal abortion services that contravene public health guidelines, such as mandatory waiting periods or third-party authorization requirements.
- Ensure accessible, safe, and affordable abortion services for women especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination.
- Where domestic laws or policies allow health care workers to refuse certain forms of sexual and reproductive health care on grounds of conscience or religion, change these laws and practices to ensure that such refusals of care do not jeopardize women's timely access to sexual and reproductive health care.
- Ensure the affordability of effective contraceptive methods and address financial barriers that continue to undermine and impede women's access.
- Guarantee the practical availability of a wide range of effective contraceptive methods, across rural and urban areas, and include all modern contraceptive goods and medicines in national lists of essential medicines, also in national insurance schemes.
- Amend and improve laws and policies pertaining to standards for reproductive health services for women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Ensure the collection of more specific and accurate and disaggregated statistics related to the reproductive health of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Introduce and monitor periodic and mandatory trainings for health workers on SRHR, patient-centred approaches paying particular attention to reaching women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Guarantee sufficient budgetary provision for women's sexual and reproductive health and ensure the availability of adequate human resources across all levels of the health system, in both urban and rural areas.
- Integrate sexual and reproductive health care into national UHC plans and into disaster management during times of crisis.
- End and reverse austerity measures and cutbacks that apply to gender equality programming or the provision of sexual and reproductive health care.
- Adopt measures to ensure that all women can access affordable, good quality maternal health care, including prenatal and postnatal care.
- Guarantee the primacy of respect for women's informed consent, and priorities women's informed decision making at all stages of childbirth.
- Review pro-natalist policies in the countries and replace with Rights-based population policies.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Bring abortion laws into line with human rights standards integrating abortion care into healthcare system and ensure it is in line with availability, accessibility, affordability and quality standards free from stigma and discrimination.

- Mainstream mandatory, age-responsive, standardised, evidence-based and scientifically accurate comprehensive sexuality education curricula across the education system including into ordinary school curricula in accordance with the UNESCO Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education and WHO standards. Guarantee that teachers receive the appropriate training on CSE, free from stigma and discrimination.
- Guarantee the practical accessibility availability and affordability of a wide range of effective contraceptive methods including emergency contraceptive methods, across rural and urban areas, and include all modern contraceptive goods and medicines in national lists of essential medicines, also in national insurance schemes and subsidization.

### Useful sources

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2. <https://oko.press/wiezienie-za-edukacje-seksualna-i-przepisanie-antykoncepcji-projekt-stop-pedofilii-w-sejmie/>

# SUB-GROUP: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE

## health and rights of sex workers

### Lead

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The right to health, including Sexual and Reproductive health, is a fundamental human right for every person. In Europe and North America, sex workers'[1] right to health, and other human rights, are violated by policy and legal frameworks that oppress and criminalize sex work, including the purchase of sex, as well as by the structural barriers in accessing health services, and stigma and discrimination in health care and legal settings. In recent years, the wider regional contexts of rising right wing populism, xenophobia, and racism; a regional predilection for neoliberalism and austerity; increased privatization of public, health, and criminal justice services; increased use of criminal justice systems as sole healthcare providers; and the increase in criminalization, punitive and conditional diversion programs; has meant that sex workers face rising stigma, marginalization, violence, and discrimination on an unprecedented scale.

This Factsheet highlights examples of international legal frameworks that underpin the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of sex workers, current regional trends and contexts, and recommendations to policy makers beyond Beijing+25, and towards the full realization of the sexual and reproductive rights of sex workers.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

### Barriers to the realization of SRHR and accessing SRHR services and other health services:

- From health-care to social protection, criminal justice systems to public services; sex workers continue to face significant **stigma, discrimination, and violence**. Socially sanctioned norms, that see certain behaviours and identities as contravening established norms, leave sex workers on the margins of society, excluded, and silenced;
- Sex workers often face **multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination**, including from staff in health care settings, based on their gender identity, race, ethnicity, migrant status, or sexuality; in particular migrant, LGBTQI and non-binary, and indigenous sex workers, and sex workers with disabilities; compounded by an increasing racism, xenophobia, homophobia and lesbophobia, transphobia, and a hostile environment for migrants in Europe and North America; Attitudes of health care workers, often based

on religious or patriarchal beliefs, can lead to pervasive stigma associated with their status as sex workers, adding additional barriers to accessing SRH services;

- The **erasure** of sex workers' realities, narratives, stories, and identities, and their exclusion, continues to be a significant barrier to the realization of sex worker's SRHR. In regional funding, legislation, policy, and civil society spaces, sex workers are often viewed as 'victims', with no choice or agency, failing to recognize sex workers as rights holders with autonomy;
- The **lack of space** for sex workers to lead the development of policy, including Sexual and Reproductive Health policy, that affects their lives, continues in the region. Funding, legislation, policy and services have been heavily weighted towards issues of addressing issues of trafficking for 'sexual exploitation', criminalization policies, or exit programmes; significantly more than those that actually uphold the rights of sex workers;
- **Mandatory health testing, HIV screening, treatment and registration** for sex workers impacts their access to SRHR and other health services and are a violation of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Conditionalities of mandatory health checks are often coercive and sex workers face prosecution and fines or are unable to work in specific spaces (e.g. registered sex work venues), if they do not meet conditions. These policies stigmatize sex workers and the services they provide as professional and autonomous workers. The checks are invasive and degrading, and criminalize health- leading to a distrust in services. In some countries sex workers are expected to pay the fee for medical checks; In some countries in Europe, only unmarried women can register as a sex worker, failing to recognize the diversity of sex workers and the SRHR services they may need to access;
- **Documentation/health insurance requirements**, particularly for migrant sex workers, is a significant barrier to accessing all health services, including SRHR services. In a criminalised context, it is almost impossible for sex workers to provide needed proof of income or employment they need to obtain health insurance, leading to routine denial of services of health services;
- **Legal / resident status** - Migrants sex workers, particularly those who are undocumented, already face more precarious situations. They often have no 'right' to access health services or to obtain health insurance. In addition, they often fear arrest or deportation when accessing state-run services due to their lack of a regularised legal status.
- **Health programs for sex workers** often focus on voluntary HIV and STI testing and treatment, whilst important, fails to address the broader SRHR needs of sex workers and meet international guidelines and standards; family planning and contraceptive counselling, pregnancy care, abortion and post-abortion care, cancer screening, and hormonal therapy and counselling for transgender sex workers. Reproductive health for example, is a key area of SRHR for women and GNC people who are sex workers;
- **Privacy / anonymity**- Sex workers report that stigma and discriminatory attitudes of staff working in health care settings leads to their sex work-status being disclosed without their consent, and this often leads to further discrimination, decreased quality of care, or even refusal of service. As a result, few sex workers disclose their profession to medical providers, and some may avoid contact with the health care system altogether
- **Criminalization of sex work** undermines sex workers right to health. Criminalization stigmatizes and socially excludes sex workers, and prevents access health care through fear of reporting or arrest. Additionally, the confiscation of condoms as evidence of sex work by police similarly discourages the utilisation of SRH services, increasing sex workers' vulnerability to HIV and STIs. In setting with laws around HIV exposure, non-disclosure, and transmission; same-sex sexual activity and sodomy laws can further deter sex workers from seeking critical SRH care for fear of legal reprisal.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Recognize and realize sex workers are rights holders, by consciously choosing to open doors for, find, and centre sex worker voices from diverse communities in sex work-centric discussions and crafting of policy

- Stop the erasure of sex workers' voices and include sex workers from diverse communities in decision making and policy making;
- Remove all punitive laws and regulations related to sex work and the purchase of sex, in the form of decriminalization, that marginalize sex workers, that barrier access to sexual and reproductive health and other health services, and violate sex workers' human rights
- Provide a full range of health services to sex workers that are confidential, non-conditional, free from violence, stigma and discrimination, and that respond to and recognize their diverse identities, experiences, working conditions, and needs
- Remove barriers to accessing SRH services for migrant sex workers, placing a firewall between legal status and service access.
- Eliminate mandatory and coercive HIV and STI testing and treatment policies
- Address the stigma and discrimination that sex workers experience from mainstream SRH services, providing sex worker-led sensitisation training for health care staff and implementing strong complaints and redress systems to address abuses effectively
- Promote SRH education programming among sex workers and their clients, improving SRH literacy
- Prioritise funding for trusted, community-led services

### International commitments and standards

- 'Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education' World Conference on Women: The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action [2]
- 'States parties should take measures to fully protect persons working in the sex industry against all forms of violence, coercion, and discrimination. They should ensure that such persons have access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health care services.' Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights 2016 recommendation [3]
- 'In direct violation of CEDAW's Articles 11 and 12[4], access to safe pregnancy and maternal care, as well as safe abortion, are frequently denied (to sex workers)' Framework on Rights of Sex Workers and CEDAW; IWRAW, Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) [5]
- 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure [...] access to health care services, including those related to family planning.' CEDAW Article 12
- 'Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights could also amount to torture, including forced sterilization, abuse and mistreatment of women and girls seeking sexual and reproductive health information, goods and services (ref CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 35)-Framework on Rights of Sex Workers and CEDAW
- Sustainable Development Goal 5: "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action

of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.”

- Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers: Practical Approaches from Collaborative Interventions-/ Sex Worker Implementation Tool (SWIT)- defines the vision for comprehensive SRH services for sex workers as part of a community-led, human rights-based approach to addressing HIV and STIs- 2013, WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, NSWP, the World Bank, and UNDP

## Note

The Women’s Major Group follows the global UN processes on women’s rights, gender equality and sustainable development. The Beijing+25 process is a global process, where we are building on decades of work to bring forward the positions of feminists globally. The WMG creates spaces for women’s rights activists in all their diversity to formulate their priorities. In this case, the WMG aligns with organisations and movements globally, from the global South in particular, who have strongly stood up for language that fully does justice to the human rights of sex workers, and does not lead to further discrimination, marginalization of criminalization. The language is in line with the CEDAW recommendations on addressing exploitation of women, whilst highlighting the human rights of all women in all situations. The positions of the WMG from previous years is what we will build on, in a global context, where we have a reality of criminalization of the worst sorts, the WMG cannot limit its positions to a Northern context only. We always put the priority and solidarity with our sisters from the global South at the forefront.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognised that sex workers are workers within the informal economy in its discussions related to Recommendation 200, which concerns HIV/AIDS and the world of work.<sup>21</sup> Paragraph 2(a) sets out the scope of the Recommendation and it is explicitly noted in the official record that “sex workers were included ...[as] all workers working under all forms or arrangements at all workplaces.”

## Other resources

- Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
- Feminism needs sex workers. Sex workers need feminism. For a sex worker inclusive women’s rights movement
- ICRSE Briefing paper- Understanding of Sex Workers’ Right to Health: Impact of Criminalization and Violence
- Framework on Rights of Sex Workers & CEDAW
- Joint Submission for Canada’s Review before the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 65th Session
- Sex Workers’ Access to Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

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[1] UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation define sex workers as “female, male and transgender adults aged over 18 years who sell consensual sexual services in return for cash or payment in kind, and who may sell sex formally or informally, regularly or occasionally.”

[2][https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Platform\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf)

[3]<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4slQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW1a0Szab0oXTdlmnsJZZVQfQejF41Tob4CvljeTiAP6sGFQktiae1vlbbOAekmaOwDOWsUe7N8TLm%2BP3HJPzjHySkUoHMavD%2Fpyfcp3YlZg>

[4] CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24: Article 12 of the Convention (Women and Health)

[5] <https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/framework-on-rights-of-sex-workers-cedaw-1.pdf>

[6] [Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers: Practical Approaches from Collaborative Interventions](#)

[7] [https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/framework\\_on\\_rights\\_of\\_sex\\_workers\\_cedaw.pdf](https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/framework_on_rights_of_sex_workers_cedaw.pdf)

[8] [https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/framework\\_on\\_rights\\_of\\_sex\\_workers\\_cedaw.pdf](https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/framework_on_rights_of_sex_workers_cedaw.pdf)



# **4. Ensure feminist economic policies and climate justice**

# ADDRESSING ECONOMIC

## structural barriers for economic justice

### Lead

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**This factsheet links to other factsheets: Climate, Environment and Women's Rights, Rural Women's Rights, Corporate Accountability and the Beijing process, and Tax Justice**

## Summary statement

We call for a new economic order that prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet. We call for a complete overhaul of the current economic system, moving away from extractive and profit-driven capitalism, an economic model based on a broken indicator – GDP- which does not reflect our needs, and the notion of infinite growth beyond our limited natural resources.

Instead, new indicators should be developed used for a comprehensive approach with 'carrots and sticks' to drive a sustainable and wellbeing-oriented economy that values social progress and the protection of the environment.

### Concretely we need:

- **Accountable governments** that promote socio-economic innovation through policies targeting SMES and other groups; for some this means excluding Transnational companies for innovation subsidies.
- **To stop the impunity** of Transnational companies to exploit women's labour and natural resources.
- **Care services** (childcare but also all other care services) should be a basic right, accessible for all. In addition, care leave and working time should be properly adapted to allow for a reasonable private life and work balance.
- **To recognize unpaid care work as "work"** that gives right to social protection. Policies should ensure that women are not penalized for providing work outside the formal productive sphere (In particular, care periods should be taken into account in the calculation of Pensions in order to address the huge pension gaps in most UNECE countries)

- **To connect social protection and taxing systems to individual rights**, moving away from household only based policies.
- **To address Gender Based Violence at work**: all governments should ratify the new ILO Convention No 190 on “Violence and Harassment”.

**This summary statement was the result of two rounds of discussion** at the UNECE civil society forum, 28 October 2019 in Geneva. The following people that agreed to be listed: Magda de Meyer (President Women’s Council Belgium), Leo Baranes (WIZO)., Kaliu Cornelie (Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova) Gea Meijers (WIDE+), Valerie Bichelmeier (Make Mothers Matter), Julia Guenther (WIDE Austria), Anjum Sultana (YWCA), Sophie Chassot (CARE France), Annelies Pierrot Bults (ECICW and the Netherlands Council of Women), Gisela Duetting, Maggi Brigham, Katrien van der Heyden, Vivian Fankhauser, Sanja Nikolin (Women’s Platform for the Development of Serbia), Els van Winckel (Zonta international, UN Committee Geneva). The recommendations do not represent the opinions of each member but give an overall conclusion.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Women of all ages still shoulder the **bulk of unpaid care work**, which remains a major barrier to women’s economic empowerment. Women in the UNECE region spend on average 41 minutes per day more on work (paid and unpaid) compared to men. Regional differences are big: in the Nordic Countries women do 25-30% more unpaid work, while the ratio is 6 times in Albania (1).
- In addition to gender-based discrimination, **intersectional discrimination** - linked to ethnicity, race, migratory status, age (older/young), location (e.g. rural/urban), maternity, family status (e.g. widows, single mothers), sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability, etc. - restricts women’s full economic participation.
- The average hourly **Gender Pay Gap** remains high at 18% in the region, with large variations across countries - up to 62.4% in Kyrgyzstan (2). But from an intersected perspective, related gaps are much greater, like the **Motherhood Pay Gap**. And the high **pension gaps** in most countries - for example 53% in Germany in 2017 (3) - which reflects the discriminations and structural gendered economic injustices women face over their lifetime.
- The **‘glass ceiling’ remains unshattered**: as we move up the corporate ladder, the proportion of women shrinks - with for example less than 6% women CEOs in the EU (4).
- **Precarious work is on the rise**, linked to the erosion of labour rights, levels of income and social/job security; it is a trend that especially affects women.
- **Digitalization and ongoing globalization of production chains** are bringing already many changes to the nature of work, which will have an impact on gender equality and women’s working conditions. Current findings suggest that gender equality will be sustained and entrenched if additional measures in the law and policy are not taken (5).
- **The whole economic system doesn’t work for women as it values paid work and profit over unpaid work and the well-being of people and the planet.**



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

- **Are uneven across the region, with even regression in some countries.**
- **Legislation gaps** remain. When adequate laws exist to support women's rights, they are not always enforced as women are constrained by traditions/power relations or simply not aware of their rights.
- **States should prevent the retreat or regress in the legislative protection of women's labour rights**, as is the case in Ukraine, in connection with the new draft Labour Code, which allows for the easy dismissal of female workers, including pregnant workers, women workers who have recently given birth and those who are breastfeeding (6).
- In spite of laws that prohibits dismissal and discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or maternity, mothers still face specific discrimination and harassment at work and a higher pay gap (the "motherhood penalty").
- In central Asia, women have theoretically the same rights as men to own and/or inherit land, but institutional or societal constraints deprive them of their rights.
- **Time use surveys (TUS)** to monitor the value and distribution of unpaid care work are not yet conducted on a regular basis (BPFA 165g) (only 33 UNECE countries have conducted TUS(7)).
- **Macroeconomic policies, especially trade and fiscal policies, fail to comply with the BPFA commitments to protect the labour rights of women** (165c and r) and regulate the activity of (transnational) corporations (165 k and l) so that they do not adversely impact women's economic status. In particular:
  - **Austerity measures in many countries** of the region have had multiple disproportionate impacts on women: 1) as public-sector workers, 2) as service users and 3) as recipients of social protection benefits. As a result, women's vulnerability to poverty has increased, especially that of single female pensioners and lone mothers. E.g. in the UK one in every 55 single-parent families became homeless in 2017-18 - 92% of them being single mothers. In some countries (e.g. Spain, Greece, Ukraine) austerity has become a permanent reality (8).
  - **Global and regional trade agreements and arrangements** have brought new harmful impacts on women. For example, as companies are enabled to outsource their production to countries with lower labour costs, the majority of women working in the textile industry in Eastern Europe and Central Asia work under harsh conditions and do not earn half of what they need for a minimum standard of living (9).



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

### We are calling UNECE governments to proactively

- Legislate and implement effective non-discrimination legislation for the world of work and ensure effective access to justice for women. Ensure that the burden of proof for cases of alleged gender-based discrimination in employment is not on the victim.
- **Provide adequately funded social protection infrastructure and services to redistribute unpaid care work** and make sure women of all ages have access to a sustainable livelihood. Especially ensure:

- Universal high-quality, flexible and **affordable public childcare and other care services**, including for disabled and other dependant people, with choices on the type of childcare catering to the different needs of families.
- Access to adequately **paid maternity protection**, as well as adequately **paid paternity leave** for fathers and parental leave for all parents, as well as carers' leave for other circumstances.
- **Pension rights and entitlements** for social protection for all those providing unpaid care work, including "care credit" in the calculation of pensions.
- Develop measures that promote women's employability (including for parents returning from care leave and for part-time and contract work) and **ensure flexibility and choices for women** and men reconciling paid work and family/private life. (examples of practices Norway and UK such as the right to request flexible working arrangements).
- **End austerity policies and the on-going privatization of social services and invest in care services provided as a matter of individual rights.** Especially increase the level of remuneration of work traditionally performed by women (i.e. care, teaching, social work, etc.).
- Governments have made repeated commitments to **Gender Budgeting**, among others in Beijing and in the context of SDGs (indicator 5.c.1), we call on governments to further develop and fully implement systems to track both gender equality in revenue laws and income from revenue, as well as public budget allocations for gender equality and women's rights. The full and equal participation of women and girls in their diversity shall be ensured in economic and budget policy making. Gender impact assessments of all economic policies should take into consideration the impacts on women and girls in all their diversity (intersectionality).
- **Promote Feminist Economics:** shift the gendered assumptions and hierarchies in which knowledge about the economy that underpins our policies, is based.
- **Pursue effective policies to ensure that women and men receive equal remuneration for work of equal value.** Further develop and regularly apply methods to evaluate jobs based on gender-neutral criteria, strengthen employment standards, including through higher minimum wages and measures to address the systemic undervaluation of women's work.
- **Ensure decent work for all**, prioritize ratification and effective implementation of the 4 key ILO Gender equality Conventions (10), **Convention 189 on domestic workers**, **Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**, and implementation of the measures contained in **Recommendation 204 on formalizing the informal economy** (11).
- Full protection of labour rights should also be **ensured in new kinds of 'services' resulting from the 'digital (platform/sharing) economy' and other nonstandard work arrangements**, such as domestic service providers. As well as examine and address any gendered impacts of the climate crisis, digitalization and automation on women's employment.
- **Address women's occupational segregation, through educational diversification, professional training, and addressing stereotypes** and other barriers. Women must be encouraged to enter Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) jobs, in which there will be more jobs in the future, and men should be encouraged to enter more jobs in the social and care sector.
- Ensure women's **equal participation in management and decision-making** at every level and in every sector.
- **Trade policies should not prioritize business rights over the rights of people**, but respect equally nature and human rights, including women's rights. In particular countries in the region should abandon Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms and strengthen patent rights (12).
- The UNECE member countries of OECD must meet the international target of 0,7% ODA. They should commit to fulfil the **objective of having 85% of programs having gender equality as the primary or important secondary project goal**, as outlined in the EU

Gender Action Plan II (2016-20) **with 20 % for gender equality as the primary goal.** They should also promote a Feminist foreign policy (examples: Sweden, Iceland and Canada) that includes funding for women's rights organizations.

### Useful sources

1. ILO 2018 Report Care work and Care jobs for the future of decent work
2. Difference in hourly earnings: UNECE leaflet The Gender Pay Gap across the UNECE region
3. [//www.thelocal.de/20171214/women-in-germany-receive-half-the-pension-men-do-study-shows](http://www.thelocal.de/20171214/women-in-germany-receive-half-the-pension-men-do-study-shows)
4. EIGE [//eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_bus\\_bus\\_\\_wmid\\_comp\\_compex/bar](http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_bus_bus__wmid_comp_compex/bar)
5. See for example, WTO Public Forum workshops and this recent [webinar](#) (for more information and future briefing on this topic, kindly contact Gea Meijers, [gea.meijers23@gmail.com](mailto:gea.meijers23@gmail.com)).
6. [Alternative Report](#) on Ukraine's Implementation of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (VIII Periodic Report) (2017).
7. ILO 2018 Report Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work
8. Source: BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45800186>.
9. <https://cleanclothes.org/file-repository/livingwage-europe-europes-sweatshops/view>
10. Especially the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) and Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), which both remain under ratified. On the issue of equal pay, a recent example of good practice is the obligatory equal pay certification for employers in Iceland (2018).
11. To date, only 7 UNECE countries have ratified this convention (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland).
12. See for more WIDE+ 2018 briefing 'Gender and EU Trade Agreements'.

# TAX JUSTICE

## and gender equality

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Tax justice policies and practices are fundamental to achieving gender equality for women and girls. They are called for in the CEDAW treaty (1981), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) (1995), and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in sections of revenue generation and redistribution outcomes. See the sections: ICESCR Article 2, CEDAW Articles 2 and 3, BPA 58b,179f, 205c, and Agenda 2030, SDGs 5 (Gender Equality),<sup>10</sup> (Inequalities),<sup>16</sup> (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Global Partnership).

Tax justice supports government obligations to identify and mobilize maximum available revenues that are capable of progressively realizing the full human rights of women and girls. And it calls for redistributive and regenerative tax policies and a transparent international financial architecture that supports the realization of gender equality through gender equal tax laws and budgetary practices.

### Tax justice and gender equality

Sufficient tax revenues are necessary to ensure that governments can provide adequate social protection and public services, including education, healthcare, housing, access to effective judicial systems, prevention of violence against women, access to clean water, sanitation, and adequate incomes. Failure to mobilise maximum available domestic revenues put gender equality and the well-being of women and girls at risk.

The failure to mobilise maximum domestic revenue often results from domestic tax systems that under-tax the wealthy and capital at the expense of heavy taxation of those with less financial resources to pay taxes. In these systems there is a lack of willingness to enact on addressing lax domestic and transnational tax avoidance on labour, oil, mining, gas, land use in combination with extractive, and environmental laws demanded by powerful investors. And there is a failure to protect the integrity of their fiscal systems. Undeclared wealth held 'offshore' in secrecy jurisdictions is estimated between: **'US\$8 trillion to US\$32 trillion, with US\$200 billion annually in associated revenue losses,'** and shifts taxable profits from source countries to tax havens at the rate of \$500 billion annually.

A tax system based on the 'ability to pay' principle taxes those with lower incomes and with little or no wealth far less than those with higher incomes and greater wealth. Tax justice and gender equality requires durable progressive tax systems that tax higher incomes, wealth and capital; reprices goods and services to bring about positive social, ecological, and environmental changes, and strengthens representative democracy.

## Financialization and the ‘race to the bottom’

Continuous cuts to corporate income tax (CIT) rates (since 1985, the average global CIT rate has fallen from 49% to 24%), tax incentives and ‘light’ regulation of offshore corporations and investors have created a fiscal culture of ‘tax competition.’ As a result, domestic and international tax laws enable small numbers of powerful individuals and businesses in high income countries to take advantage of lower income countries (LICs) willing to participate in this competition by shifting wealth and revenue from higher tax jurisdictions to such low or no-tax jurisdictions. Tax competition results in dramatic revenue losses for both high- and low-income countries where ‘real’ economic activity takes place (e.g., production, extraction, sales, drives control over land and real estate) into offshore ownership that forces out productive labour and jobs. This in turn, increases unemployment and income inequalities that disproportionately impact women and girls.

## Secrecy jurisdictions and illicit financial flows

Secrecy Jurisdictions and Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) enhance illicit finance practices such as profit shifting, tax avoidance, and **‘bleeding’** vital sustainable resources from countries that especially in Lower income countries should be used to fund social protection and public services. Both are also used by criminals and corrupt elites engaged in money laundering and trafficking of women and girls. The secrecy policies in Lower income countries enable elites, multinationals (MNCs), and the corrupt to avoid financial regulations and taxation.

## National tax systems

Governments at all levels have permitted their once-progressive tax systems to become ever more unequal through numerous routes: enactment of growing numbers of joint tax and benefit laws that create tax incentives for households to prioritize women’s unpaid work and lifelong income dependencies; tax exemptions; failure to take after-tax disposable and consumable incomes into account when increasing reliance on consumption taxes such as VAT. Indirect taxes create particular hardships for women and girls who provide unpaid care and productive services, often have low or no income, and must use more of their low incomes to pay VAT when purchasing non-exempt daily necessities.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

The working group in this process also recommends the following (\*See [Bogota Declaration on Tax Justice for Women’s Rights](#)). Governments must establish progressive revenue systems which ensure maximum available resources and gender equitable redistribution. Additionally, they must:

- Eliminate the negative and discriminatory gender effects of all existing tax and other fiscal laws as a matter of urgency.
- Ensure that no government adopts new tax or spending laws or programmes that increase market or after-tax disposable and consumable income gender gaps.
- Ensure maximum available resources to invest in high quality, gender-equal public services, social investments, the care economy and social protection.
- Raise all tax revenues in the most progressive way possible – through progressive direct personal and corporate taxation of income, wealth, and high net worth

individuals – to ensure that all, including MNCs, pay their fair share. Flat-rated low and minimally graduated rates of personal, corporate, wealth and capital taxes should be converted immediately to robustly graduated tax structures with truly 'progressive' rates that base tax liability on factual ability to pay by those with low incomes and by those with high incomes.

- Ensure that national and regional tax and financial secrecy policies do not contribute to large-scale tax abuses in other countries and do not favour wealthy countries, corporations or wealthy individuals.
- Establish an inclusive intergovernmental UN Global Tax Commission with equal seats at the table and equal voices for all countries in setting international tax policies.
- Ensure that taxes and regulatory policies collect the full costs from fossil fuel producers and consumers (MNCs and individuals) of eliminating and remediating all climate, ecological, and environmental damage and their disproportionate burden on women and girls

**The working group during UNECE Women's Civil Society Forum held on 28 October 2019 formulated the following two priority recommendations:**

- Raise all tax revenues with truly 'progressive' rates that base tax liability on the factual ability to pay by those with low incomes and by those with high incomes through [applying] robustly graduated tax rates in all direct personal and corporate taxes on income, wealth, and high net worth individuals, [which can clearly] ensure that all, including multinational corporations (MNCs), pay their fair share.
- Ensure that national and regional tax and financial secrecy policies do not contribute to large-scale tax abuses in other countries and do not favour wealthy countries, corporations or wealthy individuals, and that international tax policies support the fair distribution of global taxing rights and establish publicly available data to tackle illicit financial flows (i.e. tax evasion and tax avoidance).

# CORPORATE AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

## to the Beijing+25 process & beyond

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**This fact sheet is linked to the factsheets on “Tax Justice” and “On Structural Economic Barriers”.**



## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Since the 1980s, transnational corporations (TNC) , and the World Bank and the IMF and related “think-tanks” have been able to increasingly influence governments in promoting neo-liberal priorities and policies that will foster their interests above the individual human rights of women and men in finance, economics, social well-being and environmental stewardship.
- Privatization of public infrastructure and services and public-private partnerships (PPPs) serve corporate interests and undermine the rights of women and girls. PPPs have not proven to provide better services; rather, services and goods tend to become more expensive and less accessible or decrease in quality.
- In 2018, 26 people owned the same wealth as 3.8 billion poorest people on the planet. (1) Extreme poverty is increasing. Corporate wealth concentration is linked to the violation of the human rights of diverse women and girls and undermines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Governments are under taxing corporations in many countries. Private sector companies should pay taxes to the countries where they operate. Loss of tax revenue represents a loss of income to finance public services such as social and reproductive health services, childcare, education, housing, affordable energy, public transport and environmental protections all essential for the realization of women and girls’ human rights.
- Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) in tax evasion and avoidance as well as the laundering of money due to criminal dealings has resulted in deficits in tax revenue of national governments. A wider definition of losses arising from IFFs estimates that loss of revenue could amount to \$416bn. (2)
- Trafficking in women and girls is a crime that crosses borders and generates large illegal revenues. Often, the same routes are used for illicit trade such as of small arms and drugs demonstrating the links between these crimes.
- TNCs have expanded their influence in the UN itself through the UN Global Compact as well as the June 13, 2019 “The United Nations-World Economic Forum Strategic Partnership Framework for 2030” signed by UN leadership without the consent of the

General Assembly. We urge the immediate rescinding of this agreement and strengthening of democratic multilateralism instead.

- Many TNCs do not ensure women's rights are upheld and promoted within their own corporate structure, for example: maternity protection, living wages and harassment-free workplaces. The neo-liberal agenda that TNCs and many governments have promoted has also enabled a growth in international production chains, which are based on the exploitation of many women as a source for expandable labour (e.g. the feminisation of labour in light manufacturing such as clothing), as well as extractivism of land, natural resources and digital data (which is leading to for example the killing of women's rights defenders).
- Voluntary frameworks, like the 'Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) (3) developed by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, give the private sector additional social capital and credibility, which are used in branding exercises to increase profits, without enforcing any concrete action or accountability on women's rights and gender equality. The WEP specifically state "No required action is necessary." Without strong mechanisms for accountability the private sector is the winner in this framework, increasing profits and further delegitimizing the UN and UN Women.
- TNCs have been playing a significant role in the pushback on multilateralism and the protection of women's rights. Despite this documented evidence, TNCs are being given significant roles in the work of UN Women and in setting the agenda for women's rights and gender equality in the Beijing+25 process, including alongside civil society organizations as 'stakeholders' in the Action Coalitions. Unfortunately, TNCs have also been given significant roles in SDG implementation. These partnerships with the private sector are being presented as a necessity, rather than further entrenchment of the roll-back and undermining of democratic institutions and civil society. This approach undermines the autonomy of women's organizations to set the agenda and ignores the significant power imbalance and incongruent motivations and goals between women's organizations and TNCs.
- The increasing influence of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in all walks of life means there is an even greater need for a robust commitment to the intentions of international legal instruments protecting the rights of women and girls, and underlying ethics regarding technology companies. For example, apps have increased various forms of violence against women and girls. There is no accountability to the use of big data.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

In 1995, governments committed to (F 1.l) Ensure that all corporations, including transnational corporations, comply with national laws and codes, social security regulations, applicable international agreements, instruments and conventions, including those related to the environment, and other relevant laws; additionally, they also agreed to (F.4.c) Observe national labour, environment, consumer, health and safety laws, particularly those that affect women. (K.1.254) Governments and international organizations and private sector institutions should, as appropriate:(a) Take gender impact into consideration in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the High-Level Political Forum, and other appropriate United Nations bodies and in the activities of international financial institutions.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

The Working Group at the UNECE Women's Civil Society Forum on 28 October reaffirmed and/or concluded with the following recommendations and actions to be taken at Global Level, Governments & United Nations:

- Make explicit the criteria for the involvement of corporations and corporate foundations in UN programmes and policies, especially in UN Women. **Only companies that are complying with the core ILO decent work conventions, CEDAW, and the environment and climate emergency commitments can engage.** When TNCs/ business leaders are involved in the Beijing+25 process they must not be considered as equal actors alongside women's rights organizations and member states. Their involvement should be monitored in a transparent manner through an independent body that includes relevant experts and women's and other civil society representatives.
- **UN Women must hold companies to account for the rights of diverse women and girls and gender and environmental justice.**
- **Establish an adequately resourced UN intergovernmental tax body** with membership of all nations and equal voting rights, providing it with gender equality expertise and mandating it to review national, regional and global tax policy in line with women's equality and human rights obligations.
- **Establish systematic coordination mechanisms in order to eliminate Illicit Financial Flows, human trafficking and gender-based discrimination.**
- Ensure global tax and financial policies, treaties and agreements, comply with human rights, women's equality, labour and anti-money-laundering standards and develop an international legally binding instrument to regulate and monitor the compliance of TNCs.
- Sanction global enablers/facilitators of tax abuse IFFs with a special focus on banks, secrecy jurisdictions, shell companies, legal advisors/law firms and corrupt government authorities and push for a more comprehensive definition of illicit financial flows that put human rights front and centre. Enlarge policy space to curtail IFFs by implementing regulations, eliminate investor-state dispute settlement clauses to ensure that state rights to regulate and tackle IFFs are protected.
- **Establish international standards to protect witnesses, whistle-blowers, and human rights defenders who expose tax abuse and report corruption.**
- **Promote the negotiations, ratification and effective implementation of the UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights and ensure it covers gender specific issues** including i) Gender impact assessments of business activities, ii) Gender-sensitive justice with reparation mechanisms, and iii) Respect, protection and generation of an enabling environment for women human rights defenders. While awaiting a binding treaty, ensure a gender-responsive implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as outlined in the report "Gender dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights" by the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. (4) Governments and the UN must ensure effective access to remedies by promoting universal jurisdiction, extraterritoriality of international human rights law and the recognition of corporations as single entities.
- **Develop and implement legislation to ensure accountability in the use of big data.**

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# RURAL WOMEN

## & economic empowerment

### Lead

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### Contributors

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Economic issues: land and property rights, where traditional law and gender stereotypes still prevail. Employment problems leading to labour migration. Women's social insecurity and vulnerability to violence in the informal sector. The workload of rural women in unpaid domestic work is very high. Low wages in budget areas. Inadequate access to productive resources, financial services, technology and innovation. The use of tax laws that discriminate against women and reduce taxes paid by power holders and the wealthy in the name of deficit reduction or tax competitiveness.
- Political issues: inadequate implementation of laws to promote gender equality in the field. Lack of gender budgeting. Women's poor access to decision-making processes and political participation.
- Social problems: an imperfect system of social protection, a decline in the quality of education, access to quality medical services, including family planning and reproductive health. Problems of safe public places, insufficient lighting of streets and stops. Strengthening religious influence and patriarchal principles that exacerbate existing in society, stereotypes regarding rural women and girls.
- Environmental issues: environmental pollution, outdated infrastructure, roads, public transport, access to clean drinking water and irrigation water. Rural women have health problems that are closely linked to limited access to clean drinking water, lack of adequate sanitation, and poor hygiene.
- The special needs of rural girls: access to quality and professional education, sanitary conditions in rural schools, early and forced marriages, access to youth-friendly reproductive and sexual health services and labour migration of parents.
- Across the region, it is possible to identify an absence of appropriate legislation to protect and empower rural women, and even when this legislation is in place, there is a lack of political will to ensure its full implementation. Article 14 of CEDAW outlines specific requirements which must be met for rural women, and no country in the region has fully satisfied with this. There continues to be a lack of gender budgeting, and representation of women in local, national, and regional legislatures remains below the targeted goals. Even when women are in power, rural women are consistently under-represented.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

- Kindergartens and schools: low level of buildings, lack of funds for the repair and construction of new facilities. An acute shortage of places in kindergartens, and often a complete lack of kindergartens in the villages. Lack of safe toilets that meet standards of decent living in rural schools and inadequate water supply.
- Overloaded classes, lack of teaching staff, high-quality textbooks, low salaries for teachers. The relevance of the problem of vulnerability to violence of children whose parents are in labour migration.
- Issues of local budgets, local natural resources: non-transparency of the processes of budgeting and issuing licenses for quarrying.
- The situation of rural infrastructure: poor roads, lack of street lighting and equipped stops, which aggravates the security situation of women and girls. Lack of infrastructure to provide clean drinking water.
- The situation of women deputies of local councils: difficulties they have to face in the process of nomination, elections, and then in the process of work - pressure from male deputies, lack of support from family and local communities. Harassment and security threats when women deputies of local councils raise sensitive issues of unfair decisions.
- Problems associated with the state of health care in the villages, poor interaction both interdepartmental and with local communities. In rural areas, there are no shelters and crisis centres for women and girls affected by violence. Even primary care is not always available to rural women.
- Empowerment and responsibility of local councils for making appropriate decisions.
- Still existing restrictions based on gender and discriminatory laws on inheritance and land ownership.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Ensure the realization of the right to access public services in rural areas, the right to financial inclusion, to land, property, productive and natural resources, as well as access to markets and information technologies, by raising revenues adequate to securing gender equality in all aspects of life and spending those revenues in consistent stable long-term programs.

- Create laws that protect women's rights to inherit land and secure land tenure.
- Design financial services and tackle discriminatory policies in financial institutions.
- Ensure gender-balanced representation of rural women in local communities at, 30 percentages by adopting and implementing national laws about quotas in political representation in countries where they have not yet been adopted?
- Ensure access to inclusive and quality education in rural schools that is gender sensitive, including also reproductive health.
- To carry out a gender analysis of the social protection system, taking into account the specific situation of rural women particularly older widows. Increase the number of kindergartens in rural areas so that women can continue or receive additional education, have more free time to improve their economic situation.

- Develop a national media campaign to eradicate gender stereotypes and stigmatization of rural women and girls.
- Public spaces remain under-serviced and, as such, unfit for safe living. Outdated infrastructure, rural transportation, lighting, and access to services like medical facilities and law enforcement, are all frequently highlighted as a significant concern by women across the region. Critically, girls outside of urban areas must have access to quality and professional education, safe and appropriate sanitary conditions in rural schools, protection from early and forced marriages, access to youth-friendly reproductive and sexual health services and labour migration of parents.
- It is well established that women are at the forefront of the climate crisis' impact on our society. There are many traditional practices which could help mitigate or reduce the impact of the climate crisis, but which are ignored because they come from rural women. Clean water and sanitation, access to appropriate and affordable social provisions such as schooling and educational opportunities beyond the most basic levels are also a significant concern.
- Young rural women are the future. They must be safe, educated, healthy, and have appropriate systems for life. This must include social investment and structural institutions, allow for entrepreneurship, and offer a quality of life in rural communities that stems the tide of migration to over-stretched urban areas.

# CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

this is our feminist demand

## Lead

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## Contributors

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

Today, millions of women, indigenous communities, children, and low-income families across the UNECE region and around the world are already affected by the climate crisis. Biodiversity and the state of many ecosystems around the world are fully at risk with around 1 million animal and plant species threatened with extinction, many within the next decades. Our governments' actions have massive detrimental effects on people, especially marginalized groups who are at the frontlines of the climate crisis globally.

From a climate perspective, the UNECE region is extremely diverse. In Central Asia, mountain snow caps are melting, leaving rural agricultural communities vulnerable to landslides and increased income insecurity. In the Balkan and Black Sea region, floods have demolished homes and led to disability and death, particularly of women and the elderly who have not been able to evacuate in a timely fashion.

Patriarchal social and governance structures form deep structural barriers that make it more difficult for women to take action. In particular, women from rural communities have little or no decision-making power. For example, in Central Asia, many men in the rural communities have migrated to work abroad, but the women who stay behind are often not able to make decisions on the use of the land, as the legal decision-making power is only given to their husbands.

Existing discriminatory patterns towards women reduces access to resources, to social protection and to finances, and reduces their public participation, especially for women from ethnic minorities, migrant women, and non-gender conforming people.

It is very problematic when women have no say in decisions on e.g. infrastructure projects such as construction of hydropower plants and/or coal fired power plants, and when their concerns are not taken into consideration. Such infrastructure investments are taking place in the Central Asian, Western Balkans and Black Sea regions. Women from these regions feel disempowered by decisions that impact their lives, but that have been taken without public consultation nor been assessed from a gender-impact perspective.

The climate crisis is directly linked to our extractive economic model, our throw-away society, our fossil fuel consumption. Not only fossil fuels for airplanes and computers, but an increasing part of global petroleum is used for derivatives such as plastics and chemicals, which we use as plastic bags, straws, cups, and then throw away.

Waste mountains burning and incinerators are emitting not only green-house gasses, but also highly dangerous toxics that accumulate in our food and our bodies, and are linked to breast cancer, reproductive diseases, diabetes, etc.

The most marginalized groups in society are also often most exposed, living in the most polluted areas. Women suffering from, for example reproductive damage due to chemical exposure are often subject to social exclusion. The increasing number of health effects on women, such as breast cancer, reproductive diseases, diabetes, allergies, etc. is linked, among other causes to exposure to chemicals in products.

A Canadian study showed that women working in the plastics industry have a 5 times higher risk of developing breast cancer in their lifetime. In some countries, women make up 85 per cent or more of the workforce applying pesticides on commercial farms and plantations and are therefore highly exposed to pesticides that are harmful to their health.

Women's exposure to toxic chemicals can cause long-term and irreversible health damage, and also negatively impact their economic and social situation. The high health-care costs for example for cancer treatment, increase the marginalization of women impacted

In Central Asia and other Eastern European countries, most women in rural areas lack bank accounts and do not have insurance thus they are at risk of sliding more deeply into poverty with every drought or flood. A majority of the lowest income households are single women-lead. When they are forced to migrate for economic reasons, they are at risk of exploitation by criminal groups, including human trafficking including for sexual exploitation. They also can find themselves be pushed into the most dangerous and polluted jobs, for example, as waste scavengers living on-top and next to waste dumps that continuously emit carcinogenic pollutants.

In North America and the EU region, damage from environmental pollution and the climate crisis hits low-income groups the hardest, and the majority of low-income households are headed by women.

Indigenous women in North America are most vulnerable as they rely on living off the land and need access to strong sustainable forests. This makes them most vulnerable to food insecurity when their traditional lands are degraded. Moreover, we cannot look at the violence against Indigenous Women without looking at the connection to violence against Mother Earth.

On-going research in Europe's large cities, such as Barcelona, is showing that over 65% of households that can no longer afford to pay their heating bills, and then have their energy cut off, are single-women and women-lead households. Therefore, environmental inequalities and climate-related injustices are exacerbated by gender-based discrimination and discriminatory social and economic structures. At the same time women's ecological and carbon footprint is lower than that of men. Studies indicate that "in the Western world, women use 22% less energy on average than men" (fewer automobile trips, less consumption of meat, more attention to energy efficiency...) (1) and that at the same time, they are underrepresented in environmental governance and participation. Moreover, the creation of new 'green' jobs are filled in majority to men, as women are underrepresented in technical sectors in the EU. In Western European countries the workforce and management of fossil fuel and extractive sectors are largely dominated by men. (2)



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Environmental and climate policies have mostly been gender blind. It is at international levels that efforts have been made the last few years to address the full participation of women in environmental decision making, to set targets for gender equality in policy bodies, and to ensure gender-equal planning and budgeting.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has a gender action plan (GAP) that was launched two years ago and that sets targets for participation of women in climate policy decision-making as well as allocations of funds and means for climate action.

A number of countries have taken measures to institutionalize gender equality in their environmental ministries and agencies by setting targets or allocating budgets to gender equality research. In the Eastern European, Balkan and Central Asian region, several countries want to integrate research funding for gender impact in their climate-funding applications, as this has become a requirement from the Green Climate Fund. For example, Serbia has produced a training manual on integrating gender issues and effects into national climate policies and funding plans. However, when it comes to budget allocations, gender equality measures are too often seen as 'add-ons', especially at the national level, and are not yet seen as priority issues calling for intervention. Too often, the need for eradicating pervasive gender discrimination is addressed with reluctance.

In addition, the negative impact of the UNECE region on women's rights in the rest of the world is certainly the greatest problem of all. The USA in particular is a culprit, having put on hold its commitments under the Paris Agreement, and being the second largest emitters of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) after China. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists data from October 2019, The UK and Germany are also amongst the largest global emitters of GHGs. (3)

But almost all UNECE countries are not on track to reduce their GHG emissions, and therefore they are collectively responsible for creating one of the main causes of climate-related loss of livelihoods and related conflicts in countries of the Global South. Much more needs to be done by UNECE countries to start to address their devastating historical responsibility for contributing to climate disruption and global warming. The actions needed are not limited to the energy, construction and transportation sectors, but also would need to include a moratorium on new mines as well as ending imports of products based on deforestation, e.g. soy, palm-oil and overall a reduction of meat.

There is insufficient investment in real solutions, such as 'gender-just climate solutions' (4). Such best practices have shown the great potential of women lead climate actions: for example, sub-soil water storage and production of renewable energy, by enterprises and cooperatives with women in leadership.

Unfortunately, instead of investments in gender-just climate solutions, the region continues to invest in fossil fuels and derivative products such as plastics and Petro-chemical products, and in 'false solutions' e.g. investments in nuclear energy – the most inefficient and expensive and non-renewable (not to mention dangerous) energy source – as well as gas-fracking and non-sustainable industrial agriculture. These misplaced investments lead to further exclusion and inequalities. Currently, one of the great obstacles to gender-equal climate protection and environmental restoration are the continued funding and subsidies going into non-sustainable,

highly concentrated, climate-destructive, industrial sectors with a majority of men in decision-making.

On the light side, women and feminist organisations globally are cooperating through the Women and Gender Constituency at the United Nations UNFCCC proposing strong gender-equal climate action for all national climate plans, as well as promoting inspiring women-led climate actions (5).



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Engaging feminists in all their diversity, young and old, women, men and non-binary, will contribute to the much-needed acceleration of climate action, as shown by young women leaders such as Greta Thunberg (Sweden), Autumn Peltier (Wikwemikong First Nation), Shalvi Sakshi (Fiji), Jamie Margolin (USA) and many others. The global climate crisis can also be an opportunity. An opportunity to give new impetus to sustainable innovations, to rethink the existing structures, to open up breaches to transform the system for more equality and an opportunity to listen to people's voices on the ground, especially women's.

- **Funding** should go to promote research, capacity building and inclusive participation of feminist civil society and community groups that know how to ensure gender-just climate and environmental policies, and active engagement of feminists in decision-making on climate and gender issues (6). In particular, support women's direct access to smaller-scale climate funds (from approximately \$100,000 up to \$10-\$15 million USD) to go to women's organisations, Indigenous organisations, and local communities directly via the mechanisms created by the UNFCCC such as the Green Climate Fund. We strongly warn against using mechanisms outside of the framework of the Paris Agreement; for example, we oppose a recapitalization of the Dedicated Grant Mechanism under the Climate Investment Fund, which should sunset as planned.
- **Governments should commit to a 2nd Gender Action Plan** under the Paris Agreement that would include progressive targets to reach gender parity in all main decision-making bodies and delegations that are negotiating on climate. Also included should be gender-responsive national climate measures. In particular such measures should commit to implementing gender-just climate technologies (7).
- **Ensure the protection of women environmental and climate defenders** who are persecuted for trying to defend their environment and communities.
- **Indigenous women's** very survival is intimately connected to the health of the land and climate. To restore balance and ensure Indigenous women's voices are heard in environmental debates and concerns within our own territories we need to disrupt the current systems of investment through critical investments in community based Indigenous women's groups in all member states. Indigenous women, Roma Women and Sami Women need to represent themselves and have investments into their own political and social development. We need to disrupt the traditional systems of investment in women in order to make systemic change.
- **The displacement and relocation** of Indigenous women and their families due to the climate crisis, and resulting climate disasters, as well as the impacts of resource extraction industries have significantly impacted the level of violence against Indigenous women including Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, Missing, and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This crisis is rooted in the pervasive poverty that has resulted from the exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources.

- **Decision-makers and civil servants need to build capacity** on how to plan and budget for gender-equal climate and environmental actions. Governments and local authorities should create, apply or adapt gender environmental indicators, especially in link with the SDGs
- In the UNECE region, countries should set targets - in line with the OECD gender-markers - to ensure that all climate and environmental funding promotes gender equality.
- Governments at both national and local levels should **divest from all extractive and fossil fuel related activities** and invest in sustainable, renewable, local sectors that have committed to gender equality and ending all discrimination against women in all their diversity (CEDAW). In the UNECE region, this would include divesting from coal, shale-gas (fracking) and nuclear power, as well as a moratorium on hydropower plants. The EU and the UN should provide audits and legal support for countries in the region to exit contracts in fossil fuel-related areas, including contracts in Indigenous lands, territories and communities that have not been accorded governance authority to address these issues consistent with their own values and goals.
- Support creation and replication of **local climate-positive economic and social sectors** with gender equal funding, impact, and leadership roles in all sectors – sustainable agriculture and food, energy, transport, building, scientific research, technology and communication – by creating enabling conditions and by eliminating unfair support to unsustainable sectors, including, for example, imposing higher tax rates on aviation, shipping, private vehicles, etc.
- **Obligatory gender and environmental impact assessments** of all climate policies and programmes, with full participation of local women and feminists.
- **Align National Climate Plans with the global chemicals conventions** aimed at eliminating hazardous waste and chemicals, the Basel Rotterdam Stockholm Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).
- **Clean up all chemical and waste polluted ‘hot spots’** to protect populations living nearby and avoid further contamination.

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# WOMEN IN LABOUR MOVEMENTS

## Lead

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## Contributors

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## Decent work is at the heart of gender equality

Trade unions are committed to advancing the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to meeting the targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals, with particular attention to SDG 4, 5 and 8. Through organizing and collective bargaining unions play a critical role in achieving gender equality by ensuring women can access decent work, which is central to women's economic independence and autonomy, and at the heart of gender equality.

We propose that the aspirations of the BPFA can be made real by action on four key axes:

- Guarantee the fundamental human rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining of **all** women workers;
- Invest in care for gender equality and development, to redistribute the burden of unpaid care; work, to ensure access to quality public services and to create millions of quality green jobs;
- Eliminate gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work;
- Promote women in leadership through a feminist approach to leadership.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

**Women's labour force participation** in the region is stagnating and stands between 51,6 % to 55,8% which is 12% below that of men (for Northern, Southern and Western Europe: 51,6 %, Eastern Europe: 51,8% and Northern America: 55,8%). **Women are over-represented in precarious, part-time jobs and non-standard forms of employment across the region.** Precarious work is particularly prevalent in sectors with high numbers of women workers including health care, education and the service sectors. For instance, in Germany,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of precarious workers are women - workers who lack social security or access to pensions - and having high rates of informal (migrant) domestic workers in private households. In the Nordic countries and across the region, the proportion of women working part time jobs is a key obstacle to gender equality: affecting women's income and pension security, promotion opportunities and prolonging gender stereotypical roles in family life.

**Gender gaps in pay and social protection persist:** Worldwide, more than half of the global population has no social protection coverage, and less than 30 per cent enjoy comprehensive social protection. Experiencing lower coverage rates and substantially lower benefit levels, especially with regard to maternity protection, retirement pensions, unemployment benefits, occupational injury and accident compensation schemes and survivors' benefits. In the EU, women's pensions tend to be 37 per cent less than men's. Ranging from 25.6% in Estonia, 21% in Germany to 3.5% in Romania. However, a very low gender pay gap may simply mean that there are fewer women in the labour force. A survey of the European Trade Union Confederation (2019) across unions identified labour market segregation and unpaid care responsibilities as the major factors for the gender pay gap. While Iceland became the first country to enforce equal pay (2018), still only half of the EU member states followed a 2014 recommendation from the European Commission to tackle the gender pay gap.

**Austerity measures and the privatisation of public services** including health and social care, education, transport, electricity, water and sanitation **have had disproportionately negative impacts on women's human rights and have increased gender gaps in employment and social protection.** Current deficits in the quality and provision of care services will create a severe global care crisis and increase gender inequalities at work, if not adequately addressed. In Spain, drastic cuts in the health and education sector (between 2012 – 2014) increased the precariousness of women's jobs who form the majority of the workers in these sectors. Care workers – the majority of whom are women, and disproportionately migrant women and women of colour – too often experience discrimination, job insecurity, including zero-hours contracts, low pay, poor working conditions and violence and harassment at work. In Europe 2.5 million domestic workers work in the care sector, many migrant women workers who are vulnerable to exploitation, violence and abuse.

**Women perform 76.2 per cent of the total hours of unpaid care work – more than three times as much as men.** This work is invisible in the System of National Accounts and measurements of Gross Domestic Product yet presents a major obstacle to women's emancipation whilst contributing trillions of dollars to the global economy. Canada's market-based childcare system only provides access to a licensed, regulated space to one in five children under five and in many communities, childcare remains unaffordable for many, meeting or exceeding the cost of housing. Only six countries – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia and Malta - ensure that there is no gap between well-paid maternity and parental leave and access to quality early learning and childcare. In Germany, where parents have a legal right to childcare for children under three, the labour force participation of mothers has increased.

There has been considerable progress towards achieving **gender equality in education** since the adoption of BPFAs, and gender disparities in out-of-school rates have decreased considerably over the last fifteen years. However, despite girls outperforming boys in education at all levels in most countries in the region, women still have worse employment and learning outcomes than men. This is due in part to the fact that women are less likely to undertake and graduate tertiary level education in high-paying fields, including STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines. **Only 6% of women complete a degree in engineering, compared to 25% of men.** Within the teaching profession, the majority of early childhood educators are women, but fewer than one in two tertiary level educators are women. And when it comes to leadership, the data shows that gender inequality also persists in OECD countries: **there are more male headteachers than females, and only 18% of full professors in Europe are female.**

**Gender-based violence remains one of the most tolerated violations of workers' human rights.** According to statistics, 35% of women - 818 million women globally - over the age of 15 have experienced sexual or physical violence at home, in their communities or in the workplace. Gender-based violence and harassment pervades the world of work, affecting all

sectors and occupations. For instance, across Europe, one in six workers report having been subjected to acts of violence, harassment and unwanted sexual attention (Eurofound), around 90 % of victims of sexual harassment are female. A union (TUC) survey on sexual harassment at work in UK found that more than half of all women and nearly two-thirds of women aged 18 to 24 years said they had experienced sexual harassment at work and a union survey in Bulgaria found that over half of women transport workers experienced violence from passengers. After years of union campaigning, the vast majority of States in the region voted for the adoption of ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206. In Canada progress was made with the adoption of legislation on violence and harassment in federal workplaces and paid domestic violence leave in most jurisdictions.

**Unions are a powerful force for realizing gender equality, both in workplaces and in our communities.** There is a distinct correlation between unionization rates and achieving gender equality in the world of work. In the Nordic countries - with one of the world's highest unionization rates - most of the gender equality policies first came through collective bargaining and in the US case studies provide evidence how women enjoy higher pay when unionized. Across Europe, 45.1 per cent of the union members are women and when including Central Asia, women make up 51.16 per cent of the total trade union membership. Through trade union campaigns and policies, unions in Europe and Central Asia have reached 30% women in decision-making and leadership positions and made commitments to reach 40 per cent representation.

**Attacks on civil rights and liberties, including trade union rights,** are a significant and growing obstacle to women's ability and opportunity to organise to change their working realities. The majority of the world's workers, particularly women, disabled workers and migrant and domestic workers, are disenfranchised of their rights to freedom of association at work. For instance, in Canada, 50,000 postal workers were deprived of their right to strike and forced back to work on 27 November 2018 following the adoption of a special law by the federal government. Among the issues leading to the dispute was pay equity and equal treatment for rural and suburban mail carriers, mostly women workers. According to the ITUC's Global Labour Rights Index, Europe saw an increase in violent attacks against trade union leaders and a growing trend of charging and sentencing workers for their participation in strike action. There is an erosion of collective bargaining rights, with 40% of European countries excluding workers from the right to establish or join unions, 68% violating the right to strike and 50% violating collective bargaining rights. Turkey and Kazakhstan are among the top 10 violators.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

The trends and evidence provided in the previous section show that States concerted action is required in closing the persistent gender gaps in women's labour force participation, pay and social protection, including the gender pension gap of 37%, to address women's over-representation in precarious, part-time jobs and non-standard forms of employment, to eradicate gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work and effectively address multiple forms of discrimination and intersecting systems of oppression based on class, race, migration status, sexual orientation and gender identity.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

### **To take serious action to advance the BPFA, States must:**

- Respect and promote the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and collective bargaining.
- Ratify all relevant international and regional human rights instruments that guarantee the rights to freedom of and collective bargaining, including ILO Conventions 87, 98, 151 and 154 and ensure that the right to freedom of association and the right to organise can be exercised by everyone without discrimination;
- Actively create an enabling environment for workers to establish independent trade unions and engage in collective bargaining;
- Support tripartite social dialogue between government, employers and trade unions to prevent and remove barriers to gender equality;
- Support the negotiation, signing and implementation of Global Framework Agreements between transnational companies and Global Unions, and mandate that businesses perform gender-focused due diligence with respect to human rights throughout their global supply chains.

### **Invest in care to promote gender equality and avert a global care crisis**

- Commit a minimum of two per cent of national income to investment in quality public care services;
- Adopt gender-responsive macro-economic policies by securing fiscal space for investments in gender responsive quality public services, public social protection systems and sustainable infrastructure and reverse the expansion of corporate power, which is enabled through the use of tax incentives, public-private partnerships, tax evasion and trade agreements on public services;
- Remove gender bias from macro-economic policymaking, including through recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work in the System of National Accounts;
- Enact laws and implement policies to facilitate the reconciliation of work and private life including through ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions 183 on maternity protection and 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities. Mandate paid parental and family leave and provide pension care credits for time spent out of the labour force to raise children/care for dependents;
- Integrate gender perspectives into urban and rural planning and expand public transport to provide women with safe, equal access to public services including education, childcare and healthcare and to their place of work;
- Invest in gender-responsive social protection systems that guarantee universal access to essential health care, access to basic pensions and guaranteed minimum unemployment benefits;
- Address the over-representation of women in precarious employment, low wage employment, and the informal economy by adopting measures that ensure universal access to a living wage and social protection. This includes an evidence-based and regularly adjusted statutory national minimum living wage, as well as programmes to facilitate access to formal employment and to ensure informal workers have access to social protections in line with ILO Recommendation 204;

- Implement laws, policies and programmes to address both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation and secure equal pay for work of equal value in line with ILO Convention 100 on equal remuneration;
- Adopt measures to improve women's access to quality vocational education and training; and just transition measures for women workers affected by the climate crisis, digitalisation, and automation.

### **Eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in the world of work**

- Ratify and effectively implement the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) and Recommendation 206, through law, policy and collective bargaining. Particular attention should be paid to sectors or occupations that are more exposed to gender-based violence and harassment, such as hospitality, health and social services, transport, education, media sectors, domestic work and informal work;
- Promote workplace policies to address the impacts of domestic violence in the world of work, such as paid domestic violence leave, adjustments to working patterns and access to counselling services for victims of domestic violence;
- Enact laws and policies to prevent, address and redress gender-based discrimination in line with ILO Convention 111 on discrimination in employment and occupation. This must include measures to prevent and dismantle discrimination rooted in intersecting systems of oppression based on class, gender, race, sexual orientation and gender identity and migrant status.

### **Recommendations from the working group**

The group agreed the following two priorities in order to guarantee the fundamental human rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining of all women workers:

- Eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in the world of work including through the ratification and effective implementation of ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment and its accompanying Recommendation 206. Particular attention should be paid to sectors or occupations that are more exposed to gender-based violence and harassment, such as hospitality, health and social services, transport, education, media sectors, domestic work and informal work;
- Invest in care to promote gender equality and avert a global care crisis by:
  - Committing a minimum of 2% of national income to investment in quality public care services, and adopting gender-responsive macro-economic policies that are free from gender bias;
  - Addressing the horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, and the over-representation of women in precarious employment, low wage employment, and the informal economy by adopting measures that ensure universal access to a living wage and social protection.



SWITZERLAND

# **5. Ensure peace, justice and accountability**

# PEACE & SECURITY

## and displaced women

### Lead

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### Moderators

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### Contributors

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The integration of a gender perspective into peace and security is one of the most important topics on a global agenda that needs united efforts to ensure sustaining peace across the UNECE region, according to the resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282. Since the Beijing conference in 1995, certain countries of the UNECE region have been threatened by terrorism (e.g. France) as well as wars and armed conflicts that are ended (e.g. Kosovo), frozen (e.g. Georgia) or still on-going (e.g. Ukraine). This has influenced women's lives in conflict zones in different ways, pushing women into displacement, precarious conditions or sexual abuse. At the same time, it encouraged women for activism and leadership in peace-building processes. Multiple policies and interdisciplinary approach should be applied to apprehend many issues that touch women in their everyday life in peaceful periods as well as in conflict or post-conflict situations.

As many governments in the UNECE region have declared the "Women, Peace and Security Agenda" to be one of the focal points of its work, we demand a progressive agenda from our governments at national and international levels. Rather than pushing back the pushbacks made by certain UN Member States, Germany for example has the opportunity to shape international security policy based on Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy and international frameworks such as BPFA, CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 and 2467. In addition, several Central and Eastern European countries have yet to ratify the Istanbul Convention on Action against violence against women and domestic violence, a treatise which calls for states to punish acts of violence against women, especially in the context of armed conflict.

The Global Study (UN Women, 2015) also acknowledges "the attempts to 'securitize'" the agenda, reminding the states that "Resolution 1325 is a human rights mandate." Despite this, the approval of the UNSC Resolution 2242 in 2016 and the inclusion of "Countering Violent Extremism" reinforced the risk of instrumentalization of women's rights, especially women on the move (i.e. migrants, asylum seekers and refugees), and subordinated the need for women's protection and a strategy of securitization. All of the above implies a shift from a human rights and gendered perspective to a security approach to the WPS agenda.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Focus on military and security approach: the main actors implementing the NAP in many countries are the Ministries of Defence and Interior (security forces) jointly with Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; there is an insufficient involvement of other ministries (i.e. justice or education) that could play a key role in peacebuilding and prevention processes
- Weak definition of armed conflict and lack of government accountability towards implementing the WPS agenda
- Lack of measures to guarantee that foreign policies (e.g. arms trade) do not contribute to the causes of conflicts
- Improper community policing prevents access to justice for women who face sexual or gender-based violence from within their own community
- Simplistic interpretation and systematic confusion of women's participation in WPS, that is understood as holding consultation and information sessions for CSOs, without the inclusion in decision-making processes
- Stereotypical perception of gender roles still persists in most countries, which in turn reduces to recruitment of women into the armed forces
- Lack of vertical coherence: little correspondence between the principles, objectives, measures and areas of action
- Lack of horizontal coherence between the various frameworks, plans and instruments (i.e. CEDAW, SDGs, Trafficking Plan)
- Lack of concreteness in some countries (poor planning, no timetable) on how the frameworks, objectives and principles declared throughout the NAPs will be applied
- Lack of budget: some NAPs have no budget, undermining implementation efforts for the WPS agenda
- Lack of transparency, fragmented and dispersed information and data
- Measures to address non-compliance are not very stringent and gender indicators are often not included to measure the achievement or transformative impact of actions
- Weak geographic and thematic localizations of some NAPs do not allow an effective implementation of the WPS agenda



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Governments seemed committed to addressing the BPFA within the past five years. There is mention of the SDGs and use of EU resources to address some of the critical issues, especially sexual and gender-based violence. Although there are some mentions in several NAPs about linkages between the WPS agenda and gender equality, trafficking, SDGs or others, no provisions have been developed, nor resources and measures to operationalize these linkages.

**Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation** are among the most pressing issues to address the governments to build the culture of peace, according to the resolution A/RES/53/243. The European Union (EU) claims to be a major player in fighting uncontrolled trade as well as proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) on a global level. Some European states, like Germany and Spain, have started to integrate a gendered perspective

in the proliferation of SALW or target the issue in their NAPs. However, the whole cycle of production, exportation and arms control is led by a Eurocentric approach and therefore marginalizes the actual interests of conflict-affected communities. Additionally, governments greatly lack a gender lens and meaningful participation of women-led organisations in their programmes on disarmament and arms control. To achieve policy coherence that is based on human rights and gender, this deficit needs to be tackled by the EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security. Moreover, some current efforts have been made by the States to sign onto and ratify the TPNW. It should be noted that all countries have to follow the same rules, because as it can be seen, Ukraine's accession to the NPT did not secured its integrity from external aggression promised by neighbouring country in Budapest Memorandum in 1994.

**Impunity for sexual and gender-based violence** is another pressing issue requiring government's attention. Although states indicated in their national reports on Beijing+25 their commitment to fighting sexual and gender-based violence, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation in armed conflicts, they are still not being prosecuted in a meaningful manner by national and regional institutions. To date, sexual and gender-based violence is not perceived as a crime in armed conflicts. Additionally, many communities not only face sexual and gender-based violence from the "other" but also within their own communities. There is a large gap between the commitments listed in the national reports on Beijing+25 and the actual number of systematic sexual exploitation and abuse cases, including rape cases that governments actually prosecute. We demand the full implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, jointly with DAC Recommendation on sexual exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) agreed on July 2019 that the BPFA be used as the basis for a legal framework on the governmental level that ends impunity by persecuting perpetrators of such crimes. This is an important step to ensuring accountability on a national level, allowing for collective action and establishing legal precedent for international trials.

**Proper training and understanding of gender integration in peace and security** is important to take into account. While there exists relatively widespread agreement that women need to be involved in all levels of decision-making and stages of peace and security, there is a lack of proper understanding and training on what this looks like in practice. Furthermore, inclusion of women's voices from all backgrounds is vital to peace processes, in particular women living in communities under threat of terrorism, paramilitary control, and organised criminality linked to armed conflict.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- Whole-of-government approach that links WPS to education, health, foreign affairs, community, social development and other issues should be developed
- Meaningful action on women, peace and security requires recognizing the interrelated, inseparable and mutually reinforcing nature of all elements of the WPS agenda, and committing to full implementation
- Policy coherence should be based on human rights and gender. Gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls are central to international peace and security. Relevant gender indicators and goals should be developed
- Definition of armed conflict should be widened to include terrorism, paramilitary activity and organised criminality linked to armed conflict
- Intra-community focus on healing trauma and harm caused by intra-community violence as well as intercommunity violence should be privileged

- Impact of internal displacement should be recognised to give more possibilities to provide support
- Decisive action to prevent conflict, avert crisis and end war should be taken
- Monitoring group to evaluate implementation of the WPS agenda throughout the peace processes should be formed to achieve more transparency and accountability. Annual monitoring and impact assessment should be conducted
- More involvement of different ministries, such as ministries of education, equality, justice, in the WPS agenda is needed
- Training on WPS, gender, and women's rights should be reinforced and promoted
- Women from diverse backgrounds should be included in peace talks
- Meaningful participation of CSOs should be reinforced by creating a mechanism for civil society and local initiatives
- Legitimacy of the work of all human rights defenders and their role in promoting peace and security should be defended, and all attacks against them should be condemned
- More funding is needed for efficient implementation of peacebuilding programs

### **Key recommendations from the Beijing+25 CSO Forum thematic workgroup (28th October)**

There is an existing policy framework in place for WPS, but we see that it is obviously not working. The issues we bring up in our group are still pertinent, and they relate to all four pillars of the WPS agenda: prevention, protection, participation and recovery. It means there is a problem, and that is why we want to emphasize on key issues again:

- Peace is not possible without meaningful and equal participation of women; especially women from civil society groups and women affected by conflict in the peace process and decision making at all levels. The process must focus on gender-inclusive outcomes and implementation with women being equal and meaningful part of both policy making and implementation.
- We call for an expansion in the definition of security: in addition to the existing definition of state security, we need to increase the focus more on human security, which includes economic security, political security, community and personal security, environmental and food security. This shift must affect implementation and budgeting issues which are or are not covered by policy. Otherwise, we will not succeed in establishing long-lasting and qualitative peace.
- We need effective systems for early warning, conflict prevention and mitigation. This includes indicators, but also extensive peace education, training and empowerment for the groups that work for peace. It also requires protection and security for those who promote the peace agenda in their countries and communities.

Finally, we want to bring your attention to the Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the UN: Recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on WPS which was sent to all UN Member States on behalf of 438 civil society organizations across 94 countries in October 2019. The letter calls on Member States and the Security Council to prioritize and commit full political support for 5 key WPS issues.

### **Useful sources**

- NGO statement - <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/open-letter-unsc-wps-anniversary-october-2019>
- Beijing Platform for Action - [http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800](http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800)
- International survey - <https://forms.gle/SjcXXuCL74apcqSBA>

# ACCOUNTABILITY & MONITORING

a global independent body for women's rights

## Lead

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

In the context of rising authoritarian populist regimes, women's human rights are under a new threats in both developed and developing countries. Misogynism is often a tenet of authoritarian/populist regimes. Anti-feminism, far-right and extremist movements are on the rise globally. The risk of being subjected to inequalities, violence, in-human degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests and detentions or other type of rights violations are increasing and specifically women and girls are deprived of their rights and liberty. There are setbacks and backlashes on gender equality in many countries and strikingly enough, even in multilateral or regional organizations and bodies. Thus, there is an urgent need to focus upon the shrinking democratic spaces and their impacts on civil society; specifically, on women's NGOs, feminist organizations and WHRDs. Recent years have witnessed growing antagonism by governments to women's organizations and their' activities in many arenas.

While such push backs are taking place, women activists, women human rights defenders and LGBTIQ+ organizations do not have a truly independent body to directly and freely appeal to when their rights are violated. There is a need for substantive protection frameworks (with enforcement authority) and resources to reduce the obstacles and risks women and women's NGOs face due to governmental threats violence and structural inequalities.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

The BPFA, in its paragraph 344 suggests that "...Consideration should be given to establishing a mechanism for collaborating with non-governmental organizations to promote the implementation of the Platform at various levels." Although there exist some international monitoring and appeal bodies on gender equality and human rights, namely CEDAW and GREVIO and even though their experts serve in their own capacity, it is rather difficult to talk about total independence and autonomy as **the nominations and elections of these experts are made directly by the state parties/ governments.** This is clearly stated both in CEDAW

(Article 17) and GREVIO (Rule 9) Rules and Procedures. In addition, these bodies offer very limited or no space for the participation of women's organizations during nomination, election and decision-making processes.

Further, the intergovernmental body on women's human rights, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where governments meet every March in New York and take decisions on women's rights and gender equality policies globally, has severely closed its doors to Women's NGOs in recent years.

In summary, in many countries, independent women's NGOs have little or no fair access to the so-called independent international bodies. Furthermore, in recent years, authoritarian / populist governments have increasingly established their own NGOs (namely GONGOs – Government organized NGOs), which they support with all means, financially and in terms of government cooperation that also causes some donors to prefer working with these GONGOs. This leads to the total exclusion of independent women's NGOs from policy making processes.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

In view of the above, **there is an urgent need to re-institutionalize gender accountability** since the existing bodies are not responsive to women's human rights. Women and women's NGOs all around the World do not have a truly 'Independent Body' that they can appeal to, expect fair decisions and interventions for improvements of their lives. It is high time that we had an independent body with independent investigative, decision making, and enforcement powers, free from any state influence and which will find solutions to the needs of all women: A body where women can appeal to without any barriers (such as language, geography etc.), get workable solutions, **monitor and enforce the implementation of BPFA** and even devise policies on enhancing women's rights, gender equality, feminist values and women's empowerment.

**This independent body would** have the capacity to receive complaints, prevent violations of women's human rights, afford women protection, and be the intermediary body to demand accountability and reparations from those that commit crimes against women and girls, as well as from those that continue enacting gender discriminatory civil and fiscal laws to end impunity at all levels. It should have the knowledge, expertise and experience on the work over social demands, as well as an established reputation to be respected by governments and international institutions. It would also develop monitoring systems and accountability structures, including **monitoring the implementation of the outcomes of the Global Forums**. It should not be there to monitor only; its main function will be to **RESPOND**.

**It should have a horizontal organizational model and horizontal working relations, respecting the diversity of women.** The organisation should be flexible, inclusive and approachable and responsive worldwide through, in all its sections. It should be transparent in its methodologies, yet prioritises the privacy and security of information, especially regarding the safety of its applicants.

**This body should be recognized** by international organisations and governments and have the powers to make protocols with existing bodies e.g. CEDAW, GREVIO, special rapporteurs on women's rights and human rights and all other pertinent institutions so that it will have a legitimate stance to act as a social partner in global policy making and monitoring processes. **The body should be responsive to urgent needs;** for example, it must have the capacity to

bring solutions to eliminate the language barriers which is a big hindrance for especially grassroots women.

Further questions remain, such as what will be needed to ensure the legitimacy and the power of this body in relation to states and multilateral institutions and how can the structure of this body be formed to enhance/ensure its powers. Funding will be another important part of the discussion which we are hoping to undertake in the future regional and global meetings. Sponsorship from independent sources will be sought. The sustainability and the format of the funding will be important in order to ensure that this body can undertake the important and extensive work that it sets out to achieve.

**Continuous and coordinated efforts** will be needed during the regional and international **Beijing+25 meetings and beyond**, to shape such an Independent Body, owned and managed by women. We are calling onto the World's women organisations and civil society to work with us and contribute towards the establishment of this organisation which would speak the demands for accountability of the women in need and monitor the actions of the stakeholders.

We need a global system responsive to women's needs. We need a world that will ensure equality and freedom for women. **This is a time for galvanizing change!**

# FINANCING

## for implementation of BPFA

### Lead

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## Structural barriers and negative trends

- Weak process of linking planning and budgeting of the BPFA at national levels.
- Lack of comprehensive availability of sex-disaggregated data, particularly following the life cycle stages (by sex as well as age), as a basis for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).
- Weak linkages between GRB and wider public finance management (PFM) reform processes. Weak link between policy and legal requirements for gender equality with resource allocations for implementation of these requirements in many of our countries in the region
- Weak mechanisms to track resource allocations throughout the budget cycle, from budget planning through to evaluation of impact of expenditures.
- Weak transparency on allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment leading to the status when information is not publicly available.
- The national agenda 2030 implementation plans, have weak Means of Implementation (MOI) strategies in particular regarding Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls
- Weak effectiveness: in many cases, Gender Responsive Budgeting is implemented by 'ticking boxes' and does not serve the purpose of transforming Gender equality financing.



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Countries are undertaking gender-responsive budgeting but gaps remain in translating their commitment to gender equality into adequate resources and monitoring systems, and at all levels of government from national to local.

The Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on Gender Equality has a target and indicator for tracking resource allocations to gender equality measures. Governments introduce deliberate measures into the planning and budgeting cycle to meet their gender policy objectives such as eliminating gender-based violence or increasing women's employment. By making these allocations public, governments commit to higher levels of transparency and accountability in budget decision making.

The Beijing+25 national review reports show that many countries from the region have not reported to question 21 of the UN Women "Guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews: "Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?" One of examples from governmental reports to this question: "NO. Such statistics is not yet covered, and it will be possible only after the gender program is developed".

In the 2018 Monitoring Round (indicator 8 "Countries have transparent systems to track public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE)" =SDG indicator 5.c.1. showed that only 19% (13 of 69) of partner countries report they have comprehensive tracking systems in place and make gender budget allocations available publicly, thus fully meeting the indicator requirements.

10 countries from the UNECE region participated in measuring mechanisms to track resource allocations towards women's rights and gender equality: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova.

Some countries have taken steps to establish such systems and have some basic elements of these systems in place. Strong, gender-responsive development strategies show that countries are committed to gender equality, but these strategies are not resourced. Few countries have allocated adequate resources to support gender-equality activities, which signals an important policy implementation gap.

Many partner countries, those that already use sex-disaggregated statistics to inform decision making as well as those that do not, indicate a need for increased capacity in this area – both in terms of collecting the data and to understand and systematically use this information.

Results of the 2018-2019 GPEDC Monitoring Round show that partner countries are experiencing challenges moving beyond the planning phase to putting in place mechanisms to systematically track allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the budget cycle and also to make these allocations public. While 51% of partner countries include specific guidance on gender-related objectives in their budget call circulars (or equivalents), fewer (28%) tag budget allocations to identify their link with gender-equality objectives, and only 19% conduct gender audits of the budget. Currently, 64% of countries publish information on gender-equality budget allocations, but continued effort is needed to make this information available in a timely and accessible manner.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

- **Adequate and effective financing** as it is essential to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls. We call Governments to reverse the trend of underinvestment in gender equality and women's empowerment. Governments should close implementation gaps in gender-responsive budgeting and in translating their political commitments into financial practice. They should make allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment public in order to strengthen oversight and accountability.
- Governments should apply a **comprehensive approach** to implement policy priorities, whereby governments incorporate gender-sensitivity throughout the budgeting and PFM process and systems rather than through isolated and separate efforts.
- **Legal reforms** to ensure that state make obligatory, transparent and accountable budget allocations for effective implementation of commitments on women's rights and gender equality should be taken urgently.
- Put in place **mechanisms to systematically track allocations to gender equality** and women's empowerment throughout the budget cycle and also to make these allocations public.
- Governments should ensure at least **85% of their development funding is gender responsive**, as some States have started to do as part of their Feminist Foreign Policy approach.
- **Capacity building for governments** and decision makers is needed to understand how to monitor if funds were spent in a gender responsive manner
- **A multi-stakeholder process** is needed (States and CSOs) to plan the allocation of finance in a gender responsive manner, using gender responsive budgeting (GRB) methodologies
- **As loans for women in rural areas** are inaccessible, governments need to prioritise grants rather than loans to fit the situation of women with low income and who have no guarantees and collateral.
- **Public Private Partnerships (PPP)** are not an option for funding women's equality measures, as PPPs focus on large infrastructure programs that are not based on the human rights of local populations' and their needs
- **Capacity building** for women's organisations is needed (platforms, training of trainers, training, webinars) including tools on accessing available finance.
- **Gender responsiveness should be mainstreamed within the PFM system**, governments should adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels the need to strengthen linkages between GRB and wider public finance management (PFM) reform processes.
- **Criteria** for additional funding by donors for partner countries that are performing well in areas related to gender equality, should be encouraged.
- We suggest organising a side event during the Forum Equality to explore the barriers and the options to overcome these barriers.

## Recommendations from group on Financing implementation of the BPFA

In order to ensure an adequate and effective financing to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls we:

- Call for legal reforms to ensure that state makes obligatory, transparent and accountable budget allocations for effective imp of commitments on women's rights and gender equality
- Call to put in place mechanisms to systematically track allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the budget cycle and also to make these allocations public.

### Useful sources

- Governmental Beijing+25 review reports
- GPEDC. 2019. Making development co-operation more effective: How partner countries are promoting effective partnerships. PART I OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP 2019 PROGRESS REPORT: <http://effectivecooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Part-I-of-the-Global-Partnership-2019-Progress-Report.pdf>
- UN W. 2017. EGM Report on SDG Indicator 5.c.1: <https://gender-financing.unwomen.org/en/highlights/sustainable-development-goal-indicator-5c1>
- FG CPDE 2019 data on indicator 5.c.1 : The metadata of Indicator 5.c.1 can be found in the webpage of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGS:
- [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-06/Tier%20re-classification%20requests%20for%206th%20IAEG-SDG%20meeting\\_web.zip](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-06/Tier%20re-classification%20requests%20for%206th%20IAEG-SDG%20meeting_web.zip)



**Twenty-year-old singer, Zere Asylbek from Kyrgyzstan, performing during the civil society forum. Zere released her first Kyrgyz-language song `Kyz` ('Girl') in 2018. The song created a huge commotion in the country, and led to heated debates on women's rights and their choices.**

# **6. Ending violence against women, girls and women human rights defenders**

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

## Lead

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## Contributors

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**Living a life free of violence is a fundamental human right, but... “Millions of women and girls around the world are assaulted, beaten, raped, mutilated or even murdered in what constitutes appalling violations of their human rights...” (former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon).**

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) are phenomena rooted in inequality, discrimination and power imbalances which become manifested as physical, psychological, economic and other forms of abuse. VAWG affects women and girls across the life course from child and forced marriage to rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, harassment in the workplace and also elder and widow abuse. Children who experience domestic violence often suffer in silence. Deeply ingrained patriarchal structures reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and violate women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy. These effects are often compounded by structural inequalities and institutional violence based on race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, immigration or IDP status, age, homelessness, imprisonment, marital status, health, disability and socio-economic class, making an intersectional approach essential. Intersectionality offers an essential framework for understanding the experiences of individuals whose identities intersect at points of oppression. The media also plays a pivotal role in the objectification of women and girls and the retrenchment of harmful gender norms. VAWG is

evolving and rapid advancements in new technologies have facilitated and increased cyber VAWG, online harassment, and non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, as well as child pornography. Gun violence, particularly in North America, can be a specific form of VAWG and GBV.

Most VAWG cases go unreported. Family and community pressures, lack of information and financial resources, language barriers, immigration status and lack of trust in and revictimization by local institutions, including the police and the judicial system, may prevent women reporting of VAWG. On average, only 13% of cases of VAWG across Europe are ever reported, and only a fraction result in conviction (EIGE, 2019). Moreover, accusations of domestic violence are often ignored under civil law in child custody decisions, allowing perpetrators to retain parental rights.

Gender stereotypes remain a challenge with VAWG often being perceived as a “women’s problem.” Toxic masculinities and sexist attitudes further exacerbate this problem. It is often seen as a private family matter rather than a public or political one, making it difficult for authorities to intervene. Some members of this group have also suggested investigating the Every Woman Treaty. Despite these many dimensions of VAWG, women’s agency and resilience remain strong, and civil society continues to make its voice heard.

**VAWG is an obstacle to the achievement of the SDGs. UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, stated in 2018 that whilst women’s empowerment was central to the success of the Sustainable Development Agenda, this could not be achieved without eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG). Most countries in the UNECE region make the link between the BPFA and the SDGs, especially Goal 5, but the alignment between the two frameworks is not often clearly stated.**

## Survey results answers to questions regarding the UNECE region

Based on 43 national country report reviews, 55 CSO questionnaires and VAWG working group discussions with additional input from online comments and feedback provided during the CSO Forum, 28.10.2019.

**Main structural barriers:** Insufficient access to justice; lack of training of judiciary, police, health and social workers about VAWG; lack of specialized courts; lack of education, awareness and data on VAWG, including feminist analyses; lack of women in leadership, especially in faith bodies and religious institutions; lack of knowledge, implementation and enforcement of laws, misinterpretation of the law; austerity measures, lack of funding for specialised services for VAWG survivors, e.g. shelters, legal aid, job training, sexual and reproductive health services (including abortion and birth control); socio-economic and cultural barriers and harmful gender norms, roles and stereotypes that disproportionately affect women of already marginalised groups.

**Most prevalent and concerning forms of VAWG:** Domestic violence, sexual violence (including conflict-related sexual violence), psychological and emotional abuse, human trafficking, cyber violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, FGM and other harmful practices such as widow abuse, femicide and sexual exploitation.

**De jure and de facto progress:** Most governments have advanced in some of the 12 critical areas of the BPFA both de jure and de facto, albeit to different extents, e.g. little progress in

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, a backlash against the #MeToo movement in Canada, Denmark and other countries.

#### Examples of positive practices include:

- Free legal aid for VAWG survivors regardless of background and financial income
- Social support services for protection and empowerment of girls and women.
- Supporting women's independence, free childcare for work/study, tax credit for single mothers.
- #MeToo movement which empowered women to speak up about their experiences of violence.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

### Improve access to justice

**Priority 1:** Remove barriers to reporting VAWG and stop impunity of perpetrators (especially for victims of sexual violence). Ensure more effective, fast track investigations, prosecutions and compensation for victims of GBV, better coordination between sectors, safety of victims, media privacy, immediate interventions (e.g. emergency restraining orders, child protection orders, crisis ambulance services, professional, medical and psychological help and forensic data collection) and free and accurate legal aid for survivors. Use multisectoral teams of well-trained police, judges, health and social workers, and work to rehabilitate perpetrators and engage men and boys in campaigns to eliminate GBV e.g. the White Ribbon Campaign.

**Priority 2:** Strengthen legal protections against VAWG through affirmative consent laws and the inclusion of emerging forms of violence such as cyber VAWG and unlawful violations of internet privacy. Ratify and implement existing comprehensive international legal frameworks such as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), CEDAW and the new ILO Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Improve law enforcement mechanisms and ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law, especially on grounds of race, socio-economic class, immigration status, and gender identity and sex characteristics in accordance with international human rights standards. Whilst laws are important, a comprehensive approach is essential together with community funding for survivors.

### **Establish and improve National Action Plans on eliminating VAWG based on gender equality mainstreaming and budgeting which promote empowerment and civic engagement for all.**

**Priority 1:** Provide adequate and sustainable funding for a range of community driven resources for survivors' services, including women's shelters, rape crisis centres or sexual violence referral centres, free legal aid, psychological support and childcare and healthcare for survivors. Pay particular attention to marginalised groups and people facing additional challenges due to intersecting inequalities. Ensure effective responses to all cases of VAWG based on the due diligence standard, and increase the range, diversity and quality of available support services while minimizing the duplication of their function. Engage more actively CSOs which have specialized knowledge and expertise in the respective areas.

**Priority 2:** Collect integrated, reliable, disaggregated and confidential data on all forms of violence. Improve structures to assess VAWG and establish reliable monitoring and independent evaluation mechanisms to oversee ending VAWG efforts, expenditures and results.

**Priority 3:** Set transparent accountability processes and spaces for full participation of CSOs, feminist and women's organisations.

### **Focus on prevention of VAWG through education and awareness**

**Priority 1:** Educate students from pre-kindergarten through secondary school on internet safety, gender equality, human rights, mutual respect, diversity and tolerance; teach adolescents about consent and provide comprehensive sexuality education, social skills and anger management counselling where needed.

**Priority 2:** Address gender stereotypes in schools and homes and through the training and involvement of teachers, police, healthcare professionals and the media.

**Priority 3:** Work with CSOs, women's organisations and feminist movements to mobilise women and girls at the grassroots level and with men and boys to take a stand against GBV. Engage local governments, employers and public institutions (Parliaments, ministries, local authorities, municipalities, etc.) to prevent domestic violence, including using mobile units and smartphone apps with guaranteed confidentiality.

**The following people are** thanked for their additional comments made after the first draft was circulated on 16th September by the VAWG working group. Their online comments and those provided personally to us on 28th October at the CSO Forum have helped strengthen this document: Pille Tsopp-Pagan, Yuliia Anosova, Annette Lawson, Elly Pradervand, Julia Ehrt, Joyce Hamilton, Ann-Marie Wilson, Altin Hazizaj, Selina Kindrat Pang, M. Canan ARIN, Neus Pociello, Doris Bingley.

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The co-moderators for the breakout groups and final editors were Mohinder Watson and Olga Sidenko.

# ADDRESSING ANTI-WOMEN'S

rights groups, shrinking spaces, neoconservatism

## Lead

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The severe systemic crisis provoked by the global financial crisis in 2008 further deepened income inequality across the world and led to a rejection of social and political gains associated with neoliberalism. This has resulted in an increase of systematic attacks on human rights, in general, and women's and marginalized groups' rights in particular (1), by neo-conservative governments (with the crucial support of religious conservatism) and well-resourced and globally well-connected fundamentalist faith-based organisations (2). In fact, they have reached UNECE governments and multilateral institutions, including the EU Institutions (3), jeopardizing the human rights, including those that focus on women's rights and norms that have been built in past decades. On the 9th of April 2019, a Global Civil Society Summit was held in Belgrade where the deteriorating conditions, the attacks on human rights defenders, women's rights and LGBTIQ+ activists were denounced (4). This patriarchal neoliberal fundamentalist (5) offensive is manifested in numerous initiatives led by both governments and private sector (6) which have been largely contested by feminist movements.



## Structural barriers and negative trends

Evidence (7) of **Shrinking Civic Space**: The accusations and judicial proceedings against activists and NGOs (ex. Helena Maleno by the Spanish State; the rescue NGO "Open Arms" by the Italian government) and the arrest of human rights defenders (ex. 10 human rights defenders in Turkey), the creation of gag rules (ex. the Spanish "Gag Law" restricting freedom of expression) and the attacks against journalists (ex. Poland; Turkey; Ukraine; Russia) are just a few examples. In many countries, and in some international spaces, space created for independent civil society is being used and dominated by anti-gender, anti-equality and government organized NGOS (GONGO)s.

**Attacks to equality and gender mainstreaming policies**: Sexual and reproductive rights are under attack in several countries (Poland; Hungary; Italy; Austria; Romania), including the reactivation of anti-abortion laws (Spain (8); the Global Gag Rule (9) passed by the Trump administration in 2017; and the One of Us Initiative advocating the EU institutions to prohibit

funding SRR initiatives). Also, equality, “gender mainstreaming” and non-discriminatory policies, including GBV, and gendered educational curriculum (ex. Spain; Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Turkey) are challenged.

**Increase of hate crimes.** Exclusionary narratives such as the ‘fortress’ Europe , “gender ideology”, securitization policies (Preventing Violent Extremisms) criminalizing minorities such as Roma and Muslims, with serious effects on women and gender non-conforming people; and misogynistic/ macho narratives are increasing xenophobia and result in homophobic/transphobic/anti-feminists attacks. There is a parallel Increase in anti-Semitic attacks and hate crimes (France, Germany, e.g.).

In the **political arena**, Trump’s arrival, Putin’s presence and other ultra-conservative political leaders (e.g. UK; Spain; Austria; Hungary; Poland) have boosted fundamentalisms (economic/social/religious) (10).

**State capture** by transnational corporations and growing **militarization**: The lack of accountability, transparency and the use of national security concerns to legitimize ongoing human rights violations impact women’s rights in the region and create insecurity which foment populist discourses.

**Setbacks in the narratives:** In the process of radicalization, hate speech plays a central strategic role leading to an increase in racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-LGBTIQ+ aggressions (11) as it is denounced by CSOs (“STOP Hate Crimes in Europe” Final Conference Statement, Madrid, 2012).

**Main progress and/or backlashes related to Beijing:** A lot has been achieved over the past decades and several legal cornerstones have been developed (ex. Irish referendum on abortion, 2018). However, we cannot take progress for granted. According to official reports gender parity may be shifting into reverse (WEF, 2017; EIGE reports on Beijing) and worrying setbacks are seen in some regions (12).The backlash and attacks against women’s rights are being largely contested in the streets by feminist movement and CSOs (13). Also, some political leaders have been vocal supporters of women’s rights (Canada demanded respect for reproductive rights; Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and other countries stood up to the Global Gag Rule through She Decides Initiative; in the UK and France decisions to ban protests by anti-abortion groups in front of clinics and websites that publish false information were passed). The backlash is also challenged by faith-based feminists reinforcing a holistic approach to human rights which re-affirms that we must not allow the conservatives voices to define what religion is and what human rights are.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Calling on governments to renew their women’s rights and gender equality commitments (such as calling the EU to ratify the implementation of the Istanbul Convention), to reaffirm the **principle of non-regression** requiring that international norms which have already been adopted by States cannot be revised, and increasing accountability among international organizations and governments contributing to transparency, ensuring human and women’s rights and reducing implementation gaps and impunity.

- **Aligning economic policies** with international human rights law, women's rights frameworks, and promoting rights of those traditionally marginalised (such as women of colour and with disabilities, LGTBQI+, HIV/AIDS women, migrants, other marginalized individuals from the global south).
- To **map and report 'gender-neutral' and anti-rights** organisations pushing for anti-democratic and anti-rights policies and narratives, developing strategies that hold them to account. Anti-rights groups purposefully erode the canon of established international human rights treaties and conventions, dismantle democratic structures, push for anti-humanistic values and even de-legitimise UN agencies and human rights bodies. While these movements use the language of liberation and human rights, they in fact promote restriction.
- Demanding states to control anti-rights groups as a matter of international human rights law; and mapping the origins of the funds/money/tax havens of those who finance anti-rights' groups, such as done by the Ours Platform.
- Calling on governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders to **suspend financial restriction** to the full implementation of women's rights (ex. sexual reproductive health and rights) and to increase funding for the women's movements and women's rights platforms, grassroots organisations and projects, especially grassroots women-led organisations focusing on advocacy on the pushback against the gender equality pushbacks.
- **Building alliances** with human rights actors, CSOs, institutions and other stakeholders to showcase that faith-based traditions are not a monolith.
- To **promote funding**, tools and training and capacity building to feminist groups to challenge the fundamentalists pushbacks.
- To challenge hate speeches in all its forms such as those against feminists, LGTBQI+, migrants, Roma, minorities and women from marginalised backgrounds and **increase accountability** and transparency of all of those that are responsible for discriminatory practices that violate international human rights law.

### Useful resources

1. See the E.U. Fundamental Rights Agency report (2017): "[Challenges to women's human rights in the EU](#)"; and EU Parliament's resolution (2019) based in the report) on "[Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights](#)".
2. There is evidence about the large and global connections among the anti-rights movements as well as to the international harsh capitalist political economy and to other movements that are benefiting from it such as the climate change deniers. See for example Open Democracy, 27 March 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-trump-linked-us-christian-fundamentalists-pour-millions-of-dark-money-into-europe-boosting-the-far-right/>; Open Democracy, 27 March 2019, Revealed: dozens of European politicians linked to US 'incubator for extremism', <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-dozens-of-european-politicians-linked-to-us-incubator-for-extremism/>
3. On 19 March 2019, members of the European Parliament in collaboration with "One of Us" organised the "9th week for life" in the European Parliament.
4. [2019 Belgrade Call to Action](#)
5. Right-wing ideology is a package, of a conservative small state economy – which leads to household being the main area of delivering social services in the 'family' thus constraining women to the household economy more than in a more even centre-left or radical progressive version of the economy that provides a lot more care services and public services more generally.
6. Supporting religious private education, in detriment of public one, and sex-segregated schools; reducing public investment and privatizing the Health sector (Madrid, UK see [Privatization of healthcare in Europe](#)"), affecting to key services for women. Also, questioning gender equality policies, closing shelters for VAWG victims, allegations of

- "gender discrimination" against men, and attempts to dismantle Sexual and Reproductive Laws.
7. 58,7% of the 300 respondents of a survey conducted by Civil Society Europe and CIVICUS considered conditions are deteriorating for CSOs despite effective legal framework for civic freedoms in EU countries (CIVICUS, 2016). See also the CIVICUS Monitor
  8. The Spanish conservative former minister of Justice, Gallardón, tried in 2013-2014 to restrict access to abortion.
  9. It is an Executive Order for which U.S. funding is denied to health organizations that provide abortion services, counselling or referrals. This is accompanied by other policies such as the funding cut for UNFPA (Kemp-Kasten amendment).
  10. In October 2017, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on cultural rights defined the concept and denounced the impacts of fundamentalist and extremism on women's rights on the report A/72/155.
  11. See RAXEN REPORT Special 2018. Globalization of Intolerance.
  12. The Andalusian case (Spain) is significant in that sense. After the elections held in December 2018, a far-right wing political party (Vox) which openly opposes to current legislation on equality between women and men and GBV, denying even its existence, entered the Andalusian Parliament. An agreement was signed between the 2 parties in government and Vox. It establishes a serious backlash in prevention and attention of VAWG, and contravening CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, questioning gender mainstreaming policies and renaming GBV into intrafamilial violence. It also supposes a reduction of the amount assigned to equality and ending VAWG mechanisms.
  13. i.e. Black Friday to protest the proposed ban on abortion in Poland (2017); May 8th feminist strikes in Spain (2018,2019), Demonstration November 7th (2016) in Madrid (Spain) against macho and sexual violence; and the MeToo movement.

# SUB-GROUP: ELIMINATE TRAFFICKING

in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking

## Lead

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Prostitution and trafficking in all forms depend upon the exploitation of women's and girl's vulnerabilities arising from a patriarchal societal system which creates inequality, exclusion, discrimination and abuse of power, and which is often underpinned by discrimination in the law. The #MeToo movement has been one example demonstrating the widespread nature of sexual coercion and the continuum of violence within which exploitation occurs. Trafficking for the purpose of "exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation" ([Palermo Protocol](#)) is the most prevalent form of human trafficking and women and girls are the most affected ([UNODC, 2018](#)). In Canada, 95% of all detected victims/survivors are female (mostly <25 years old and internally trafficked) ([Statistics Canada, 2018](#)) and in the EU two-thirds of those registered are female: Women and girls account for 95% of victims of sexual exploitation, 20% of labour and 68% of 'other forms', with a near equal split between those trafficked from within the EU or outside of it ([European Commission, 2018](#)). There is no official estimate in the U.S. and some challenge the veracity of such statistics due to the contrast between estimates and official numbers. Women and girls face recurrent sexual violence across all forms of trafficking (i.e. sexual abuse in domestic servitude).



## Structural barriers and negative trends

What are the structural barriers and “root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women?” ([Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action D3 130\(b\)](#))

### **Gender Based Violence (GBV) is pervasive and perpetrators act with impunity**

- Trafficking is a form of gender GBV linked to other forms of GBV: 30% of trafficking cases assisted by National Anti-trafficking Coalition Shelter (Albania) are divorced mothers with children who are former victims of domestic violence.
- 88.2% of top rated porn scenes contain aggressive acts ([UN Broadband Commission on Digital Development, 2018](#)); in 2018, there were 537 cases of trafficking into pornography identified in the US ([Polaris National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2019](#)).
- Low conviction rates for perpetrators in the trafficking chain - from recruiter to end user.

- Paying for sex with a victim of trafficking is sexual violence; many States fail to recognize prostitution markets as inherently linked to human trafficking “...making it much easier for traffickers who wish to use a legal environment to exploit their victims” (Europol, 2016).
- Women in prostitution “have the highest homicide victimization rate of any set of women ever studied” (UNODC, 2019).

### **Migrant and ethnic minority women are not sufficiently protected and supported**

- Women and girls seeking asylum face lack of gender-sensitive processes in reception centres and higher risk of trafficking and gender-based violence.
- EU approach to migration emphasizes security over women’s human rights: In 2016, 80% of Nigerian women and girls arriving over Mediterranean are believed to have been trafficked into the sex trade; “It is urgent and important that the analysis of the data on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings [...] shall be accompanied by a study of the market they are intended for and of the growing demand for paid sex services” (IOM, 2017).
- A majority of Europeans continue to view Roma people unfavourably (Pew Research, 2019), leading to higher rates of poverty and inadequate access to employment, housing, education, health and justice for Roma (FRA, 2018). Women from minority ethnic backgrounds like Roma women are overrepresented in prostitution in Western Europe and as victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (EWL, 2018); ethnic minority women and girls and transgender women are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking (Public Defender of Georgia, 2018).
- Native American and First Nations women and girls dramatically overrepresented in prostitution and trafficking in North America and high incidents of trafficking linked to the border with Mexico and immigration response (ICE) putting victims at higher risk (USA).

### **Female face of poverty**

- Poverty, exclusion and gender stereotyping keep women in a position of vulnerability to prostitution and trafficking.
- The unemployment rate across the EU is higher for women than for men, and women are engaged in part-time work three times more than men (Eurostat, 2019). Predatory capitalism creates demand for exploitable labour; high unemployment and lack of gender sensitivity in welfare systems ensure there is a steady supply of victims of exploitation.
- Austerity, reduced spending for social programmes, and privatisation of public services have hit women particularly hard. 86% of the burden of austerity has fallen on women (UK), forcing some to engage in or return to prostitution (House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). The link between lack of affordable and accessible social services (especially healthcare, child and elderly care) and prostitution and trafficking cannot be overstated.
- The sex trade preys on women’s poverty and vulnerability, but is highly profitable for exploiters: sex trafficking nets \$99 billion USD globally and the highest profit per victim is made in developed countries (ILO, 2014).



## Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

### **Ratification and enforcement of international conventions (BPfA D3 130(a)):**

- SDG 5.2, despite being on the elimination of trafficking and sexual exploitation, does not have any corresponding indicators, and has received less attention than, for example, SDG 8.7 (such as through Alliance 8.7); European Commission data shows projects focused on sexual exploitation significantly underfunded compared to labour.
- Implementation of international conventions remains weak and immigration legislation contradicts trafficking legislation: Most female victims of labour trafficking are exploited in domestic servitude yet the Overseas Domestic Workers Visa (UK) leaves domestic workers tied to abusive employers.

### **Measures to address the root factors that encourage trafficking**

Including strengthening existing legislation to provide better protection of women and girls' rights and punishing perpetrators through criminal and civil measures (BPfA D3 130(b))

- Women face fines and imprisonment resulting from regulations penalizing them for being in prostitution, which may lead to loss of custody of children, increased debt to traffickers or lengthy prison sentences (USA), with a chilling effect on potential victims. In Albania, victims of trafficking have been convicted for "exercising prostitution" whilst their pimp/s are convicted for the exploitation of the prostitution of the victims.
- Women continue to face the disproportionate burden of child and elderly care and no measures for recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work have been taken.
- Despite the clear link between social protections and prostitution and trafficking (as outlined above), states continue to defund or privatise public services, and implement austerity.

### **Cooperation by relevant law enforcement authorities to dismantle trafficking networks (BPfA D3 130(c))**

- UK exit from EU threatens backslide on European efforts to combat THB, putting victims at risk of losing protections, assistance, support that are currently provided for under the EU Anti Trafficking Directive, as well as impacting on efforts to prevent and prosecute (i.e. potential for downgraded Europol membership).

### **Allocate resources**

To provide comprehensive programmes to rehabilitate victims into society, and cooperate with NGOs to provide social, medical and psychological care of victims of trafficking (BPfA D3 130(d))

- Victim identification remains weak, with competence to identify victims residing solely with the national police (Spain) or formal certification dependent upon criminal conviction (Germany). Official data in the USA and non-EU European states and disaggregated by sex remains scarce.
- Many governments, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, do not allocate adequate funds for victim assistance, and where they do, NGOs avoid being critical of

their governments for fear of losing their funding. Many NGOs continue relying on donor funding.

### **Develop educational and training programmes and consider enacting legislation preventing sex tourism (BPfA D3 130(e))**

- EU Anti-Trafficking Directive remains best practice for setting minimum standards on victim protection. Individual member states taking further measures to end trafficking/sex tourism, i.e. Sweden tabling legislation to criminalise paying for sex abroad.
- The city of Seville (Spain) uses the fines of buyers of prostitution to develop prevention and awareness-raising programs on sexual exploitation and THB. There is also a trafficking pro bono legal service at the Seville Bar Association.



## **Recommendations beyond Beijing+25**

**Prevent:** States must provide long term and standardized educational programs focused on key issues such as: respect, dignity, health, sexual and reproductive rights, challenging of gender stereotypes and harmful practices (such as early and forced marriages, male entitlement to access women's bodies, etc.)

- Reverse austerity measures and budget cuts to public services and ensure that vulnerable women have access to affordable healthcare, housing, and childcare, as well as access to the labor market, loans, property rights, reduced gender pay gaps. Recognise, value and redistribute unpaid care work.
- States must take measures to address the issue of birth registration, especially for vulnerable groups such as Roma, migrant and refugee and rural women.
- **Prosecute:** Ratify and implement existing international treaties on sexual exploitation, including CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol, which specifically prohibit the exploitation of the prostitution of others including pimping, procuring and the running of a brothel and ratify and implement existing international treaties on labour exploitation, including the new Protocol on Forced Labour and ILO convention C190 to end violence and harassment in the workplace. States must have clear provisions for punishment of all forms of trafficking (internal and external).
- Create a specific instrument at EU level to tackle sexual exploitation of all forms, including online and in prostitution, as part of a continuum of violence against women.
- States must apply the non-punishment principle by taking measures to ensure victims of trafficking are not penalised for infractions committed related to their exploitation and that their records are cleared. In particular, decriminalise people in prostitution.
- States must at a minimum criminalise paying for sex with victims of trafficking and minors. In many European countries, a criminal offence for paying for sexual acts under any circumstances has been shown to be the most effective means to reduce demand for sexual exploitation and curtail trafficking (*Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2018*).
- Trafficking must become a crime of low profit, high risk. States are urged to follow the money from start to finish and freeze assets, which may also be used for compensation.
- States must take all necessary measures to ensure perpetrators' accountability and punishment measures introduced for perpetrators of different related forms of violence.

- **Protect:** Improve capacity of authorities to screen for trafficking indicators, especially for migrants/street children and include NGOs/social services in formal victim identification.
- Funding must be ring-fenced for services for survivors, and services must be trauma-informed and victim-centered/oriented across all professions (judges, police, prosecutors). Services must include access to witness protection programmes.
- States must take all necessary measures to collect sex-disaggregated data and gendered statistics on all forms of trafficking (trafficking for the purpose of forced labour needs specific attention i.e. in agriculture).

**We demand EQUAL RIGHTS!**

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EQUALITY**  
HEALTHY  
WOMEN &  
EQUITY FOR ALL  
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# **7. Ensure women's rights in media, education and technology access**

# WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

## Lead

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## Contributors

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## Structural barriers, negative trends and progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

Access to information and right to communicate are fundamental human rights. Media plays an important role in influencing citizens' perceptions of women, raising awareness about gender inequality, and the empowerment of women. It has the power to build and destroy stereotypes and it is very important regarding the portrayal of women.

However, the global efforts and commitments made so far did not progress far enough in establishing gender equality and improving the position of women in the media since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) in 1995. Sections G (women in power and decision making) and J (women and the media) of the BPFA are crucial and their objectives remain leading in promoting gender equality globally, focusing on the need for governments to actively promote gender-mainstreaming in the media, and to guarantee equal access and full participation of women in decision-making and leadership that are essential to media.

While women are 50% of the world population, the most recent Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) shows that media content is far from gender sensitive and is often presented from the male-dominated perspective. Women remain only 1 in 4 of the people seen, heard or read about in the news since 2010, their viewpoints are not included, and they are often portrayed according to stereotypes. The proportion of stories that clearly challenge gender stereotypes has hovered between only 3% and 4% since 2005.

This tendency is valid both for the traditional media (e.g. TV, radio, newspapers, books, magazines) and for the digital media. EU Femm Committee's (The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality) 2018 Study on Gender Equality in the Media reported widespread gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunities within media industries including gender pay gap, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion.

Social media, which is one of the most important societal phenomena in our lives, and the main source of access to information and entertainment for the millennial and generation Z

youth, was non-existent in 1995, and therefore it has not been covered in the BPFA. +25 Review must focus on and thoroughly examine the gender impact of social media. The imposing of unrealistic beauty standards and gender stereotypes, online harassment and cyber-bullying towards women in social media, the rise of anti-gender equality rhetoric in the internet, and the digital gender gap, are among some of the topics which need to be considered.

With the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automated-Decision Making (ADM) in machine learning we face new opportunities but also threats to women's full participation and human rights. Entrenched implicit stereotypes and unconscious bias is being slowly stripped from the analogue world to the new digital media world, aggravated by the lack of women scientists creating ADM systems; from inherent bias in hiring; selection bias and stereotypes in the delivery of ads to women; and explicit misogyny through feminised mechanisms like Alexa - women continue to be excluded and left behind. We need gender equality in AI and ADM to ensure the full participation and the rights of women in the present, and in the future, we invent in the digital media world.

In parallel with the digital gender gap, media literacy is one of the most important topics that need to be addressed, especially due to the fast changing and mainly unregulated realm of digital/social media, which is becoming more important for all citizens, to be able to discern discriminatory content, fake news and to protect oneself from data breaches. This is particularly important for women, for whom the digital divide still remains a reality.

Moreover, the access of women to decision-making positions in the media industry remains dismally low. Lack of safe environments and policy frameworks in the media perpetuate gender inequality both in the content the media produce, and in the positions held by women in the media sector. As a result, the under-representation of women as news reporters has not changed in 10 years: only 37% of stories are reported by women. Besides, women in newsrooms do still face poor career perspectives and challenges in accessing decision-making roles. The most recent extensive study covering 170,000 people in the news media by IWMF found that 73% of the top management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women.

The safety of female journalists is a serious concern both in the field and at the workplace. According to the findings of the International News Safety Institute i, two thirds of women journalists are harassed and intimidated at their own office, mostly by their male colleagues and are discriminated on the account of their gender, race, age or professional experience. This often leads to self-censorship and social-censorship driven by fear, emotional effects or psychological trauma and even giving up journalism entirely. Next to the challenges women experience in the newsrooms, (they encounter diverse forms of violence by different types of perpetrators in the digital sphere) they are also attacked on online (social media) platforms. International figures show that online attacks have become more visible and coordinated in the past five years. Although both men and women face harassment online, many female media professionals deal with the kind of hate comments (sexist hate-speech) men do not come across such as messages about their appearance, gender and sexuality. International Women's Media Foundation's study of 2018 highlighted increase in (online) harassment of female journalists. A wide range of online attacks, the study finds, "... amplify misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, religious and other hate speech", and very often spills over to real-life harassment. Research in the Netherlands concluded that to improve the situation, the judicial system and the police need to prioritise the protection of women in the media and this should be combined with specific training for women journalists (e.g. on conflict management). Furthermore, serious backsliding in freedom of expression, restrictions imposed on journalists and the arbitrary detentions have a chilling effect on the activities of women journalists and lead to intimidation and self-censorship.

Governments need to step up actions in protecting women against any form of gender-based violence, including online and within the media sector, to reverse the trend of the global epidemic of trivialising online gender-based abuse and to provide access to justice for all. A key priority must be to counteract the discriminatory rules and attitudes that contribute to many failures to address gender inequality effectively.



## Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

Many issues have been discussed by the group (for example the need for discrimination-free AI, need of investments in open internet research, digital literacy, online harassment faced by women and LBTQI and Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) community, need for keeping gender-disaggregated data by organisations, fair and equal gender representation in and by the media (traditional and online), creation of gender-responsive policies, use of media as education tool, etc.)

### **To fully realise the BPFA we call for political leadership and recommend:**

- To achieve equality including digital equality, develop and implement inclusive policies to promote gender balance in media decision-making at all levels, which is grounded in human rights and takes an intersectional approach to combat and correct for gender bias and stereotyping in the media, including in Artificial Intelligence and Automated Decision-Making (you cannot be what you cannot see).
- States to undertake proactive action including developing mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in addressing online harassment, violence, threats and attacks in the media through strong legal frameworks to promote accountability, including but not limited to codes of conduct and self-regulations in the media.
- Grounded in universal human rights, promote international cooperation which includes creating multi-stakeholder alliances (private sector businesses such as global media and advertisement corporations, governments as regulators and civil society - which includes women as creators and consumers of media products) to address the issues that women in media face online and offline.

### **Key recommendations**

- Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) requires the formulation of gender-responsive ICT and media strategies and related policies which seek to improve the relevance or representation of content and services;
- Ensuring diversity within the portrayal of women in media, focusing on the representation of the intersectional experiences which women coming from disadvantaged backgrounds go through. Representation, providing a platform to speak, giving full agency to women, giving wide coverage for feminist story-telling are extremely important in this aspect.
- Increasing investments and financial incentives from governments for investment in gender equality measures in the media and the ICT sectors and the establishment of a monitoring mechanisms that integrate gender perspectives for increased accountability around implementation of commitments.
- A majority of the online harassment measures focus on prevention measures and advice/ feedback/ criticisms to those who have been attacked by giving perpetrators an

opportunity to escape prosecution. The 3Ps paradigm: prevention-protections-prosecution must be fully enforced as a fundamental framework to combat against misogyny within the media to reverse the trend of the global epidemic of trivialising online gender-based abuse and provide access to justice for all.

- Social media corporations (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook ...) must urgently reconstruct their -currently inadequate and non-transparent- online harassment and cyber-bullying policies with a gender perspective. The judicial system and the police need to prioritise the protection of women in the media and this should be combined with specific training for women journalists (e.g. on conflict management).
- Gender-biased algorithms and automated decision-making (ADM) that are used (amongst other things) in the context of newsfeeds, trending issues, and the display of ads and content online must be detected, reviewed, and reconstructed. Encouraging media corporations to self-regulate and advocating for media corporations to take responsibility for misogynistic media as well.
- Rigorous testing are needed across the lifecycle of AI systems: testing should account for the origins and use of training data, test data, models, application program interfaces and other components over a product life cycle.
- At the EU level, several countries have adopted quotas to increase women's participation on boards, and women have reached parity within several countries at the UNECE's region as presidents and board members in public broadcasting, but they are still underrepresented as executives. Further implementation of relevant gender-responsive policies is required to advance the position and decision-making power of women in the media.
- Action is needed to ensure that the existing rules on equal treatment in employment are enforceable (in particular gender pay gap, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion).
- Making the most of the influential power of social media: Feminist collective movements can collaborate with social media influencers (Youtubers, Instagram influencers, etc...) in order to engage the youth more.
- Action to promote new initiatives providing digital training, mentoring and networking opportunities, with special focus on career progression, improvements to pay, and working conditions are required and such efforts form an integral part of fighting gender inequality in the media.
- Social and educational campaigns and programs, and targeted training initiatives, including industry decision-makers, to promote egalitarian values and practices.

## Useful sources

- <https://aplusalliance.org/en/articles/1> (see end of document for recommendations)
- The position paper highlights the mounting evidence that gender bias and sexism is pervasive in automated decision-making. From inherent bias in hiring; selection bias and stereotypes in the delivery of ads to women; and entrenched implicit stereotypes and unconscious bias that gets translated into explicit misogyny through feminised machines like Alexa – women continue to be excluded and left behind. Affirmative Action for Algorithms <A+> in order to correct real life bias and barriers that prevent women from achieving full participation and rights in the present, and in the future, we invent in the media.
- <https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/HLP%20on%20Digital%20Cooperation%20Report%20Executive%20Summary%20-%20ENG.pdf>
- [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_41\\_42\\_EN.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Documents/A_HRC_41_42_EN.docx) (various references to online violence against women)
- <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/184/58/PDF/G1818458.pdf?OpenElement> (Special Rapporteur VAW 2018 report on online violence)

**NOTHING**  
**ABOUT US**  
**WITHOUT**  
**US**

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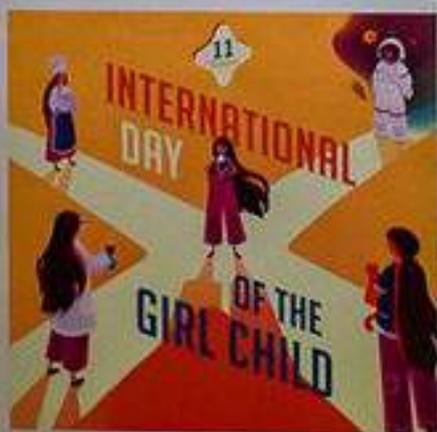
email

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country

Ukraine

Women facing multiple forms of discrimination because of their sex, ethnicity, disability, geographic location and HIV status among other factors, are often marginalized from decision-making. No policy should be decided without the full and direct participation of women affected by that policy. Credited to UN Women Ukraine



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Georgia

International Day of the Girl Child

**ANNEX**

# AGENDA

<b>8:30 - 9:30</b>	Registration and networking in exhibition space	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>9:30 - 10:30</b>	Opening, introduction and cultural performance - to the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2020 Generation Equality Forum and CSW processes.	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>10:30 - 11:30</b>	Civil society priorities - for Beijing+25 women's rights & gender equality process	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>11:30 - 11:45</b>	Break	
<b>11:45 - 13:00</b>	Civil society priorities - break out groups, 'world café' style	<b>Rooms 2, 3, 4</b>
<b>13:00 - 14:30</b>	Rally - to the big chair outside the Palais des Nations	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>14:30 - 15:00</b>	Lunch - bring your own, or available to purchase at cafeteria	
<b>15:00 - 15:45</b>	Civil society priorities - presentations by break out groups	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>15:45 - 16:00</b>	Break	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>16:00 - 16:45</b>	Working groups - analysing country reports, positions and alternative civil society reports	<b>Rooms 2, 3, 4</b>
<b>16:45 - 17:15</b>	Presentations by working groups	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>17:15 - 17:45</b>	Planning next Steps, combining priorities for joint statement to UN member-state meeting on Beijing+25 review (on 29-30 of September) appoint speakers for next day and drafting group to finalize interventions during the evening	<b>Room 2</b>
<b>17:45 - 18:00</b>	Closing	<b>Room 2</b>

## VENUE

International Conference Centre Geneva  
Rue de Varembé 17, Geneva, 1211 Switzerland

## SPONSORS



**GENERATION  
EQUALITY** REGIONAL CIVIL  
SOCIETY FORUM

GENEVA | 28 OCTOBER 2019

**Women's  
Major Group**  
Creating a Just & Sustainable Future

## Participants list

Organisations
"Armenian Forests" NGO
"Different&Equal"
28 Too Many
Act Alliance
Act Church of Sweden
ACTED Uzbekistan
Adéquations
Afrikanische Frauenorganisation
All Ukrainian Organisation Women's Consortium of Ukraine
Alliance Internationale des femmes
Amnesty International Bucharest Group
AO "Institutum Virtutes Civilis"
Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment NGO
Art Print Space and FiLiA UK
Asociación Mujeres con Voz
Associated country Women of the World (ACWW)
Association des Femmes Centrafricaines Ingénieurs du Développement Rural délégation Europe (AFCIDR-EUROPE)
Association for Consumer Rights Malta (ACR)
Association in Women's Career Development in Hungary (AWCDH)
ASTRA Network, Federation for Women and Family Planning
Atria - Institute for Gender Equality and Women's History
Austrian consulate in Munich
BANGWE et Dialogue
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Başkent Kadın Platformu
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
Biovision
BPW FRANCE

BPW International
BPW LYON
Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University
Bread for the World Youth (Beijing+25 Youth Task Force)
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF)
CARE France
CECIF-ECICW
Center for Legal Civic Initiatives
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Support of Women
Centre of Public Initiatives "Ideas for Change"
CFUW
CGIL
Child Rights Centre Albania
CHOICE For Youth & Sexuality
Christian Aid
CNCD-11.11.11
CNDE - Spain
CNDI consiglio nazionale donne italiane
COC Netherlands
Comisión para la Investigación de Malos Tratos a Mujeres
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
CONGREGATIONS OF ST JOSEPH
Conseil National des Femmes Françaises
Conseillère Environnement - Transport General Directorate for Risk Prevention Mission Permanent de la France
Consell Nacional Dones de España
Count me in!
CREA
Creación Positiva
Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"

D.I.Re - Donne in rete contro la violenza
Deutscher Frauenrat
DGB
Earth justice
ECICW/CECIF
EDF Youth Committee
Education International
Equality Now
Equipop
Escola de Pensament Feminista Amelia Valcárcel
Eurasion of union of adolescents and youth Teenergizer
European Center International Council of Women
European Disability Forum
European Network of Migrant Women
European Women's Lobby
EWL
FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
FAWCO - Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
FemAgora
FemFo Feminist Forum
Femmes d'Actions
Femmes solidaires
FOKUS - Forum for Women and Development
Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan
Forum Política Feminista
Free Press Unlimited
French minister
Gender-Centre, Platform for Gender Equality
Geneva women's strike - Greve des femmes
Global Affairs Canada
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)

Graduate Women International
Gray Panthers
HERA - Health Education and Research Association
Humanity Diaspo
IAW
ICW/CECIF
IFBPW (Ex-Officio Chair NGO CSW/NY)
IFRC - international federation of the red cross
ILGA World
International women* space
International Alliance for women (IAW/AIF)
International Council of Jewish Women
international council of voluntary agencies
International Council of Women (ICW-CIF)
International Falcon Movement - Socialist Education International
International Federation of Medical Students Associations
International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)
International organisation for migration
International Public Association "Gender Perspectives"
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
IPPF
Journalists for Human Rights
KA.DER ( Association for Support of Women Candidates)
Kyiv Gender Studies Institute
L' Associacio. Drets Sexuals i Reproductius
La CLEF- Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes
Latter Day Saint Charities
Le Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial
LIM
LO Norway
Make Mothers Matter

MenEngage Alliance
MenEngage Europe
Mercy Corps
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ,Bulgaria
MiRA resource center for black migrant and refugee women
MOSGB
N(N)LE Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
NAMEN
National Alliance of Women's Organization
National Board of Catholic Women
National Council of Women GB
National Council of Women Malta
National Council of Women of Spain (Aroa Foundation)
National Council of Women- Ukraine
Native Women's Association of Canada
NAWO
Netherlands Association of Women's Interests, Women's Work and Equal Citizenship
Netherlands Council of Women
NGO "From Equality De-Juro to De-Facto"
NGO "Istiqbolli Avlod"- NUKUS
NGO "La Strada - Ukraine" (member of International La Strada Association)
NGO "League of Professional Woman"
NGO Atina
NGO CSW Geneva
NGO CSW/NY
NGO PARASTOR
NGO-Coordination post Beijing Switzerland
Norwegian Children and Youth Council
Norwegian Midwife Association
Norwegian Shelter Movement
NSWP

OJQ PGR AMZA
Older Women's Network, Europe
Ontario Native Women's Association
OTRAS
OutRight Action International
OWEN - Mobile Academy for Gender Democracy and Promotion of Peace e.V.
PA Women's organisation Alga
PaRiter
Persons Against Non-State Torture
Plaform for Gender Equality/The group of feminist initiatives from Moldova
Plan International
Platform for Gender Equality
PO "Cultural-Education Center TOMIRIS"
PO "Madina"
Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights
Praxis für Naturheilkunde und Heilpflanzen
Public Foundation DIA
Public Foundation"Your Choice"
Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation
RED Mujeres Latnoamericanas y del Caribe en España
REFH et CLEF
Regards de Femmes
Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE)
Representing International Alliance of Women in Board European Women's Lobby
Réseau Féministe "Ruptures"
RESURJ
RFSL - the Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights
Rutgers
Sami Women Network
Sarajevo Open Centre
SeConS - Development Initiative Group

SÈNAN L'AVENIR DE NOS ENFANTS

Sex and Politics - Youth branch

Sex Workers Forum Russia

Sexual Rights Initiative

Shirley Ann Sullivan Educational Foundation

Soka Gakkai International

Soroptimist International

SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic

Swedish Women's Lobby

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Tajikistan network of women living with HIV

Taso foundation

Tax Justice Network

The Beam Magazine

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

The hidden hero in each kid

The National Council of Women of Finland

The Norwegian Union og Municipal and General Employees NUMGE

Theatre for Dialogue

Training for Women Network Ltd

Uçan Süpürge VAKfi

UK Government, Department of Work and Pensions

UN Economic Commission for Europe

UN Women Beijing +25 Global Youth Task Force/Girls20

UN Women ECE

UN Women France (observer)

UN Women Germany

UN Women Nationales Komitee Deutschland e.V.

UNAIDS

UNDP

UNHCR
UNHCR
UNICEF
Union Women of the Don
UNITED for Intercultural Action /// Asociación Egeria Desarrollo Social
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
University of Basel, department biomedecine
University of Bern/Women's Initiatives for Peace in Donbass
VAKAD
Vrouwenraad (Women's Council Belgium Flanders)
WAVE Network (Women Against Violence Europe)
WECF - Women Engage for a Common Future
Wecf France
WECF Georgia
Westminster Foundation for Democracy
WIDE+
Widows for Peace through Democracy (WPD)
Widows Rights International,
WILPF
WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform
Woman Development Future Public Union
Women and Gender Equality Canada
Women Deliver
Women Enabled International
Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways
Women in Development Shkoder
Women on Film and Audiovisual Media of Spain /CIMA
Women Political Club, Platform for Gender Equality
women Problems Research Union
Women Roma Network "Success"
Women's Association for Rational Develoment (WARD)

Women's Coalition - Turkey
Women's Federation for World Peace, Int'l
Women's Fund in Georgia
Women's Information Consultative Center
Women's Initiatives for Peace in Donbas(s)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's International Zionist Organization
Women's Network for Peace, Germany, and Peace Commission of the International Alliance of Women
Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia
Women's Resource Center Armenia
Women's Rights
Women's Union of Russia
Women's World Summit Foundation WWSF
Women@theTable
Women's Front /JURK
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations
YouAct - European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Young Feminist Europe
Young Feminists
YWCA - World
YWCA Canada
YWCA of Belarus
Zonta Club Fünf-Seen-Land
Zonta Int D-13 UN & CoE Committee Chair
Zonta Internatiinal

Country	# participants
Albania	4
Armenia	3
Australia	1
Austria	7
Azerbaijan	3
Belarus	2
Belgium	12
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2
Bulgaria	2
Canada	16
Croatia	1
Denmark	2
Finland	3
France	38
Georgia	8
Germany	26
Hungary	4
Israel	1
Italy	7
Kazakhstan	1
Korea	1
Kosovo	3
Kyrgyzstan	8
Lithuania	1
Luxembourg	1
Malta	4
Moldova	7
Montenegro	1
Netherlands	15
North Macedonia	3
Norway	15
Poland	2
Portugal	2
Romania	2

Russia	4
Serbia	5
Spain	22
Sweden	3
Switzerland	34
Tajikistan	6
Turkey	8
UK	27
Ukraine	14
Unknown	61
US	15
Uzbekistan	2
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>409</b>

## Intervention speakers

What	Link to website	Speaker
Item 1: Opening of the meeting	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/opening-statement-civil-society-reflections-on-beijing25-in-the-unece-region/">https://www.wecf.org/opening-statement-civil-society-reflections-on-beijing25-in-the-unece-region/</a>	İlayda Eskitaşçioğlu
Item 5: Closing the gender gaps: Effective economic and social policies in the UNECE region	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-5_-interventions.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-5_-interventions.pdf</a>	Marieke Koning Asel Dunganaeva Gea Meijers Valerie Bichelmeier
Item 6: Ending violence against women and girls: Lessons from the region	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-6_-intervention-3.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-6_-intervention-3.pdf</a>	Mohinder Watson Rashima Kwatra Marianna Leite
Item 7: Education for Gender Equality: a powerful tool for transformation	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-7_-intervention.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-7_-intervention.pdf</a>	Madeleine Kennedy-Macfoy Kate van de Krol
Item 8: Smart investments: Financing for Gender Equality	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-8_-intervention.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-8_-intervention.pdf</a>	Prabha Khosla
Item 9: Women in leadership - women's representation in policy and decision-making	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Item-9_-intervention-2.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Item-9_-intervention-2.pdf</a>	Jennifer Kamau Ernestine Melha
Item 10: Acting for climate: Empowering women to build climate resilience	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-10_-intervention.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Item-10_-intervention.pdf</a>	Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard Anne-Sophie Garrigou Bistra Mihaylova
Item 12: Co-Chairs' summary and closure of the meeting	<a href="https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Closing-session.pdf">https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Closing-session.pdf</a>	Sylvia Beales



## Asel KENZHETAYEVA

graphic artist, dress designer, illustrator

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Kazakhstan

**A woman rocks the cradle with one hand and rules the world with the other**

The illustration questions a traditional ethos that the sole role of women in reproduction. It hints at the importance of empowerment of women in all spheres of life, who, as the Kazakh proverb says “rule the world with the other hand”.



## Elizabeth GORDON

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| United Kingdom

### Out of the shadows ~ acrylic on canvas © 2018

Women and girls are tortured in their homes and other private spaces by parents, family, partners, traffickers, pornographers, buyers and johns. This is non-state torture. In the spirit of leaving no woman or girl behind, non-state torture must be specifically criminalised under law to ensure that states adopt appropriate legal protection thereby eliminating human rights discrimination against women and girls. I walk out of the shadows as a survivor of non-state torture to speak: No more "invisibilization"!



## Salma ZULFIQAR

is an award-winning artist and peace activist

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### Migration blanket

“I have created the Migration Blanket with women in the United Kingdom, showing their struggles, hopes and dreams about being included as part of society. From a racist attack to having no status and cultural clashes to opening her own department store and the free flow of Migration – the women and I expressed ourselves. These are themes that many migrant and refugee women all over the world can relate to. The Migration Blanket is comprised of some 60 patchwork panels, which were created individually by the women and me, each showing a unique life story. The artform is collage and drawing on canvas.”



## Ermina TAKENOVA

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### Victim blaming

Misogyny is equivalent to burning witches, especially in patriarchal societies. It is absurd how people tend to judge a raped woman more than a rapist. Imagine going through a violent experience and then being told that somehow it was your fault. Sometimes the rapists and abusers are even pitied by society – because there is always the assumption that the woman somehow provoked the attack. Women's lives and dignity are sacrificed for the sake of men's privilege and comfort.



## Alisa TELETOVIC

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### I am you, you are me

My art is intimate and personal. When we see inside ourselves, take off our masks, expectations, lack of love, then we can repair. I am you, you are me, inside we are the same and we are one - when we realize this, then there is hope.



## Ina RIEGLER

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### Fight

The painting explores the fact that too many women are still experiencing physical, psychological and structural violence every day. This piece is a self-portrait of the artist in boxing gear. Boxing is meant literally as well as symbolically for all kinds of fighting: "Never give up, fight for your rights!" Regarding the trauma-psychological terminology of "fight or flight", the artist calls women to fight and not flee.



## Erden ZIKIBAY

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Kazakhstan

### Pseudo-Heroes

More often than not, men in oppressive societies avoid challenging the systemic injustices that undermine their rights. Instead they tend to turn their frustration and anger on women who are seeking and fighting for emancipation.



## Lala GASIM

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### Mother nature

Empowering women is the world's best bet to fight climate change. That's why the Women Resource Centres in rural Azerbaijan help women to start businesses that safeguard the environment and promote sustainable agriculture. Meet Khalida, whose organic greenhouse farming protects the soil making it more resilient to floods, droughts and land degradation.



## Natia KVARATSKHELIA

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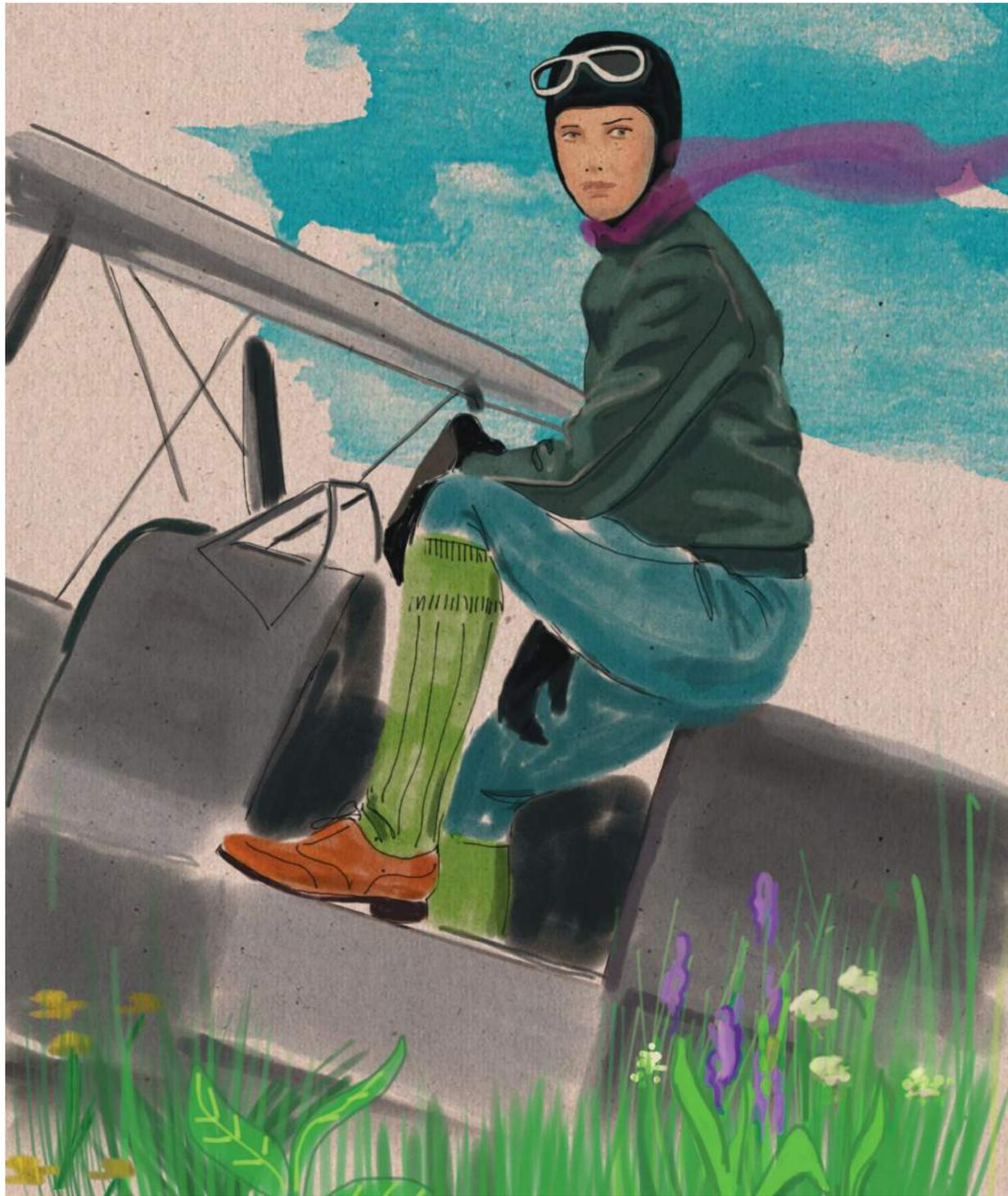
Georgia

### Maia, the sun warrior

Maia Tskneteli is a popular Georgian national hero who lived in the second part of the 18th century. The story of this heroic woman, referred to as Mate the Bandit, has been passed down from generation to generation. According to a legend, Maia was still underage when she was raped by her master. Her parents couldn't bear the grief and passed away soon after the incident. Maia killed the master, dressed in her father's clothes, slung his gun across her shoulder, picked up a sword and a dagger and headed to King Heraclius's court in Tbilisi. She introduced herself as Mate and asked for his protection. Since then, she served at King Heraclius's court, fought, freed the children captured by Persians and protected the people. *A story of Maia Tskneteli, by Teona Dolenjashvili*

### Changing the Narrative on Gender Stereotypes: A Collection of Tales from Europe and Central Asia

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Women Europe and the Central Asia Regional Office, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, is producing a regional collection of tales. The tales are aimed at inspiring girls to succeed in non-traditional roles as portrayed by known and forgotten historical fictional female figures from across the region. The collection will showcase inspirational accomplishments by women and girls, and their positive contributions to their communities and society.



## Maka JISHKARIANI

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country

| Georgia

### Short and tall pots and flying into the sky

The first Georgian female pilot, Rusudan Zhordania, was born in Zugdidi in 1915. After finishing school, she was admitted to Tbilisi State Conservatory to learn piano. But, within a year, she realized that music wasn't her calling. In 1935, Rusudan Zhordania enrolled in the Aviation School of Tbilisi. She dedicated her entire life to aviation. Rusudan Zhordania spent a grand total of 55,00 hours in the air. She knew how to fly 14 types of aeroplane. Rusudan Zhordania trained many pilots. After retiring, she worked as a teacher and wrote her memoirs.



## K.Angeline PITTENGER

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United States

### Battlegrounds and playgrounds

This is an image derived from Barbara Kruger's 1989 work, Untitled (Your Body Is a Battleground). Kruger's piece was created when I was nine years old. The above image was made in humble homage and gratitude for the work that Kruger and other feminists that came before me (howsoever imperfectly) have done. Because of their work, I could legally and safely have an abortion, was able to explore my sexuality in relative safety with people of all genders. I have also had the privilege to be a part of feminist movements and spaces in both Europe and the United States. These were designed to allow us to safely, joyfully and playfully explore pleasure in our bodies in spaces that held up the ideals of intersectionality, body liberation and diversity. While our bodies continue to be battlegrounds, our bodies can more often be playgrounds. The model in the image is a young black feminist in Barcelona.



## Nadiia Babynska VIRNA

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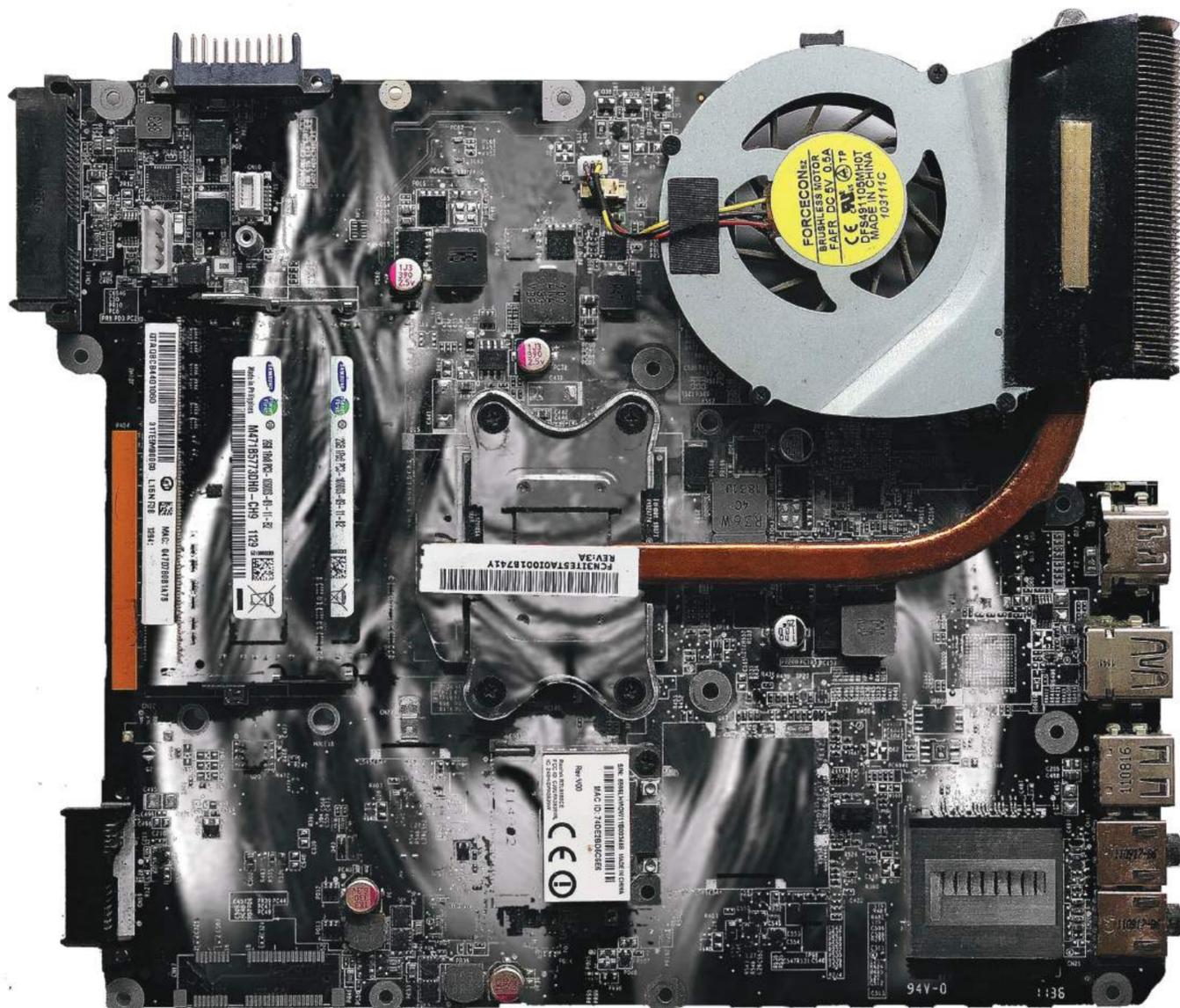
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Ukraine

### Rights not flowers (8 March 2019)

Flowers for women, vodka for men. It was, and unfortunately is, about the traditions of former USSR countries' perceptions of the International Women's Day: flowers, sexist's congratulations, drunk men. Since my childhood men have been giving us flowers on this day. Since my childhood men diminish the role and the sense of this day. Stop doing that! It is about rights, not flowers.



## Medina BAZARGALI

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**The origin of the world (2018) - motherboard, the MRI of my uterine tubes**

The technical world has won. And, new people lack the usual existence given from their birth. For me, there is a semiotic game with a basis for any electronic machine, and a narrow perception of the 'board' which 'constructs' human life, and the intertext with Courbet in the new technological era of the world origin from the motherboard. All this forms my understanding of virtuality by the second, new birth.



## Rand JARALLAH

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### Sexism

Ever felt like you were being treated as an accessory at the meeting table because you're a woman? Whether at the work-place, a social gathering, or at home? Yeah, I've felt that too. It's called sexism. What is sexism? It is prejudice or discrimination based on sex especially against women. It's behaviour, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex. Sexism is a form of oppression and domination. Don't internalize this notion, you've got so much to add to the conversation. What we need is a cultural and social shift in our attitudes towards women. (Source: artist has gathered some of this information from @merriamwebster)



## Bhargavi JOSHI

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### Second sex

Growing up in India, I was acutely aware of the harassment women face on a daily basis at home, on the streets, and in their workplace. Then, as I travelled and lived around the world, I realized that this isn't as much an issue of the 'third world,' as it is of the 'second sex'. It changes in form and degree, but at its core the issues remain the same - an imbalance in power creating opportunity for exploitation. Printed Violation was born out of that realization. I use my photography to create social campaigns that at first glance are simply beautiful images that draw people in; it's only upon closer examination that the underlying (oftentimes uncomfortable) messages become clear. I use my work to fight for a more just and honest world.



## Brooke ESTIN

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When one is centred on their loving heart, that energy can manifest in the world in unexpected ways. This piece represents the many phases of the complexity of relationships. The lesson is that when we learn to drop out of conflict and into our hearts, we can signal love, connection and forgiveness - even if that signal can't yet be received.



## Maria SIVERS

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### Freedom and equality

Women and girls live in a historically patriarchal world, with many local and national structures still biased towards men. Globally, patriarchal structures are a major obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people. The struggle for women's rights is a challenge to be met that requires perseverance and creativity from all of us to remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive model to society at large.



## Tim MAATMAN

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**The Netherlands**

The illustration on an equal footing shows the leg of a white person (possibly a man), at least the bottom part of it, and a woman (possibly of another colour) looking up to this immense figure (demonstration of power?). It is one of the works on intersectional feminism produced by a small group of art-students (Femi, Jesper, Simone and myself, Tim) from the arts academy, AKV st. Joost in the Netherlands.



## Rosemary RAUBER

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### Calculated risks

My project is contrasting images of people seeking refuge who have calculated their risks to leave their homes on perilous journeys against the calculated risks people make in their everyday lives. People on vacation often pay a premium price for an adventure. They want to encounter something or somewhere different and new, willing to pay for a controlled experience. People seeking refuge pay a premium price for the 'privilege' of risking their lives to get to a place of greater safety. We make the decision to do something based on known factors with the hope that the outcome will enrich our lives. When decisions are made for reasons of safety vs. self-actualization the 'known' is usually incredibly limited and the enrichment is purely surviving. Perceiving displaced people as being unique as opposed to different would be a start in changing attitudes. If we understood just how similar we are, despite our home countries, skin colour and religion, maybe we would do a better job at helping those in need.



## Marieke WARMELINK

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### Orsine Koorndijk

This is Orsine Koorndijk, from Suriname, who lived in The Netherlands. Orsine was a special woman, socially involved and a talented writer. Her novels highlight cruel corporal punishment within Roman Catholicism in Suriname and structural exclusion of people with dark skin. Orsine has helped raise her voice for a world of equal respect. She died in 2019. Every brave act, every action, every word is kept in the heart of her family members and beyond.



## Ia Ninoshvili/Forset

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### International Day of the Girl Child

At the age of 10, a girl is at a crossroads. Which path she takes does not only matter for her own life. It matters for the lives of all of us.

*Credited to UNFPA Georgia*



## Emily GREGORIOU

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**“I never paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality”**

Frida Kahlo has become an icon in Europe, and all around the world. Though this may seem positive (in highlighting women artists) the way she is often showcased - immortalised on objects and as decoration - goes instead to devalue her complex life, struggles and activism. Stripped down to a black and white drawing, these words by the artist herself feed out of her soul along with other elements that reference her haunting and exotic self-portraits and subsequently her life and reality.



## Sophia KIRTADZE

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### The broken shadows

Nino was originally from Cappadocia. According to various sources, her parents – mother, Sosana, and father, Zabulon, a military man – chose the way of monasticism and went to live in Jerusalem. Nino, who was 12 years old at the time, was sent to live with Niofora-Sarah of Bethlehem, a Christian woman who often told her stories about the life and crucifixion of Jesus. It was also her who told Nino that Georgia was the resting place of the Seamless Robe of Jesus. Saint Nino, equal to the Apostles, came to Georgia in approximately 323 AD through the mountains of Javakheti. She was carrying a grapevine cross gifted to her by Saint Mary. Nino arrived in Mtskheta and began to preach Christianity. In 326 AD, Christianity was declared the state religion of Georgia. Saint Nino passed away on January 27, 338 AD. She is buried at the Bodbe Monastery. *A story by Teona Dolenjashvili*

**NOTHING**  
**ABOUT US**  
**WITHOUT**  
**US**

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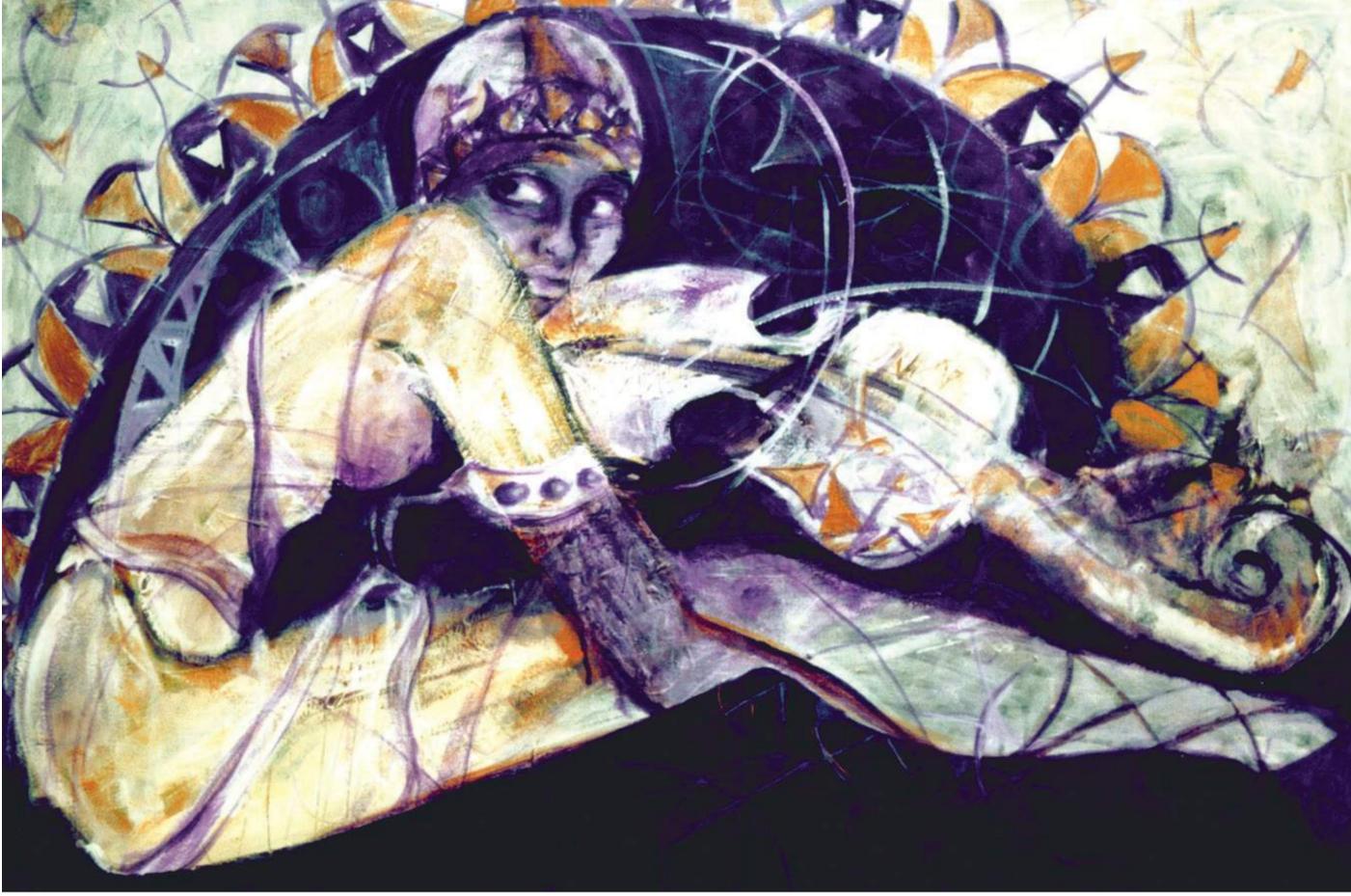
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Women facing multiple forms of discrimination because of their sex, ethnicity, disability, geographic location and HIV status among other factors, are often marginalized from decision-making. No policy should be decided without the full and direct participation of women affected by that policy! *Credited to UN Women Ukraine*



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### Untitled

Humanity will always be incomplete unless it ensures equality between women and men in every aspect of life. None of its members can speak about freedom, before women's liberation from oppression and domination all over the world. Gender equality for a free world! Feminism for equality!



## #Artivism for gender equality

These 25 art pieces celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most visionary agenda for women's rights and empowerment everywhere.

This exhibition highlights struggles for gender equality and women's rights in Europe, the United States of America, Canada, the Caucasus and Central Asia countries.

This exhibition was conceptualized by Women's Major Group and UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

The content of this exhibition represents the values of the artists and does not necessarily reflect the views and the position of Women's Major Group, UN Women, EuropeAid and Women2030.

**#Artivism**

**#GenerationEquality**